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## **“Valuable service strengthens membership”**

August is the month dedicated in Rotary to membership and there is no better way for the District Governor to better understand and address the situation regarding membership in our Clubs than during the Club visits. Monique and I started our visits on the 8th July at the Rotary Club Vittoria, the Governor Elect, Tita Sallemi's Club, and we have, since then concluded 25 visits during the month.

Apart from the Administrative Visit to the Club's, I was particularly pleased to see that many Clubs had organized visits to protect that they either planned to carry out this year or where, infact, already in operation.

As I had already stressed during all my speeches at the Pre-SIPE, SIPE and District Assembly, I am placed the focus on Rotarian service right at the centre of our District's work, building on the work focus in this regard over the last few years.

We have, once again, witnessed a drop in the number of members in our District, starting the Rotary year with 3,749 members. This is a drop of 6.5% over the last three years. The interesting thing is that this drop has resulted after admitting 949 new members into our Clubs. However 15% of these new members have resigned. We have to address their reasons.

Presumably they have not found in our Clubs whatever it was that they were expecting. So we must task, what we're they expecting? How have we positioned Rotary and the objectives of our Association to them? Have we been alongside our new members to give them guidance and training? Have we involved these new members in the Clubs' work or are we waiting for the accumulation of many years of Rotary experience before considering them as being ready to hold a Rotary office or role?

We Rotarians often speak about the problem of membership: little success in attracting new members (which leads to a high average age within the Club), the reduction in numbers of members in many Clubs (leading to the reduction obviously within the District), reduced levels of participation, weakness in the transition of members from Rotaract into Rotary, and also excessive squabbling within our Clubs.

Clearly many of these factors are rife in our Clubs, however I believe that these factors are symptoms rather than the cause of our problems. People usually join Rotary for one of two reasons: to provide service within our communities or to increase their professional network.

During my visits to the Clubs I have seen a direct correlation between membership and the level of service carried out within the Clubs. This correlation is even stronger in Rotaract Clubs. The young do not see Rotaract do not see Rotary as a vehicle in which to broaden their friendships – there are so many other ways of doing this nowadays – but as an association through which, together with their friends, they can help those in need in their communities.



One creates tomorrow's Rotary by building today's Rotary. If we speak about our youth being the future of Rotary then we need to build tomorrow's Rotary based on the needs and demands of our youth: a service based Rotary and a professional network.

Therefore, what is it that we need? The situation in each Club differs because there are differences in the local environment and context, however I believe that each Club needs to provide its members with more training, more guidance to new members, undertake more service of value to the community, and increase the visibility of the true service provided by Rotary so as to attract and maintain new members. Let us stop the phenomenon of new member resignations by selecting members more carefully, by taking better care of these members and by involving them more in the Club's activities right from the outset. After making the effort to attract a new member, we cannot lose them on this manner.

We need to address this matter during the Club visits and then again during the District Seminar on Leadership and Membership being held on the 7 October in Enna.

I would like to end by thanking all the Clubs that have welcomed us during the Governor's visits with such enthusiasm and hospitality, despite our visits being so early in the new Rotarian Year and in the significant heat of this last July.

I wish you all a restful holiday period and Buon Rotary.

*John*