



Malta, 01 Giugno 2018

“Together we have made a difference”

It seems unreal that it is nearly a year since I wrote my first Governor's letter in which I spoke about the Governor being the driver of a car in which the members are the engine. The engine has worked and driven many kilometres and the car is still intact. There have been some straight and smooth roads and some more challenging.

I had also written about each and every one of us needing to steer our lives driven by the theme of making a difference in our communities. I have spent the year putting the District's focus on the need to increase our service to the community while maintaining the spirit of friendship and fellowship.

As promised Monique and I visited all the Clubs in the District by mid-December, ensuring that we were able to understand the work of each Club, the opportunities and sometimes the issues as early in the year as possible. We asked the Clubs to show us their projects during the official visit and a great number did. We have also had the opportunity to visit some Clubs a second time to coincide with important anniversaries or the inauguration of certain major projects.

We were welcomed within the Clubs with a level of hospitality, friendship and respect which was stunning. We were warned by various PDGs that it would be a memorable year and indeed it has been. We have grown to love Sicily and the Sicilians even more during this year. Thank you all.

We have been moved by many of the projects that we have seen. At the risk of missing out worthy projects, how can one not be moved by the Clochard project of the Palermo Clubs, the work done by members through the Commissione Azione Professionale assisting migrants with medical, legal and other problems, the insatiable work by many on the Basic Life Support project, the Pranzo Solidale for 300 people organised by the Club of Bagheria, the work done by Rotarians in various Casa Famiglie or Mensa dei Poveri, the work done with and for the disabled in our communities by so many Clubs, the support given to Padre Pertini in the Zen of Palermo, the polyambulatorio in Catania, the use of the camper van by many Clubs to carry out screening projects in the community.

The list is endless. We shall focus on these during the Congress, ensuring we showcase how Rotarians have made a difference this year.

The global tree planting project was a great success in our District with 83 of the 93 Clubs planting 6,173 trees planted for our 3,750. That is a 65% over-achievement on RI President Riseley's recommendation. I have to single out the 50 members of the Rotary Club Ribera



for special mention having planted 1,250 on their own (actually Monique and I planted three of them).

The support for the new generation has been strong. The Youth Exchange Programme has been very successful once again. RYLA was special and the collaboration with Rotaract and Interact was significant. We need to keep Rotaractors closer to our Rotary clubs.

Membership is still a cause for concern. Although the net loss of members has continued to reduce, as at 1 June we are “only” 30 members down, we still lose too many new members and are not being effective at transitioning members from Rotaract to Rotary. We tried to address the issue of training with a new twist this year including specific District level training, both in Sicily and in Malta, aimed at new members. During the Malta session, due to the smaller number of participants, I asked new and prospective about their motivations for joining Rotary and the message was clear: to do projects in the community and to get to know more people. Is this what our Clubs are offering our new members?

I have heard people explain away the loss of members using economic arguments yet I see Clubs in the same cities and regions some of which are growing and others are shrinking. This cannot only be an economic argument. Through my visits I can say with confidence that the Clubs that are growing are those that have good leadership and are running projects that make a difference. That is where our focus needs to be.

Of course there were things that I hoped to achieve which I did not. There were mistakes that I made for which I ask your forgiveness. If asked what was cause for disappointment during the year I would have to say that it is having to deal with conflicts between members in Clubs. While there were only about four of the Clubs in the District with such issues out of ninety-three, and this may not seem like a lot but I have had to spend more time on the phone and email trying to resolve issues in these Clubs than on any other single factor. This is disappointing. This is not at all Rotarian. Sorry for my frankness but as you have all told me, my approach is Anglo-Saxon and transparent.

At the District Congress, together with Past Rotary International President Ravi Ravindran and our Board Director Elect Francesco Arezzo, to whom I would like to express our District's appreciation and support, we will see how we have made a difference. The large numbers registered for the event is a great satisfaction. Thank you for your support.

Throughout the year I have had the benefit of being supported by so many people. Of course District Secretary Antonio Randazzo has been invaluable: wise, a true Rotarian and a great friend. Co-Secretary Alfredo Nocera handled the Western Club visits with great aplomb and efficiency. Rosario Indelicata managed District finances with great competence as did all the District staff. I have been supported by the advice received from many Past District Governors.



Monique, who during the year also studied for a Masters' degree in Entrepreneurship and also completed four Italian language courses, was by my side throughout including 88 of the 93 visits, the missing ones were during her exam or to avoid the small aeroplane to Pantelleria.

We have some fantastic stories accumulated throughout the year including many related to the incorrect use of the Italian language. It has been fun. It has been a great honour to represent our District. To represent you.

But most important is that together we have made a difference. Our communities in Sicily in Malta are today better served by Rotarians, better supported and better helped. Hopefully Rotary is more visible. It is Rotarians that have made a difference and I am sure we will all rally round Governor Elect Titta Sallemi from July to be inspired to continue to make a difference.

Thank you all for your support, hard work, dedication, patience, friendship and hospitality throughout this wonderful year.

John