

JENNIFER JONES ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT 2022-23

Rotary International President-elect Jennifer Jones wants members to imagine the possibilities in the change they can make to transform the world.

Jones, a member of the Rotary Club of Windsor-Roseland, Ontario, Canada, revealed the 2022-23 presidential theme, *Imagine Rotary*, as she urged people to dream big and harness their connections and the power of Rotary to turn those dreams into reality.

"Imagine, a world that deserves our best," Jones told incoming district governors on 20 January, "where we get up each day knowing that we can make a difference."

Jones, who will make history on 1 July by becoming Rotary's first female president, gave a live online address to precede Rotary's annual training event for district governors from around the world, the International Assembly. The assembly was rescheduled because of the COVID-19 pandemic and will now be held virtually 7-14 February.

Jones told the incoming governors about a chance she took when a member asked for assistance in getting a young peace activist out of Afghanistan during the U.S. troop withdrawal last year. At first unsure how she could help, she relied on "that certain Rotary magic" and contacted a former Rotary Peace Fellow she had met a few years earlier. Less than 24 hours later, the activist was on an evacuation list, and soon she was on her way to Europe.

Engaging members through meaningful responsibility

To better engage members, Rotary needs to "adapt and retool," Jones said, using her hometown as an example. Windsor was once the automotive hub of Canada. But after plant closings left thousands without work, the city needed to retool, in the same way an auto plant would,

preparing for new parts or a new model. Now, Jones said, Windsor is a leader in agribusiness and medical and aerospace technology.

For Rotary, “finding the right ‘part’ to engage each member should be our core function,” Jones said. “It comes down to the comfort and care of our members.”

Engaging members is crucial to retaining members, she said, adding that we need to ask members what they want to get from Rotary and give them meaningful responsibilities.

“It is our offer of hands-on service, personal growth, leadership development, and lifelong friendships that creates purpose and passion,” Jones said.

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RI President-elect Jennifer Jones

Embracing change also means embracing new club models, Jones said, as she asked the incoming governors to form at least two new innovative or cause-based clubs during their term. “Let’s make sure we engage our members, so they love their clubs and their Rotary experience,” she added.

Jones also announced the appointment of a Rotaract member as a Rotary public image coordinator and said that she has included Rotaractors on several committees and will assign some Rotaractors as president’s representatives.

“We have been entrusted with leadership in our great organization,” Jones said. “Now it is up to us to be brave and intentional in our actions, and let others help us lead.”

Jones noted that Rotary has little time left to achieve the RI Board of Directors’ goal of having women make up 30% of Rotary’s members by 2023. Rotary has achieved this in more than 110 countries, she said, but it

has a long way to go. She pointed out that Rotaract has already achieved 50% female members.

To raise Rotary's profile, Jones plans to hold a global impact tour that will include talking with leaders about working together to address the world's most pressing challenges. "Rotary opens these doors and we need to harness our connections, to deepen these relationships and create new partnerships," Jones said. "And the best part is, this can happen at every level of leadership."

Jones closed her address by saying that although we all have dreams, acting on them is a choice we make. When an organization like Rotary dreams about big things like ending polio and creating peace, she said, it becomes our responsibility to make them happen. "You don't imagine yesterday," Jones said, "you imagine tomorrow."