

## Janet Kriseman Induction Speech

### Rotary for a broken world

So why have I started with the music video of Leonard Cohen singing the Anthem? There is a crack in everything, that's where the light gets in. The 20/21 incoming president of Rotary International is Holger Knaack. Knaack means crack in German. That seemed too much like fate for me to ignore.

I am a long time Leonard Cohen fan, and that song, called The Anthem, speaks to the times in which we find ourselves. Cohen recorded that version in 2008, in the midst of the Financial Crisis, from which we know the world recovered, so it encourages me to believe that Covid19 too shall pass.

What does he mean, the crack is where the light comes in? I think he means that when something breaks, it can be an opportunity to improve it. When something breaks we can often see why it didn't work well before, we can see inside what might have been a closed object, now we see the mechanism, and we can see how to put it together again in a way that might make it more effective, and more resilient for the next time there are the inevitable stresses of life. The Japanese have a ceramic art form called kintsugi. When a piece of pottery breaks, instead of discarding it, they glue it back together using molten gold, and the result is usually even more beautiful than the original item. They view the broken shards not as the end of the object's life, but as an opportunity to make something better.

Covid 19 has crashed into us like a wrecking ball, and while we are still standing, we are surrounded by the shards of the world we knew. The challenge for us is to try pick up the pieces that we want to keep, and glue everything back together in a way that we emerge stronger and more beautiful. Covid 19 has sown suffering and death for many, but we were able to come together quickly as Rotarians and using the existing organisational structures and funding mechanisms to roll out help for our communities in need.

Mr Knaack used his incoming address to encourage Rotarians to seize the many opportunities Rotary offers to enrich our lives and the communities we serve. It is our acts of service, he said, big and small, that create opportunities for people who need our help," while also creating growth and leadership opportunities for Rotarians themselves. I am obviously a case in point. Rotary gives each of us the infrastructure and encouragement to put our service ideas into action and to make lifelong connections. "Everything we do opens another opportunity for someone, somewhere," said Knaack. We must see Covid 19 as an opportunity to grow our resilience and our effectiveness. We have moved our Friday morning meetings successfully online which has had the side benefit of enabling friends of Waterfront from all over the world to participate and reconnect. And donate! Thanks to Siham's initiative, we even managed to organise a successful fundraising quiz without anyone even leaving their home. Many of our existing projects continued to run smoothly with oversight from afar. We hope to learn from the EClubs how to initiate new projects in this new stay at home environment.

Of course, Rotary can only be Rotary for us and the people we serve if it continues to exist. Knaack emphasised that Rotary must be willing to evolve, to change as necessary for Rotary to grow and thrive. Waterfront has already embraced several of these ideas, offering different types of membership, such as family memberships for more than one person and corporate memberships. Another possibility could be to encourage people to participate in Rotary Community Corp activities, without ever actually becoming club members so that they can be exposed to the magic that is Rotary. Change also means introducing innovative forms of clubs that meet the needs of changing, more diverse members, such as eclubs and special purpose clubs, or incorporating some of these ideas into our existing clubs such as considering alternating virtual with in person meetings.

We as Waterfront are fortunate to be located in a very dense residential and commercial neighborhood. We should seek opportunities to engage more of our neighbors, potential Rotoractors, corporate members and more. We should strive to have our club be as diverse as our country, because diversity enriches us all.

I suppose you can say that adjusting to Covid 19 is a work in progress for us. We need to find ways to keep the Friday morning online meetings enjoyable and relevant. We need to adapt our projects so

that they can thrive despite our members being less hands on, and we need to find new projects that we can initiate and execute with less interpersonal and in person contact than before. We need to ensure that our members still feel connected to Rotary and each other and able to take advantage of the Rotary opportunities for themselves and the people they seek to serve.

One such Rotary opportunity is to use the revamped Rotary online learning center to learn new skills that help us improve our project design and delivery, or run our clubs more effectively, or grow in our individual Rotary roles. I hope that the Covid 19 restrictions on movement might end up enabling more of our members to participate in service projects that might otherwise have been difficult for them to engage with. And our experience thus far with Zoom meetings should make it much easier for members to participate in District-wide events and to serve on District committees, which expand our reach.

And of course, when this difficult time passes, and it will, and a vaccine or other treatment is found, and we meet again next to the ocean, blinking in the early morning sun, the gold cracks where we have mended our world will remind us that we have survived, and came back stronger, that the light came in, and showed us the way

