

**Convention 2006**  
**President's Message**  
**Carolyn Rice, President**  
**Presented July 22, 2006**

Good Morning!

Today it is my pleasure to spend some time speaking with you all, reflecting on the year just past and pondering on our future.

We do have many fond memories of the 2005-2006 year, but for some, nature's catastrophic events that took place will have possibly tinged their memories with the sadness of knowing that their world will never be quite the same. The loss of homes, possessions, and a way of life are all gone. The special cover story in the 2006 edition of the *Quotarian* said it all with the Charles Dickens quote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

The worst of times yielded the best of times in terms of a most positive response from members when we witnessed not only the generosity of the members to those in need but also the heartfelt support given for each other—Quotarians supporting their fellow members. That true "Quota Spirit" definitely shone through with the very special caring and by the sharing of other's burdens.

In the words of the now District 21 Governor Vicki Miller, "Our lives have been changed forever, but one thing remains constant—the hope perpetuated by Quota. We have hope. We have love. And we have each other."

Throughout the twelve months, members worldwide have translated this year's theme into action. Each day the lives of individuals and communities have been changed for the better, because Quotarians have chosen to "Reach Out Together" to those in need.

It was with particular pride that we celebrated last night the spirit of international cooperation that we have nurtured in Quota through our fellowship and service.

We each have a relatively small amount of time in our lives in which to make our mark, to truly make a difference. I feel, as I'm sure you all feel, that each of us has a right and responsibility to give of ourselves through service to our local communities and our world communities.

To serve those less fortunate to ensure a better quality of life for all. Without this public witness of service, we lose our universal understanding that life is a gift that cannot be bought or sold. And together, all of us working for the best interest of our world, can achieve much more than one of us working for individual gain.

Quota International and its charitable arm, the We Share Foundation, had many accomplishments last year due entirely to the efforts of our members, clubs, districts, and areas. Of course our dedicated staff too worked tirelessly this past year as well. We could not function without them.

Service through sharing is an important part of Quota International's mission. Each year, clubs around the world share thousands of dollars, hours, and other resources with countless people. Through projects, meetings, and other activities, club members share time, support, and good times with one another. And, as members of an international organization, clubs have the opportunity to share resources and ideas with one another.

Our clubs are incredibly innovative in identifying and meeting their communities' needs in creative ways, and the Quota International network offers a unique opportunity to share those projects.

This year, a major world event, the devastating hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, saw the We Share Foundation launch its first-ever international relief effort. This resulted in almost U.S.\$50,000 being donated to 14 hurricane relief projects, all of which were administered by Quota clubs in the affected regions.

Truly members helping members.

I was very moved by my journey to Gulfport, Mississippi, U.S.A., to view damage inflicted by Hurricane Katrina and learn more about the relief efforts that your donations to the We Share Foundation's Hurricane Relief Fund financed.

Words cannot adequately convey what I felt or saw first-hand during my time in Gulfport. My visit with the members of Quota's Mississippi Gulf Coast club, which is based in Gulfport, was truly an amazing experience. I was horrified by the devastation, but I felt privileged to witness the resilience of the people in the area as they went about repairing homes, businesses, and lives.

My trip to India and the Philippines was an incredibly moving journey, where I visited all clubs and all Club-to-Club World Service projects in both countries. I witnessed amazing passion and commitment shown by the Quotarians in both countries, not only to their Club-to-Club projects, which you have generously funded this year, but to a diversity of service work, whenever and wherever it is needed in their communities.

But isn't this true of all Quotarians?

Our worldwide network of service expanded in 2006 when the Board of Trustees approved 14 Club-to-Club World Service projects, a record number, in five Quota countries: Fiji, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Suriname.

With this expanded number of projects, we hope every Quota member will participate. All of our projects, new and continuing, need your support, and I thank you for caring to make this program the success that it has been in the past.

The We Share Foundation raised a total of U.S.\$166,844 for its programs and operations; this amount includes U.S.\$41,728 from clubs for the 2005 Club-to-Club World Service Projects. I thank all members and clubs who made this success possible.

This year the foundation expanded in a third new way with the formal launching of two new programs: the Healthy Hearing Campaign, created by Hearing and Speech Chair Linda Morton, and the Cops 'n' Kids Literacy Initiative.

These projects have several significant qualities that make them ideal for sharing: they are easy to implement, adaptable to an individual club's needs and strengths, and in line with Quota's mission to serve disadvantaged women and children and deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-impaired individuals.

In the spirit of sharing, we encourage you to learn more about these programs, find the resources necessary to implement them, and learn about creative ways they've been used.

They have been promoted in our e-communications, our *Quotarian* magazine and we have new links on both programs on our We Share Foundation Web site. I'm thrilled that we will have the opportunity to hear first hand of these wonderful programs here at convention during the presentations.

And later this year, we will be formalizing the Junior Quota Clubs Program, a service program where members in Quota Clubs mentor young people in Quota service. Guidelines are being revised and expanded and will be shared with clubs around the world.

All of these new service efforts—the disaster relief fund, the expanded Club-to-Club Service Program, and the expanded We Share Foundation programs for clubs—have been made possible entirely through your donations to the We Share Foundation.

Wherever there's a need, Quota clubs around the world find a way to help. Whether it be senior citizens desiring some companionship or donating cleaning supplies to a shelter for abused women, Quotarians approach each situation with a willing spirit and helping hands. And the best part is that club members gain as much as they give.

Thank you all for *Reaching Out Together* to make this world of ours a better place, each individual member has made a contribution, by sharing their time and talents in honoring their commitment to our Quota Objects.

This year we celebrate ten years of the Leaders as Listeners program, the philosophy by which we manage our organization. It's how we make the decisions, move our organization forward in new directions; make change; and it is the process by which your elected leaders systematically listen to you, our members.

It is called “active listening” and it works, it's the most important task we as leaders undertake during our term of leadership.

Do you remember the vivid analogy that caught the attention of leaders in 1997 that explained if you drop a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will jump straight out? But if you put that same frog into a pot of water and gradually raise the temperature, it won't notice the change until it's too late?

This analogy and its message is even more relevant today for our organization, as we continue to monitor the external changes in our Quota world and the internal needs of members.

We were told then that a successful organization of the coming century would look very different; it would be smaller and flatter, more lean and mean, and more collaborative and performance-based. It would concentrate on what it does best and would have to demonstrate that it is delivering value.

Since value is determined by members, leaders must fully understand who members are and what they really need and/or want. How? By staying in close touch with members and continually assessing their most important needs.

As leaders we are charged with listening and acknowledging not only the “squeaky wheels,” but most importantly, the silent majority of members who we want and need to be part of our planning process.

Research supports Quota’s Leaders as Listeners approach, and so the Convention Town Meeting will focus on the topic of the “We Share Foundation”—the very heart of Quota, our charitable service arm.

A second Leaders as Listeners discussion will be held during this year’s development and growth program, on Sunday morning, and it will focus on the issues surrounding club membership.

All year long our elected leaders...club presidents, district officers, and your international board members have been part of a team—listening, encouraging, supporting—in particular at area meetings, district conferences, and whenever they connect one on one with members.

A further example of our Leaders as Listeners in action is the newly instituted Leadership Training Program created for district governors to use to train new club officers at Quota Training Seminars, so that everyone would start with a firm foundation in how to successfully lead and operate their club this year.

The two governance task forces that I announced on May 15 of this year were created in direct response to issues brought forward by members. We received a resolution from Quota International of Liverpool, Australia, and one from District 30 (also in Australia).

Both requested that task forces be organized to study different issues that they addressed. In addition, both requested that these subjects be discussed at Convention 2006 and the convention body vote to approve the launching of the task forces.

**TASK FORCE 1:** Research alternate models that increase access of all members to Quota International leadership positions. (This continues a task force review initiated by PIP Mary Cotter two years ago.)

**TASK FORCE 2:** Research methods by which all clubs shall be able to vote on bylaws.

The task forces will be asked to report preliminary findings and progress to the 2006-2007 board of directors at their February 2007 mid-term meeting. Final findings will be reported to the 2007-2008 board of directors at their July 2007 meeting. This allows approximately 15 months for study of the issues.

I asked President-elect Enid and Treasurer Daryl to join me as ex-officio members of both task forces. Parliamentarian Carolyn Stubbs and Executive Director Kathleen Treiber will both serve on both task forces as parliamentary adviser and staff liaison, respectively.

The appointment of task force members was based on current membership numbers of major membership countries and/or regions of Quota International, while also considering the expertise needed for serving on these task forces. I chose to appoint a total of 13 task force members to the two committees (6 and 7 members each, respectively).

I thank all members of the task forces for agreeing to serve and especially Isabelle Butters and Rosemary Hannie as the respective chairmen.

Turning now to a few more specific matters

As of April 2006, the end of our 2005-2006 Quota year, our official membership was 6,776. This is 141 fewer members than we had at the same time last year. In terms of our membership, however, while we still show a declining membership, the decline has been reduced considerably from previous years.

Under the excellent leadership of Development and Growth Chair, President-elect Enid Croes-Marugg, a new development and growth plan was put in place, and your leaders are working hard to encourage and support membership recruitment and retention in many ways.

We have developed a variety of membership recruitment and retention tools and resources, and this year the topic was addressed at club visits, district conferences, and area meetings.

We also encouraged membership success through our District Dynamo program, our Excellence in Membership awards, and our Quota Cares Month program.

And since May 1 of last year, we have celebrated the chartering of two new clubs and five new branches organized. We acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the organizers.

Thank you everyone for the efforts made in the areas of recruitment and retention.

Turning now to our finances, we have continued to reduce our operating expenses in every possible way, despite rising costs. A continued reduction in expenses is budgeted for the 2006-2007 year.

As a result, Quota International and the We Share Foundation have both ended the year with an excess of income over expenditures. This is of particular significance as it was the first non-convention year.

Members' generosity at district conferences and area meetings has added significantly to our fund-raising targets. Our area directors arranged special fund-raisers at their area meetings last September, which have also contributed to the increased donations this year.

We thank you for your continued support of our organization. Every gift helps Quota's programs, whether they are development and growth or service initiatives. And we know many of you enjoy wearing the beautiful Quota jewelry that you have received as thank you gifts for your donations.

Our initial on-line Silent Auction, 'Q-Mart 2006,' was a huge success and approximately U.S.\$10,000 was raised for the Wanda Frey Joiner Development Fund. Plans are well underway for 'Q-Mart 2007.'

At this 2006 Convention, we celebrate the completion of one full cycle of the combined calendar change and biennial convention component of the transition into our new way of operating. At Convention 2003, in her welcome speech, our then President Beatriz Doran-Scoop talked about the realities behind Quota's change:

“A journey begins not with the first step, but with the desire to go where you have never gone, and for good reason... Nothing will be the same again, ever. As the world turns, so does our reality, and we have to evolve with it and make the best of it.”

Beatriz also went on to say that the good news is that we have made the best of it.

Well, I'm pleased to be able to say that we certainly have made the best of it, and I wish to acknowledge the support given by the membership to the process. The changes have not been made without some pain, but there is no going back, only moving forward.

At Convention 2003 we saw the calendar change proposal formally adopted. Members indicated they were strongly in favor of biennial conventions and the changes to the timetable for area meetings, district conferences, and club visits.

Last year, five of our six areas held their meetings in the new time period required by the calendar change: September, October, or November.

Since July 2004 we have been planning for this convention. This has allowed us to stage convention without increasing our convention staff numbers during this year.

For the first time, the future year's budgets for both Quota International and the We Share Foundation were approved at the mid-term board meeting, thereby allowing more discussion than previous years.

Strategic planning on both entities continues by way of a three-year plan presented at the 2005-2006 mid-term board meetings. Also, as part of our forward planning, three plans were presented and discussed on fund-raising and also development and growth.

Our original estimation of savings from the calendar change for this year and next year has in reality far exceeded our expectations.

And, in spite of our organizational streamlining and the cutback of our staff by 30 percent since 2002, our programs and communications have been operating at a very high level, winning numerous international awards.

In this past year, our *Quotarian* magazine won four international awards including the Communicators, Apex, and MarCom Creative awards. In addition, several awards were won by our Web sites.

The We Share Foundation also won four awards from the Associations Advance America competition for our Volunteers in Action, Club-to-Club World Service, and Hurricane Relief efforts.

This year we undertook a major revision of our award-winning Web site, including adding a site index to make the site easier to use. We initiated and subsequently expanded our password-protected site for district leaders, which contains a wealth of information

and resources for use. Friends of Quota also receive the password as a thank-you for their support in sponsoring that site.

E-communication is playing a crucial role in keeping our members informed and up-to-date with all aspects of both Quota International and the We Share Foundation's activities.

If you haven't already logged on to either [www.quota.org](http://www.quota.org) or [www.wesharefoundation.org](http://www.wesharefoundation.org) then I highly recommend you take the time to visit both of our award-winning Web sites. We have put just about everything in relation to Quota on those sites.

We are an organization of volunteers, prepared to give our time, caring, and commitment to so many service activities. Quota couldn't be possible without you. Your dedication this past year is to be commended, whether to your local communities or fellow Quotarians in far away places.

I thank you for all you have done to support our programs in the past, and all I know you will do to support the programs in the future. We couldn't do it without you, and by having an active fund-raising plan, we are able to keep mandatory dues low and allow the people who wish to support the organization with their optional donations a way to do that.

Our leaders, too, have given incredible service to Quota. We are operating with minimal staffing, having cut our staff size by 30% as part of our organization's streamlining, making the role of our volunteer leaders even more critical. I thank you.

In conclusion, I thank you for your service in the name of Quota and your dedication to our organization and for the inspiring example you provide as volunteers. Your boundless generosity and commitment to service are acknowledged and appreciated.

Wherever my travels have taken me, visiting clubs or districts, attending your meetings and your events, it has been inspiring to see the difference you are making in so many lives and situations within your own communities and indeed across our Quota world.

And I thank you for the privilege and honor of serving as your president, to witness Quota caring and sharing at its finest. Nothing is beyond our reach if we reach out together.