

Convention 2004 President's Message
Delivered by 2004-2005 President Mary Cotter
Saturday, July 17, 2004

Good Morning!

A little less than a year ago, I stood before this body and asked all of you to work to Strengthen Quota's Roots. As I looked upon you, I hoped that I would have the wisdom and strength to move us forward. The past year has been a busy one as we have all worked to make Quota a stronger and more efficient organization.

International presidents have a steep learning curve, and from the day of my installation, I have been immersed in the job. Right off the bat, I had a board meeting, and then there was the follow-up. I had to form five task forces and assign members to our standing committees. Then there were the day-to-day challenges of the Presidency to be met. In addition, I have traveled extensively throughout Quota-land in order to keep my finger on the pulse of our organization.

As my term ends, I find myself reflecting on what I have done in the last year.

- I have traveled close to 100,000 miles, and have visited eight countries on three continents.
- I have enjoyed the hospitality of 20 Districts, talked to hundreds of Quotarians from 12 different countries, and corresponded with every district.
- I have visited seven of our eight Quota International Club-to-Club world service projects.

To all of those who made my journey so enjoyable and enlightening, I extend my heartfelt thanks. I have seen sights that amazed me and left me in awe of the accomplishments of Quotarians throughout the world. I am going to spend the next few minutes sharing some of what I have witnessed and learned with you.

By far the most rewarding visits I have made this year are to our Club-to-Club projects. These projects ONLY exist because of the generosity of Quotarians throughout the world. A significant portion of the operating budgets of all of these programs comes from donations to Club-to-Club projects. I know that many times it seems that all the Washington office and the Board do is ask for donations, and many times we all wonder where the money is going, and if it is really providing a benefit to the needy.

Well, let me tell you, the funding that goes into Club-to-Club projects goes to the project, and these projects are making lives better for many beneficiaries of your donations. I know that hearing about these projects is not the same as seeing them, but let me take a few minutes to share with you what I saw.

Before, I do that, however, I would like to extend a special thank-you to PIP Beris Pritchard who managed to guide me safely through my visit to our world service projects. Thank you, Beris, for the things I DIDN'T catch.

The first Club-to-Club projects I visited were in India. India is home to three Quota clubs. A significant part of the Indian population is poor, with 25% of the population – over 250 million people – living below the poverty line. In this environment, the Indian clubs operate three of Quota's Club-to-Club projects. These projects are all located in low-income areas and serve the populations of those areas. Talk about living proof of the munificence of Quotarians.

The first project that I visited was sponsored by Quota International of Sainik Farm. They operate both a Home for the Aged and a Mobile Crèche. In addition to providing a funding source, the Sainik Farm Quotarians devote numerous volunteer hours to these projects. The home for the aged project was created to meet the challenge of helping a group of abandoned, elderly, nursing home residents. Before Quota International of Sainik Farm began working on this project, the building was falling down around the residents. The people living there were not safe. Quotarians from Sainik Farm changed all this and improved the quality of life for these residents. Today the nursing home is well run, and it provides a safe place to live.

The mobile crèche is a pre-school that helps to educate and care for a group of young children. Many times the food the children receive at the crèche is all they receive for the day. The group has made great progress in a very short amount of time with this project. Most of the tiny children in this school would be on the streets to fend for themselves if they were not involved with this project.

After Sainik Farm, I visited the Quota Home for Abandoned and Destitute Women, more commonly known as the Quota Home. The Home is a multi-faceted project sponsored by Quota International of New Delhi. This day program offers poor young women and children an education. The school for the children provides them instruction in many areas – an opportunity not often enjoyed by their peers. While the children are in school, the young women are learning vocational skills that assist them in becoming self-supporting.

This program has been in existence for many years and it has helped countless families. I was privileged to be at the Home to dedicate the new section. This addition allows more of the needy to be served. The Meyerson Tzedakah Family Foundation made this addition possible, and we are very grateful for their support.

Journeying a short way to DLF City I observed another Club-to-Club project, the Charitable Dispensary and Vocational Training Center which is sponsored by Quota International of DLF City.

This is a two-fold project. They operate a clinic six days a week for very low-income area residents. To help with this clinic they employ a physician, but in the main the clinic is staffed by Quotarians who volunteer their services. The second part of this program is a training center for women in the village to learn some marketable skills. With the self-supporting knowledge they acquire the women can bring in some additional family income. DLF Quotarians are present 6-8 hours a day, six days a week to assist in this training.

After visiting India, the next stop on my tour was the Philippines. I was the International representative to District 41 for their conference. I also observed many of their Club-to-Club projects – both those that currently receive Club-to-Club funding and past world service projects that the local clubs have continued by tapping other resources. As with the Indian projects, these Club-to-Club projects are only financially possible because of the generosity of Quotarians throughout the world. Yet funding, while essential to the operation of these programs, does not--in and of itself--make these endeavors successful. I was impressed with the extensive volunteerism of local Quotarians that greatly contributes to the achievements of these projects.

The Philippines currently operate three projects funded under the auspices of the Club-to-Club world service projects. The Sawang Calero and Guba Day Care Centers are sponsored by Quota International of Cebu. The Sawang Calero Center is located in an economically deprived part of Cebu. The children and their families are very low income and the children depend on the school to meet many of their needs. In addition to educating the children, the center also offers them a large part of their daily nutritional needs. The sole teacher has two sessions a day; one with 35 children, and one with 40. (The costumes shown are made from flower sacks, and these musical instruments are made out of flattened bottle caps driven into the sticks with nails.)

At the Guba Day Care Center, the children must walk three to five miles in each direction. If there is rain, many times the roads are impassable, and they do not attend school. In this very rural location, the children would not have the opportunity for any education if it weren't for Quota International of Cebu and this project.

My next stop was the Bahay San Rafael Home for Special Children. This home, sponsored by Quota International of Las Piñas, offers highly specialized help to a group of children with profound disabilities. The majority of these children were abandoned on the streets because they have Cerebral Palsy, and, were it not for this home, most of them would probably have suffered an early death. This project helps to give these children some quality of life.

Next on my tour was the Project for Battered and Abused Women sponsored by Quota International of Manila. The project is a work in progress and is not yet operational. The club is working on procuring the project site. Young women who have been abused will be able to find both refuge and training in this location. In the meantime, the club offers assistance to young women who have been raped or abused and have just delivered babies.

From there I visited the future site of the Deafness Resource Library, a project sponsored by Quota International of Manila-South. This is another work in progress. When completed, this library will be located in an already established school for the deaf so that parents, teachers, and students have access to it. The teachers at the school are working to prepare the children for the world before they are mainstreamed into a regular school. The children are taught to be in an oral world, and to lip-read. This school treats the children and the family as a unit – all need to be educated to the world of the deaf.

All the projects I visited were outstanding, and they were made possible by the beneficence of Quotarians. Visiting these programs has allowed me to see first hand the dollars of Quotarians at work. Our world service projects are living proof that Club-to-Club donations are making life better for hundreds of people. Seeing them made me proud to be a Quotarian, because we do make a difference in the lives of others. To all of those who make these projects work, either through their generosity or through their volunteer efforts, I say thank you.

While the visits to our world service projects were a highpoint of the year, I want to talk about some of the other things that have been happening this year. We have continued to implement our calendar change. As a part of this change, the Governor's Seminar was moved to the July time frame.

As a result, the mid-term Board meeting held in January could be devoted entirely to board business. Personally, I found the board of directors meeting to be very beneficial because it allowed your Board of Directors ample time to discuss the business of our organization, and to plan some innovative actions. The most significant action taken by the Board during this meeting was the creation of our new Branching Project. This Project is a simple way to attract new members and assist new clubs to grow while being mentored by a sponsor club. To learn the specifics of this program I encourage you to attend the Branching workshop.

A second innovation introduced this year is the District Dynamo competition. This is a program in which clubs within a District compete against each other to see which club could get the largest net gain. This was a six-month competition, and awards were presented during District Conferences. Please join me in a round of applause for the winning clubs.

During my term, the timing of District Conferences was switched from the September/October/November time line to the March-to-June period. The change seemed to fit seamlessly into our Quota Calendar. With the change of our District Conferences, we eliminated all Area Meetings in the Fall of 2003. We will see many of our Areas holding meetings in September and October of this year. To make these schedule changes fit into the rest of our operations we began voting for area directors by mail. The changes made this year have resulted in more effective and efficient operations and in savings in the Quota operating budget.

The final subject I wish to talk about today is “Strengthening Quota’s Roots.” During the last convention, I urged you to spend the year focusing and building on those things upon which Quota is founded. I asked you to enhance community service; increase the visibility of Quota within your community; and to strengthen your club. So, how are we doing in these areas?

As I have visited with Quotarians and received feedback on what is happening I have noted some excellent examples of community service projects undertaken by our clubs. The work of our Filipino Quotarians is an outstanding example of selfless service to their community. While in Florida I found a great example of a community interagency project that not only enhanced Quota’s image, but also fostered future Quotarians . Quota International of Coral Gables worked with a local Girl Scout troop to develop a stage production about the history of Quota. To do this the Quotarians mentored the girls throughout the project teaching them how to do research and orchestrating the production. The stage show was filmed, and I would like to show you an excerpt at this time.

Last, but not least, while in Charleston, West Virginia I found the year's best example of a club enhancing its image by using the media. Quota International of Huntington sponsors an annual "style show" to raise money to support its projects. By being creative, the club was able to co-opt a television personality from a local station to emcee the event. As a result, the style show got coverage on the local nightly news program. Now, how is that for enhancing the image? See for yourself!

Another indicator of the strength of our local clubs is the numerous projects that were submitted as a part of this year's excellence awards process. In reviewing these projects, I was amazed at the creativity, innovation, and dedication to community service that exists in many of our clubs. These projects serve to reaffirm what clubs of any size can accomplish when their members use their local resources and work together to achieve their common purpose.

I realize that this is only the tip of the iceberg and there are many other clubs exerting significant effort to build on those things that have made Quota International what it is today. Those clubs that have made the effort are stronger than they were a year ago and are reaping the rewards of their success.

In closing, let me say how impressed I have been with the camaraderie of Quotarians worldwide. I want to thank all who graciously received me into their communities and shared their events and activities with me. I also want to express my gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to Strengthen Quota's Roots. I know you have certainly strengthened mine.