Thank you, Rosemary, for that beautiful introduction of our family. And, thank you all very much.

My friends, a moment captured in a photo can say a thousand words.

This photo says "OH NO, what did we just get ourselves into?!!" or it could say "OH NO, how are we going to balance next year's budget?"

It might also say how embarrassed, grateful and truly humbled I am by the riches of your friendship these last 45 years, and for the warmth and generosity of your support.

In the words of a saint, "to whom much is given, much is expected."

I humbly accept the responsibility you have placed on my shoulders, and I will devote all my efforts to lead this organization that has—for 97 years—brought light into this world, especially for the sake of "our children, their future."

You should expect nothing less than for me to give you the very best I have to give. I want you to know that I have a team of District Governors and spouses or partners who are committed to the team values of respect for one another, hard work, communication, collaboration, and accountability. I would like them all to stand and face you so you can applaud them because they have taken on the responsibility of serving you, our members and clubs, as next year's leaders of Kiwanis International.

The future of the world's children is our future, too. For if you believe, as I do, that we are placed on this earth to serve others, the legacy of that service will live on forever and then we, at the appointed time, will rest in peace.

But now is not the time to rest. We have lots of work to do, and we must do it quickly. The needs are greater than ever, and the children of our troubled world are depending on all of us to unify as one Kiwanis body to make them safer, healthier and happier.

As you know, Kiwanis is on the cusp of another century of service. But what will that next 100 years look like, if we don't begin to shape it now?

Will our organization be filled with tens of thousands of more members who will put into action the indelible aspirations of the Six Objects of Kiwanis?

Will it be an organization that will never give up hope, and find the way to do more with less?
Will it identify and recognize the skills and creativity of future leaders who will place their boots on the ground before they circulate their words in the air?

Will it become a younger, more diverse, much wiser and more technically savvy group of volunteers who can deliver impact and service in communities as they, themselves, wish to define those communities?

Our mission next year is to make more children healthier and happier, and I believe we can put more smiles on children’s faces if we follow three strategic objectives.

What do I mean by these words: CONNECT, INSPIRE and ADVOCATE?

CONNECT

Kiwanis clubs need to connect with each other and with their brother and sister members. We call ourselves a family, and yet, we hardly know the family we have on five continents. Sadly, only a very small percentage of our total membership attend International and District conventions. And yet, that is precisely what our Fifth Object directs us to do: *to provide a practical means to form enduring friendships while building better communities*. Today’s generation, out of which we sponsor more than a quarter of a million Service Leadership members, believes the world is their community. Do we Kiwanians believe that, or do we want to stay in our comfort zone and say we are just one of many wonderful organizations helping in a geographically defined community?

As your President, I am prepared to say no, we are not just one of many. Kiwanis has a very special distinctive service mission that can transform the world.

Over the next year, we will place priority on connecting Kiwanis International with its clubs, and connecting clubs with other clubs around the world, so that every new member you sponsor has a purpose for belonging and staying longer in our Kiwanis home. They will be oriented to active participation in a global organization of volunteers serving both their local and their global communities, and they will be proud to be part of an organization where "persons of influence"—whether they are from government, major businesses or your neighbors down the street—know what Kiwanis is and what it stands for.

INSPIRE

Kiwanis will do more to inspire new members to take the magnificent legacy left by the
generations of Kiwanians who came before us, and re-energize and re-create it as a new legacy. How unfortunate it has been to shepherd hundreds of thousands of young leaders through our family home and not invite them back to stay. It is time for Kiwanis to stop talking about "tracking", and start immediately to build the bridge and open our doors to a larger, remodeled Kiwanis home. Isn't that what the Fourth Object of Kiwanis says, to develop by example, a more aggressive and serviceable citizenship?

Over the next year, we will connect and re-connect with thousands of former members of our sponsored organizations and give them a reason to come back home.

ADVOCATE

Kiwanis is one of the leading advocates for the most valuable and the most vulnerable human assets: our children. So why are we so hesitant to use our collective voice to say loudly and clearly, in every possible way, that our children matter most of all? Doesn't the Sixth Object of Kiwanis say we are idealistic and that we are expected to maintain sound public opinion to increase justice? Where is the justice if we stand by and allow an infant or mother to die needlessly anywhere in the world because of maternal and neonatal tetanus? The Eliminate Project is not just another fundraising project, it is our Global Campaign for “justice and righteousness.”

And I ask you, closer to home in our own communities, is there justice in allowing a child’s brain development to be impaired by our lack of attention and care? Where is the justice for any child to be unsafe, unhealthy or uneducated?

When Kiwanis advocates for justice, patriotism, and righteousness in the Sixth Object, we are advocating for a child’s future. Those are not just words to memorize. It is a patriotic call to action by everyone concerned for the welfare of the child.

Next year, the letters YCPO will no longer be a slogan or a hard to translate acronym; it will be re-booted with a new emphasis on Early Childhood Development, and it will be a distinctively Kiwanis priority.

In 2013, that long overdue multi-year Strategic Plan of Kiwanis International will become a reality to guide us to become forceful advocates for children so that we can inspire new members to use new means and new technology to connect the world of Kiwanis with its global mission. You see—Connect, Inspire, and Advocate—are not just words. They can be the templates for the future of Kiwanis.

The long awaited Strategic Plan will be comprehensive, and yet it will be focused and
simple in its scope. We cannot wait any longer for it to take shape and talk ourselves to
death about strategies for growth. We have heard enough. We must act and act quickly
to implement new strategies, or we run the risk of a hollow victory when we celebrate
Kiwanis in 2015.

Some say Kiwanis is dying. Is Kiwanis dying? Let me be blunt. The day a person is
born, that person begins to die. But the day an organization like Kiwanis is born, its
very reason for existing must live forever. Why? Because Kiwanis, according to the First
Object of Kiwanis, is God’s spiritual work on earth, and that work cannot and must not
stop. You and I will come and go. But while we are here, we have a sacred obligation
to make sure the light of Kiwanis always shines on this earth, on its children and their
future.

So today, on this day when we launch another year of service, let us get the job done by
recommitting ourselves to the meaning of the Second and Third Objects, to adopt the
highest professional standards of excellence in all that we do, as we keep our focus on
our neighbor above ourselves.

Let’s go back to the future and live everyday as Kiwanians who know how to put the
real meaning to every word of the Six Objects of Kiwanis, by changing and touching the
lives of others.

Because if we want to sense the past, we will touch that stone; and if want to seize the
moment, we will smell that rose; but if we want to glimpse the eternal, through
Kiwanis, we will touch a life.

Thank you my fellow Kiwanis members for touching our lives and our future.