

Good morning, everyone!

President Hass, Board of Trustees, distinguished faculty, staff, parents, families and friends, and most importantly graduates, thank you for allowing me to share this important day in the life of the 2014 graduates of Austin College. This is, indeed, an honor.

It's a particular honor to be here as the president of Rotary International. I say that because your mascot is the kangaroo – the Rotary International Convention, my Convention, 1-4 June - is in Sydney, Australia. So, instead of saying good morning I probably should have said G'Day.

If you don't know about Rotary and what it does I hope you have at least heard of Rotary. Perhaps you have even seen a Rotary wheel or sign here in Sherman or your own community. There are actually two clubs that meet here in Sherman each week: the Rotary Club of Sherman which has been around since 1923 and meets in the Sherman Municipal Ballroom at noon on Tuesday; and the Rotary Club of Grayson County which has been around since 1987 and meets at Fulbelli's restaurant on the square on Wednesday morning. Those clubs are just two of over 34,000 Rotary clubs all over the world, where more than 1.2 million people get together every week with the goal of making their communities, and this world, better places to be.

My theme as President of Rotary International for 2013-2014 is *Engage Rotary Change Lives*. It is very simple and very basic. If you engage something generally something happens. My thought was that if Rotarians got engaged in the work of Rotary, lives would change. As a matter of fact, I think that logic would apply to non-Rotarians as well. I do know that by helping others you do change lives but the most gratifying part of that is the life that actually changes the most is your own. What started as an unselfish act of giving of yourself to help someone else ends up in reality benefitting you the most. I know that here at Austin College you are encouraged to change lives – your own and others – through service. It looks to me like I am standing this morning in front of a group of new Rotarians.

The Rotary motto is Service Above Self. With that in mind, every club decides what kind of service they want to engage in, both locally and internationally. It might be digging wells to bring clean water to villages that need it, or training midwives so that women can have safer births, or building playgrounds in neighborhoods that don't have them. The real beauty about Rotary is that it is every club's opportunity to help their own community, and to join together with other Rotarians from around the world to address larger, more long-term needs if they choose.

For the last quarter of a century, Rotarians worldwide have joined together and have been working steadily to do something tremendous: eradicate the disease of polio, forever. Hopefully, you have never had to deal directly with polio and, hopefully, you don't know much about it. But, it does still exist in three endemic countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria, and the

world is not safe until the disease has been fully eradicated. We have reduced the number of cases worldwide from over 350,000 in 1987 to 416 in 2013 and just 77 year to date. Our goal is zero cases and we continue working diligently to fulfill the promise we made to the children of the world in 1985 of a polio-free world.

There are a lot of people out there who are trying to change the world. And that's a great thing. But what's really special about Rotary, is that Rotary gives you a way to turn those dreams into reality.

Turning your dreams into reality is something all of you are getting ready to do. You've finished your college degrees, and you're heading toward the next stages of your lives—whether that's graduate study, or a job, or something you're still deciding. But whatever you do next, you will do it better, you'll be happier in your lives, and you'll achieve more, if you aren't living your lives just for yourselves. At the end of the day, you'll never regret choosing to do what's right, instead of what's easy. And you'll never regret the time you spent helping make the world a better place.

There are a lot of ways to achieve that. Rotary's just one way, but in my mind it's a pretty amazing way.

I've been a Rotarian since 1979, which is long before most of you here were born. Rotary has probably been the single greatest influence in my life, and it's the reason I'm standing here today. But my day job for most of my career was as the president of the University of Oklahoma Foundation. I spent some 40 years at the University of Oklahoma, and over that time I went to at least 15 commencements. That doesn't include my own by the way. Anyway, when President Hass invited me to speak, I thought back over all of those commencement speakers and tried to remember some of the inspirational things they'd said.

And you know what? I couldn't remember a thing.

I was concerned that this might just be me, so I went around the 18th floor of Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Illinois, and asked some of my colleagues if they could remember anything that had been said at their commencements. And the response was pretty universal: "No."

So my goal today is to tell you something that you'll remember down the line- something that you will find useful.

I'm going to tell you about the Rotary Four-Way Test.

Rotary was founded, 109 years ago, by a lawyer from Vermont named Paul Harris. He started practicing law in Chicago right around the turn of the century, and he didn't feel too much at home. He missed his family and friends, he missed people saying hello to him on the street, and

he was having a hard time meeting anyone who shared his ideas on what was important in life. It seemed like everyone was too busy making a buck. Nobody seemed too interested in getting to know their neighbor, or in helping each other out or in doing what was right. He was especially bothered by a lack of something that he held very dear: ethical practices in business.

So Paul decided he'd start a club. He invited three friends from different professions to come together and meet on February 23, 1905. It started out as a place for likeminded professionals, people who believed in honesty, hard work, and ethical behavior. The group decided to rotate the weekly meeting among their offices and hence the name "Rotary" came to life. Pretty soon, it turned into a service club, which in retrospect seems pretty much inevitable.

About thirty years later, when Rotary clubs numbered in the thousands all over the world, Rotarians decided it was time to adopt a formal declaration of its belief in ethical practice. The Four-Way Test was written by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor, when he was charged with turning around a failing business during the Great Depression. He turned the business around, by choosing to do what was right.

The Four-Way Test goes like this:

Of the things we think, say or do

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

I've tried very hard to live by this "test" ever since I first heard it. It can be tough, but if you apply it to your daily life I think you will find that it really works.

If you find yourself stuck between what's easy and what's right, or you aren't even sure what is right- the Four-Way Test is a great place to get yourself unstuck. No frills, nothing complicated—just:

Is it the truth? Is it fair to everyone? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Is it being beneficial to everyone?

If you can say yes to all four of these questions, you're doing OK. If you can't, well, you'd better go back to square one.

So if that's all you remember from what I've said today, then I'll be pretty happy.

But it's a hot day, there's a lot going on, and I won't hold it against you if you don't remember that a few years down the line. So I'll make it even simpler, and say that if you're ever stuck

between what's easy and what's right, then go straight back to basics: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

When people need your help, give it.

If someone's suffering, don't look the other way.

Don't be afraid to make a difference. Don't be afraid of your own ability. You can do so much more than you think.

All you have to do is read the paper or watch the news, or even walk down a city street, and you see just how many people there are in the world who need help. It's easy to focus on that, on how great the needs are, and on how much of that we truly can't do a thing about. It's easy to get discouraged—and that's what a lot of people do. They say, whatever I can do is just a drop in the bucket, so why try at all?

But that's not how we think in Rotary. And that's not how you should think either.

In Rotary, we know that everything we do makes a difference. We can't fix the whole world, and I wouldn't suggest that that any of you try! But that doesn't make what we can do, any less valuable.

If you find yourself thinking, what I do is just a drop in the bucket—I advise you to look at your parents as your role models. They never said, since I can't feed every child in the world, there's no point in feeding you!

It's not an attitude that makes a lot of sense. It's an attitude that you take, when you don't want to face up to your own potential.

And it's true, as Mark Twain wrote, that at the end of your life, you regret the things you didn't do, much more than the things you did.

No one ever, at the end of their lives, says, "I wish I'd done less for others, and more for myself."

And I can promise you that no one ever, ever says, "Gosh, I wish I'd spent more time with my phone, and less time with the people I love."

So live your life without regrets. Care about others. Make a difference. Dream all the dreams you want. But now it's time to get busy, turning them into reality.

Thank you, and congratulations.