

Executive Director Sarah Kelly



First and foremost, I hope you are truly proud of your last year's accomplishments in your communities and for our incredible organization.

For the second year in a row, we have stemmed the massive hemorrhaging of membership loss, and that is all you. President Mike's challenge was to do a little bit better. His challenge was just 3%. Who can't do something 3% better? Ruritans have stepped up, and so many clubs set a positive example.

What that translates to, to me, is Community.

I have been thinking a lot lately about Community. Society has become very tribal and more separated from others than ever before. Do we even need community with all our gadgets and gizmos? I know I do. Consider the essence of our shared experiences, the support that emerges within a community. We find understanding, empathy, and collective resilience within these connections. Community is not just a need; it is the fabric that weaves our stories, aspirations, and shared humanity together. So, let us appreciate the value of community and its profound impact on shaping our lives.

Ruritan's purpose is to "create a better understanding among people and through volunteer community service make your community a better place to work and live." So, we must transcend the tribalism, separation, segregation, and the "us vs. them" mentality. Whoever the "them" is, because we can't have "us" without "them." Let us strive for unity; in unity, we find the common ground that builds bridges of understanding, compassion, and a brighter future for all.

It is time for some introspection. Is our club genuinely relevant? Are we making a tangible impact on our community and the lives of our members? Consider the same question for our districts and national. Relevance isn't a given; it's earned through purposeful actions and meaningful contributions. Let's reflect on our role and strive to ensure that at every level – club, district, and national – we are not just present but profoundly relevant in making a positive difference.

This will probably take a gut check in each of us and a genuine change of behaviors, beliefs, and mindset. Change is not a collective decision; it begins with each individual embracing the spark of transformation. Mere words won't suffice; it's the commitment of each one of us that will pave the way for meaningful change. Let us recognize the power within ourselves to break the cycle of repetitive behavior and usher in a brighter future.

I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't encourage growth, but let's shift our perspective. It's not about mere numbers. It's about fostering vibrant communities. Growing for the sake of numbers alone is a shallow pursuit. Instead, let's channel our efforts into creating environments where individuals thrive, connections are meaningful, and our impact extends far beyond numerical metrics. Quality growth transforms not just the size but the substance of our organization, ensuring a richer and more fulfilling experience for everyone.

In our pursuit of success and progress, it's crucial to recognize that anything other than focusing on the health and stability of our clubs and incredible organization can be a distraction. While challenges and diversions may arise, our primary focus should remain on forward-moving behaviors like opening new clubs, bringing new members into existing clubs, retaining existing members, training, and communicating. Let's stay steadfast on that path, acknowledging that each step forward is a step away from distractions and toward our collective aspirations.

I am honored and humbled to serve as your Executive Director, and I am PROUD to be a Ruritan.

It's up to you now. Our future is in your hands.