According to President Buddy Cutler, this meeting was like six meetings in one! Rotarians met for a Spellerbration, scholarship awards, supporting literacy, fellowship, and finally lunch in the Keuka/Seneca Room at the Radisson Hotel Corning. Members and guests were eventually tracked down and greeted by Paula Smith while the Corning Rotary Band, including Dave Anderson, John Brown, Ted Goldwyn, Jim Hudson, and Rick Perry played a few jazzy selections. Paul Rossi gave a surprisingly poignant blessing, for which Crandall offered her congratulations. President Buddy Cutler presided.

MEMBERS AND GUESTS

President Buddy determined there was too much to do during this meeting to make guest introductions. However, since there was so much tracking down of guests accomplished by a determined Paula Smith, they will be introduced here.

Tony Spycher brought his wife Marianne. Pauline Emery’s guests were from the Winfield School, including Principal Jen Batzing, and teachers Karen Baker and Stacey Griffin. Deb Joseph brought visiting Rotarian and fellow Spelling Bee Committee member Benita Nesbitt. John Sirinani brought Melissa Colacino, John Brown brought his wife Margo, and Dick Pope brought his wife Jackie.

There were also several guests for the young man of the hour, Jairam Hathwar. Jairam’s entourage included his mother, Dr. Roopa Hathwar; his father, Dr. Jagadeesh Hathwar; his grandmother from India, Bhageerathi S. Hathwar; close family friend, Cyndy Adler; and classmates Virginia Ehemann, Benjamin Ehemann, Nikhil Lahiri, Ibraheem A. Cheema, Sarah Pambianchi, Ashleigh Woodcock, and Surav Amin.

Dr. Roopa had an entourage of her own from her office, including Bonita Carpenter, Julia Reilly Kaitlin Scouten, Diane Kelly, Jodi Swanson, Danielle Reed, Sarah Lazore, Dr. Jana Pulkrabek MD, and Dr. Peter Pulkrabek PhD.

Other guests in attendance to honor Jairam included Allison Hunt, District Director from Tom Reed’s office, as well as reporters from WENY, WETM, The Leader and the Star Gazette!

As for the scholarship recipients, Rebecca Seip brought her parents Bill and Sue Seip. Colin DeMeritt brought his mother Connie DeMeritt and grandmother Lana Mathers. Taylor Jubilee brought her folks Ivan and Krystal Jubilee. Jessica Currie brought her parents Tim and Jenny Currie, and Stephanie Li brought her folks Lifang and Jim Li.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melanie Moon called our attention to brochures on the tables highlighting YMCA summer session programs and inviting Rotarians to participate.
**President Buddy** announced a couple of opportunities for Rotarians to help raise money for Camp STAR. He and **Bill Boland** have been working with Watkins Glen on an event that will be held the weekend of June 30th. The details aren’t known yet, however, if you would like to be involved, you will need to take an online course to be able to work at Watkins Glen. He also announced a Golf Tournament to benefit Camp STAR on July 18 at Indian Hills. It’s $75 per person, or $300 for a foursome.

**PRESIDENT’S TIME**

Having too much to do during this meeting did not preclude our President from playing his games. Unfortunately, not all of his definitions took into account the presence of minors in the room!

**Dick Pope** was this week’s victim. Most every table voted against him, which worked out well for Rotarians’ wallets as he missed both words!

**THE PROGRAM**

Before the meeting began, **President Buddy** introduced the Winfield School guests and turned it over to **Nora Smith**, who invited Pauline and the Winfield School guests to the front of the room announcing we raised $4,800 for the literacy program! Nora then turned it over to the Winfield School guests to give us an update on the program.

Jen Batzing spoke first, thanking the Corning Rotary and the Literacy Committee for their commitment to the Winfield School students. She also shared some encouraging outcomes that Rotary’s commitment to literacy has produced at the Winfield School. Students track minutes read with a goal of reaching one million minutes. This year, Kindergarten students alone read 92,000 minutes. She also shared increases in fall to spring reading and math metrics to dining table drum rolls courtesy of Rotarians.

She then turned over the mic to Karen Baker and Stacey Griffin who spoke about a Superheroes-themed Scholastic Summer Reading program in which Kindergarteners will participate, made possible by Rotary donations. They also highlighted a special Celebration of Learning next Tuesday, June 21. Several Rotarians will be attending and presenting the students with their summer reading packets, which include a green tote, books, and a bookmark/timer so the students can continue to track their reading minutes.

**Spellerbration**

**President Buddy** then turned the floor over to Spelling Bee Co-chair **Dick Pope** to emcee the Spellerbration. **Dick** started with a history of the Spelling Bee, which started in 1925 in Louisville, KY, and Scripps took it over in 1941. There were no Bees during World War II. Co-champions have been declared in 1950, 1957, 1962, 2014, 2015, and 2016. There have been 95 winners including co-champions—48 girls and 47 boys. He also pointed out that the words have increased in difficulty over the years, taking a significant leap in difficulty in the 1980s.

**Dick** then turned over the mic to his Spelling Bee Co-chair **Deb Joseph**, who he credited with having done most of the work. Deb took the mic acknowledging the danger in contradicting **Dick**, and crediting her committee, especially Benita Nesbitt, for their hard work. **Deb** went on to thank a host of sponsors, including the Bath Rotary. She highlighted that we will be losing our strongest sponsor, Kraft Foods, and made a plea to Rotarians for thoughts on who might replace them. She also announced that the 2017 Spelling Bee will be held at Corning-Painted Post (C-PP) High School! Finally, she shared that Dr. Hathwar has volunteered her sons, Jairam and Sriram, who was co-champion of the 2014 Spelling Bee, to serve on the 2017 committee. She concluded by thanking Corning Rotary for their support.
Dick then introduced Allison Hunt, District Director for Tom Reed, who read a statement that Tom had presented to Jairam in Albany and that was entered into the Congressional record. She concluded by congratulating Jairam on his accomplishment and acknowledging the many politicians he has met since winning the Bee, but advised him not to become one!

Next, Dick introduced Corning Mayor and fellow Rotarian Rich Nigri. Mayor Nigri read Jairam a proclamation, which concluded with proclaiming June 16, 2016 Jairam Hathwar Day in the City of Corning, NY!

Dick then introduced Cyndy Adler, a former teacher in the C-PP school district, a dear friend to the Hathwar family, and Jairam’s official photographer! Cyndy accompanied the Hathwar family on Jairam’s journey pre and post Bee, recording many memorable moments with her camera. Her photos were compiled in a PowerPoint presentation that was running in a loop during the entire meeting. Cyndy spoke about the tremendous amount of support and sacrifice the family provided Jairam along this journey to help him reach his goal. She also thanked Rotary and the whole community for their support, and congratulated Jairam for his accomplishment.

Dr. Roopa Hathwar then spoke about how incredible it has been to have the support of the entire Southern Tier community for all these years during her sons’ challenges and successes. She recalled approaching Rotary in the summer of 2012 to sponsor the Bee and how Rotary stepped up to the plate and carried on the sponsorship allowing our children an opportunity to compete at the national level.

She then went on to give an accounting of the whirlwind tour her family has been on since the win, including interviews with ESPN, CNN, and NBC. On Live with Kelly, Jairam had a surprise video visit from his favorite golfer Jordan Speith, who invited Jairam to attend the Barclays PGA tournament in late August, which was the highlight of Jairam’s fame!

Jairam and his co-champion Nihar from Texas rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange, followed by more interviews. They flew to LA to attend the Jimmy Kimmel show. Last Wednesday they attended the Joint Congress address by the Indian Prime Minister who recognized the spelling bee champs, and yesterday they were in Albany where the Senate passed a resolution in recognition of Jairam’s win.

Dr. Hathwar thanked her offices, colleagues, Jairam’s teachers and classmates, the Rotary Club, Dr. Hari Sharma, Dick Pope, Deb Joseph, and the entire Spelling Bee committee for giving her family the opportunity and thanked everyone for coming.

Dick Pope then took the floor, recognizing John Pignatore for getting the seed money for Rotary to sponsor the Spelling Bee, and introduced Jairam’s grandmother, who is here from India. He also mentioned that the Hathwar’s are waiting to hear from the White House, where Sriram’s win brought his family a couple years ago.
Dick then invited Jairam to the front of the room, where he read a prepared speech saying, “Without you guys I would not be standing where I am today, and I would like to thank all of you for supporting me throughout my journey.” He enumerated the lessons he learned along the way, including a strong work ethic, perseverance, to take things as a challenge, to develop a competitive spirit while having fun; it builds confidence, and you even learn a couple words! He also encouraged others to compete for those reasons and pledged to help the Corning Rotary to continue supporting the Bee.

**Scholarship Awards**

**Paul Tick** introduced the first two scholarship recipients, beginning with Jessica Currie. Jessica will be pursuing a career in medicine at Hunter College. She currently works two jobs and volunteers at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and Corning Hospital.

**Scholarship Awards**

**Paul** then introduced the next scholarship recipient, Colin DeMeritt. Colin is an honor student at Corning Community College and also wants to pursue a career in medicine. He attended Watkins Glen High School where he was an Interact Student for four years and raised lots of money for various charities. He continues to be a mentor for students at Watkins Glen. He was a member and Past President of the National Honor Society and is an auxiliary member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Next **Gerry Wolfe** introduced Taylor Jubilee. Taylor has volunteered for many years at both Corning and Arnot Ogden Medical Center. Her volunteer activities also include volunteering at church, for the Wine Glass Marathon, and as a youth jumping coach. Taylor’s plans include majoring in Nursing at Stony Brook University, where she will also be on the track team.

**Scholarship Awards**

**Stephanie Li** was the next scholarship recipient **Gerry** introduced. Stephanie served as the Vice President of the Interact Club at C-PP High School. She has volunteered for the Wineglass Marathon, the Boy Scout food
drive, and at Guthrie Corning Hospital. She represented Corning Rotary in an adult spelling bee to promote literacy, and served as the team mascot at the Scripps National Spelling Bee regional competition. She was key to the success of Interact’s Valentine’s Day fundraiser. She plans to return to Corning to establish a local High School scholarship based on the promotion of community service. She will attend Washington University in St. Louis in the fall majoring in Biology with a focus in Pre-med.

Gerry next introduced scholarship recipient Rebecca Seip, President of the Interact Club. She has volunteers for the Wineglass Marathon, the Painted Post Food Pantry, a program in Special Education, the Salvation Army, and the American Cancer Society to name a few. Rebecca plans to study Political Science.

**TODAY’S WINNING TICKET**

**50/50** There was no raffle this week.

**Photos:** Rick Davis

**PS**