



ROTARY CLUB OF FONTHILL

WEEKLY MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, June 21st, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

Bob Eamer, Paul Snack, Troy Killick, Annie Holtby, Frank Adamson, Collins Acheampong, Ann Harrison, Bev North, Mike Taylor, Carolyn Mullins, Mel Groom, Lance Wiebe, Paula Racher, Mike Lethby.

1. **Welcome** to our Guest Speaker, Mike Lethby, Niagara Resource Service for Youth (RAFT).

2. **Land Acknowledgement. Paula**

We begin this gathering by acknowledging the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

O Canada was led by **Carolyn**

3. **Toast: Paul**

To the King and Canada, To the Office of the President of United States, and To the President of Rotary International, our very own Jennifer Jones for her last month!

4. **4-WAY TEST: Paul**

Of the things we think, say or do

Is it the truth?

Is it fair to all concerned?

Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Invocation: Paula

Service happens in laughter and friendship

Service happens in quiet conviction.

Service happens with firm intention

Service happens in growing kinship

to all humanity in attention.

to Service Above Self.

5. **President's Report, Correspondence and Announcements. Troy**

Troy. FarmFest last Saturday was an amazing event. **Paul.** It went well for Richard. He indicated that he'd be willing to do it again. **Troy.** Thanks beyond belief, Paul! Thanks to everyone in the Club: Paul at all the meetings, Mel and Mike at the gates, Bob Parking, Bev Social Media, etc. **Paul.** Thanks for all hard work. A lot you don't see is behind the scenes. Picking up the fences was a pain but it made a big difference. Niagara This Week and Cogeco were there. I did an interview. If anyone has pictures, I can pass onto the paper. The First Year is always tough. The feedback was quite positive. We have a good connection with Mike Chechak. It was a good connect for his farm and for Richard's farm. Lots of fun! **Ann.** From the ticket sales, it doesn't give you the real picture. **Paul.** We had 250 patrons, 20 Crossley volunteers, 40 booths and 'day of' sales. We have to improve the ticket sales. **Bob.** The White Meadows store did well.

Troy. We presented the \$1500 cheque to Therapy Paws of Canada for the tent for their therapydogs. Pass the Torch Evening is June 28th, 6-8 pm at Wellspring. You need to register!

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Today's Presentation is by Mike Lethby, Executive Director of Niagara Resource Service for Youth (The RAFT) Introduction by Ann. Welcome Mike! Both Mike Taylor and I have known Mike Lethby for years. With his degree in Political Science and History as background, Mike has been involved in not for profit agencies – especially Youth Homelessness. Youth Reconnect, Housing 1st for Youth and Fresh Paint that helped youth develop skills were some of his other initiatives.

Mike Lethby: RAFT serves the entire Niagara Region. Since the early 2000's, it's offered shelter and grew to 22 beds. The problem around homelessness got worse. We were looking for solutions for homelessness. In 2007-08, we started Reconnect. We found that when kids had been in school and then **faced with homelessness, the choice was dropping out** and moving to the city of St Catharines. Homeless kids are **vulnerable to exploitation** both criminal and sexual. These kids are valuable to those doing human trafficking. We felt that schools were better places where kids could be helped. Schools help to identify students.

Where are we now? Youth Connect! We went from a high of 500 coming through the doors in 2005 to where we are today with 140. Still, it was a group of 30%. We looked around and found progress! Shelter Diversion! **A structured interview** occurred - people could ID other housing possibilities other than shelter! **Cambridge had the program** and Niagara was able to learn from them. **People who DO require shelter got the service.**

When Covid hit, it changed the landscape of services. I'm proud of our staff and management. Staff showed up to do work and we had improved results during Covid. **Shelter Diversion** could track a lot of factors after 2 years and we were able to divert 40%. Breaking it down gave us **some insight** as to where a youth was a month ago, a week ago, last night. How they arrived at diversion? Ask the question – What were the circumstances before you required Shelter? We'd get two groups. 1st Group was attached still to friends or family – still in community. 2nd Group was largely living on the street in destructive housing. If we're looking at **Group 1, we are able to divert 5 out of 6 youth to appropriate housing. If we're looking at Group 2, only 1 out of 5 youth were diverted in that group.**

There are lots of anecdotal stories about racism, etc. Addiction, in itself, doesn't create homelessness. The number of Canadian addictions sits at 6%. Affordable housing won't impact homelessness if there's zero wealth. It comes down to human connections and attachments for some reason. One group can't access this human connection. **30-40% has had the experience of Foster Care. At their 18th Birthday, it's**

the end of their support. Often they'd go to welfare. There were no actual attachments – the main people were the staff.

We know everyone has friends and family as community. It just may take time to get back to it. WE make it OK for them to reach out. **It's better to live with a family member than in a shelter.** RAFT can support them with transportation, etc. 60-80% is exiting into housing. The largest provider of affordable housing is family and friends. They account for 70-80%. Take those off the table and you have 20% needing services.

Troy. I like that you're being proactive. Have you seen it work elsewhere? **Mike.** We learned some from Cambridge. We worked to create our own that worked for Niagara. **Carolyn. What about your funding?** **Mike.** The Homeless money comes from the Niagara Region and the Province. For innovative work, the Federal Government supplements the Common Good. We also receive from Rotary Clubs, Foundations like Branscombe and Private Donors.

Paul. How many kids in a year? How old are they? **Mike.** 90-110 through the Shelter, 200 through Reconnect and 50 in other programs. 10-224 is our core group. 400-600 youth are here in a year's span. In community, it runs from 1 to 19 years old and we had 50.

Lance. Obviously youth is susceptible to gangs. **Mike.** We work with Niagara Regional Police. We have had gangs trying to infiltrate. Since reducing our numbers in the Shelter, the Youth are no longer a good target. Before seeing the reduction, we did have significant numbers targeted.

Ann. I started working with RAFT in the early 2000's. If a kid had a problem, I'd bring him/her to the shelter in the city. That changed when workers came into the schools. The Home Depot really took RAFT into the projects they supported. The Orange Door at Home Depot gives all its money to RAFT.

Bob. What's the difference between Niagara Life and RAFT? **Mike.** The most difference is in the development. All agencies started off as city-based. Then there was an evolution along with Niagara. It's a political place to be.

Troy. Thanks Mike. I looked at your website earlier. You do a great job. We make a donation to our local Library – Lincoln Pelham Library – as a thank you to our presenters.

6. Rotary Moment and Happy Loonies.

Mike. I'm a close collaborator and friend of Mike's. A drop in centre was the start of RAFT. The Niagara Region communities serve as partners, Thank you, Mike, for the work!

Lance. A very good presentation! Kudos to Paul and FarmFest!

Frank. Thanks for presentation, Mike. What a great Farm Fest day! I wish my grandson could have been there for it! Don't forget to register for the changeover! I went to the Welland Turnover last night!

Collins. Thank you to Paul. It's good to be there with kids. My phone is full of photos! **To Mike** – Can you share information? I'd like to know details of your research! **Mike.** Sure, I'll get your contact information.

Bev. Great meeting to attend! If you're not in that particular arena, it's good to hear. Fabulous FarmFest!

Annie. Thanks, Mike. Always appreciate the update.

Carolyn. Thanks for the update, Mike. FarmFest was great! I feel that I've hugged the world after the Crossley reunion! Huge thank you to Collins for volunteering to be President Elect!

Mel. I saw Mike last night at United Way. Don't forget to update your Smart Serve if it's past its expiry date. Date would be on card.

Troy. We're inducting one new member on the same evening as the Changeover.

I'm excited about the changeover.

Paula. Thanks Mike. It's my Dad's 90th birthday in Brantford so we won't be at Changeover.

Paul. Service and caring in Rotary is similar to Big Brothers Big Sisters philosophy. Thank you, Mike.

Mike. Happy that all made it through Covid and doubling efforts!

Ann. FarmFest was great! Crossley Reunion – it was great to touch base. Thanks to Janet and Carolyn!
I can't speak highly enough of RAFT!

Next Meetings/Events:

June 28th Pass the Torch Evening at Wellspring in the Rotary Room. Please sign up by Monday, June 26th on Clubrunner.

July 1. Canada Day Rotary Kids at Harold Black Park 230-7 pm. We could use help setting up at 130.

July 5. No Meeting.

July 12. Weekly Meeting. Speaker Kristin Caniff.

July 13. Fonthill Bandshell Summerfest Concert - we're sponsoring. Elvis!

July 15. Volunteering at the Summerfest. Check your Smart Serve Expiry and update. Club pays the fee.

July 19. No Meeting

July 26. Board Meeting. Concession area MCC.