



THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025 YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

*The Magic
Of Rotary*

LONNIE GIENGER

MULTIFAMILY INVESTING, BUILDING A LEGACY OF HARMONY & PEACE



Lonnie Gienger is a seasoned entrepreneur, multigenerational family leader, and CEO of Wilkinson. In 2004, he partnered with his lifelong friend, Russ Wilkinson, to guide the strategic growth of what has become one of the nation's top multifamily investment firms, known for its industry-leading returns and positive impact.

Professional Experience - He facilitated the acquisition of Good Neighbor Care Centers, serving as Chairman and later CEO. Under his leadership, the company grew to 52 locations nationwide and more than 2,000 employees by 2007. For three generations, the Gienger and Wilkinson families have partnered in various ventures, deepening their shared values and relationships. Today, the next generation of both families continues to own businesses and invest together, strengthening their bonds while creating lasting impact.

Leading Families - Lonnie is passionate about developing leaders and building organizations that foster long-term, multigenerational success. He believes business is one of the most powerful platforms for building a better world. For more than 25 years, he has co-founded and chaired two leadership development firms, coaching and training thousands of executives globally. He also mentors high-net-worth families and family offices, helping them build holistic, thriving legacies.

FOR THURSDAY'S MEETING

Greeters – Clark Permann, Dave Heintl
Inspiration – Anthony Peterson
Sergeant-at-Arms – John Cooper
Attendance – Nicole Franson

FUTURE PROGRAMS

April 10th – Adam Ratliff, Snake River Dams
April 17th – JD Bewley, The Franchise: Golden Opportunity,
Family Legacy & The McDonald's Journey
April 24th – Best-Selling Author Robert Dugoni

YOU'RE INVITED TO DINNER!



Scholarship Dinners are just around the corner starting Thursday, May 1st and going through Saturday, May 10th. For our newest Rotarians, members volunteer to host a dinner at their home for other Rotarians. They are a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow members in a relaxed, informal setting; all while enjoying a delicious meal together. Plus, the best part is you'll be supporting a great cause at the same time – our Academic & Vocational Scholarship programs.

The cost is \$125 per member and includes your spouse, significant other, or guest. All members are charged whether or not they attend. There is no cost if you host a dinner. Check your calendars and pick your date(s) today!

HAPPY ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Melissa Brewer
Yvette Inzunza
Brent Elkin



100 JOBS FOR 100 KIDS

Yakima Rotary has been a part of the 100 Jobs for 100 Kids summer youth employment program for the past 19 years. The program was created to help kids in our community get that first summer job. It became an example for other communities and was nationally recognized in 2015. Rotarians have been involved by providing jobs, financial pledges to help fund a job and volunteering at an Annual Job Fair which this year is set for April 30 from 11am to 5pm at the Henry Beauchamp Community Center. Volunteers will teach students how to complete a job application, participate in a mock interview, learn how to be a valuable employee, and help serve lunch. (President Jim has already signed up to be on the grill). Each job is a 4-week part-time position of 20 hours at a cost of \$1,340. Rotary is sponsoring 2 jobs. They are looking for businesses willing to hire a youth and donations of any amount that can be bundled together to sponsor a job at a local nonprofit.

A link to sign-up was sent to you by Adrienne Garner last Tuesday. You can pick your task, your donation amount, and volunteer shift from 1 to 2 hours. Together we can create a positive impact for kids in our community and change the life of a young person.

REVIEW

Our Rotary day started with the greeting team of Celina Sanchez and Andi Hochleutner. With the ring of the bell, President Jim invited Russ Wilkinson to come up for our moment of inspiration and the power of partnerships. Spring has officially begun; it was only appropriate that President Jim recognized the Mariners opening day, the sounds of lawn mowers in our neighborhoods, and tennis. Member recognitions included Charlie Robin, Felix Rifa, Brent Elkins and Amanda Ryder for attending the Rotary Leadership Institute last Saturday; along with Anthony Peterson, Shawna Masters, Ricky Adams, Alyssa Ford for being recognized by the Yakima Herald as part of their annual 39 Under 39. We are incredibly lucky to have them in our community and club. Sign-ups for hosts and attendees are underway for our Scholarship Dinners. The dates are May 1st-10th. Brad Hansen followed with sergeant-at-arms. He had double duty as he also introduced Chelsea Severn as our program speaker to talk about the White Pass Foundation.

How did the Foundation start? Chelsea's husband David grew up in Yakima. They moved back here during Covid. His grandfather told him, when you know you are in your place lay down roots and give back to your community. With a love of all things outdoors and sports and memories of taking a ski bus up to the mountains, David wanted other kids to have that same opportunity. He was going to get it going – Chelsea was going to run it.

According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 7 kids aged 10 to 19 years old will suffer or experience some type of mental disorder that includes depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues. There is one remedy that is easily available – NATURE. According to NatureBridge there are 5 top benefits that nature provides (1) reduces stress (2) improves concentration (3) enhances learning (4) cultivates joy and (5) creates stewardship. It also improves thinking, reasoning, and other mental abilities. Being outside, breathing fresh air provides clarity that we have still not seemed to find since the pandemic.

The White Pass Foundation teaches skiing. They provide kids from our local area that don't have the opportunity to go up to the mountain to learn to ski over a 4-week period. It is also so much more than that. The kids that participate are learning responsibility. They have to bring their own gear; if they forget they don't ski. They learn respect; respect for themselves, respect for those around them, and respect for those working with them. Each week there is a theme that they have to follow. Teachers talk about how the responsibility for carrying gear correlates to responsibility in life. They encourage them to improve grades and to help each other. Every ski hill has a skier's responsibility code. In this day and age, kids give up really easily. They are taught to respect the process;

that you can do hard things; you just need to get over that first hump. They teach about camaraderie; and they teach how to make snow angels.

Who are they serving? All Yakima area middle schools, Naches Middle School, East Valley Middle School and White Pass School in Morton. According to the State of Washington, the Yakima area has the highest level of poverty in the state. The students they serve don't have the means to be able to come up to the mountain. When they hold parent information nights, they always ask how many have ever been to White Pass. The response is 10% or lower. They are trying to give them, for that short 4-week period, some security and fun. How do they organize it? Chelsea is a certified ski instructor and has a master's in teaching. She combines those two to teach the fundamentals of skiing and the fundamentals to create a better life. She creates lessons based on what PSIA encourages to make a sound skier and incorporates pillars of characters. Each week they progress in an organized way. What about impact? Three years ago, they started with 60 students. This year they served 130 students. The schools they serve have seen a positive impact on grades, attitude and friendships. The Naches Middle School principal has seen kids participating in the program who previously never interacted, now acknowledge each other, say hi, and eat lunch together.

How can we help? They need volunteers to help teach at White Pass on Wednesdays and Fridays. There is nothing else like seeing their eyes, the first time they see Great White ski lift, and as they learn and make it down. Everything they need is provided at no cost. The ski clothes are donated. The White Pass rental shop provides free skis, boots and helmets. The Foundation helps schools with transportation. They need financial support and help getting the word out about what they do.

What is next? They would love to expand to other schools. They have had others reach out and ask; they need to find more days to do it. They are working to strengthen relationships with other organizations, making it more than just the ski season. The Yakima Mile has reached out to ask if the kids would be willing to participate in the run with the proceeds going to the White Pass Foundation. It is all about getting kids away from the bad places they could go. Middle schools were chosen because the ages of 11-13 are when a child is most likely to have declining grades, to be introduced to drinking and drugs, and start gang involvement. If one child turns away from the bad, it is a success. It takes a village to raise a child. Yakima is a village; these kids are our kids. Their goal is to make sure they are surrounded by our village so they can teach them to do hard things and dream bigger.



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