



THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2024  
YAKIMA VALLEY COLLEGE CONFERENCE CENTER

*The Magic  
Of Rotary*

ASHER & SHAWN NILES  
MASTERCHEF JUNIOR



Asher Niles has been cooking since he was 2 years old. You can watch videos of him as a toddler cooking up delicious eats and explaining - with necessary subtitles - the food that he is preparing! When he was old enough to realize that his dad, Shawn Niles was on MasterChef, he made up his mind that he wanted to be on MasterChef as well one day!

From 2 years old until 8 years old, he was in the kitchen as much as he possibly could be, learning skills, trying out new ideas, and falling more and more in love with food. When a fellow MasterChef friend reached out and asked if Asher had applied for the upcoming season of MasterChef Junior, Shawn and Asher rushed to get their application in. MasterChef Junior immediately called and said, “we want to make this happen.” After following the typical application protocol, Asher finally got word that he would be traveling to Los Angeles for final cuts, and while there he found out that he would be part of the final cast for season 9.

During the filming, he continually made it through each challenge, very rarely receiving negative feedback. In fact, after winning episode 2 with his Thai Halibut Curry, Gordon Ramsay called him a genius in the kitchen! Daphne Oz would later make the same comment after trying his roasted marshmallow ice cream. While Asher finished 4th place, he was extremely proud of his accomplishments as the second youngest contestant on the show.



Shawn Niles is the founder and executive chef of The Fat Pastor, a culinary business that includes a fine dining and competition club called, Bite Club; a free business and culinary school called Urban Kitchen for underserved Yakima Youth; catering; culinary production centered on the Yakima Valley; and a newly launched spice line call “Flavor Ain’t Fair.” As a career pastor, Shawn never foresaw venturing into the culinary world. His experience on season 8 of MasterChef with Gordon Ramsay telling him he was born to cook inspired him to take a chance and Fat Pastor was born. After a few years of trying to juggle full-time pastoring with full-time cooking, he knew he would be able to make a greater difference choosing full-time in the culinary industry. He’s had the opportunity to cook across America, on Netflix shows, and most recently in New York in The Hamptons.

This Thursday, Asher and Shawn will bring their culinary skills to us as our caterers and share their experiences participating in MasterChef. When Asher isn’t busy being a kid and trying out lots of other hobbies and Shawn isn’t spending time with family and building on making a difference in the underserved community through the culinary arts, you can catch them cooking together, promoting Yakima, and preparing for an upcoming day at the Fair labeled “Fat Equals Flavor at The Fair.”

**FOR THURSDAY’S MEETING**

Greeters – Alex Ditto, Clark Permann  
Inspiration – Sharon Miracle  
Sergeant-at-Arms – Bob Romero  
Program – Jennifer Bliesner

**FUTURE PROGRAMS**

July 23rd – Yakima Rotary Trust All Club Celebration  
July 25th – No Meeting  
August 1st – Judge Ruth Reukauf  
August 8th – Don Carrell, Kwik Lok

2024-25 ROTARY INTERNATIONAL THEME



Rotary International President Stephanie Urchick chose the theme of The Magic of Rotary as a way to celebrate the magic of Rotary. While it isn't possible to end polio or bring peace to the world by waving a wand, we as Rotarians can create magic with every project completed, every dollar donated, and every new member of Rotary.

YAKIMA ROTARACT'S FOURTH ANNUAL

# CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

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FIRST DRINK FREE!

AUGUST 4 @ 1 PM

HOSTED AT **BALE BREAKER** BREWING COMPANY

Rotaract Yakima

REVIEW

It's amazing how this club transitions so seamlessly with leadership changes. With last Thursday falling on the Fourth of July, this week was a celebration of a new Rotary year with President Jim DeGrasse. Three past presidents; Erin Black, Doug Rich and Kurt Labberton helped make it a great day. Music and Sergeant-at-Arms were fused into one as Past President Doug, aka Wayne Campbell, served as host of Name that Tune with songs all about President Jim. Past President Kurt Labberton followed with words of wisdom from culturally great thinkers that included, "someone is sitting in shade today because someone else planted a tree a long time ago", "the afternoon knows what the morning never suspected", and "if you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else." Past President Erin welcomed our guests, thanked the Board for serving as greeters, and officially handed off the gavel to President Jim.

With two standing ovations (one at the beginning and one at the end) President Jim (Jimmy, James, JDawg) shared his growing up journey, his business journey, his Rotary journey, and his family. There was laughter, love, and, from more than one of us, teary eyes. He began with things he loves; coffee and peanut M&Ms, tennis, biking, skiing, home remodeling, F1 Racing, cars, music, and Rotary!

President Jim was born and raised in Yakima. Growing up he rode his bike everywhere, helped his brother on his paper route, played pinball at the Skookum Bowling Alley, played piano, and roller skated. He always thought he would be a chemical engineer. His first classes at University of Washington changed his mind; after the first day his major changed to Finance. He was 33 years old when he married Dawn, was 35 when their first daughter Maddie was born, and 37 when their second daughter Jackie was born. He didn't start playing tennis (a sport he loves) until he was in his 40's.

His grandfather, Merch started the family business, Triangle Auto Supply, in 1921. Along the way they grew and expanded. They were highlighted at the Central Washington Fairgrounds with cars that included an electric car. Locations in Ellensburg and Sunnyside were purchased in the 1930's. By the 1950's, new ideas brought new buildings and in the 1970's, his dad began selling imported car parts- no one else was doing it. His dad was the first person in a parts store in Yakima to buy a computer. In the 1980's they expanded with a store in Kennewick and Spokane. Jim and his brother Todd purchased the business from their parents in 2003. In 2021 at exactly 100 years old and three generations later, they had an opportunity to sell the business and did.

President Jim is a third generation Yakima Rotarian. Over the 20 years of membership, he has participated in service projects both internationally and locally. He traveled to Morelia, Mexico to help build a school cafeteria, he traveled to Belize to help build a women's workshop in partnership with Heritage University and traveled to Honduras to construct a treehouse as part of a therapeutic center for kids in Trujillo. He's had the privilege to work on many community projects including the Gateway Sports Complex, Welcome to Yakima

sign, 2 Habitat Houses, installing pavers at Camp Prime Time, building Rotary playgrounds at Franklin, Randall, the Greenway and MLK Jr. Park, and helping lay 85 pallets of pavers at the Rotary Marketplace. If you add up the value, the amount that this club has accomplished is unbelievable. It doesn't even include the scholarships we award to students in our community.

As our President, he comes with an open door to hear and listen. He encouraged us to come to Rotary and just for an hour to leave the craziness of the world and judgment outside, and come with curiosity, to learn, enjoy and engage. There are lots of buzzwords for Rotary. He added six more; grace, blessings, compassion, understanding, learning, and love. He also shared a word that describes himself: grateful - grateful to be here and grateful for his family, tennis friends, and fellow Rotarians. He is excited for the year with great programs led by Kelly Gasseling, Brad Hansen and Jordan Matson; the addition of new membership types; and the auction in November being chaired by Quinn Dalan, Mike Hummel and Mike Norton. He encouraged new members to get involved, not be afraid, and take a risk. And encouraged each of us to share the same joy and happiness he's found in Rotary. The focus should not be on how many numbers we have but on the guests who visit every week. He highlighted the addition of women to Rotary over 30 years ago. Last year between all three Yakima clubs and the Trust we had 8 amazing women leading us and inspiring others.

He recognized the women in his life. His mom has been a part of Rotary for 63 years. His wife Dawn is his hero. She makes a difference in children's lives as a public-school teacher. While Rotary is Jim's way of giving back, Dawn does give back every day! He is incredibly proud of his daughters. A few weekends ago, Jackie graduated from CWU with her education degree. Maddie followed with her doctorate degree from UW. There are 8 billion people on this planet - he was born and raised in Yakima. He won the human lottery!

It has been amazing journey. He ended with a line from Dr. Place who we just lost. "There is a great deal of pleasure in life by being able to make someone else's life better" - that's the Magic of Rotary.



Jim's 1st Meeting - Family



Board Greeters





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