



THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

*Unite For
Good*

A CELEBRATION OF PRESIDENT SHERI BISSELL



One year ago, on July 1, 2025, Sheri Bissell became the 107th president of Yakima Rotary. She started that first meeting wearing a Rotary #107 jersey; it was the perfect kickoff of her theme for the year of TEAM ROTARY. The room was full of friends, family, and Rotarians there to welcome her into her new role. Her message that day was one of team and that every Thursday was game time, a time to make a difference, and to Unite for Good all with a focus on increased impact, membership, engagement, and an ability to adapt.

The Program Committee impacted with outstanding speakers every week. We continued our celebrations of Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, and Black History month with Jackie Cruz, Kip Ramsey, and Jennifer King. They were remarkable with a reach that extended outside Rotary to our community, local high school students, Heritage University and Central Washington University. Other amazing program featured 9/11 survivor Lt. Col. Ryan Yantis, Christian Conners to share the story of Houdini Was, Drs. Mike Mittelman and Chris Gilmer to talk about PNWU and Heritage University, Yakima Police K9 Officers, Cam Foster sharing the path to becoming an NFL Agent, Southwest Rotarian Jeff Scott taking about Destigmatizing Mental Health, Rikki Cooper with an update on White Pass Ski Area, a panel discussion on the coming of a new Medical Detox Unit to our community, and a program run completely by our new members. It was important to President Sheri that there was something for everyone.

Membership included an outstanding class of 23 new members introduced – they are an amazing group! Membership expanded to new experiences in how our meetings were run. It started with music and songs of the day chosen by our own members highlighting that person and why they selected their song. It was a fun way to learn about each other. Sergeant-at-arms changed from time to time with Happy Bucks as a way to share something good happening. The vibe every week was the best!

Engagement came through opportunities for fun and service. The Social Committee organized Second Chance Socials and early morning Rotary Roasters. We traveled to Tavolo, Westwood Golf Club, Second Street Grill, Single Hill Brewery and Bale Breakers. Our annual Rotary picnic took place at Cowiche Creek Brewery. The annual holiday party was full of Bingo fun. There was Rotary Ski Day, Fireside Dinners, Rotary Bunco Night, and the weekly Card Draw that came down to only 2 cards left in the deck before we had a lucky winner. Community service included the tradition of providing backpacks full of school supplies to one school. President Sheri chose her alma mater McClure Elementary; 570 students received new backpacks along with a special supply kit for every teacher. Handing them out to the kids on the first day of school was pure joy. We awarded 18 Academic and 24 Vocational scholarships to local students. We served through Rotarians at “Work” Day, clean-up day at the Yakima Little League Baseball Fields, and collected 85,800 pounds of food for Rotary Operation Harvest and received over \$90,000 in cash donations for the nine local food banks we serve. We supported Jobs for Youth with the funding for 4 summer jobs for kids in our community and awarded \$30,000 in grants. Behind the scenes we adapted as needed, effortlessly. Our team members showed up, gave 100%, and made a difference.

President Sheri shared time after time that there was no place we'd rather be than Thursday at Rotary. She was right! She brought joy, shared her heart, and left us every week with a play of the day to take with us. We are thankful that she said yes when asked to serve - it has been an extraordinary year!

FOR THURSDAY'S MEETING

Greeters – Past Presidents
Music – Doug Rich
Inspiration – Jennifer Bliesner
Sergeant-at-Arms – Kellie Connaughton & Erin Black

FUTURE PROGRAMS

July 2nd – No Meeting – Happy Fourth of July
July 9th – President John Cooper
July 14th – Rotary Trust All Club Celebration
July 16th – No Meeting

LAST SECOND CHANCE SOCIAL



Our final Second Chance Social of the Rotary year will be this Wednesday, June 24th from 5:00 – 6:30pm at Oak Creek Brewstillery in Naches located at 10160 S. Naches Road. Our speaker from last week's meeting is waiving all the tasting fees so you can experience their small batch selection of vodka, gin and whiskey. Rotary will pick up the appetizers; all other drinks are on you. Good company is included at no extra charge.

Let's send off the Rotary year in style with great conversation, tasty bites, and a toast (or two) to another successful year.

PICTURES FROM ROTARY



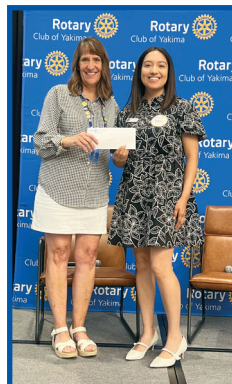
Carolyn Flory, honorary member Cely Zuniga & President Sheri Bissell



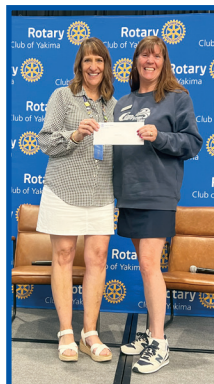
Nicole Donegan & Program Speaker James Love



President Sheri & Officers Gonzo Deloza & Jorge Quinones



President Sheri & Evelyn Delgado from Yakima Valley Museum



President Sheri & Camp Prime Time Executive Director Margaret Filkins

REVIEW

Songs of the day have been one of the best things we do at every meeting. With last week being the final program with President Sheri in charge, it seemed only fitting to have two songs, one at the beginning and one at the end. Kurt Labberton started off with S'Wonderful by Diana Krall. For Kurt, it brought back on of his favorite Rotary moments at his final meeting as club president. He played the song as the theme for the end of an ideal day. Celisa inspirational message came from a Ted Talk that her daughter and friends asked their parents for life advice. Celisa told them to choose friendships, family, neighbors, and colleagues; courage over fear; integrity; joy; and never underestimate the impact that one person can have on the people around them. So good! Blue badges were handed out to Esther Magasis, Randy Bonds, and Megan Nobbs; each of them completed their Rotary Education requirements. Jim Berg handled sergeant-at-arms duties with a quiz about one of President Sheri's favorite things – football.

Allocation and Review Committee Chair Dan Sullivan came to the podium to present the final three grant checks of the year. The Yakima Police Department received a grant of \$911 to complete a Law Enforcement Memorial Garden designed to create a permanent, dignified and peaceful place for reflection, healing and remembrance. The Yakima Valley Museum was awarded \$2,000 to fund a new WWII Legacy Project exhibit centered on the wartime experience of individuals across the Yakima Valley. The final check was presented to Camp Prime Time in the amount of \$3,000 for replacement of mattresses at camp serving families with children who are seriously or terminally ill or have disabilities. With an annual budget of \$30,000, the Committee went slightly over. President Sheri picked up the difference with her president's fund and from our effort to raise money the other day for a summer job through the Jobs for Youth program, added enough money from her fund to provide two jobs.

The next presentation came as a complete surprise to one person in the room, Aracely (Cely) Zuniga as Carolyn Flory introduced her as our newest honorary member. That's all it took for a standing ovation. Cely was born in California and raised in Toppenish. After graduating from Toppenish High School, she went on to Wenatchee Community College where she played basketball and graduated with her AA in Arts. She became a firefighter for WFS Environmental fighting fires around the Pacific Northwest and began working at the Yakima Convention Center in 2012. Most of the Center's clients know her by name, request her to work their events, and leave her 5-star reviews. Rotary has always been #1 for her. She goes above and beyond by putting out flyers on our tables, selling board squares and card draw tickets, troubleshooting computer problems, and always saying yes to last-minute changes. When not at work she spends time with her long-time boyfriend Seth, her family (who adores her), and plays rec soccer and golf. She is punctual, hardworking, and truly exemplifies "Service Above Self." She is one of the best things every Thursday – we are so happy to have her as part of Team Rotary!

Dana Eliason had the honor of introducing Nicole Donegan and our program speaker, James Love who sat down together to share an interview style

presentation on Oak Creek Brewstillery where James contributes to team development, operations, guest experience, events, marketing, and continued growth of the business. Here are some of the questions and answers we heard.

Let's start with Bron Yr Aur. Mike and Annette Hatton founded Bron Yr Aur. Mike was in the fruit industry and Annette worked in insurance. Long time residence of the Naches area they drove by the Bron Yr Aur building all the time; it was operating as a deli, ice cream, fruit stand, and wine tasting venue. When it came up for sale, they purchased it; after a year they realized that the business model wasn't very profitable. Mike had been home brewing for about 20 years. They constructed the back of the building, purchased the equipment to make large batches of beer, and started making pizza. Wanting to make sour beer, they purchased the old RJ's Tire in Naches. It was pre-Covid and sour beers were a big thing – thus the name Brewstillery. The demand for sour beers began to pull back; they began to focus on whiskey, gin, and vodka. They started with whiskey. Because it was Covid, they worked on the building as funds became available. They opened on Labor Day in September of last year.

Today they are on their third-generation whiskey. Their first three-year cask strength batch sold out in 6 weeks. The second batch was a blend. In addition to their whiskey, they have two gins – floral pine juniper berry blend and a citrus blend, and three vodkas - straight vodka, blackberry vodka, black pepper vodka, and a fourth, hazelnut espresso vodka waiting for state approval. They let their vodka sit in tanks with real blackberries and black pepper; and make all their syrups in house.

All their spirits are premium. Some of the drinks they are working on now include an original margarita and prohibition drinks. As a team they make drinks to test – it can take a lot of bad ones to make a find a good one. Their menu comes with elevated pub food that is good for the soul.

Why did James get involved? After a career in corporate he thought it might be fun to own a restaurant and bar. He knew he needed experience to find out if it was something that he really wanted to do. He saw profile about Oak Creek, went to website, made the journey there, and felt it was a place that he could call home. Their hours of operation are Wednesday and Thursday from 3pm to 8pm with trivia on Thursday; Friday from noon to 9pm; Saturday from 10am to 9pm and Sunday 10am to 6pm. Brunch is served from 10am to 2pm on Saturday and Sunday. They serve beer from Bron Yr Aur and have showings of cider and wine. What are they experimenting on now – rye whiskey and moonshine. The best part of the conversation was a Second Chance Social on Wednesday to see what they are all about in person.

The program ended with our second song of the day from Karen Ireland. Her song was Help from the Beatles. It was the perfect song for how she feels about Rotary. Karen found herself getting down on Yakima as part of the coroner's office. She met Rotarians who were "normal" people and believed in helping others. They HELPED her see Yakima in a better light.