



THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025 YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

*The Magic
Of Rotary*

CHELSEA SEVERN WHITE PASS FOUNDATION



Chelsea Severn was raised in the snow globe that is Park City, UT. While growing up detached from the real world she enjoyed all things outdoors and found a great love for alpine ski racing. She attended the University of Utah on a full track scholarship. She began teaching and coaching skiing in high school and continued to do so off and on throughout college (don't tell her college coaches!) She continued coaching after college while struggling in the post-recession journalism world when she started coaching track and field and realized her true passion lay in helping others grow - especially children.

She gained her Master of Arts in Teaching - Secondary Education from Westminster College. In 2013 she moved to NYC with her husband, David Severn where she coached for Columbia University and tutored for an immigrant and refugee nonprofit called the Open Door NY and also started their family that now consists of three amazing children. After five years in the city, Chelsea and her family made their way back west with a short stop in Spokane where she was the sprint coach for Gonzaga University for two years before landing here in Yakima - her husband's hometown.

FOR THURSDAY'S MEETING

Greeters – Celina Sanchez, Andi Hochleutner
Inspiration – Russ Wilkinson
Sergeant-at-Arms – Brad Hansen
Program – Brad Hanson
Attendance – Alex Ditto

FUTURE PROGRAMS

April 3rd – Lonnie Gienger, Multifamily Investing, Building
a Legacy of Harmony & Peace
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



PODCAST

Insightful Interviews
Magazine Audio
Immersive Stories
News Roundup

Tune in to hear stories that include
“Where no TikToker has Gone Before”
with Rotarian and astronaut Samantha
Cristoforetti; “Chicago Chefs Cook” with
chefs Tony Priolo and Sarah Stegner; and
Reasons to be Cheerful” with David Byrne;
Backyard Bird Chronicles with writer Amy
Tan; and many more.

PROPOSED NEW MEMBER

Unless written objection is received by the Board of Directors by Monday, March 31, 2025, the following candidate will be elected to membership:

Tressa Mercy

Lead Commercial Relationship Manager

Wells Fargo Bank

Classification: Banking

Proposed by: Erin Black

Endorsed by: Bob Price

SECOND CHANCE SOCIAL - WEDNESDAY



HOP on board for this month's Second Chance Social this Wednesday, March 26th from 5pm to

6pm at Bale Breaker Brewing Company where they don't just make their beer...they grow it too. Enjoy a relaxed, fun atmosphere with the best of company, sample their amazing beverage menu (on you), and snack on a charcuterie board and egg rolls provided by Rotary.

REVIEW

President Jim has the best "Welcome to Rotary" opening to our meetings. A special thank you to everyone who makes our meetings a success. Liz Hobson and Larry Hull served as our greeters. Sy Ruiz shared a wonderful moment of inspiration that included words of wisdom from his grandmother and the impact made possible through service to others. President Jim recognized Sharri Greene for being one of Berkshire Hathaway's top 3 sellers and Bruce Heiser for the most bell ringing volunteer hours for Rotary Bell Ringing this past holiday season. He also announced that Dozer Days is looking for volunteers on April 5th-6th.

Paul Larson introduced our newest member and his law partner and boss, Ryan Griffiee. Born in Seattle, Ryan is the youngest of five children. He attended Highline High School, the University of Washington, and received his juris doctorate and MBA from Pepperdine University. He and his wife moved to Yakima in October 2011; together they have three amazing kids. He has been very involved in the Bar Association taking on many leadership roles and has been involved in the Fresh Hop Festival for many years. His hobbies include playing chess, word games, and golf. Congratulations on joining Rotary!

Interact is an extension of Rotary and the ideas of leadership and service for high school students. As a club we sponsor two Interact clubs at Davis and Eisenhower high schools. They not only partner with us on our service projects (Operation Harvest & auction) but they plan and organize their own service projects. Interactors Brianna Camacho (Davis), Alexandra Campos (Ike) and Eric Parkinson (Ike) were our guests to share what they have been doing this year. The most impressive for both were their pantries created to provide students with no questions asked, with basic necessities such as food, hygiene products, clothes and school supplies for students no questions asked. They did a great job; President Jim surprised each with a \$1,000 donation to purchase additional items. Drew Harris followed with an announcement of dates for this year's Scholarship Dinners as May 1st-10th. Hosts are being recruited with sign-ups for attendees coming soon. Mike Hummel wrapped up Rotary business with sergeant-at-arms that included a clip of the famous Edgar Martinez game winning double that drove in Ken Griffey Jr for the Mariners first ALCS appearance.

Our featured speaker was one of our own, Monsignor John Ecker. There are moments in life when you get to meet and hear from a truly remarkable individual. This was one of those times. As a fellow Rotarian, Monsignor shared a glimpse of his 92 years of a wonderful life. Set up in what we like to our "Oprah" set, Rick Pinnell, as our moderator, sat down with Monsignor to ask questions - a sampling of which you will find below.

- For non-Catholics in the room, what should we call him - father, monsignor, John, Jack or Captain? The answer - anything you want. What is the difference between a monsignor and a father? Only a title; there isn't any more money.

- What is his favorite vacation spot? Hawaii. He goes every year, often with his sister. He only takes a gym bag. The rule is she only gets one carry on too.
- What is his favorite event to attend in Yakima? The Symphony. He has season tickets. He also used to run a couple of miles a day - he can't do that anymore.
- What was it like growing up in Boston in the 1930s and 40s during the Depression and World War II? He was the oldest of 3 kids. His father died when he was 5. They grew up in poverty in the ghetto. He remembers Pearl Harbor Day. There was no television, only radio. People were afraid that they would be attacked.
- Why did he decide to become a priest? He grew up in a Catholic community. There were a couple of priests in his parish who were wonderful examples of service. They inspired him. How did he get to Yakima? There were lots of priests in Boston at the time he was ordained. The archbishop at the time gave permission for those that wanted to go somewhere else for 3 years and come back. He came to Yakima in 1958 and fell in love with our community and its people. After 1 1/2 they asked him to come back to Boston; he said no.
- When asked years ago if he was a liberal his answer was and still is, he is not liberal, he is not conservative, he is pastoral. He doesn't make distinctions between people. In 1964, the Second Vatican Council opened it up for priests to be involved with people of other denominations and religions. He has been active in community faith groups ever since; he has been invited to many churches to give homilies.
- What is the real story of why he enlisted? It was during the Vietnam War. The bishop and him were not getting along too well. He had been transferred to a little parish in Warden. He wrote the bishop sharing that he thought he would be of better service in the military; he was granted permission to serve. The military opened up a whole new world to him of being able to serve in different ways. He was there to bring God and a humanizing element into a dehumanizing society.
- What was Christmas like in a combat zone? One year there was an Army battalion from Yakima nearby. He received permission to invite them over; he gave them stuffed animals shipped from Yakima meant to go to kids - in essence they were all kids. One of his most beautiful masses took place in the middle of the ocean after just picked up the Apollo astronauts. It was packed with people of all denominations.
- What are the best decisions he's made? Becoming a priest in service to the people of God and going into the military; it changed his outlook and acceptance of people, who he was, and what he could do.

It was an insightful conversation full of wisdom and sprinkled with humor and fun - one that we could have listened to for hours. It ended with singing Happy Birthday to him. We are blessed to have him in Yakima and as a part of our Rotary family.



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