



THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023 YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

*Imagine
Rotary*

IMAGINE ROTARY



Five years ago, we had the unique opportunity to participate in an engaging process to plan what our Rotary Club would look like in the future. A lot has changed since then. We've gone through a pandemic, our community is different, and the make-up of our Club has evolved to include many new members.

With a theme for Rotary International of Imagine Rotary, Rotarians around the world have been asked to Imagine what Rotary looks like in their own clubs, communities, and the world. As a Rotary club, we have much to be proud of – it is always good to look at ways to be even better.

What does that mean for this week's meeting? It means a fun, interactive exercise that gives you the chance to provide your input on everything Rotary in three areas of focus with a "parking lot" open to any topic you want to add.

- Enhance our Public Image and Community Awareness
- Support and Improve the Member Experience
- Grow Rotary's Impact through Local and Global Community Service

Come and be prepared with great ideas and energy...we all need to do our best to Imagine what the future has to hold.

We will be enjoying box lunches, which will be available upon entering the meeting. Please grab one and sit at any table. You will have time to eat and enjoy fellowship before we begin. Please keep in mind that this may not be the best meeting to invite guests.

FIRESIDE/SCHOLARSHIP DINNERS

Have you signed up to attend or host a Fireside/Scholarship Dinner yet? As of last week, we have 21 hosts and 99 Rotarians and guest attendees. This is one of the most favorite things we do as a club. The dates are Wednesday, April 19th through Wednesday, May 3rd. The cost is \$125, whether you attend or not and includes your spouse, significant other, friend or just yourself. Hosts are exempt.

All proceeds go to benefit our Academic and Vocational Scholarship programs. The Fireside Committee is busy making calls to extend personal invitations. Now is the time to check your calendars and pick your date(s). You won't be disappointed!

Rotary  Club of Yakima

VOCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATIONS DUE
MARCH 16, 2023

[FOR MORE INFO](#)

yakimarotary@yakimarotary.org
www.yakimarotary.org/page/scholarships



FUTURE PROGRAMS

March 9th – Washington State Women's Commission
March 16th – Gloria Mendoza, Engaging Community in Economic Development
March 23rd – Craig & Jake Kupp, Faith, Family and Football
March 30th – Tom Gaulke, National Disabilities Month

REVIEW

Thank you to everyone who helped make our meeting another magnificent reason to spend our Thursdays. It started with Steven Gustafson, Rich Austin, and President Rick as our greeters and continued with our music, invocation, and sergeant-at-arms. Our music was Louis Armstrong's *What a Wonderful World* sung by our Rotary choir. Tim Carlson provided a moment of reflection that embraced all faiths. David Hargreaves sergeant-at-arms brought a lot of laughs about aging - I'd share some of his corny jokes, but I can't remember. President Rick welcomed our guests and Soni Alexander invited everyone to participate in the upcoming Fireside/Scholarship Dinners on April 19th through May 3rd.

We had two great new member introductions. Tammy Hanlon introduced Teresita Tamez. Teresita was born in New York as a first generation American and raised in Florida. Her parents were from Cuba. She received a degree in Accounting from Hodges University. She decided to go back to law school in 2010 after googling the meaning of life and seeing a banner come up for the law school admission test. She graduated from law school in 2013. After working for the City of Yakima, she recently took a job at the Yakima County Prosecutors Office. She shares two stepsons with her husband along with three dogs; and loves bicycling and shopping, especially consignment. Carter Fjeld introduced Maria Rodriguez. Maria was born in Michoacán, Mexico and came to the U.S. at the age of 4. After a few years, her family moved to Yakima where they have lived ever since. Maria is the CEO of Vizions, formerly known as RCDR (Rural Community Development Resources) which sponsors entrepreneurs by providing loans that most banks would not consider. She and her husband, Joe, are parents to two sons. For the past 6 years she has served as the chair of the annual Cinco de Mayo celebration. She is also active in PTA and as a parent volunteer for Davis football. She loves spending time with her family hiking and fishing. We are so happy to have both of them as a part of our club!

Drew Harris shared his story as part of our last celebration of Black History Month. His grandparents were born in Mississippi and moved to Yakima as part of The Great Migration to the North in which Black people moved North for better jobs and opportunity. They brought Southern values with them – hard work, ethics, tight-knit family, Christian, community involvement and giving back, and respect for people of all races. Drew's mom and dad met at Davis High School. Married for 41 years, they faced their own challenges being an interracial couple before there were many around. They had two boys, Drew and his brother, Blake. Drew graduated from Ike and attended Seattle U on a basketball scholarship before finishing at CWU. Today he is a residential real estate agent, the dad to his own 11-month-old daughter with girlfriend Kirsten, the VP for Rod's House Board of Directors, and a founding member of the Miller Park Project. Growing up he loved spending time at his grandparents' home; they were everything to him. With Kirsten and his dad there to share the moment with him, he ended by thanking his dad for showing him what a great Harris man looks like and instilling values in him that he will instill in his own daughter.

Bruce Bacon introduced Bete Demeke as our program speaker. Bete is the President of Project Mercy, a nonprofit organization that focuses on development programs in Ethiopia. The story of Project Mercy began in 1974-75; they were not good years for millions of Ethiopians including his family. Communism had taken over the country. Many people were killed including 60 of whom were close colleagues of his parents. Upon the death of the Emperor of Ethiopia, Bete's parents Marta and Deme, made the decision to escape

to Kenya knowing that they might be next. They fled to a refugee camp in Kenya; Bete was 14 years old. In the summer of 1976, they arrived in the U.S. as part of the first refugees in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. As soon as they arrived, his parents decided to help the millions of refugees that didn't make it out. Marta and Deme along with Chuck and Fran Dickinson founded Project Mercy and began their work helping refugees in seven African countries. In the 1980s the crisis shifted from refugee relief to famine relief. Project Mercy shifted its focus on Ready to Use Therapeutic Meals by creating a recipe that was approved by the FDA, made in the U.S., shipped to Ethiopia, and shared with other aid organizations.

In 1991, the DERG government fell. Marta was one of the first to go back to Ethiopia. She traveled throughout the country and returned with a report to the Project Mercy Board that they needed to do something other than aid. Knowing that sustainable progress would come from working in development, not just aid, Project Mercy created a unique holistic and integrated model focusing on education, healthcare, vocation & empowerment, food security, and infrastructure. They chose the village of Yetebon who had welcomed the opportunity to work with an organization like Project Mercy. They asked what they needed and what they wanted. The community shared that they needed a school and clinic. They donated the land and learned the skills needed to build. Once constructed, the teachers, doctors and nurses had to come from somewhere else; they built staff housing. Their work continued to grow. When school started it became obvious the kids did not have lunches; they began a school meal program. That sparked a conversation about food after school or during breaks; they began garden and dairy programs. The clinic was no longer big enough. With the design skills of our very own Rod Knipper, a beautiful hospital was built that Yakima Rotary helped fund through a Rotary International Global Grant. A maternity home came next followed by a new Pre-K and Kindergarten school, high school, and college. Infrastructure connected them all. A total of 70 to 80 acres of land donated by the community made it all possible.

Today, over 50,000 lives are touched annually. There are 1,900 plus students in Pre-K through secondary school. The number of schools went from zero in 1993 to seven today. The college trains midwives, health extension workers, and provides continued development. Today a quarter of healthcare workers working there grew up and attended schools there. Nutrition has expanded to vegetables, fruit trees, dairy, and poultry. Students are teaching the community elders. Infrastructure waterlines traverse through 3 different townships serving 30,000 people with clean water and they are working with the government to expand government health insurance coverage for entire families.

Their work has been life changing for those that live in Yetebon and into their expanded area of ChaCha. Many Yakima Rotarians have been a part of their accomplishments especially with the grant to fund the hospital. We were invited to come back and visit.

