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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026
YAKIMA VALLEY COLLEGE CONFERENCE CENTER
YAKIMA ROTARY VOCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Create
Lasting
Impact

Vocational education is more than preparation for a career; it is preparation for a life of purpose, service, and contribution. Skilled professionals care for our families, build and maintain our homes and businesses, keep our technology and infrastructure moving, and provide essential services we depend on every day.

At Yakima Rotary, we believe that investing in vocational training is an investment in our community. For more than 30 years, we have been providing vocational scholarships, removing financial barriers, and opening doors to opportunity. This year, following a competitive process that included scoring 69 written applications and conducting personal interviews, the following 21 students were selected to receive the 2026 Yakima Rotary Vocational Scholarship:

- Rigoverto Alvarado – Perry Technical Institute: Instruction, Automation & Robotics Technology
- Sophia Alvarez – Perry Technical Institute: Medical Office Administration & Coding
- Araceli Castaneda Reyna – YVC: Bachelor of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene
- Carina Delgado – Perry Technical Institute: Business Technology & Accounting
- Carly Jo Edwards – Perry Technical Institute: Information Technology & Communication Systems
- Wesley Erickson – Perry Technical Institute: Information Technology & Communication Systems
- Jose Estrada – Perry Technical Institute: HVAC & Refrigeration Technology
- Garrett Gano – Perry Technical Institute: HVAC & Refrigeration Technology
- Mario Gonzalez – Perry Technical Institute: HVAC & Refrigeration Technology
- Mauricio Hernandez – Perry Technical Institute: Plumbing Technology
- Brittney Johnson – Perry Technical Institute: Medical Office Administration & Coding
- Roeshell Kershner – Perry Technical Institute: Business Technology & Accounting
- Cesar Loza-De La Cruz – Perry Technical Institute: Plumbing Technology
- Obed Montes Sanchez – Perry Technical Institute: HVAC & Refrigeration Technology
- Jimmy Nunez Gonzalez – Perry Technical Institute: HVAC & Refrigeration Technology
- Daniel Reynolds – Perry Technical Institute: Agricultural & Diesel Equipment Technology
- Rakel Rivera – YVC: Associates of Applied Science in Nursing
- Jayme Rosier – Perry Technical Institute: Business Technology & Accounting
- Brendon Trudell – Perry Technical Institute: Instrumentation, Automation & Robotics Technology
- Richard Trujillo – Perry Technical Institute: Business Technology & Accounting
- Eder Valentez – YVC: Associates of Applied Science in Radiologic Sciences

Please join us Thursday to meet them, hear some of their stories, and celebrate their hard work and dedication to their chosen fields of study.

FOR THURSDAY’S MEETING

- Greeters – Steve Hahn, Dre Moreno
- Inspiration – Alex Ditto
- Program – Andi Hochleutner & Anthony Peterson
- Attendance – Megan Bewley

FUTURE PROGRAMS

- October 15th – J.R. Martinez, National Hispanic Heritage Month
- October 22nd – Tom Davis, John I Haas Sensory Panel
- October 29th – Elf the Musical
- November 5th – Kaarin Austin, WA News Fund

PROPOSED NEW MEMBER

Unless written objection is received by the Board of Directors by Tuesday, October 13, 2026, the following candidate will be elected to membership:

Thomas Russell
CEO
Yakima Family YMCA
Classification: YMCA
Proposed by: Bob Romero
Endorsed by: Bruce Bacon

SECOND CHANCE SOCIAL



Wednesday, October 21st
Single Hill Brewing
5pm to 6pm

Hors d'oeuvres are on Rotary.
Drinks are on you.
Come for the bites,
stay for the fun!

ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE INFORMATION NIGHT



Do you know a young person who would like to serve as an exchange student? Through the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program, students aged 15-17 spend a full academic year living abroad, learning, growing, and seeing the world in a whole new way.

To find out more, there will be an information night for interested students and their parents on Monday, October 19th at 6:00 pm at Yakima Valley College Conference Center located at 1704 W. Nob Hill Blvd.

Gain World Class Education ~ Travel, Learn & Grow
Make Lifelong Connections ~ Gain Personal Leadership Skills

Questions: Contact Marisol Fast
at 509-952-2486 or Jeff Scott at
509-480-9496



REVIEW

It was another great Rotary day with visitors from Sunrise Rotary selling raffle tickets; music; a beautiful inspiration message; new member introduction; the presentation of blue badges to Susan Brown-Aaron, Corie Burck, Brian Drumhiller and Megan Murphy; and a fantastic program. Joe Biondi's musical choice about Latin artists and the growth of Latin music celebrated National Hispanic Heritage Month. Josh Shockley followed with the encouragement that no matter where you are in life, show up even if it's not perfect.

Jim DeGrasse introduced our newest member, Chad Janis. Chad was born in Pineridge, South Dakota on his ancestral homelands of the Oglala Lakota Nation and raised in Wapato. His dad was a Yakama Nation Police officer, and his mother was a public health practitioner focusing on underserved indigenous communities. Following in his father's footsteps, Chad began his career as a police officer at the Wapato before moving to the Yakima Police Department where he has risen through the ranks and currently serving as a Captain. Following his mother's path, he received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and is pursuing a master's degree at Harvard Extension School. He is the proud father of one daughter and partner to Julia, with whom he shares two dogs. In addition to a passion for public service that has included working as part of the Domestic Violence Coalition and Handle with Care, he seeks out endurance sports to mitigate the stressors of police work. Welcome to Rotary! We are so excited to have him join our Rotary family.

Alyssa Ford made a pitch for Operation Harvest – we are less than a week away! And Kate Urwin earned her spot as a regular of the sergeant-at-arms committee with the best sergeant-at-arms.

With Rotary business finished, Rick Pinnell had the honor of introducing our featured speaker, Gerardo Ruelas who to share "What's happening at Costco." He began with his story. Gerardo was born in raised in a small mountain town of 800 in Mexico. He migrated with his family to Sunnyside when he was a teenager; his family still lives here. He attended Heritage University; a place near and dear to his heart because it gave him access to higher education. After graduation he went to work for Costco Guadalajara, Mexico before spending a couple of years in the Bay Area and moving to work in IT in Issaquah. At the time of his move, the company was looking for people who not only had technical aptitude but understood the operation and culture of the company. Founded in 1983, the mission of Costco is to provide members with the best possible products at the best possible price. They do that by obeying the law, taking care of their members, taking care of their employees, respecting their suppliers, and rewarding their shareholders. As an employee of Costco, Gerardo has never not known what the right thing is to do.

Net sales last year were \$297 billion. They operate in 14 countries and have 939 warehouses of which 292 are international. Their margin on products ranges from 10% to 13%; anything higher than that requires CEO approval. What is their secret? It's not the hotdog – it's the person behind the hotdog. They employee 316,000 people worldwide. The remarkable part of that is that 23,700 have been with the company for 25 plus years. They also have a 94% retention rate and an average wage of \$34 in the U.S. A cornerstone of their success is the Kirkland Signature brand which had over \$90 billion in sales last year. Kirkland is the best quality of the best value; his favorite Kirkland Signature item is the wine. Some of the challenges Costco faces are dynamic regulatory environments, each country has their own laws for ingredients and labeling; climate environmental pressures as they go out and source products throughout the world; and supply chain disruption. Their focus for the future is to continue to grow internationally (they open 20 to 30 warehouses a year, most of them are international); provide competitive wages; build supply chain resilience (they make their own hotdogs and have their own chicken plant); and sustainability throughout every aspect of the business.

All their warehouses, no matter what the location, have the same standard, quality and layout. The only exception is Asia where they build up because of limited space. The first warehouse in China was opened in 2019 in Shanghai. It required a systems perspective data market study to understand consumer behavior and how it would impact decisions made. Gerardo's team was responsible for traditional IT from registers to hardware, and how to pay vendors. Lessons learned included that China skipped credit cards – they went straight to digital money. Cash is non-existent. Trying to get products into China is challenging that can include trade tensions. There was also a huge surprise at the amount of membership interest. In the U.S. a successful new warehouse, 7,000 people signing up before an opening is considered successful. The record before China was in Korea with 28,000 people. In Shanghai they had 130,000 people sign up before opening. For perspective there are 95,000 in Yakima. Issaquah is the busiest store during the holidays with 2,000 people in the store. Sunday in Yakima has 500 people. There were 10,000 people in Shanghai. They closed at 2pm; there was grid lock traffic, cell phone towers were down, and the army had to help keep people out. Now China warehouse openings are now held over 5 days by last name.

It was a great presentation that ended with a fun fact: one of their products is a live fish in a bag of water so it can be taken home and cooked fresh. This was the second time that Gerardo has spoken to our club – can't wait to have him come back again!



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