



Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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MAY IS YOUTH SERVICE MONTH

Happy Birthday

Happy Anniversary

Upcoming Speakers:

May 12	Darren Watts Restorative Justice	May 19	Gordon Hobbs Maple Ridge Bike Museum	May 26	Calvin Johnson To be confirmed
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RI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Shoki Wafula did not know what to expect when he was forced to leave his birth country of Uganda for South Africa. What he found was a Rotary community that welcomed him with warmth and friendship. That experience inspired him to help create a Rotaract e-club where young leaders from around the world could connect, develop their skills, and serve together.



Today, that community includes members across multiple continents who collaborate on leadership development, peace building, and service initiatives. For Wafula, the experience reinforced the lesson that meaningful service begins with people who feel connected, valued, and empowered to lead.

His story reminds us why Youth Service Month is so important. Through Rotaract and programs like Rotary Youth Exchange, young people build leadership skills, develop global understanding, and discover the impact they can make through service.

Rotary's Action Plan calls on us to enhance participant engagement. At its heart, that goal asks a simple question: How can we ensure that participation in Rotary is meaningful and fulfilling for everyone? Youth programs and Rotaract provide a powerful answer.

When clubs mentor Rotaractors, host exchange students, or support youth leadership initiatives, they create opportunities for members to share their experience in ways that feel personal and rewarding. These connections deepen members' sense of purpose and strengthen the bonds within our Rotary family.

They also create lasting pathways into Rotary. Thousands of young people complete Rotary programs each year, and they carry those experiences with them throughout their lives. Many remain eager to stay connected.

Organizations such as Rotex International, an association of former Youth Exchange students, help Rotary program alumni continue serving as mentors, leaders, and advocates for our youth programs. As Rotex co-founder Hans Lee wrote in a recent reflection on Youth Exchange alumni, "Exchange doesn't end when you return home."

When we welcome these young leaders into our clubs and activities, we strengthen the continuity of Rotary across generations.

During Youth Service Month, I hope every Rotary club reflects on how youth programs can enhance engagement for new and long-time members. Collaborate on service projects and invite youth voices into your planning and decision making.

Rotary's message to the world is that we can *Unite for Good*. Youth programs show us how that happens in practice — when generations come together, share ideas, and work side by side in service.

When we invest in young people, we are not only shaping future leaders. We are building a stronger, more connected Rotary today.

Francesco Arezzo
President 2025-26

President **Alex Pope** presided.



Kim Boekhorst

A new leader has taken over the reins at the food bank that supports the communities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. Kim Boekhorst has officially been named as the new executive director of the Friends in Need Food Bank as of Sunday, March 1. Kim took over the role from Mary Robson, who held the position since 2013, and whom board chair Lynda Lawrence described as a respected leader and advocate in the community for many years.

Program: Friends in Need Food Bank –

Kim Boekhorst – Executive Director

Kim's Presentation:

I want to start by sharing a bit about my journey. My family and I moved to Maple Ridge in 1979. That's about 47 years of living, working, and raising a family right here in this community. I was a young parent. My eldest son was born when I was 22, and my daughter when I was 25. I still remember standing in a grocery store line with both of them, trying to pay for food—and my card was declined. I had to put the food back. Feeling every set of eyes on me. That moment stays with you. That feeling of not knowing what you're going to do next—it's incredibly humbling. I never used the food bank—mostly because I didn't even know it existed—but I remember thinking very clearly: I never want to feel that way again. And that moment has stayed with me ever since. It continues to give me perspective.

Fast forward to 2017. I volunteered for the homeless count here in Maple Ridge. I was sitting across from people coming in off the street, asking how they got there. And I remember one man in particular—about my age. Sitting across from him felt like looking in a mirror. And I remember thinking: the difference between him and me may have been just one different decision. That's never left me.

In 2024, I started volunteering at the food bank as a driver, one day a week. I started as a way to give back—but I stayed for what might sound like selfish reasons. It grounded me. When you think you have problems, and then you deliver food to someone facing real challenges—it resets your mindset. It keeps you humble.

Then in October 2025, I came across a leadership opportunity with the Food Bank. It spoke to me.

I wouldn't describe myself as particularly religious, but I am spiritual—and if there was ever a calling, this felt like one.

I knocked on Mary Robson's door just to have a conversation... and before I knew it, I was working alongside her by late November. Things moved quickly. And on March 1st of this year, I was named Executive Director. I feel incredibly fortunate every day to be part of an organization working to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry.

Now let me share what's happening in our community today. In April 2026 alone, our locations received 3,009 visits—a 15% increase year over year. We now serve 1,001 unique households every week—the highest number we've ever recorded. To put that into perspective, just five years ago, that number was closer to 450. Those households represent 2,235 individuals. And in April alone, 93 new households registered. At the same time, more than 100 volunteers contributed over 1,200 hours in a single month. We're seeing more families, more seniors, and more working individuals coming through our doors every week.

One of the things we're most proud of is our Perishable Food Recovery Program. Through partnerships with local grocers—Save-On-Foods, Superstore, Walmart, FreshCo, No Frills, and others—we collect surplus perishable food seven days a week, nearly every day of the year. Food that would otherwise go to landfill is recovered and redistributed. In April alone, we recovered 38,500 kilograms of food. That's the equivalent of 57,000 meals—and it prevented over 100,000 kilograms of CO₂ emissions. Of that food, 81% went directly to people, 17% supported local farmers as livestock feed, and only 2–3% became waste. In 2025, this program recovered over 1.5 million pounds of food.

But food recovery is only one piece of the puzzle. Food insecurity doesn't look the same for everyone—so our response can't be one-size-fits-all. Our school program now supports 2,700 students every week across School District 42. Many of these students arrive at school without food. And when a child is hungry, they're not thinking about math or reading—they're thinking about food. Teachers consistently tell us: when food is available, attendance improves, focus improves, and behaviour improves.

We're also seeing a sharp rise in seniors accessing our services. These are people who have worked their entire lives—and now find themselves choosing between rent, medication, and food. We support them through weekly distributions and home deliveries. And for many, it's not just about food—it's about dignity, connection, and not being forgotten. Our Pitt Meadows operation continues to grow as well, thanks to Grace Community Church. And through partnerships with organizations like Hope for Freedom, we're supporting individuals in recovery—many of whom now volunteer with us. They're not just receiving help. They're giving back. That creates something bigger than food: purpose, accountability, and community. We also support dozens of local organizations—The Hub, Salvation Army, RainCity Housing, Alouette Addictions, youth centres, and more. When we receive excess food, it doesn't sit on our shelves—it gets redistributed across the network. So our impact extends far beyond our walls.

But here's something many people don't realize: We receive no regular government funding. Everything we do - every meal, every delivery, every program - is made possible through donations, grants, and community support. At the same time, demand is rising—and supply is tightening. Just this past Friday, we ran out of food an hour before closing. Our cooler was empty. There was nothing left to give. We've had to purchase food to fill the gaps. Not long ago, we spent over \$4,000 on basic produce—and it lasted just a week and a half. That's not sustainable. Our infrastructure is also under pressure. One of our refrigerated vans is at the end of its life. Replacing it will cost about \$110,000. And it's not a luxury—it's essential. Without it, we can't move the volume of food needed to meet demand.

So we're facing a difficult reality: Demand is increasing. Supply is becoming less predictable. And the tools we rely on are under strain. We're being asked to do more—with less. And we can't do it alone.

I'll leave you with this. Food insecurity doesn't always look the way people expect. It's not always visible—and it's not always "someone else." Sometimes, it's someone just one unexpected moment away. I know how close I came to that moment myself. That's why this work matters so much to me. And it's why the work that each of you does matters just as much. Organizations like Rotary understand something important: real change happens when people come together with a shared purpose. On behalf of our board, our staff, our volunteers, and the families we serve—thank you. Your commitment to "Service Above Self" isn't just a motto. It's something people in this community feel every single day. And when we align that spirit with action, we create something powerful. We create hope. Right here in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows."

Club Business

A reminder to all Club members: if you haven't done so already, be sure to donate a bottle of wine (\$20 minimum value) to be used for auction at the Wine Festival, or pay \$20 cash to Ineke so that the club can purchase a bottle on your behalf.

May 8 – Final Wine Fest meeting at 11:30 AM via Zoom

May 13 – Wine the Festival

May 14 – club executive meeting at 5 PM at Centra Law office

May 20 – Hometown Heroes Banquet at 5 PM at Samuel Robertson Technical School - tickets are \$60; This is a Rotary sponsored event, and if you can't attend then please consider donating the cost of a ticket for the recipients or their family members.

May 21 – Duck Race Meeting at 4 PM.

May 28 – Pub Hub - location to be announced

June 20 – Installation of new club executive – fun social evening with entertainment – 6 PM at Golden Eagle Golf Course (\$100 per person).

August 9 – Duck Race

Happy & Sad

Lynda - Happy to say tickets for WineFest are SOLD OUT!!

Clint

Happy and a bit sad, that his "little girl" Peyton has been accepted in military college, exactly what she wanted.....but it means she will be leaving home!

Ineke

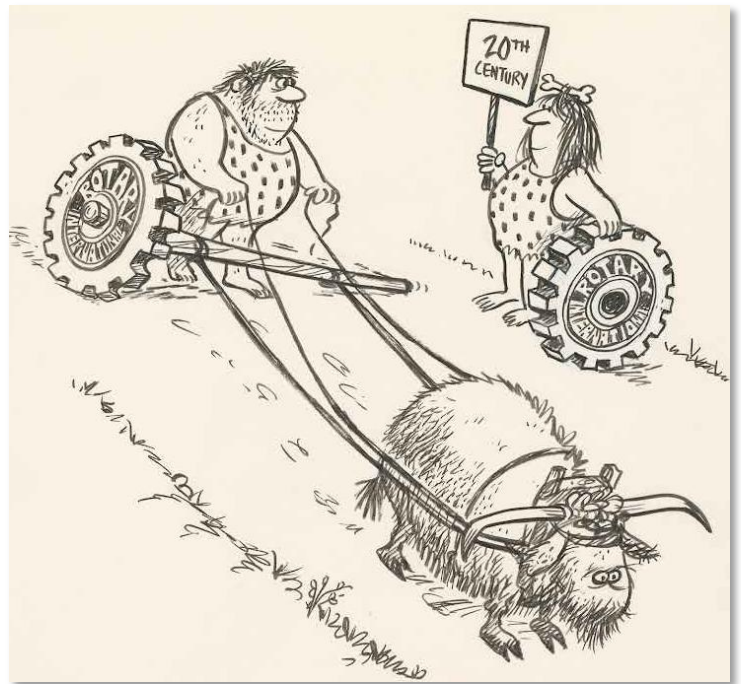
Wonderful camping & Rotary Conference in Harrison Hot Springs; Proud of Kim, for his excellent Foodbank presentation; and Happy WineFest is almost done!!!

Chantal - Happy to be back at Rotary, as she has been quite sick for a while.....

.....BUT the best part: Baby #2 will be born "around" November 6!

Yvonne - Happy that she went to the District Conference in Harrison (where she sold almost two books of WineFest tickets).

Laurie – Was very impressed with the last in-person WineFest Committee meeting, chaired by Lynda and Debbie, with 8 of our lady Rotarians at the last meeting held at Debbie's house, all working hard to make this year's WineFest another great success.



What would we do without our lady members!

Presidents Closing Quote

When I was a kid, I could go to the store with \$1 and come home with two bags of chips, three candy bars, and a cold drink. Nowadays, they have cameras everywhere.

Submitted by Laurie Anderson