Rotary Club of Meadow Ridge

The Four Way Flasher

ROTARY CLUB MEADOW-RIDGE BRITISH COLUMBIA CANADA

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Website: MeadowRidgeRotary.ca

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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CREATE LASTING IMPACT

NOVEMBER IS ROTARY FOUNDATION MONTH

Happy Birthday	Happy Anniversary
	Nov 26 Matt & Lynda DeBruyn,

Upcoming Speakers:

Nov 24 Monica Watson Leadership, Teamwork and Communications	Dec 1 Nikita Sharma - How to become an Influential, Respected, Magnetic Leader	Dec 8 AGM

LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Eric Mollema** presided.

Guests

Pauline Forster

Nicole Mirea, a guest and employee of Clint
(fourth visit to our Club)

Introduction of Guest Speaker

Laurie introduced our guest speaker, **Michelle Taschereau**, a Pitt Meadows resident.
(Did you know that according to *The Globe and Mail*'s evaluation of 454 Canadian cities, Pitt Meadows ranks #1 overall as the most liveable small city in the whole of Canada?) Michelle is the founder of Atlas Brain Health, an education, coaching, and teaching practice concerned with brain health. Laurie went online to learn about Michelle; and then (not wanting to over-tax his brain or think for himself by preparing an introduction) typed what he had found into Artificial Intelligence's ChatGPT, and (just for the fun of it) instructed it to turn it into a poem. This is what it came up with in about 15 seconds:

Michelle Taschereau is our guest today,
With plenty of brainy things to say.
At Atlas Brain Health, she leads the way,
Helping people live better lives each day.

Brains shape our thoughts, our work, our play,
And guide our actions every day.
So what Michelle has to say, I fear,
Is surely good for us to hear!

She's a brain injury trainer, a wellness coach,
With cognitive skills, and without reproach.
Her goal is to make brain-health clear,
And bring better care to everyone here.

For twenty years, she has shared her skill,
With knowledge, compassion and goodwill.
For survivors, caregivers, and those in need,
She's dedicated to helping them succeed.

So let us put our brains in gear today,
And listen closely to what she'll say.
For learning about the brain, you see,
Is bound to be a "no-brainer" for me.

Program:

Michelle Taschereau –Understanding and Improving Brain Health



Michelle Taschereau delivered an informative presentation on brain health, explaining how lifestyle choices can help maintain cognitive function, improve overall well-being and potentially reduce the risk of dementia. She is the founder of Atlas Brain Health and has more than 20 years of experience working in brain injury rehabilitation, education and wellness coaching.
Her professional work is supported by personal experience as a caregiver and as a parent of a child with diverse abilities.

Her interest in brain health developed through several personal experiences. Her daughter was diagnosed with significant challenges when she was young, and when her daughter was seven years of age, Michelle was told that she might never live independently.

Through years of support and hard work, her daughter is now 30, living independently, working and raising her own child. Michelle also spent 16 years caring for her husband's son following a brain injury. This experience exposed her to significant gaps in the healthcare system, particularly the transition between hospital treatment and returning home.

She observed that patients are often discharged from acute care without adequate education, rehabilitation support or assistance in adapting to their changed circumstances. These experiences motivated her to establish Atlas Brain Health, with an emphasis on making brain health education and practical support more accessible.

Her work involves:

- Educating healthcare professionals about brain injury and brain health.
- Supporting brain injury and stroke survivors as they adjust to changed circumstances.
- Helping caregivers manage the challenges of caring for others.
- Assisting organizations and businesses with employee wellness, productivity and burnout prevention.

The Importance of Brain Health

Michelle emphasized that the brain controls virtually everything we do, including:

- Communication and decision-making.
- Concentration and memory.
- Energy and motivation.
- Leadership and relationships.
- Movement, emotions and behaviour.
- Our ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Despite its importance, people frequently concentrate on their heart, muscles and blood sugar while paying relatively little attention to maintaining brain health. She suggested that brain health deserves the same attention as other aspects of physical health.

Dementia and the Opportunity for Prevention

She cited approximately 772,000 Canadians living with dementia in 2025, with the number projected to increase substantially in coming years, and encourages people to take preventative measures while they can. An important statistic in her presentation was that approximately 45% of dementia cases are associated with potentially modifiable risk factors. Her message was that lifestyle choices can make a meaningful difference.

Europlasticity – The Brain's Ability to Change

One of the most interesting subjects was neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to reorganize itself and develop new connections. When the brain suffers an injury or illness, some existing connections may be damaged. However, the brain can sometimes establish alternative pathways to accomplish tasks that were previously performed through those damaged connections. This ability is particularly important in rehabilitation following strokes and other brain injuries. Michelle stressed that maintaining a healthy brain before an injury or illness occurs gives us a stronger starting point for recovery.

Ten Important Elements of Brain Health

Michelle identified several lifestyle practices that contribute to maintaining healthy brain function:

1. Physical Exercise - Exercise is particularly important because it stimulates the production of a substance called BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor). BDNF as a kind of fertilizer for the brain because it encourages the development and strengthening of neural connections. She recommended at least 20 minutes of physical activity, with walking being an excellent and accessible option. Exercise does not have to be strenuous to provide benefits.

2. Protecting Hearing and Vision - Hearing loss and vision impairment can contribute to cognitive decline. When people lose their hearing or vision, they may become socially isolated, reducing the stimulation their brains receive. Michelle encouraged members to address hearing difficulties and make appropriate use of hearing aids. She emphasized that maintaining hearing and vision is important not only for communication but also for preserving brain connections.

3. Learning New Things - Learning stimulates the brain and helps develop new neural connections. Michelle suggested activities such as:

- Learning a new language.
- Playing a musical instrument.
- Doing puzzles and Sudoku.
- Taking up a new hobby.
- Learning unfamiliar skills.

Interestingly, she suggested that learning should sometimes be a little frustrating. That feeling of struggling with something unfamiliar is often an indication that the brain is working hard to establish new connections.

4. Maintaining Social Connections - Social interaction provides important mental stimulation. Conversations, relationships, shared activities and friendships all engage different parts of the brain. Isolation, by contrast, deprives the brain of valuable stimulation. This is another reason why participation in organizations such as Rotary can be beneficial.

5. Managing Stress - Chronic stress produces elevated levels of cortisol, which can negatively affect brain health. Michelle recommended finding effective ways to reduce stress, including:

- Physical activity.
- Meditation.
- Spending time in nature.
- Socializing with friends.
- Participating in enjoyable activities.

6. Living with Purpose - Having a reason to get up in the morning is important. Michelle suggested that people who remain involved in activities, volunteer organizations and community projects benefit from having meaningful goals and responsibilities. She observed that Rotary members are already doing something positive in this regard by remaining engaged in community service.

7. Prioritizing Sleep - Sleep is essential for brain maintenance. During sleep, the brain's cleaning system helps remove waste products and toxins that accumulate during the day. Adequate sleep is therefore important for maintaining cognitive function.

8. Eating Well - Nutrition plays an important role in brain health. A balanced diet provides the nutrients needed to support brain function and maintain healthy neural connections.

9. Making Time for Fun - Enjoyment and laughter are important elements of overall well-being. People should make room for activities they enjoy rather than concentrating exclusively on responsibilities and obligations.

10. Maintaining a Positive Mindset - Michelle emphasized that our beliefs about aging can influence how we behave and how we feel. She encouraged members not to assume that growing older necessarily means declining physical or mental abilities. People can continue learning, exercising and developing new skills well into their later years. She encouraged members not to accept society's assumption that life necessarily declines after a certain age. Her message was that we should continue challenging ourselves and maintaining an active, positive outlook.

November is Rotary Foundation Month

Laurie (the Club's Rotary Foundation Committee chair) reminded members that November is Rotary Foundation Month. He shared a message from Jennifer Jones, the chair of the Rotary Foundation of RI, about the Foundation's work in clean water, education, disaster recovery, and peacebuilding around the world. The message reminded Rotarians that these achievements happen because members believe in Rotary's ability to make a difference.

On November 7, Alex, Barbara, Ineke and Laurie attended the District 5050 Rotary Foundation Dinner in White Rock, where Dean Rohrs (who is our District's Rotary Foundation Chair and who was a past Vice-President of Rotary International) challenged each Rotarian to consider making an additional $10 donation this year. If all club members participated in making this further small contribution, our Meadow Ridge Rotary Club would contribute approximately $350 extra. Full participation across our District's 58 clubs would raise an additional $20,190 for the work of the Rotary Foundation.

Membership, club election, and bylaw amendments

- **Membership.** Ana Castillo (our 2006 Rotary Exchange student) sent her regrets for not attending toys meeting, and asked to meet with the Membership Committee to discuss joining the club.
- **Club elections.** The vice-president (or "president-nominee") position is vacant. Former presidents who might be willing to serve again were also invited to express their interest. The club needs members willing to take on executive responsibilities and help ensure continuity in leadership. Current executive members and committee chairs who wish to continue in their roles were asked to email Mark. Members also highlighted Rotary's leadership training program, President-Elect Training Seminar ("PETS"), for incoming presidents. Anyone considering the presidency should take advantage of Rotary's excellent leadership training, which provides valuable experience that can be applied not only to Rotary but also to other organizations and leadership responsibilities. The importance of having members step forward to ensure the club's continued effective operation was emphasized.
- **Revised bylaws.** Eric and Laurie have drafted amendments to our Club's bylaws. A marked-up copy showing the proposed changes will be circulated via email to all club members before the AGM on October 8. Members are asked to send any questions or comments to Laurie in advance of the AGM.

Duck Race



The Duck Race Committee met recently, and reported that the committee discussed increasing prize value and fundraising revenue. Initial outreach for a vehicle prize from local car dealers yielded no results. Members with potential sponsor contacts or other prize ideas were asked to email Eric. Options for structuring a proposed $20,000 first prize were circulated for consideration. The committee also asked for volunteers to follow up with previous prize donors, including businesses that donated merchandise and golf packages. Eleven people attended the recent committee meeting, including three from outside the club. The technical group continues to work on the electronic platform. The organizers emphasized that the success of the Duck Race depends on participation from the entire club. Anyone with useful contacts or fresh fundraising ideas was encouraged to get involved and communicate them to the organizing committee.

Happy and Sad Dollars



Eric: Just visited his new granddaughter, after not seeing her for a while.

She appeared to have doubled her size from last time!

Mark F.: After working until approximately 3:30 a.m. preparing financial statements, he lost all his hours of hard work by pushing the wrong button on his computer..... But AI came to the rescue and reconstructed the financial statements within a few minutes!

Ineke: happy to receive a bag full of wine bottle corks from Alex for our next fundraiser!



Ray: happy that Ineke got "corked"! Not happy that his phone rang during today's meeting!

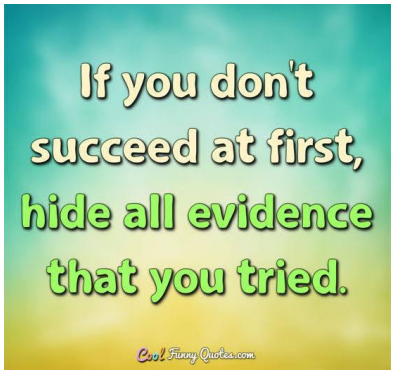
Matt: someone called him "old (unhappy) and wise (happy)" .

Libby: great "brain presentation" today....and so happy to see everyone!

Upcoming Meetings and Club Events

Date	Event
Friday, Nov 20	Wine Tasting and Charcuterie fellowship at Mark Forster's. Cost: $25 per member.
Wednesday, Nov 25	Christmas breakfast. December 25 was also mentioned in the discussion, so the date should be confirmed.
Thursday, Nov 26	 Pub Hub at the Ranch Pub and Grill. 5:30 pm
Wednesday, Dec 9	Club AGM (for election of new Executive)
Saturday, Dec 12	Christmas party at Clint's home
Tuesday, Dec 22	Christmas gift exchange. Bring a wrapped $20 gift suitable for any recipient (man or woman). However, the emphasis is not on the value of the gift but on the creativity of the wrapping and maintaining the element of surprise!  

President's Closing Quote



Submitted by Laurie Anderson