

The RIM Newsletter

Rotary InMotion



Club 16 (2809) District 6290, Chartered May 1, 1916
<http://www.muskegonrotary.org>

*Is it the truth?
Is it fair to all concerned?
Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
Will it be beneficial to all concerned?*



Celebrating the people, events, and actions of the Muskegon Rotary Club February 26, 2026

March 5, 2026, 12 – 1:30pm — Boneless Pork Loin at the LAKE HOUSE
Program – Transportation Options in Muskegon County

What's Coming

- Mar 5—Transportation Options in Muskegon County
- Mar 12—District Governor
- Mar 19—A Family Affair

Upcoming Birthdays

- Mar 5 Gavin Poulin
- Mar 8 Bob Lukens
- Mar 9 Ron Suszek
- Mar 11 Timothy DeMumbrum
- Mar 11 Stephanie Tushek



Caring Connections Fund
[Click here to donate](#)

Stage Manager This Week

Tiffany Dupont-Novak

Greeter This Week

Jane Clingman-Scott & Kaitlyn Hermanson

Reflector This Week

Darlene Collet

RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Brock Johnson
RIM Reporter – Sue Samaniego
RIM Editor – Susan Besteman

Muskegon Rotary Feb. 26th
YouTube Video: [CLICK HERE](#)



Darlene Collet provided this week's reflection



President Dave Alexander announced that next week we are meeting at the **Lake House** along with several other announcements (see pages 5-8).

Muskegon Rotary Board

- Dave Alexander, President
- Roger Morgenstern, President-Elect
- Lisa Tyler, President Nominee
- Tim Arter, Past President
- Kimberly Taylor, Treasurer
- Jane Clingman-Scott, Secretary
- Kim Boersema, Club Coordinator
- Directors:
 - Esther Ricco
 - Melissa Moore
 - Arlen-Dean Gaddy
 - Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga
 - Brandon Turnbull
 - Samantha Scott
 - Dimitri Poland
 - Lisa Kraus

Please email Club Board Members through this [link](#):

Visitors & Guests



Greg Borgman introduces his guest, **Josh Holcomb** (guest viola player for the symphony)



Melissa Horton with her guest, **Jackie Huss** (Director of Operations at the Lakeshore Museum Center)



Heidi Sytsema introduces her guest, **Lori Hausbeck**

This Week's Program:



Emily Morgenstern introduces her guest, Lieutenant Casey Bringedahl with the Muskegon Police Dept.



Pete DeBoer introduces his guest, Brittany Weed



Jim Fisher introduces his guest, Kippy Ellis



Chris Nance introduces his guest, Sam Jansen (North Muskegon City Manager)



Three Mayors

Presenters: Mayors **Ken Johnson**, **Chris Nance**, and **Gary Nelund**
 Introduced by: **Roger Morgenstern**
 RIM Reporter: **Sue Samaniego**

Mayors of Muskegon, North Muskegon, and Norton Shores provided brief updates on what is happening in their municipalities.

RIM Reporting Team
 Editors: Susan Besteman, Jackie Farrar, & Ginny Sprague
 Reporters: Kathy Moore, Roger Morgenstern, Meredith Smillie, & Sue Samaniego
 Photographers: Wyatt Huggett, Brock Johnson, Emily Morgenstern, & Roger Morgenstern

(Visitors Continued)



Sue Samaniego with her guest, Jasmine Johnson (Community Outreach Coordinator with Habitat for Humanity)



Ravenna High School Counselor Tia Filippelli was introduced by celestial thinking **Marty Sytsema**. Tia announced several impressive school accolades and introduced two spectacular seniors, Olivia Emery and Izaak Erler.

Ken Johnson, Mayor of Muskegon



One focus has been improving communications, as evidenced by the City of Muskegon 2025 Annual Report. This document includes a wealth of information on projects completed and data relating to administration, public safety, housing, and economic development. You can find the report at: <https://muskegon-mi.gov/documents/pdf/6476.pdf>.

The guiding principle for the city has been sustainability: social, economic, environmental, and fiscal.

The city has focused on inviting the community into its governance. The city commission has both a black- and women-majority makeup for the first time.

The city is making gains in housing at all price points. Working with GMED on regional development, investment has increased.

Chris Nance,
Mayor of North Muskegon



Newly elected to the position, Nance is just 3 months into his term. He has spent

time talking to community members about what they like, what they dislike, and what they want to see happen.

What rose to the top was enforcement of property maintenance codes. Little things matter most. A city that is three blocks wide and three miles long

needs to look good. The city is working with the high school to lead the way. They have a strong program related to pollinator patches.

The school must be strong to keep North Muskegon strong. The goal is to be a top 10 school. With the city and the school having the same boundaries, collaboration is key.

Economic development is a goal. There are funds out there and North Muskegon will be asking for them. Sam Janson, City Manager, has ideas for this area.

They are working on a reworked brand to help people choose North Muskegon.

Gary Nelund,
Mayor of Norton Shores



Nelund is focused on the important job of succession planning.

Norton Shores is “quietly successful.” It has the highest tax base in the county, but prioritization of funds is needed each year because there are always more projects than funds available and the city runs lean.

Demand increases as the population increases, so it’s a balancing act.

Communities with room to expand do well. Norton Shores is getting close to running out of room to expand outward. Does the city expand upward?

Q & A

How can these cities cooperate and/or consolidate?

Public safety, local government funding, transportation.

Is there a plan to move the power lines on Ruddiman underground?

No, it would be too expensive.

Muskegon Lake was decertified as an environmental issue. What will be done to keep it that way?

Be vigilant as we move forward. Even though it is off the list, there is still work to be done. We need to move toward a regional watershed management plan.

Development of the southern part of Norton Shores was mentioned. Is there a plan for infrastructure for water and sewer?

Norton Shores is connected with the City of Muskegon for these. As development occurs, the developer puts in the infrastructure. There is no issue with the supply keeping up with the demand.





Roger Morgenstern introduced today's speakers and fellow Rotarians

Rotary ReWine Schedule

1st and 3rd Thursdays each month 5:00-5:15pm Social time
5:15pm Meeting start time at the Core Plaza (Vault)

RSVPs are due by Wednesday at 5pm for the Thursday meeting.

Contact **Kaytie Drake** at kaytieely@aol.com to RSVP (total # of people including any guests you are bringing) or if you have questions.



Muskegon Rising

You can start supporting by scanning the Muskegon Rising QR Code and click subscribe. The funds go to the Muskegon Rotary Foundation to support economic, workforce, and education initiatives that are reinvested into our community.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2269729/episodes/18515690-why-muskegon-is-rising>

Muskegon Rising Podcast S3E4: Erick Couch – Sun Chemical



What do the yellow lines on America's roads have to do with jobs, safety, and Muskegon's economic future?

In this episode of Muskegon Rising, Aaron Maike talks with Erick Couch of Sun Chemical about the company's major pigment manufacturing facility in Muskegon County and its role in road safety, advanced manufacturing, and federal Buy America policy.

They discuss how road markings connect to modern vehicle technology, why more federal dollars could support American-made materials, and what that would mean for high-wage union jobs and local economic growth.

It's a conversation about innovation, infrastructure, and how a Muskegon manufacturer is part of a much bigger national story.

Listen and watch now and subscribe to Muskegon Rising.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2269729/episodes/18763462-erick-couch-sun-chemical>

https://youtu.be/U0NsPd6WNgc?si=K_PD EZfgvaP1RCjZ

[CLICK HERE FOR ALL PODCASTS](#)

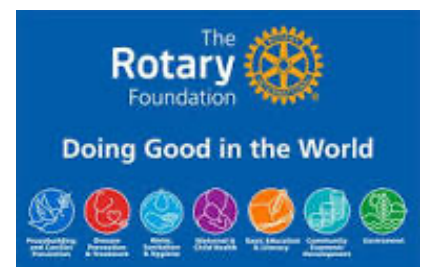
Spotlight Video Meredith Smillie – Rotary Foundation



Meredith Smillie, Rotary Foundation Chair for the Muskegon Rotary Club, explains how Rotary Foundation donations create real impact both locally and globally. From vaccinating children against polio for just a few dollars to providing clean water systems and livestock for families recovering from disasters, Meredith shows how every contribution—no matter the size—advances Rotary's mission of education, health, and humanitarian aid. Drawing on her 30 years of advocacy for children and families, she shares why Rotary's foundation work so closely aligns with her lifelong commitment to service.

Link to see the video: [CLICK HERE](#)

To donate to the Rotary Foundation:



Announcements



Mike Vogas gave us an update on our Sargent-At-Arms, **Ed Hendrickson**. He is now under hospice care but is at home and would like visitors between 1:30 and 4:30pm. Please contact Mike for more details—[click here](#).

\$2,500 Donation to District 6290

President **Dave Alexander** was happy to announce that our Muskegon Rotary Foundation Board of Directors is making a \$2,500 donation to District 6290 on behalf of **District Governor Brianna Scott** for her contribution of substantial legal work in finalizing our club’s participation in the Seaway Run. She has asked that \$2,000 go towards the district’s student exchange program and \$500 toward the District’s Polio Plus fund. Thank you, Brianna!



<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/youth-exchanges>



<https://www.rotary.org/en/plus-polioplus>

Joint Service Project



About a dozen Muskegon Rotarians, including several Interact students, joined members of the Grand Rapids Rotary Club Feb. 21 at Feeding America West Michigan in Grand Rapids to help package hundreds of pounds of pasta for distribution across the state.

The Rotarians and Interactors spent two hours in Feeding America's "reclamation area" where donated food is inspected and repackaged for distribution to food pantries in 40 counties across West Michigan and the entire Upper Peninsula. They also enjoyed a taco bar lunch provided by the Grand Rapids Club.

This is the third joint service project between the two clubs in the past year. Other non-profits served were Kids Food Basket in Grand Rapids and the Boys and Girls Club of Muskegon Lakeshore. **President Dave** said plans are in the works for another joint service project, likely in May here in Muskegon, related to our Club's two microforests.



This large sign in Feeding America's front reception area clearly shows their mission.



From left, Muskegon Rotary President **Dave Alexander**, Grand Rapids Rotary President Shannon Kolarik, Muskegon President **Elect Roger Morgenstern** and Grand Rapids President Elect Joel Hondorp.



Muskegon Rotary's contingent at the joint service project in Grand Rapids.




Ken Estelle, CEO of Feeding America West Michigan and a Grand Rapids Rotarian, welcomes the Rotarians and provides an

overview of the organization. The non-profit moved into this new facility about a year ago, which was once the main warehouse for the now defunct MC Sporting Goods.

Literacy Summit Mar. 27th



Melissa Moore announced the Lakeshore Literacy Summit on Friday, March 27th at the Trillium Event Center. In partnership the Muskegon, Spring Lake, and Grand Haven Rotary Clubs are hosting this event to improve Michigan's literacy. Michigan is ranked 44th in the country for our K-12th grades. (This doesn't include our adults.). Spend a small amount of time to learn how you can help make an impact. Register with the QR Code on the flyer. 



Rotary
LAKESHORE
LITERACY SUMMIT
2026

Friday
March 27
8:30AM
TO 12PM





Join community members at a gathering focused on strengthening literacy on the Lakeshore. Through inspiring speakers and breakout sessions, become a literacy ally and support learners of all ages. Connect, learn, and help shape a more literate Lakeshore at this no-cost event.

Learn more about:

- ✓ How the brain develops reading skills
- ✓ What local literacy organizations are doing
- ✓ Why reading aloud to young children matters
- ✓ What you can do to make an impact

Trillium Event Center
17246 Van Wagoner Rd, Spring Lake, MI

A collaboration of Rotary Clubs of Grand Haven, Muskegon, and Spring Lake, in partnership with:

















Sponsored in part by:





Cost: Free!

REGISTER NOW



DEI Corner



Heidi Sytsema from the DEI Committee, informed the club of three upcoming events

LGBTQ+ Joy & Challenge in Faith Communities

STORIES

MARCH

9

DOORS OPEN: 5:45PM

PANEL: 6-7PM

Q&A: 7-7:30PM

Moderated by Susan Harrison Wolfis

📍 **THE CORNER | 280 W. MUSKEGON AVE.**

Presented by a collective of local affirming faith communities:

BETHANY | CENTRAL UMC | COMMUNITY UMC | COVENANT COMMUNITY RCA | EDGEWOOD LUTHERAN | FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC | LAKE HARBOR UMC | ST. GREGORY'S EPISCOPAL | ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL | TEMPLE B'NAI ISRAEL | TEMPLE UMC

Learn More & Register





FREE - REGISTRATION REQUIRED

bit.ly/LGBTQandfaith

March 9, "LGBTQ+ Stories: Joy & Challenge in Faith Communities"

Panel discussion with five local members of the LGBTQ+ community, moderated by Susan Harrison Wolfis. Presented by a group of 11 affirming places of worship, with the goal of providing an opportunity for curious and open-minded people to hear firsthand about their LGBTQ+ neighbors' experiences in faith communities. Free event, with registration required. Facebook event registration [here](#).



March 20-21, 27-28, “Play It Straight”
 A play presented by the Actors Workshop of West Michigan. Play It Straight is a new play set in a public high school which requires school administrators to notify parents if a student begins using pronouns/names/gender identities at school other than those assigned at birth. It’s “intense, deeply human, and incredibly culturally relevant.” Proceeds from the first night are going to Muskegon Pride as a fundraiser. Facebook event—register [here](#).



Tastes of Thailand

- Green Curry
- Spring Rolls
- Coconut Sweet Treats

Cultural Showcase

- Traditional Thai music by William
- Thai Food history by Pep Sucharikul
- Thai & Laotian Fashion from Chay Thongtith

Arts & Games

- Shadow Puppetry Performance of *Melo the Elephant*.
- Create your own shadow puppets, tinfoil art, and paper flower bracelets.
- Thai-themed Escape Room & Durian Taste/Smell Challenge.

MARCH 21 | 1-3pm
 MADL North Muskegon Branch
 1522 Ruddiman Drive
 North Muskegon, Michigan 49445
 Scan here to register



GREAT MICHIGAN READ AUTHOR EVENT WITH CURTIS CHIN

Join us for an evening with Curtis Chin, author of *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*, as part of the statewide Great Michigan Read tour presented by Michigan Humanities.

Chin’s memoir traces his experiences growing up Chinese-American in Detroit—balancing humor, heart, and the lively world of Chung’s Cantonese Cuisine, his family’s restaurant that fed people from all walks of life in 1980s Detroit. His story captures the complexities of coming out as a gay Asian-American, his years at the University of Michigan, and his later work writing for film and television.

APR 13 | 6:30pm
 The Corner (280 W. Muskegon Ave)
 Doors open at **6pm** with tastings from local Chinese Restaurants available until the event begins. Books will be available for purchase courtesy of the Book Nook.

Save your seat with this QR code



April 13, Event with Curtis Chin, author of “Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant”
 Chin’s memoir traces his experiences growing up Chinese-American in Detroit—balancing humor, heart, and the lively world of Chung’s Cantonese Cuisine, his family’s restaurant that fed people from all walks of life in 1980s Detroit. His story captures the complexities of coming out as a gay Asian-American, his years at the University of Michigan, and his writing career. Presented by Muskegon Area District Library in cooperation with Muskegon Pride and MCC. Chin’s book can be checked out from any MADL library or purchased from the Bookman in Grand Haven, or Book Nook in Muskegon and Montague locations. Facebook event--register [here](#).

MADL
 MUSKEGON AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

Here's a link to recommended books for Women's History Month:
<https://muskegonadl.bibliocommons.com/v2/list/display/1892109169/2253452269>

Rotary Youth Exchange



Dom Bunker, chair of the Youth Exchange Committee, welcomes anyone interested in helping. To contact her—[CLICK HERE](#).

United Way Day of Caring--Projects Needed

Dom also announced that **John Noling** has already found all the volunteers needed to help with the United Way Day of Caring MicroForests so Dom is asking if you know of any other projects, please contact her—[CLICK HERE](#).

March Madness Brave Rotarian Contest



March Madness Paul Harris Fellow competition means that **Meredith Smillie** is looking for 64 Rotarians to participate in this year’s contest. \$100 saves your spot in the madness. Not only could you win a coveted Paul Harris Fellow, but you will also fulfill your recommended donation to The Rotary Foundation. Sign-ups will continue through March 12, 2026; as the brackets kick off on March 16, 2026. Payment

is expected prior to March 12. You can pay with cash, check (made out to The Rotary Foundation) or use the QR code listed here to pay via credit card. Please see **Meredith** for any questions.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0A4BACAF28A2F58-62039851-brave>



Baker College Helping Address Food Insecurity

Our Rotarians know our club has sponsored and helped staff food distribution trucks from Feeding America West Michigan for years and we have another truck planned April 22. Baker College's **Aaron Maike** announced that Baker College and the YMCA are partnering to support our community by hosting a food distribution truck in the Baker College Farmers Market parking lot in downtown Muskegon every other month in 2026. Baker's **Aaron Maike**, **President Dave** and **President Elect Roger** are discussing possible Rotary involvement in continuing this effort, both with volunteers and financial support. In the meantime, Aaron is asking if you would like to donate financially or volunteer, contact **Jamie Sowa** – [Click Here to Email Jamie](#).

Beards for Books or Color Your Hair



Ruggedly handsome and hilarious Rotarians **Gary Nelund** and **DJ Hilson** encouraged all to either grow a beard or color your hair for United Way's Beards for Books Shave Off Event. This event supports Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. They will hopefully have beards grown by March 31st to shave it off to raise money for this great cause. Every \$35 raised goes toward a year of books for one child. There are 10,000 kids in Muskegon County so join Gary and DJ to be beard champions. If no beard options, raise funds to color your hair for this great cause like **Dom Bunker** did last year! 😊

ReWine Updates

Adopt-A-Highway Program Looking for Volunteers

Our next pickup for the Muskegon Rotary stretch of highway on I-96 will be on Saturday, April 18. Volunteers will meet promptly at 8:45am for a short safety talk, then head out on the road to pick trash. (We will finish no later than 11:00am, sooner if we get a lot of help 😊). Also looking for two drivers to drive along with the volunteers who are picking trash. If you can help, please contact **Esther Ricco**, riccoe@gvsu.edu and she can provide you with details. Be a part of keeping our adopted stretch clean and taking action to protect our environment!

Pours Committee Finalized Dates



The Pours Committee

finalized its 2026 Happy Hours.

1. Wednesday, April 15: 5:00-7:00pm, 794 Kitchen & Bar
2. Monday, April 20: 5:00-7:00pm, Unruly Brewing
3. Friday, April 24: 4:00-6:00pm, Wonderland Distilling
4. Tuesday, April 28: 7:30-9:30am, Community House
5. Thursday, April 30: 5:00-7:00pm, Muskegon Brewing

****A special note that the April 28 event at Community House is a coffee hour in the morning.**

Paralympics Skiing



Jules Terry will leave on Monday with eight of her fifteen Paralympics skiing athletes, that she coaches, who qualified for the Winter Paralympics in two weeks in Cortina, Italy. We wish them well! **President Dave Alexander** has already asked Jules to share her Olympic story with the club when she returns to Muskegon.

Interact Insider

Honduras Experience

Contributed By: **Jacinda Patrick**
(Interact of North Muskegon)

It is incredibly difficult to distill this entire experience into words, as the weight of these emotions must be felt to be understood. My time in Honduras was a whirlwind, a literal rollercoaster of highs and lows, but it served as a profound reminder that love knows no barriers, whether they be language, culture, or circumstance.

Our week was defined by intentional labor and shared purpose. We spent our days building a house from the ground up, installing a latrine, and setting up a new sink. We also provided access to clean, potable water by installing three water filters. Beyond the construction, we focused on the heart of the community through a feeding program, a kids' camp, and the revitalization of the local rotary building, which we painted inside and out.

However, the physical projects were only half the story. The real impact came from the quality time spent with the families and the children who welcomed us so openly. It is a humbling reality to realize that many of the people we met could fit their entire lives into a single milk carton. They live with

so little in the way of material wealth, yet they are among the kindest, happiest, and most genuinely grateful people I have ever encountered.

Seeing their joy put my own life into a sharp new perspective. It is so easy to get caught up in the pursuit of what we think we need, but this trip proved that true happiness is not found in what we own. Instead, it lives in the love we share and the strength of the community we build together. I am beyond blessed to have been granted this opportunity, and I will carry these specific life lessons and cherished memories with me for the rest of my life.



