

# 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

March 19, 2026

**March 26, 2026, 12 – 1:30pm —Tacos at the Delta**  
**Program – Economic Development Overview**  
Presentation on GMED & Muskegon Area Economic Development

## What's Coming

March 26— Economic  
Development Overview  
April 2—Solid Rock Housing  
April 9—MCC 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Upcoming Birthdays

Mar 29 Howard Hardesty  
Mar 29 Aaron Maike  
Mar 31 Gregory Pittman  
April 1 Jeremy Garcia  
April 1 Brandon Turnbull



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

## Stage Manager This Week

Andrew Zahrt

## Greeters This Week

Don Kalisz & Pat Shafer

## Reflector This Week

Jamie Hekker

## RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Wyatt Huggett  
RIM Reporter – Kathy Moore  
RIM Editor – Susan Besteman

Muskegon Rotary YouTube  
Videos: [CLICK HERE](#)



**President Nominee Lisa Tyler** opens the meeting, filling in this week.



**Jamie Hekker** offers the reflection.

## 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                      Brandon Turnbull  
Melissa Moore                  Samantha Scott  
Arlen-Dean Gaddy              Dimitri Poland  
Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga      Lisa Kraus

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

## Visitors & Guests



**Melissa Horton** introduces her guests, Michael, Theresa & Victoria Bernhardt



**Kristi Pawlak** introduces her guest  
Laura Cunningham



**Dimitri Poland** introduces his guest,  
Lauren Harris

## Visitors & Guests cont.



**Dayne Robinson** with his guest—and wife--Jacqui Robinson



**Adam Bell** with his guest, Richard Winters



**Parker Aerts** with guest Autumn Outman



**Marty Sytsema** introduces the Principal of Muskegon Heights Public School Academy, Dale Stewart. Dale introduced two fantastic seniors, Kesian Marble and Ke-Onna Walker!

## This Week's Program The Corner: A Community Collective



Presenter: Michael Bernhardt  
Introduction by: **Melissa Horton**  
RIM Reporter: **Kathy Moore**



**Melissa Horton** introduced the program speaker: Michael Bernhardt is a native Californian who truly believes in creating a

strong family foundation as evidenced by his presentation. While showing a series of slides, Mr. Bernhardt highlighted his family's inspiring revitalization of the historic church located at the corner of Muskegon Avenue and Third Street in downtown Muskegon. Originally constructed in 1930, the building has been thoughtfully restored by the Bernhardt family and transformed into a vibrant, family-friendly commercial and event space that serves as a new hub for community engagement activities.



Mr. Bernhardt explained that the redevelopment preserves key architectural elements, including the original pews and stained-glass windows, while reimagining the space to support a diverse range of businesses and activities. He also informed us that several businesses operating within the building are owned and managed by members of the Bernhardt family, reflecting a strong commitment to entrepreneurship, family connections, and community investment.



Victoria Bernhardt owns *Little Miss Green Thumb*, a decorative plant business focused on sustainability. In addition to retail offerings, the business provides plant rehabilitation services, educational opportunities, and interactive planting parties for the public.



Jacqui (Bernhardt) Robinson operates Broadway Bootcamp LLC, which offers musical theater programming, events, and creative experiences for young children and other participants of various ages. Theresa Bernhardt leads *Heal From Within*, delivering personalized exercise physiology, healing practices and techniques designed to support individual wellness journeys.

The venue's event space, known as *The Stage*, is managed by Alex Bernhardt, who oversees a wide array of programming including comedy shows, live music, speaking engagements, theater, and other entertainment offerings.

Notably, the theater production *Play It Straight* (directed by **Adam Bell**) will be presented by the Actor's Workshop of West Michigan on March 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> at The Stage at The Corner. And *Muskegon Lumber Queen: The Musical* (directed by **Mike Vogas**) returns on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> at this location. In addition, the building has office space for rental; and hosts the Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association and other community group meetings.



Mr. Bernhardt shared that this “urban oasis” was added to the social district last year; and stated that The Corner’s dynamic use of space has positioned the building as a welcoming and versatile gathering place for the Muskegon community.



CELEBRATE OUR HERITAGE

# Muskegon Lumber Queen

THE MUSICAL

back by popular demand

**STAGE AT THE CORNER MAY 8,9,10**  
**HISTORICAL MELODRAMA**

Overall, the presentation underscored the Bernhardt family’s vision and dedication in creating a unique destination that blends historic preservation with modern community needs, fostering connection, creativity, and economic vitality in the heart of downtown Muskegon.



THE ACTOR'S WORKSHOP OF WEST MICHIGAN PRESENTS

## PLAY IT STRAIGHT

BY RICHARD WINTERS, KERRI MUND & GARY WRIGHT

AT  
**THE STAGE AT THE CORNER**  
280 W. MUSKEGON AVE  
MUSKEGON, MI

MARCH 20TH, 21ST,  
27TH & 28TH @ 7PM

TICKETS: \$18 STUDENTS: \$10

TICKETS & MORE INFORMATION  
AVAILABLE AT [WWW.LUDUS.COM](http://WWW.LUDUS.COM)

**MUSKEGON PRIDE**  
STAY STRONG! STAY PROUD!

# New Member Inductions



Theresa Bernhardt steps to the front microphone to help answer questions from Rotarians.



Welcome to Muskegon Rotary, **Kippy Ellis** and **Bridgette Zappacosta!**



**Tiffany Dupont-Novak** participates in Q&A



**Pete DeBoer** participates in Q&A

## Kippy Ellis



Kippy was raised on a different coast (California) then where she calls home today. She is the youngest of four girls and had fun in the sun riding her horse, Princess, on the beach. She started college at the University of Missouri, Columbia for her degree in Journalism; but before finishing, she married and moved to Illinois where they had four children on a farm. Kippy always had a passion for servanthood and started missionary work when the kids were young. They fed the homeless, went on Mission trips to South Dakota, and had many other adventures including her biggest one to Uganda for three weeks with Bob Goff. When Kippy's third child was one year old, she went back to school at North Central College in Naperville to receive her bachelor's degree in Broadcast TV, Radio, and Film. She graduated seven months pregnant with her fourth child and remained on the honor list all four

semesters while hosting her own radio show once a week called "The Vintage Hour." Kippy always had an entrepreneurial spirit and started her first company selling hand sown and beaded handbags with vintage recycled materials. She also owned a catering company where her motto was "we are what we eat" that used all organic ingredients. She also opened her own coffee company, Kippy's Coffee. In her spare time, she helped open a winery/event space in Maple Park, Illinois where she was a wedding coordinator and lead server manager for ten years. Kippy then met her forever husband, Michael, in 2016. They moved to Michigan in 2019 and she received her license as a real estate agent and continues to cook at the Health Hutt on Henry St. one day a week. Service before self is what brought Kippy to the Rotary Club along with her good friend, **Jim Fisher**. Kippy is sponsored by **Jim Fisher** and **Mary Anne Gorman**.

<https://www.facebook.com/thecornermkg/>



## Bridgette Zappacosta



Bridgette Zappacosta serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Samaritas, supporting family services, refugee services, behavioral health, affordable housing, a family homeless shelter, and through the emergency food assistance program serves another 20,000 individuals, annually. In Muskegon, Samaritas operates four affordable housing locations, including Shawl I and Shawl II where expansive renovations are preparing to begin, a child and family services office, and is pursuing the historic redevelopment of the Froebel School. Bridgette began her career in public accounting in Pennsylvania before relocating to Michigan, where she worked at Brickley DeLong. She later transitioned into nonprofit leadership at Pioneer Resources, deepening her operational finance experience and commitment to mission-driven work. At Samaritas, she partners with executive leadership and the Board to guide long-term financial strategy and organizational transformation. She has led major initiatives including a full financial system conversion, modernization of budgeting and forecasting processes, strengthening audit and federal compliance practices, and building a high-performing finance team. Her work helps ensure long-term sustainability while advancing services that support thousands of individuals and families across Michigan each year.

Bridgette holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance, magna cum laude, from Alvernia University.

She was recently recognized by Crain's Grand Rapids Business as a Notable Leader in Finance. She lives in West Michigan with her husband, Joe, and their two children: Vinny, a junior at Mona Shores High School, and Camilla, who attends West Michigan Academy of Arts & Academics. Beyond her professional role, Bridgette is deeply committed to raising good humans, investing in her family, and giving back to the West Michigan community she is proud to call home. Bridgette is sponsored by her husband, **Joe Zappacosta**.

## Rotary In Action Kayla Kolbe



Kayla Kolbe, attorney at Parmenter Law and a first-generation college graduate, shares how finding mentorship and connection through Rotary helped her transition back home and grow professionally. From joining the Paws Committee to building relationships with experienced community leaders, Kayla explains why Rotary is a powerful network for young professionals seeking guidance, collaboration, and purpose. Discover how mentorship, service, and community leadership come together to strengthen careers — and Muskegon.

Watch the video—[CLICK HERE](#)

## Muskegon Rising Podcast now has a title sponsor— Muskegon Area Promise!

### Muskegon Rising Podcast S3E5: TJ Meerman - Mona Shores Boys Basketball



In this episode of Muskegon Rising, host Aaron Maike sits down with TJ Meerman of Mona Shores Boys Basketball to talk about leadership, culture, and the lasting impact coaches can have on young lives.

Coach Meerman shares how his experiences as a player, mentor, and program builder have shaped his approach to developing student-athletes through discipline, relationships, academics, and service. It's a conversation about much more than basketball. It's about helping young people grow into strong teammates, students, and future leaders.

Listen now:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2269729/episodes/18841057-tj-meerman-mona-shores-boys-basketball>

Watch now:

<https://youtu.be/VN9kcgFd7jQ?si=TI0UX8N1Rfqz5giT>

[CLICK HERE FOR ALL PODCASTS](#)

Listen, watch,  
and subscribe  
to Muskegon  
Rising.



## Announcements



President Nominee **Lisa Tyler** shares a bevy of announcements: no ReWine tonight; upcoming events include Kids' Food Basket on March 25, the Lakeshore Literacy Summit on March 27, Pours for Community beginning April 15, the Rotary food truck on April 22 & District Visioning on May 2.

**ROTARY**  
*New Member Social*

**Who** 🍀 New Rotary Members and their sponsors

**What** 🍀 Appetizers in the City Barn followed by a tour of Thomas Hume's house

**When** 🍀 March 20, 2026  
4:00 P.M.

**Where** 🍀 Hackley & Hume Historic Sites  
484 W. Webster Ave.  
Muskegon, MI 49440

RSVP: [melissa@lakeshoremuseum.org](mailto:melissa@lakeshoremuseum.org)



**Melissa Horton** shares details about the Member Connect on Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.



The next Social Committee Rotary After Hours event, **Wednesday, March 25, from 5:30 to 7:00 P.M. at Kids Food Basket, 2330 Barclay Street, Muskegon.** Your evening includes appetizers, adult beverages, water, soft drinks, facility tours, and the opportunity to decorate food bags. Your cost for this event is **FREE!** Mark your calendars, and [CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP.](#) Follow on Facebook—[Click Here](#)

### Rotary ReWine Schedule

- 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays** each month
- **5:00-5:15 pm** social time
  - **5:15 pm** Meeting begins

Next meeting is April 2<sup>nd</sup> at Core Plaza. [Bring supplies for the El Salvador trip to this meeting.](#)

April 16<sup>th</sup> will be at John Noling's house with a bonfire.

April 18<sup>th</sup> Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up

RSVP by 5 pm on Wednesday for the meeting on Thursday.

Contact **Kaytie Drake** at [kaytieely@aol.com](mailto:kaytieely@aol.com) to RSVP (total # attending including guests)

Montague-Whitehall Rotary Club Presents...

**Pancake Breakfast**

Saturday, March 21, 2026  
7:30AM-12:00PM

Held in conjunction with the White Lake Area Chamber Community Business Expo

**Logan Metcalf** invites Rotarians to support Montague-Whitehall Rotary's



Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:30am-Noon.

**Rotary Lakeshore Literacy Summit on March 27 at Trillium Event Center from 8:30am-12pm.**

**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:

**Cost: Free!**

**REGISTER NOW**

Sponsored in part by:

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION of Muskegon County, Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce, Grand Haven Area Community Association, Fruitport, Grand Haven Area Public Schools, Spring Lake District Library, Spring Lake District Library, Spring Lake District Library, Spring Lake District Library



**Wednesday, April 15, 5-7:00 pm,** 794 Kitchen & Bar

**Monday, April 20, 5-7:00 pm,** Unruly Brewing

**Friday, April 24, 4-6:00 pm,** Wonderland Distilling

**Tuesday, April 28, 7:30-9:30 am,** Community House \*\*

**Thursday, April 30, 5-7:00 pm,** Muskegon Brewing

\*\* Please note the **April 28** event is a **morning coffee hour** at the Community House.



**Nancy McCarthy** promotes the *Great Michigan Read* author event with **Curtis Chin**, featuring his book *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*.



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



This author event with Curtis Chin is part of the Great Michigan Read spring tour. The 2025-26 Great Michigan Read is presented by Michigan Humanities. Additional support is provided by national, statewide, and local partners, including the Library of Michigan and MSU Federal Credit Union.



**Dom Bunker** announces an international cookbook from the Rotary Youth Exchange—on sale now!



**Dom Bunker**, chair of the Youth Exchange Committee, has been notified of our first Inbound student, a young man from Germany, and we await notification of two more. Please consider welcoming one of these students as a **host family!** Contact Dom for more information: [Click Here](#)

**Youth Exchange Outbounds**

Now is the time we begin recruiting the next class of outbound students from Muskegon County. Volunteers will also be needed to help speak with students too. If you are interested in volunteering and/or know any students who may be interested in being an outbound Rotary Youth Exchange student, contact **Dom Bunker**.

**Community Yard Sale—May 15-17th**

Rotarians, outbound youth exchange families, and friends are invited to donate items for a community yard sale on May 15th-17th at the United Way building parking lot. More details to come but please start thinking about items you may be able to contribute.



**Aaron Maibe** highlights the upcoming Feeding America food distribution truck on April 10th at Community United Methodist Church.

**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

## Next Youth Exchange Committee Meeting

Our next meeting will be:  
Thursday, March 26 at 5:30 PM  
United Way of the Lakeshore Building

## United Way Day of Caring



Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>

<https://www.unitedwaylakeshore.org/day-caring>

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY



## 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](mailto: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!

## Rotary District 6290 Volunteer Opportunities



<https://ridistrict6290.org/sitepage/open-district-volunteer-roles/>

1. Spring learning center will be at Frederick Meijer Gardens on April 18. Sign Up—[CLICK HERE](#)
2. Saturday, May 16 is the Epic Day of Service. This will be a nationwide Rotary event. Rotarians will partner with local communities and partner with other organizations to complete service projects in their area.
3. Saturday, June 6, Crystal Mountain induction of new District Governor, **Julie Schumaker**

## Braver Angels Workshop

Your Rotary PeaceBuilder Committee is hosting the Braver Angel Workshop, “Bridging the Political Divide”, Part 2, to be held May 1, 1–4 p.m., at the Chamber/GMED offices, 380 W. Western Ave., Suite 202. This workshop is the second half to the workshop held in the spring of 2025. Many of those who participated in the first half asked to have the second half held, including some observers who now would like to be active participants. This workshop will focus on open discussions, as well as finding common ground. Contact Cathy Brubaker-Clarke if you would like additional information.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP](#)



## 🌻 Why Attend?

Because leadership doesn't just happen — it's cultivated.  
Because your club deserves fresh ideas.  
Because connection strengthens impact.  
Because butterflies aren't the only things meant to transform.

