The RIM Newsletter

Rotary InMotion

Rotary Club Of Muskegon

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, November 12, 2026

Next Meeting November 19, 2026 – Noon-1:15pm Chicken Parmesan at the Delta
Program: Rotary Service/Volunteer Fair

What's Coming

November 19—Rotary Service Fair
November 26—No Meeting
Happy Thanksgiving!
December 3—Muskegon Downtown Development

Upcoming Birthdays

Nov 19 Michelle Burley
Nov 20 John Rupert
Nov 22 Karen Kayes
Nov 23 Rob Mathis
Nov 25 Emma Peterson
Nov 27 Kirk Hallman
Nov 28 Gary Nelund
Nov 30 Roger Morgenstern

Caring Connections Fund

Click here to donate

Stage Manager This Week

Tiffany Dupont-Novak

Greeters This Week

Joan Smith & Kathy Agard

Reflector This Week

Jamie Hekker

RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Emily Morgenstern
RIM Reporter – Sue Samaniego
RIM Editor – Susan Besteman



President Roger Morgenstern opened this week's meeting in style with his Chispa Project shirt and showed a piece of the inaugural ribbon from the opening of last June's Chispa project library in Honduras.



Muskegon Rotary Board

President: Roger Morgenstern
President-Elect: Lisa Tyler
President Nominees: Arlen Dean-Gaddy and Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga
Past President: Dave Alexander
Treasurer: Kim Taylor
Secretary: Joanie Smith

Directors:

Kelli DeVos	Dimitri Poland
Martha Fohlbrook	Esther Ricco
Lisa Kraus	Samantha Scott
Melissa Moore	John Selmon

Club Coordinator: Kim Boersema

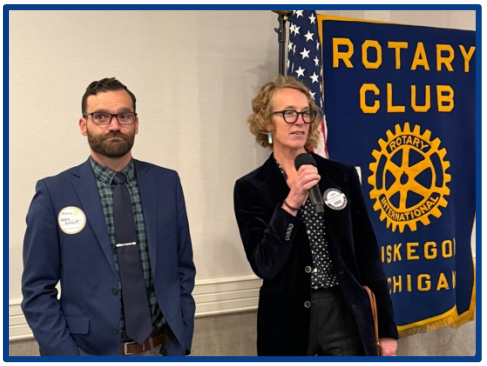
Please email Club Board Members through this link:



Visitors and Guests



Kirk Hallman with guest Gina Shulz, the new Director of Development at the Muskegon Art Museum



Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga introduces Nate Schout (Principal of Muskegon Christian Schools)



Greg Borgman with his guests, Mother Rebekah Taylor (recently ordained priest at St. Paul's) and Grand Rapids Rotarian Dan Fleetwood (owner of Focal Point)



Ben Carson introduces Noelle Bartkowiak (owner of Harbor & Home Cleaning Company)

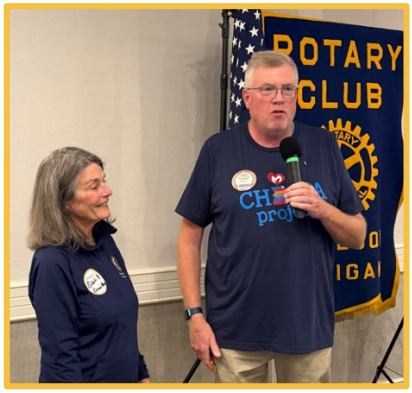


Jonathan Scouten with guest Matt Kooi (new President at Muskegon Rescue Mission)

Muskegon Rotary Nov. 12th YouTube Video:
Click Here



Stefan Hubenov, Concertmaster of the West Michigan Symphony, is the guest of **Kate Kesteloot Scarbrough**



President Roger Morgenstern introduces Grand Haven Rotarian, Gail Ringelberg (helped with the Honduras Chispa project last June)



Claire Root-Benson with two Interact students from Muskegon High School. Zainevia Johnson is a rebound student back from Brazil and Ziyah Ochoa is the Interact Club Treasurer and raising funds to join the Chispa project this upcoming June.

MONTAGUE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EDUCATION IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



Student guests from Montague were introduced by **Marty Sytsema**. Counselor Rob Patton announced they have winter sports tryouts this week and the writing club has started their competitions. Two remarkable seniors also joined: Willa Van Loon (looking at universities for agricultural & environmental studies after graduation) and Chase Kurtzhal (currently dual enrolled at Alpena Community College in their Utility Technology (Lineman) Program and would like to continue after graduation)

RIM Reporting Team

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

ReWine Meeting Schedule

5:00 p.m. Social Time
Meeting starts 5:15 p.m.

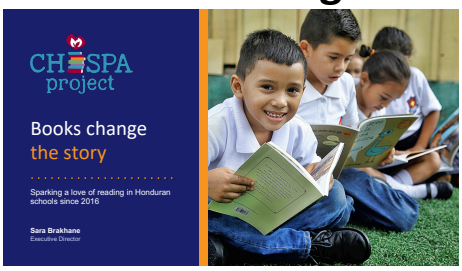
Thursday, November 19th
Muskegon Museum of Art, 315 West Clay Avenue, Muskegon

Thursday, December 3rd Lake Effect Bistro & Lounge (Shoreline Inn)

Thursday, December 17th
MOTU Lakeshore Wine Bar
1208 8th St, Muskegon

RSVP by Wednesday at 5pm
prior to each meeting by contacting Kaytie Drake at kaytieely@aol.com
Total # attending, including guests

This Week's Program:



Chispa Project

Speaker: Sara Brakhane, Executive Dir.
Introduced by: **Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga**
RIM Reporter: **Sue Samaniego**



When Sarah Brakhane went to Honduras in 2011 to visit a friend in the Peace Corps, she "drank the water" and fell in love with the country. She stayed and taught. The local school had one classroom with three grades. There was no teacher. No books. The learning activities were mostly copying things. When she began, she took the students outside to practice writing letters in the dirt with a stick.

When she had a chance, she traveled to the capital city to buy books. She had pulled together $600 for the purpose. When she arrived, she found that most books were $20-30 a piece and most were in English. She bought what books she could in Spanish and brought them back to the students. Those books brought a spark to the children's learning. Chispa means "spark" in Spanish. It can also mean "sprinkles" (like on ice cream) or what people have that gives them drive and life.



The Chispa Project's vision is to spark a desire for lifetime learning to enhance the quality of life. The mission is to:
1. Spark a culture of reading through student access to books.
2. Support educators to engage creatively.
3. Facilitate intercultural exchange through service.



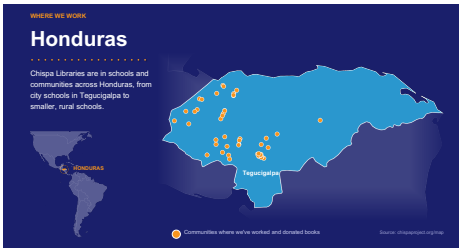
Most students and teachers in Honduras have never held a children's book. 83% of 6th grade readers in Honduras read below satisfactory. Two out of three Hondurans live in extreme poverty on less than $3/day. An average book costs $20+ - way out of the reach of most families. Honduras is not a country of readers or writers because there is no access to books.

There are six steps to install a library through the Chispa Project:
1) Application: There is an application and interview process to find schools that are ready to collaborate. They are looking for "chispa" – readiness and initiative.
2) Library Committee formed: Administrators, teachers, parents and students plan and run the library. It's a partnership and they are the experts in the community.
3) Installation: Volunteers set up shelves, label books, and paint murals.
4) Workshops: Three workshops are held for teachers, families, and students.
5) Inauguration: A day-long celebration with literacy games and activities.
6) Sustainability: Two years of visits, coaching, and support.





Over 700 schools are on the waiting list for a library. Over the past 10 years, 140 libraries have been created. 98,475 books have been delivered. 33,546 students have been served. 1,831 teachers have been trained. 95+% of teachers report better vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The number one way to raise a child's educational level is access to books. The Chispa Project provides students with a magical space where they can escape reality. Jose Antonio Lopez, principal of Nicolas Montes School, said "Books are an essential resource that we lack. We are so grateful for your support in caring for the wellbeing and futures of our students."



For more information, go to chispaproject.org.



Honduras Trip – Mar. 13th



The Rotary Club of Muskegon has taken three trips to Honduras to assist in the successful building of three Chispa Project libraries. A fourth trip is planned for March 13th-20th so, if you are interested in learning more about this upcoming trip or other ways you may be able to help, contact **Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga** (click here to email her) or click on this website link for more details: https://www.chispaproject.org/lago

Rotary Foundation Month

November is Rotary Foundation Month. The Rotary Foundation is a non-profit corporation that supports the efforts of Rotary International to achieve world understanding and peace through international humanitarian, educational and cultural exchange programs. It is supported only by voluntary contributions. The Rotary Foundation was established in 1917, as an endowment fund for Rotary "to do good in the world". It has grown from an initial contribution of $26.50 to more than $1 billion. It has one of the largest and most prestigious international fellowship programs in the world.

Programs under the Rotary Foundation, include; Polio Plus, disaster recovery, health, hunger and humanitarian grants, and educational programs such as scholarships, group study exchange, and Rotary Peace Fellowships.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F1WNaCDg_0

The Rotary Foundation

Spotlight Video

Judy Hayner



Judy Hayner has spent years helping shape Muskegon's cultural landscape, including leading the Muskegon City Public Art Initiative from its beginning in 2018 through the completion of its tenth monumental work in 2025. Now she is turning her attention to documenting an even larger story—a book exploring Muskegon's public art from 1892 to 2026. In this conversation, Judy reflects on what makes Muskegon special and offers a simple challenge: engage with your community. Attend something. Volunteer. Support a local organization. Visit a museum, hear the symphony, experience the arts—and then go back again. Judy believes Muskegon has far more to offer than many people realize, but discovering it requires curiosity and participation. Her message, especially to younger people, is clear: pay attention to what is happening around you. Muskegon's cultural institutions, public spaces and community organizations aren't merely things to observe—they become more meaningful when we choose to be part of them.

Watch the video here!

Announcements



Your Rotary Club was among the sponsors at last Saturday's 6th Annual Shades of Excellence Awards Ceremony, presented by Muskegon Young Black Professionals. Our club sponsored two $1,000 awards.
A little about the recipients:



Chelsey Brownlee will use her scholarship to attend a summer professional development workshop at the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Georgia. The scholarship will help cover workshop registration, travel, lodging, and meals.



Calvin Smith will use his scholarship to attend the ASHP Clinical Conference in Orlando, Florida, where he will have the opportunity to present his research. His scholarship will help cover conference registration, airfare, hotel accommodations, and local transportation.





Many thanks to all our volunteers who placed, and removed, more than 100 American Flags along Seaway Drive Wednesday. Those post holes are more challenging to find among the leaves! We also picked up a large amount of trash. Thank you, Orchard View Interact and all Rotarians who made this possible. Most of all, thank you to all Veterans for your service.





Next Week's Program

Get ready to "speed date" for a volunteer opportunity next week! **Mary Anne Gorman** with the Membership Committee shared the goal for next week's unusual program format is to allow members to learn who to connect with to be able to do the volunteer work and make a difference. If you're curious about what you can do to help, you'll be able to fit the perfect fit next week!

El Salvador Trip – March 31st



Our Club is looking for Rotarians and Interact students to attend two service trips: Honduras from March 13-20 and El Salvador from March 31-April 8. Your Club's board has approved contributing $500 for any Rotarians attending their first overseas trip, as well as $500 for any Interactors wanting to go. Please spread the word! For more information, see **Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga** about Honduras or **Esther Ricco** about El Salvador.

Click here to email Sarah and Esther.



Pop Cans Needed

Tennille Woodward and **Doug Wood** need your pop cans for the Mona Shores Middle School Interact Club from Nov. 16-20th. Click here to email Tennille & Doug if you need them to be picked up.

Kids Food Basket – Volunteers Needed

Tennille Woodward is also looking for more volunteers for our monthly Kids' Food Basket commitment. See Tennille if you are available to help. Our schedule is the 3rd Monday of every month—ten people needed each time.
Click here to email Tennille.

Kids' Food Basket

Thank you, John!

Many thanks to **John Noling** and his involvement as a member of the Muskegon High School Class of '65. This week, they voted to contribute funds not only to our inaugural Nov. 20th Leadership Conference here in Muskegon but also to help fund 3 Muskegon High School students to attend the District 6290 Life Leadership Conference next June. Go Big Reds!

Governor's Service Award

Doug Wood and his wife Kim are among 33 recipients being honored this month by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Community Service Commission at the 2026 Governor's Service Awards for their commitment to service and volunteerism throughout their communities.
According to a news release from Whitmer's office, the Woods have given back to their community for many years. "Kim and Doug Wood make incredible contributions to the causes they care deeply about, supporting each other in service for nearly 50 years and amplifying each other's work. 'They are tireless advocates for justice and mercy in our community and are always pushing us to do more than we are doing, so that we can serve more people,' Community United Methodist Church Pastor Robert Blanchard said. 'They are very much the kind of people who lead from the front and inspire others to keep up with them,' according to a news release from the Governor's office.

"Kim's passion for service began early in her life, and it is exemplified by her work advocating for community sustainability, leading conservation projects, and mentoring young leaders. She believes strongly in the empowerment of others, as she frequently states, 'You have to learn to say no, so someone else has the opportunity to say yes.' She currently serves as an AmeriCorps member with 4-H HealthCorps. Kim also serves in many organizations that focus on animal care. She is President of the Muskegon Area Beekeepers Association, advocating for pollinator education and conservation. Additionally, she is an active volunteer for both Alliance for Therapy Dogs and Pond Buddies, organizations which support the training and adoptions of dogs," the release states.

"Similarly, Doug volunteers in several organizations dedicated to social impact. He has served in leadership roles for an impressive list of over 35 area boards and committees. He is the co-chair of the Education Impact Council at United Way of the Lakeshore, where he focuses on education support for underserved populations. He is the Board Vice President at Family Promise of the Lakeshore, which addresses family homelessness. His dedication to others is most evident by the 20 weekly hours he spends with the Muskegon Rotary Club mentoring young people and strengthening community initiatives. He was the driving force behind establishing the organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, promoting inclusivity and advocacy for all," the release states.



Doug, ever modest, told *RIM* that credit also goes to many others. "In the spirit of the Four-Way Test, I have asked for one correction in the narrative created by the award celebration organizers: I do not consider myself "THE" driving force behind the creation of the DEI Committee at Muskegon Rotary. I am very proud of my involvement in the committee's formation and the important work it has done and continues to do. I accept that I may have been "a" part of the process.

"Like most important things done by Rotary here in Muskegon and around the world, a team of people makes it happen," Doug said. "I have been humbled by statements made by **Brianna Scott** about the role I played at the committee's formation, especially considering the hard work and commitment she and then Chief of Police **Jeff Lewis** demonstrated in getting the committee off the ground. The work continues because of the people who dedicate time and energy to it. Any recognition Kim and I receive must be shared with the many folks we stand with who make volunteering in our community so rewarding."

RI District 6290 Governor Julie Schumaker congratulated Doug and his wife on the recognition. "I want to congratulate you on being recognized for your dedicated service to the Muskegon community along with your wife, Kim. Your decades-long commitment to making the world a better place exemplifies the true meaning of "Service above Self." While you don't seek the limelight and are quick to give credit to others, it is especially gratifying to know that your leadership and service have been recognized. Doug, your Rotary family is proud of you!"

The Woods will be honored along with other individuals, businesses and nonprofit organizations at an awards ceremony in Flint Thursday, Nov. 19.

Muskegon Rising Podcast S3E23: John Prokop – Brunswick Bowling



For 120 years, Brunswick Bowling has been part of Muskegon's economic story—and its influence now reaches around the world.
John Prokop of Brunswick Bowling joins Muskegon Rising to explore how a company drawn here by Muskegon's lumber industry became a global force in bowling innovation. Today, Brunswick's Muskegon headquarters continues to support engineering,

technology, marketing and product development, while products created here can be found from Japan to London to Dubai.
It's a remarkable story of what happens when a community, its workforce and a great company grow together—and keep looking toward what comes next.

Listen: https://www.buzzsprout.com/2269729/episodes/20116031

Watch: https://youtu.be/_uroirlaB_E?si=NH3pKcoMR8eHgtwA

Muskegon Rising



Please welcome potential new members:

Vitorria Overmyer who is a transfer member from the Jackson Club. Vittoria is the Owner of Gems of Jackson Childcare & Education Center. Vitorria has been approved by the Muskegon Rotary Club and will be inducted soon.

Kathy Rohlman who is a returning member. Kathy is the Executive Director of Camp Sunshine of Muskegon. Kathy will be introduced to the Club soon.

Leah Jipping who is Owner/Optometrist of Still Waters Vision Rehabilitation. Leah has been approved by the Muskegon Rotary Board and is sponsored by **Linda Juarez**. Leah will be inducted soon.

Steven Kekelik who is the Owner/CEO of IndiGrow LLC. Steven has been approved by the Muskegon Rotary Board and is sponsored by **Greg Borgman**. Steven will be inducted soon.

Jackie Hallberg who is the Executive Director of Mediation & Restorative Services. Jackie has been approved by the Muskegon Rotary Board and is sponsored by **Jim Fisher**.

Jessica Owen-Brown who is the Executive Director of Pathfinders of Muskegon. Jessica has been approved by the Muskegon Rotary and is sponsored by **Melissa Moore**. Jessica will be inducted soon.

Harvest Fest T-Shirts

Here's a great way to remember this year's Harvest Fest and support the Muskegon Rotary Foundation too! We have a limited number of these awesome Harvest Fest shirts. They are long sleeve and all size XL. The cost is $25 each. Please pay in cash or checks made out to the *Muskegon Rotary Foundation*. See **Carla Flanders** or **Roger Morgenstern** if you'd like one!!





