

The RIM Newsletter

Rotary

In Motion



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, September 3, 2026

September 10, 2026, Tacos at the Lake House Program – Inbound Rotary Exchange Students

What's Coming

September 17 – The Hope Project
September 24 – Peace Builders
International Peace Day

Upcoming Birthdays

September 13 Belinda Barbier
September 19 Todd Rexford
September 20 Denise Sabo
September 20 Nicholas Morano
September 20 Kaitlin Hermanson



**Caring
Connections Fund**
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President Roger begins the meeting playing Tom Petty's *Running Down the Dream*. This is his go-to road trip song when he starts feeling a little drowsy.

Reflection



Joanie Smith encouraged her fellow Rotarians to "table hop" to meet our many new members.

Stage Manager This Week

Joanie Smith

Greeters This Week

Greg Borgman
Kyle Carcamo

Reflector This Week

Joanie Smith

RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Emily Morgenstern
RIM Reporter – Ginny Sprague
RIM Editor – Ginny Sprague

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Kim Boersema, Club Coordinator

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

Visitors and Guests



State Representative Will Snyder introduces his guest, State Senator Jon Bumstead, proof that opposite sides of the aisle can get along.

Muskegon Rotary Sept. 3
YouTube Video:
[CLICK HERE](#)

Visitors and Guests



Megan Byard-Karaba introduces her guest, **Lisa Carlson**, MAISD Business Partnership Coordinator.

This Week's Program The Torrent House Renovation Plan



Presenters:

Joe Zappacosta and
Mallory Metzger

Introduction:

Melissa Horton

RIM Reporter:

Ginny Sprague

RIM Photographer:

Emily Morgenstern



Missy Horton highlighted her collaborations with today's speakers, introducing **Joe Zappacosta**, Director of the Hackley Public Library and fellow member of the Muskegon Arts and Culture Coalition, and **Mallory Metzger**, Hackley Public Library's Marketing and Community Engagement Coordinator and a former guide at the Hackley and Hume Historic site.



Stepping to the lectern, Joe began his presentation about the Torrent House, seeking to not only inform us about what is happening at this historic building but also looking to engage our support for the "Torrent of Possibility," a restoration project to benefit the region.

Beginning with the history of the Torrent House, Joe acknowledged that his presentation would cover many dates but assured us there would be no quiz at the end. The eponymous visionary who gave his name to the Torrent House first came to Muskegon in 1857. John Torrent was a successful businessman, alderman, justice of the peace, real estate developer, and three-term mayor of Muskegon. He and his wife, Caroline, née Honor, married in 1858, and had nine children (six boys, two girls, and one who died in infancy). In 1859, he opened a mill, the Torrent Arms, specializing in roofing shingles and held many patents related to lumber milling and processing.



Chicago Architect W.K. Johnson designed the house, and it was built between 1891 and 1892 for \$250,000. A Gilded Age masterpiece built in the Romanesque and Queen Anne style, it was designed to impress with several unique features: a bowling alley, a billiard room, a large ballroom, prep kitchens, a total of thirty-one rooms, three floors of living space, and was one of the few stone homes in the area. The photo on the next page shows an historic view of the home.

Stately homes such as the Torrent House are very expensive to maintain, and in 1922, while the family still owned the home, they operated a tearoom on the premises called the Eff-N-Zee Tea Room.

In 1929, Ralph J. Balbirnie, a successful funeral director, purchased the home and operated it as a funeral parlor and morgue. The ballroom was converted to a casket showroom, the morgue was in the basement, and an elevator was installed. The Ralph J. Balbirnie Funeral Mansion operated from 1929 until 1942.

In 1942, a group of 21 osteopathic physicians purchased the Torrent House and converted it into fully functioning hospital. The venture was so successful that they expanded the building by adding an extension along Webster Avenue, which allowed them to modernize the hospital and add an emergency room, and expand the number of patient rooms. As the hospital continued to grow, the group wanted to add a third floor to the existing extension, tear down the Torrent House, and build a more modern wing down Third Street. Fortunately for the Torrent House, the physicians abandoned this plan in favor of building a new hospital facility at 1700 Oak Avenue in 1967.

From 1967 to 1972, the Torrent House, the addition, and the parking lot behind it were unoccupied, which led to deterioration. In 1972, the Red Cross purchased the property and considered tearing down the Torrent House and adding a parking lot.

In 1972 a local grassroots effort began to save the Marble House, a nickname for the Torrent House. The City of Muskegon proposed a moratorium on destroying the Torrent House and split the properties. Several key players came together to form a Commission to Save the Torrent House. Chairman Floyd Farmer and his wife, Caron, and

Ray and Geri Grennan, several community agencies and individuals, led the effort to restore the Torrent House including adding a new roof.

In 1990s, the City wanted to sell the Torrent House, which was zoned for commercial use. Once again, the community and the Friends of the Hackley Library rallied together and raised the money to make a competing bid. The City agreed to sell the building to the Friends of Hackley Library, a 501 (c) (3) organization.

In 1890, Charles Hackley gave the Library to the Muskegon Public Schools to own and operate. However, in 2000, the Library became a District Library, and while ownership remained with the school district, the Library continued to maintain both buildings.

In 2015, the Library undertook a major renovation of the Library building including adding air conditioning. It moved tech services, offices, and genealogy and local history collections to the Torrent House in partnership with the Muskegon County Genealogical Society. In 2021, the American Red Cross vacated the Community Services Building, nicknamed the "tumor," and the Downtown Muskegon Development District purchased the building. In 2023, the Community Services Building was demolished, and in 2024 the Hackley Public Library gained ownership of the Torrent House.

As the focus of program turned to the present, Joe asked Mallory Meston to cover the Torrent House Renovation overview. Mallory began by sharing the results of a feasibility study, which

This design includes a chairlift to address the five-foot elevation change between the main floor and ground level, as well as protection from the elements. The stairway tower would allow after-hours access to the third floor. The slide below shows floor plans for all three floors and the basement. Plans include reading and meeting rooms, a coffee shop location, and an on-going book sales area for the Friends. identified the key elements that would need to be addressed. The Purpose and Objectives include:

- Address accessibility deficiencies for public use.
- Improve code compliance (ADA, energy performance).
- Extend useful life of the facility.
- Preserve historic character and architectural integrity.
- Enhance functionality for the public and staff.



Speaker Mallory Metzger

Mallory shared two conceptional drawings for the redesigned front and side entrances of the building. These designs have been shared with the Historic District Commission. Many more discussions and approvals will be needed for the design and for the materials to preserve the building's

historic integrity. You can find more information on the Hackley Public Library website including a flyer that was on the tables. [Torrent House - Renovation Plan - Hackley Public Library.](#)

Proposed Design Solutions

New Additions

- Main Entrance Vestibule (West): Accessible entry with chair lift to address 5-foot elevation change
- Secondary Entrance & Stair Tower (East): 3-story addition with elevator and stairs, improving vertical circulation and accessibility



Interior Improvements

- Vertical Circulation: Replace existing elevator, add new interior stair connecting 2nd-3rd floors
- Social Spaces: Preserve historic layout, enhance gathering spaces on first floor
- Program Expansion: Second floor - podcast studio, audio/visual lab, genealogy rooms; Third floor - improved ballroom access with dedicated stair tower



Mallory assured the audience that everything that is currently offered at the Torrent House will be preserved. In addition, they want to focus on needs not currently addressed by other agencies as they reimagine the Torrent House for the community.



Torrent House Historic Marker

This Week's Birthdays



Inductions



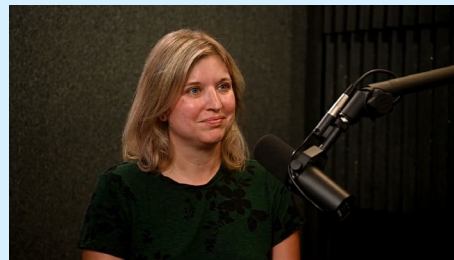
Sponsor **Roger Morgenstern** introduces **Ron Howard**.

Sponsor **President Roger** introduced **Ron Howard**, nicknamed Happy Days, back when they attended Mona Shores High School, graduating in 1984.

Ron likes to say that he has many families: his personal family including his grandparents from Lakeside and Pinchtown, his parents from Norton Shores, and his wife, Stephanie, and their two sons, Beau and Logan, who live in Ferrysburg. He also his work families including his colleagues at General Motors where he worked as a Mechanical Engineer for 32 years before retiring in 2021, and his colleagues at Seaway Appliance, which he purchased in 2023. Ron is proud to carry on a Muskegon family business institution approaching its 100-year anniversary.

While working at Seaway Appliance, Ron learned about Rotary and its community impact. Ron was a food bank volunteer in

Rotary in Action Lisa Kraus



Lisa Kraus shares how joining the Muskegon Rotary Club opened the door to meaningful service, valuable friendships, and a deeper commitment to the community.

Drawing on her experience with Taste of Muskegon and Harvest Fest, she reflects on the importance of asking questions, stepping up to serve, and working alongside fellow Rotarians who are passionate about making Muskegon a better place.

Lisa's story is a reminder that Rotary is built on welcoming people and sharing our talents to better our community.

As Rotary's Vision statement reminds us: *Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change— across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.*

Pontiac, Michigan, and while working at General Motors during COVID, he helped with ventilator and mask production.

Ron has many interests including both domestic and international travel, learning from different cultures while working on a joint venture in Japan, and living for two years in Germany while working for General Motors. He also enjoys sports including football, hockey, baseball, and golf.

Ron wants to join the Muskegon Rotary Club to meet other people, who are interested in helping their community and making a difference.



Sponsor **Jim Fisher** introduces new Rotarian **Kathy Agard**

Kathy Agard, a life-long Muskegon resident, graduated from Mona Shores Schools. She attended Albion College, double majoring in political science and communications. At Western Michigan University, she earned a master's degree in public administration, and a doctorate in education with a concentration in organizational leadership and human resource development.

Kathy's career included roles as a senior level manager or Chief Executive Officer of a number of nonprofits in Muskegon, the states in the Great Lakes Region, Philadelphia, and across Michigan.

The Council of Michigan Foundations was her home for the majority of her career, first as Program Director for a major initiative to extend and develop community foundations across the State of Michigan, then as Executive Director of "Learning to Give" a free, academic, and online set of resources aspiring to integrate the knowledge and values of voluntary giving and service deeply into the K-12 school curriculum.

She retired from Grand Valley State University where she served as the Executive Director of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy, one of GVSU's centers of excellence, and as Associate Professor in the School for Public Administration and Nonprofit Leadership. Her scholarship includes publication of a two-volume reference work on Nonprofit Leadership, and original research on growth patterns of community foundations.

Kathy has two grown children, and three college-age grandchildren. She tends to the whims of a big white Pyrenes dog, and an entitled grey cat. She's an amateur genealogist and, a not always successful, gardener.

Her interest in Rotary stems from a love of Muskegon and concern for its welfare, admiration for the work and lives of members of the Muskegon Rotary Club, and belief in the need for organizations that build community resilience.



New Rotarian **Ratan Khatri** delivered his own introduction for his sponsor, **Darleen Collet**, who recently had cataract surgery.

Ratan Khatri came to the USA in 1970 from India with his parents and sisters and landed in the little Town of Clawson Michigan, near Metro Detroit. He started school in the 5th grade after having just finished 4th grade in India. Ratan graduated from Clawson High School in 1978 and became a Naturalized Citizen just before going to flight school at Western Mich University.

He met his wife a few months later, and they have been together for 48 years, married for 44 years. After college, they moved back to the Detroit area, but unfortunately, Ratan could not get a flying job due to the economy and the Air-traffic Controllers strike. Ratan went back into the mushroom distribution business which he pursued during college and bought his first house at the age of 22.

The couple moved to Grand Haven, where they used to visit his wife's grandparents. Both sets of his grandparents lived in Muskegon, and both of his wife's parents were raised in Muskego. All those visits during

college inspired him to one day live in West Michigan. They purchased their first house, fixed it up and flipped it in ten months. Their second house was purchased to flip, but they kept it for 32 years and raised their daughter there. Their daughter is now married, and both she and her husband have doctorate degrees in physics.

In Muskegon, Ratan started in the mortgage business and owned a property management company, which he sold in 2019. He has continued to build his real estate portfolio in Muskegon, operating both long-term and short-term rentals. They sold their house in Grand Haven four years ago and have been living in Muskegon since.

Still active in real estate, Ratan coaches anyone who wants to buy a house or start Investing In real estate to build wealth. He wants to pass on his knowledge to others, also hosting four meetups a year. A recently published author on Amazon, his book, *The American Dream is not For Americans*, explains how and why immigrants succeed in America.

The couple supports many local Charities, including Boys and Girls Club, Pound Buddies, the Noah Project, local museums, and the West Michigan Symphony. He still flies privately as a member of the West Michigan Flying Club.

Ratan looks forward to being a Rotarian, meeting his fellow Rotarians, and finding how he can best serve the Club and the community.

Presidential Announcements

ReWine meets at 5:00 pm tonight at the Lake Effect Bistro and Lounge. Please RSVP to Kaytie Drake.

We need volunteers to help place flags along Seaway Drive on Labor Day September 7. Use SignUp Genius to volunteer.

The Board is seeking candidates for president nominee* and directors to join the Board beginning in July 2027. Please see President Elect Lisa Tyler if you are interested.

*The president nominee will become president beginning July 1, 2029.

Please check out the new Muskegon Rotary Flag flying at Rotary Park!



Tennille Woodward shares information about the local Life Leadership Conference for Muskegon County Students.



Dom Bunker asks for help to encourage more students to apply for the 2027-2028 Youth Exchange year. The deadline for applications is Friday September 11.

Interested Rotarians are also needed to interview student candidates for the Exchange program on Sunday, September 20. Please see page 7 or Dom's email dated 09.03.2026 for more information.

Announcements



Rob Cook shares news from the Peace Builders Committee about The Soul Box Project from Sept. 22nd – Oct. 8th



Marianne Bockheim-Verhil asks for beverage donations and volunteer participation at Harvest Fest on October 22 at the CIM.



Susan Cloutier Crain, World Community Service, announced we will be working with the Chispa Project to build a library in Honduras from March 13 to 20, 2027.

The WCS Committee will offer \$500 support to first-time volunteers (both students and adults) for an international service project. See Susan, Linda Juarez, or Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga for more information.



Tim Lipan of the Social Committee invited Rotarians and their families aboard the Milwaukee Clipper on Tuesday, September 22 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Polio eradication efforts reported as of 09.01.26 *

19 cases in Afghanistan and three cases in Pakistan. No new cases were reported this week. Total number of cases for 2026 is 22.



(2025 = 47)

*Soucre Rotary Foundation Confirmed Global Wild Virus Type 1 WHO HG

Help Find Our Next Rotary Youth Exchange Students!

The deadline is approaching for students to apply for **Rotary Youth Exchange for the 2027–2028 school year**, and we need the help of our fellow Rotarians to spread the word!

Applications are due September 11.

Think about the young people in your life. Your children or grandchildren, nieces and nephews, neighbors, family friends, coworkers' children, or students you know could be looking for an opportunity exactly like this one. Rotary Youth Exchange gives students the chance to spend a school year abroad, immerse themselves in another culture, build lifelong friendships, and serve as a young ambassador for our community and country.

Eligible applicants must be **born between February 1, 2009 and February 1, 2012**, have a **2.75 GPA or higher**, and be a Muskegon County student.* Most importantly, we're looking for young people who are curious, adaptable, and ready for an incredible adventure.

Know someone who should apply? Applications are due September 11: <https://bit.ly/MuskegonYouthExchangeInterest>

Muskegon Rotarians, We Need You, Too!

Once applications are in, it will be time to meet our prospective exchange students, and **we would love to have fellow Rotarians join us for Interview Day!**



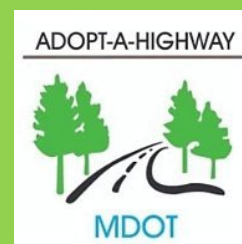
Volunteering for interviews is a great way to support Youth Exchange, meet the students interested in representing our community abroad, and help us select our next group of outbound exchange students. You do not need to be a member of the Youth Exchange Committee to help.

Interested in volunteering for Interview Day? Sign up here:

<https://bit.ly/GetConnectedMuskegonRotary>

*Whitehall and Montague students are served by their own Rotary Youth Exchange program

Looking for Volunteers



Our next pickup for the Muskegon Rotary stretch of highway on I-96 will be on **Saturday, September 26.**

Volunteers will meet promptly at 7:30am for a short safety talk, then head out on the road to pick trash. We need two drivers to drive along with the volunteers who are picking trash. We will finish no later than 10:00 am.

Please contact Esther Ricco, estherricco@hotmail.com or 616-283-1810 for more details.