

# 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

December 12, 2024

**Next Meeting (December 19, 2024, 12-1:30pm) — Plated meal at the DELTA  
 Program Topic –Seasonal Entertainment & Annual Meeting**

## What's Coming

- December 19 – Annual Meeting & Seasonal Entertainment
- December 26 & Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> – NO Meeting
- Jan 9 – Future of Great Lakes Shipping/Port of Muskegon

## Upcoming Birthdays

- |              |                           |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| December 19  | <b>Jason Smith</b>        |
| December 20  | <b>David Hogan</b>        |
| December 20. | <b>David Mendendorp</b>   |
| December 20  | <b>Troy Wasserman</b>     |
| December 21  | <b>Jules Terry</b>        |
| December 21  | <b>Michael Weessies</b>   |
| December 23  | <b>Danielle Risley</b>    |
| December 24  | <b>Contessa Alexander</b> |
| December 27  | <b>Kelly DeVos</b>        |
| December 28  | <b>Tom Livezey</b>        |
| December 28  | <b>Craig Wikander</b>     |
| December 29  | <b>Stacey Kennedy</b>     |

## Caring Connections Fund



[Click this link to donate \\$10 on your birthday](#)

## Greeter This Week

Pete DeBoer

## Reflector This Week

Jamie Hekker

## RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Wyatt Huggett  
 RIM Reporter – Roger Morgenstern  
 RIM Editor – Susan Besteman

## Visitors & Guests



**Melissa Moore** introduced her guest, Jenna Lakos (Development Coordinator with Read Muskegon).



**Susan Besteman** introduces her guest and daughter, Sofia Besteman, who is in Early Act at NM Elementary.



Musk Hts HS Academy seniors Terrance Paskel and Anecia Marble were honored today by School Advisor Sherlundra Ellis and **President Tim Arter** today at Rotary. Go Tigers!



These student guests (who impressed us all by attending even when school was cancelled for the snow) were introduced by **Kendrah Robinson**.

## Muskegon Rotary Board

- Tim Arter, President  
 Dave Alexander, President-Elect  
 Roger Morgenstern, President Nominee  
 Ginny Sprague, Past President  
 Kristi Nagengast, Treasurer  
 Jane Clingman-Scott, Secretary  
 Kim Boersema, Club Coordinator
- Directors:  
 Aaron Maike                      Tom Palmer  
 Brandon Turnbull                Esther Ricco  
 Marty Sytsema                  Lisa Tyler

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



**President Tim Arter** opened the meeting.

# This week's program: READ Muskegon



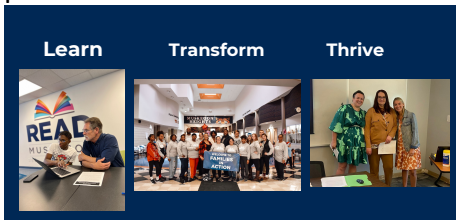
Presenter: **Melissa Moore**  
 Introduced by: **Missy Horton**  
 RIM Reporter: **Roger Morgenstern**



We received a great overview of Read Muskegon from one of our own, Executive Director **Melissa Moore**, including its history since its

2005 founding, the programs it provides today and a glimpse at its future plans.

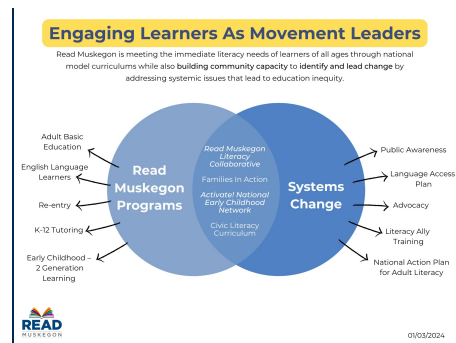
Read Muskegon is the only non-profit in Muskegon solely dedicated to literacy, said Moore, who became the organization's first full-time executive director in 2013. "A lot of people know who Read Muskegon is, but I think many people don't know the depth of the programs we provide."



Moore said a lot of focus is on third grade reading levels, but a

statistic she focuses on is the 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. Achieving this level is important for things like applying for jobs, renting or buying homes and performing banking services. Unfortunately, about half of Americans (54 percent) read below a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. Read Muskegon is helping tackle this challenge by offering programs with a variety of community partners, but also promoting change in systems across our society, Moore said. Read Muskegon's programs include:

- Adult basic education
- English Language Learners
- Re-entry to society from prison or jails
- K-12 tutoring
- Early childhood -- 2 generation learning



It is working on "systems change" through a variety of efforts, including:

- Public awareness
- A language access plan
- Advocacy
- Literacy ally training
- Promoting a national action plan for adult literacy

"The adult literacy rate hasn't changed in 30 years," Moore said. More than 25,000 adults ages 16-74 in Muskegon County read below a 4th grade level, which is considered functionally illiterate. And she said outreach is so important as only about 10 percent of adults needing literacy and education programs receive them.

The benefits of participating in literacy programs are numerous, but the work takes time as many who walk through their doors have given up on being able to read. The organization's focus is: Learn, Transform and Thrive. "It takes time and it's often in baby steps but eventually they begin to thrive," she said.



In 2023, Read Muskegon had 457 program participants and 85 percent program growth in recent years. Some of the fastest growing programs are English as a second language (270 percent raise) and jail-based programs (a 288 percent increase). Because of this success, Read Muskegon is outgrowing its facility at 26 E. Broadway Avenue in downtown Muskegon Heights.

She said the city's Downtown Development Authority has been a great landlord and they're looking to stay in city. Read Muskegon has purchased the former Potters Lamps building, 2709 Peck Street.



**2709 Peck St**  
Building a home for literacy in Muskegon County

Moore said more details will be announced soon, but the larger space still provides a great downtown Muskegon Heights location which is close to local schools, churches and other community partners. Among the new building's benefits will be room to provide childcare for program participants, a significant challenge for many people looking to use their services. It will also give Read Muskegon a chance to promote literacy among a vulnerable community while their family members also participate in adult programs.

With the new location they expect to serve more than 600 people annually, Moore said. "We've come a long way since our founding in 2005."

**RIM Reporting Team**  
 Co-Editors: Susan Besteman & Jackie Farrar  
 Reporters: Kathy Moore, Roger Morgenstern, Meredith Smillie, Sue Samaniego, Ginny Sprague  
 Photographers: Mark Alpher, Wyatt Huggett, & Roger Morgenstern  
 Contributors: John Noling, Mike Vogas, & Doug Wood

**Spotlight Video  
Nicholas Green**



Nick works with social media to tell our local and international community what we do and why. Generating interest in our charitable and outreach programs, the Social Media Team currently works with Facebook and Instagram and encourages our members to like, share and comment on posts to increase their organic reach.

See the full video—[Click Here](#)



Looking for some fiction books for the holidays? [CLICK HERE](#) for MADL recommendations!

**December 19<sup>th</sup>--  
Holiday Meeting/Party**



Mark your calendars for our special Holiday Rotary luncheon **Thursday, Dec. 19** at the Delta. There will be a special meal & every Rotarian's spouse, or significant other, is invited to attend as a guest of the Club--**FREE!** But please sign them up when you get the Sign-Up Genius e-mail from **Kim Boersema** so we have an accurate count for the delicious plated meal of house salad, stuffed chicken breast, herb whipped potatoes, brown butter carrots and of course... cookies! [CLICK HERE](#)

**No Rotary meetings on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> and Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>.**



**Andy Buelow** announced the West Michigan Symphony Brass Quintet will present a program of Holiday music inspired by diverse traditions and cultures!



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Brave Rotarians Contest!



**Meredith Smillie** announced this week's exciting Brave Rotarians' contestants who were cast off the wheel and out of the contest: **Jules Terry, Don Hutchins, Emma Peterson, and Joanie Smith.**

(Contributed by **Roger Morgenstern**) As we've watched the "Wheel of Misfortune" spinning during the last couple of weekly meetings, some Rotarians, especially our younger members, have been asking *RIM* staff, what's this Brave Rotarian thing all about? Here's the facts, checked by our coordinator for Paul Harris Fellows, **Meredith Smillie.**

The Brave Rotarian contest is one of several types of promotions we have during the year to get Rotarians to contribute to The Rotary International Foundation. The Foundation does great work around the world with voluntary financial support from local Rotarians like our Muskegon members. It is suggested by Rotary International (RI) that each Rotarian contribute at least \$100 a year toward the RI Foundation. A Brave Rotarian contest is a fun way to do this. For the contest underway now, Meredith put out the ask for volunteers who each contribute \$100. Their names are put on the "Wheel of Misfortune" and each week 3 Rotarians are eliminated. They are thanked for their \$100 contribution. At the end of the contest in a couple of weeks, two Rotarians will be "left

on the wheel." Those Rotarians will have a Paul Harris Fellow (PHF) granted to them in their name. A PHF is Rotary International's way of recognizing Rotarians who donate \$1,000 to the RI Foundation. These fellows can be obtained by Rotarians who donate \$1,000 over a period of time, or they can be given or granted to others on behalf of Rotarians or a Club. In our Muskegon Club, \$3 of your quarterly dues goes toward "purchasing" Paul Harris Fellows which the Club then gives to outstanding community members during the year.

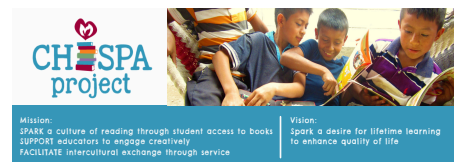
Still have more questions? Feel free to ask Meredith!

## Honduras Trip

The Rotarian work trip to Honduras is Feb. 16-22, 2025.

Registration link: <https://www.chispaproject.org/register#registration>

This work will build on efforts this year to construct and equip a community library near the capital of Tegucigalpa. Contact **Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga** at [srinsema@madl.org](mailto:srinsema@madl.org) if you are interested in learning more.



Chispa Project creates vibrant school libraries and empowers teachers in Honduras to foster a love of reading and learning. By delivering thousands of books directly to schools and working with local communities, we help set up sustainable libraries managed by students, parents, and teachers. Our programs ignite a passion for education, strengthen literacy, and support long-term academic growth.



## Auction Items Needed for Youth Exchange

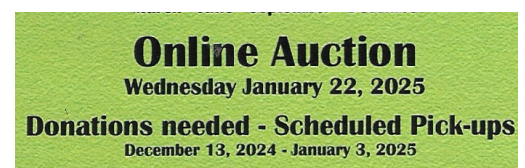


**Craig Pirrotta** helps with the Rotary Youth Exchange Program and this year it will cost \$8000 for each student. This increased expense caused one of the students to drop out, so they need our help with more donations including donations for another auction. The first auction a few months ago raised \$1200 with another \$500 check that arrived after; however, these students could use more help. Craig is looking to do another auction this month and is asking for more items or even your cash donation.

[The flyer is the last page of this newsletter.](#)

[CLICK HERE](#) to donate cash or contact Craig if you have items. This quarterly fundraiser is worth more than the effort it takes to raise the money. The value of experiencing another culture will improve the outlook and social understanding of these students for the rest of their lives.

To watch Craig's brief video, [CLICK HERE.](#)



## Pop Can Drive



**Kristi Pawlak** shared details about a special pop can drive organized by our ReWine Satellite club to raise \$1,000 to help two Muskegon High

School students who have demonstrated financial challenges but are working on raising money to participate in Rotary leadership programs. One is looking to be an international exchange student next year and the other intends to go to El Salvador. Feel free to bring your pop cans to noon Rotary meetings on Dec. 12, 19 and January 9. If you have a large number of returnable cans or can't bring them to the specified lunch meetings, let us know and we will pick them up from you. Please contact **John Noling** at [johnnoling65@gmail.com](mailto:johnnoling65@gmail.com) or call/text at 231-670-3740 or **Esther Ricco** at [riccoe@gvsu.edu](mailto:riccoe@gvsu.edu) or call/text to 616-283-1810 to arrange a pick up. Thank you for your continued support of our Interact students!!!



## Muskegon Rotary Club Survey Results



**Melissa Horton**, a member of the membership committee, provided an overview of the recent survey. [Click this link](#) (members only) to see the results. “The survey response was 42%, an amazing response rate,” she said. “You did it, thank you and we heard your voice.”

A few figures: Over 90 percent of those surveyed overall were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” to be a member of the club. There were also high marks for how the weekly meetings are run, the number of service projects and that the club is a welcoming organization.

The survey showed the three top community needs that should be addressed through service projects include homelessness/housing, literacy (great timing considering this week’s presentation!) and youth mentoring.

Horton thanked membership committee chair **Mary Anne Gorman** for all her work on the survey. The committee is taking the results and sharing with club committees to address areas of concern and interest of members to make our club even stronger.



## ReWine Updates

### Upcoming Meetings--

**Thursday, December 19** – no ReWine meeting

**Thursday, January 2** – no ReWine meeting

**Thursday, January 16** – Meeting at 5:15pm and location TBD

### Chili Cook-Off Cancelled for 2025

Due to the lack of sufficient volunteers, ReWine had to make the difficult decision to cancel the 2025 Chili Cook-Off.

## Adopt A Working Family Through United Way

**Christine Robere** shared that United Way of the Lakeshore is still looking for people to adopt six remaining families through its Adopt a Working Family program, which is helping more than 130 families in our community! Here’s a link to a recent e-mail shared with the community with background information and how to get involved:

<https://conta.cc/4g3hO8o>. United Way also has a webpage that folks can check out for more information: [Adopt A Working Family Program | United Way of the Lakeshore](#). There’s also information on United Way’s Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/RhForYmpP5b6PZwB/>. If it’s easier, feel free to call Sara Sherwood at United Way, (231) 332-4010.



## Muskegon Rising Podcast Ep 49: Howard Hardesty and Kendrah Robinson - Muskegon Rotary Club



Want to make a difference in the Muskegon community and connect with a global network of changemakers?

Join us as we meet Rotarians **Howard Hardesty** and **Kendrah Robinson** and explore the Muskegon Rotary Club, the largest in Michigan! Discover a welcoming community of individuals dedicated to service and making a positive impact.

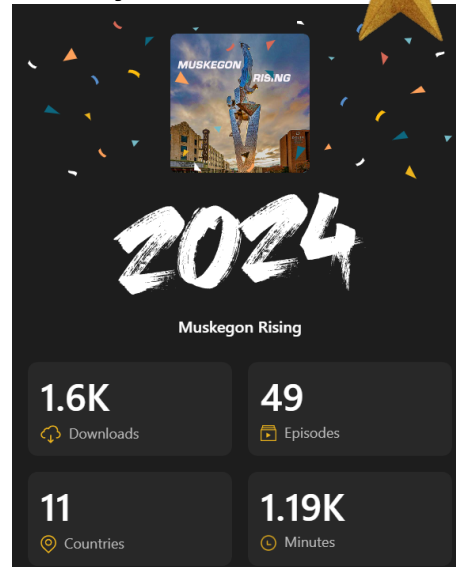
Learn how you can get involved and contribute to meaningful projects that have been making a difference in Muskegon since 1916.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2269729/episodes/16256802-howard-hardesty-and-kendrah-robinson-muskegon-rotary-club>

This link connects to the entire collection of our YouTube Muskegon Rising video podcasts.

[CLICK HERE FOR ALL PODCASTS](#)

## Congratulations to Rotary's Podcast!



Special guest, Sofia Besteman, draws a ticket for the raffle. Longtime occasional *RIM* contributing photographer **Bob Scolnik** captured Sofia keeping



warm before drawing the winning raffle ticket.

## Annual Meeting Dec 19<sup>th</sup> – Election Information

At our Annual Meeting to be held during our December 19 luncheon, we will be holding our election for new officers and directors. These new officers and directors will take office this coming July 1, 2025.

Our Nomination Committee process of developing a Slate started in August. After that nomination process was completed, the Board of Directors approved a Slate of Officers and Directors at its meeting on Tuesday, November 12.

This Slate includes the 2 additional director positions approved by the membership's vote on November 7, 2024, to amend the Club Bylaws.

The following individuals and associated positions represent the Board-approved Slate of Officers:

President Nominee – **Lisa Tyler**  
Treasurer – **Kimberly Taylor**  
Directors --

For a two-year term ending June 30, 2027 -- **Dimitri Poland**

For three-year terms ending June 30, 2028

**Arlen Gaddy**  
**Lisa Kraus**  
**Melissa Moore**  
**Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga**

Also, in accordance with Club Bylaws, as of July 1, 2025:

**Dave Alexander** will ascend to the office of President

**Roger Morgenstern** will ascend to the office of President-Elect



**Jamie Hekker** offered the reflection for this week in haiku format.



# Rotary Foundation of Muskegon

## YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

March - June - September - December

### Online Auction

Wednesday January 22, 2025

**Donations needed - Scheduled Pick-ups**

December 13, 2024 - January 3, 2025

### ITEMS NEEDED

Household Items - Sports Memorabilia  
Appliances - Furniture - Electronics  
Collectibles - Jewelry - Tools - Toys

Cash Donations  
Accepted



### CONTACT

- Craig Pirrotta  
([craigpirrotta@gmail.com](mailto:craigpirrotta@gmail.com))
- Kristi Pawlak
- John Noling
- Joanie Smith
- Chip Chipman
- Chauncy Williams