

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Giving politics a brief reprieve

It can be difficult to ignore politics and a growing election fever. Yet one of the foundations of Rotary International, and our local Rotary Club of Lake Placid, is our 100% non-religious and non-political stance.

Clubs like ours around the world focus on Rotary's overarching goals. Rotary's website says, "For more than 110 years, we've bridged cultures and connected continents to champion peace, fight illiteracy and poverty, promote clean water and sanitation, and fight disease."

On a local level, Rotary focuses on areas of need in our community, such as literacy, education, helping the elderly, highway cleanup and a whole lot more.

Therefore, people from all sides of many issues come together as Rotarians and share meals, fellowship and projects. While all around us our communities are fracturing along deep political fault lines, when Rotarians get together, we are teammates united toward a common goal, even though some of us vote Republican, others vote Democratic and others vote – or don't vote – in their own ways.

We don't have political discussions in Rotary. For example, our contribution on election night 2016 was to organize a spaghetti dinner at

the American Legion, near the town's polling station. While national and statewide candidates' polling numbers rolled across television screens, we served pasta with homemade sauce, salad and cake to whoever showed up. We kept up light banter and sociable chat even while some of our hearts were breaking and others were elated. No one discussed politics that night except in general terms. Delivering hot food to the election workers was as close as Rotarians got to the night's main event.

Then 36 hours after election night, the club members gathered together for our weekly Thursday breakfast meeting. The mood in the room was calm and respectful. We relaxed knowing that we weren't going to discuss politics. We weren't going to divide ourselves into camps. We are Rotarians.

Morally, Rotarians believe the cornerstone of all action is the "Four-Way Test" of the things we think, say and do. The test is one of the hallmarks of Rotary.

Since it was developed in 1932 by Herbert J. Taylor, who later became RI president, this has never ceased to be relevant. The four brief questions are not based on culture or religion. Instead, they are a simple checklist for ethical human behavior. They transcend generations and national borders.

As Rotarians, we should have the Four-Way Test in mind in every decision we make, all day long. Our utmost responsibility is to speak the truth, to be fair, to build goodwill and better friendships, and to do our very best in all situations.

This is not to say that Rotarians are not political people. Some of us are intensely so, on both sides of the aisle. But for the good of the club and the good of our community, as Rotarians we set politics aside for fellowship and the common goal of service to humanity. This is a basic human need, to get along even when you have different beliefs and practices.

So whatever is going on outside of our meetings, we leave it outside the door so that we can come together to do good work.

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid is one of over 30,000 clubs worldwide. Members from over 200 countries are part of a global network of 1.2 million people who come together to make positive, lasting change in communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The club meets every Thursday at 7:20 a.m. at the Marriott Courtyard hotel. To learn more about the good deeds of Rotary, go to rotarylakeplacid.org or rotary.org or visit their Facebook page – Rotary Club of Lake Placid, NY.
