

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Literacy and the Rotary Club of Lake Placid

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid has been involved with literacy since the club was founded in 1994.

The late Bob Urfirer was a charter member of our club. His wife, Helene, was a long-time member of the board at Literacy Volunteers. Our Rotary Club adopted LV as a charitable and volunteer cause, and we have had a productive relationship since.

In a thank-you note to our club in 1996, Helene Urfirer wrote, “In this time of diminishing public assistance we are struggling relentlessly to keep our free service available to the increasing number who come to us, in the Tri-Lakes and all over the underserved area of our very large county. Until Bob and I became involved, we had no idea, as most people don’t, that there were so many in our midst who cannot write a check, vote. ... You have only to meet these people to be astounded by their clever adaptiveness to the indignities they face daily, and to admire their courage in stepping forth in adulthood to overcome their functional illiteracy. Literacy Volunteers has never charged a learner. With help from caring groups like Rotary, we plan to continue as long as there is need.”

In 2010, the Rotary Club started a literacy committee, co-chaired by Randy Quayle, who had been a literacy tutor, and Mary Liz Alexander. The committee's mandate was to "support projects that emphasize literacy." One of the first donations was to the elementary school to replace the first-grade basal reading series.

While developing the scope of the committee, Mary Liz and Sean Donovan attended a fundraising trivia night at Will Rogers and was intrigued with the idea. She, Sean and other Rotarians began the now semi-annual tradition of Rotary Club of Lake Placid's Trivia Night for Literacy. In its years of existence, Trivia Night has raised in the range of \$50,000 to 55,000 for local and international literacy projects.

Our region has its own LV organization, Literacy Volunteers of Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties. New Executive Director Linda Carela said, "Rotary International is a supporter of literacy worldwide and it is so nice to see that mission extended to the Adirondack region. Approximately one in eight adults in our area function at or below an eighth-grade level, so the need here is great."

Literacy organizations and Rotary are also aligned in other ways. Like Rotary, Literacy Volunteers are people of action. They see the problems that inadequate literacy causes in our community (health issues, unemployment, poor financial decisions, etc.), so they reach out and teach. It is a simple solution to a complex problem: teach folks what they need to know, what they want to know.

Carela observed, "Ultimately, like Rotary, we are community builders. Let us find ways to give our neighbors a chance for financial stability and opportunity. When one family in our community thrives, it makes a difference for all of us."

If you like helping other people, and are curious about Rotary, stop on by a Rotary meeting any Thursday at 7:20 a.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott, or find us on Facebook or at rotarylakeplacid.com.
