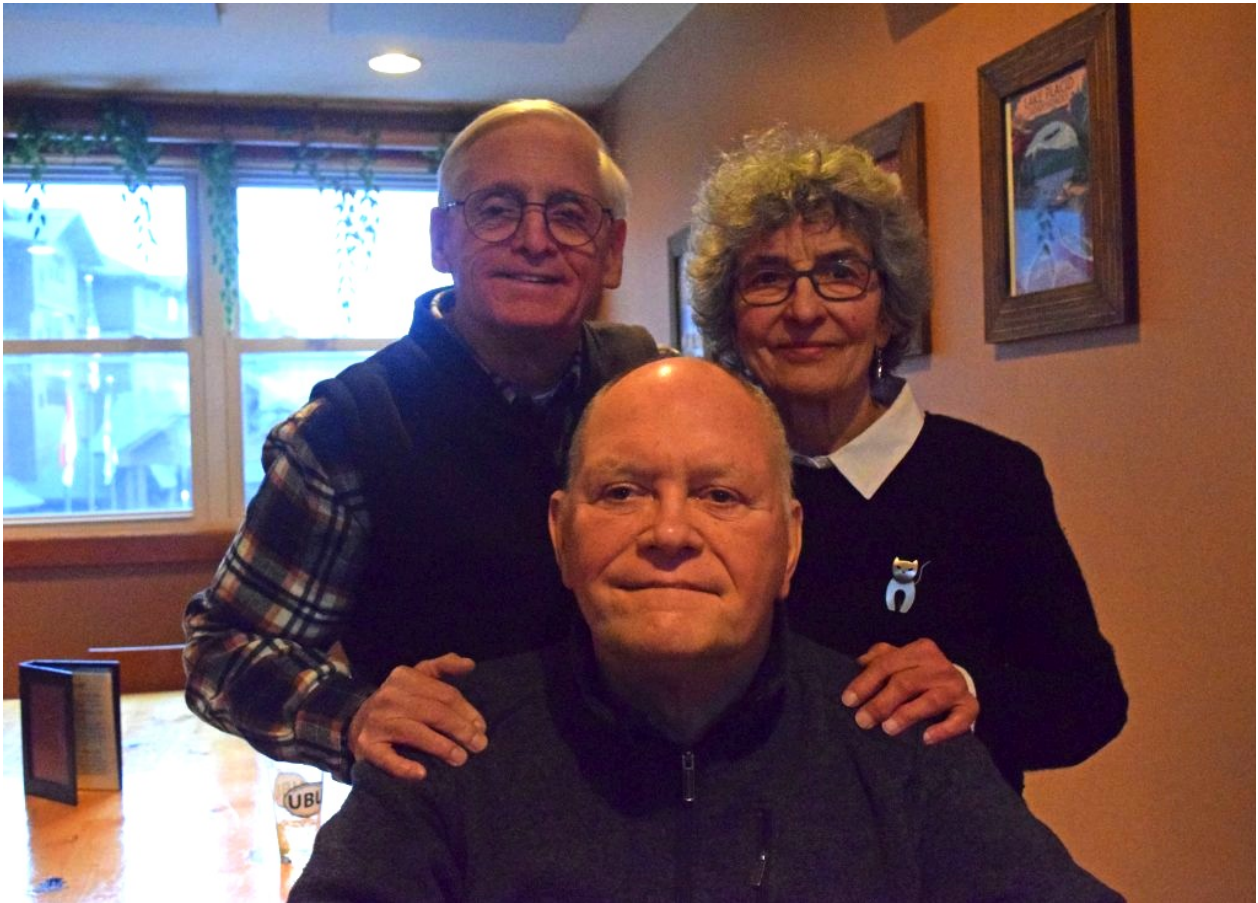


# LAKE PLACID NEWS

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## Lake Placid Rotary Club celebrates 80-year-old members



From left, Rotarians Ernie Stretton, Gene Gengel and Mary Elizabeth Alexander — who celebrated their 80th birthdays earlier in March — pose at the Lake Placid Pub and Brewery on Wednesday, March 30. (News photo — Lauren Yates)

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LAKE PLACID — While some young people might think of turning 80 years old as out of reach and far away, or a marker of feeling “old,” four Rotary Club of Lake Placid members would beg to differ.

Four members of the Rotary Club turned 80 this year — three of them within a week of each other earlier this month — and the club threw a celebration for them at the Lake Placid Pub and Brewery on Wednesday, March 30.

Rotarians cut cake and toasted their glasses in honor of 80-year-olds Mary Elizabeth Alexander, Gene Gengel, Ernie Stretton and Ben Kiernan at the club’s first gathering since before the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Alexander, Gengel and Stretton sat in the midst of the crowd as the club watched a slideshow recognizing the members and their accomplishments with the club; they joined the club in 2008, 2007 and 1997, respectively.

Stretton, a former Lake Placid Central School District superintendent, made his way to Lake Placid in the late 1990s. He said it’s important to stay engaged in life, because time slips away fast.

*“It’s amazing where the time goes. ... You have to enjoy every day, and we do,”* he said of the 80-year-old Rotarians.

How do they enjoy every day? They stay active — physically and in the community.

*“Be with people, talk with people and be involved in the community,”* Stretton said. *“That’s really a big deal. You can’t just kick back and watch television — that’s not going to work.”*

*“Oh, I never watch television,”* Alexander added.

Alexander, originally from New Jersey, made Lake Placid her full-time home in 2007 after years of visiting the area. She said it’s hard to believe she’s 80. She still enjoys skiing, and she likes to be around her local family members — she said her family history in the Adirondacks goes back to the

1800s. Alexander also spends a lot of time making up trivia questions for the Rotary Club's trivia events.

*"I'm never bored," she said.*

Gengel agreed that it's hard to believe he's 80. A Utica native, he retired in Lake Placid in 2007. He said he feels just as good as he does when he was 40 or 50.

*"It doesn't feel like 80 to me," he said. "Eighty is an old person, and I don't consider myself old."*

Stretton said the old adage is true: Age is just a number.

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