

# Politics, Precision Medicine & Peace give Rotarians hope for the future

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By Pete DeLaunay

**President Cathy** called the meeting to order early to allow the day's three distinguished speakers their allotted podium time: Gubernatorial candidate and fellow Rotarian Bill Bryant, pioneering genomic research and biotech entrepreneur, Dr. Leroy Hood and Al Jubitz, Portland Rotarian and Peacebuilder Committee lead for the International Day of Peace.



**Bill Bryant** invested his precious podium time describing his vision for a better Washington in six key areas: education, bringing closure to the McCleary decision; closing the 'skills and achievement' gap as the state now stands at 46<sup>th</sup> in STEM graduates; transportation to remedy our state's status of the 4<sup>th</sup> worst traffic congestion in the U.S. ; statewide unemployment in some counties at up to 9 1/2 % and the need for rural job growth; mental health and the looming crisis in

Medicaid costs; and the Department of Corrections where in addition to releasing inmates early now has recidivism rates continuing to climb.

His vision for the future included tackling the Medicaid crisis and remedies for the state's approach to mental health and homelessness; water availability especially in Eastern Washington where agriculture's needs are not being met; and the need to fix the state's crumbling infrastructure.

Although his time was brief, he made clear his vision, priorities and his ability to get things done if elected Governor.

Program Chair **Lisa Mayfield** invited well-known local biologist, Leroy Hood, to the podium calling him a 'rock star scientist'. Notably Dr. Hood co-founded the Institute for Systems Biology where under his leadership the automated DNA sequencer and an automated tool for synthesizing DNA were invented. Dr. Hood is currently SVP, Chief Science Officer at Providence Health Systems where he appears to have free rein to further his work.

He is evangelical about the future of healthcare and the implications for better understanding diseases. "It is a paradigm shift in the way DNA is assessed and its relationship to disease by applying new analytic



tools that are revolutionizing our context for biology,” he began.

His approach applies what he calls “P4 Medicine” which is Predictive, Preventive, Personalized and Participatory. Dr. Hood sees an “individual data cloud” for every person aimed at wellness to avoid disease, and applying the techniques of “precision medicine” using “dense biological networks” to identify how someone is diseased and how to develop new diagnostics and therapeutics to prevent it.

“We are in a very exciting position to begin thinking about personalized medicine,” he said. “Systems medicine and social networks define with precision what P4 medicine can do for the individual by using data clouds to understand how genetics and the environment come together.”

He started studying complicated biology and the study of disease in 1970 as an assistant professor at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech). He used the story of “the elephant and six blind men who saw ‘all nose’ but there were many other parts of the animal to examine”. “We are seeing small dimensions of what the human being is all about,” he concluded. “We are creating instruments that assess DNA as a key to understanding and applying a systems approach to healthcare – by knowing all the genes.”

As Chairman of the P4 Medicine institute and as President of the Institute for Systems Biology, Dr. Hood’s institute will invest \$100M aimed at clinical trials that will lead to ‘translational pillars’ for wellness, breast cancer, Alzheimer’s and cancer. A world-renowned scientist, inventor, entrepreneur and visionary, Dr. Hood is a pioneer in the understanding of genetics and human health.

The day’s jam-packed agenda ended with a sobering challenge for peace in the world from President Cathy and distinguished Portland Rotarian, Al Jubitz, who offered a challenge for Rotarians to foster peace in the world. “Peace is you and you are Rotary,” he said following a short video about overcoming violence, poverty, disease and corruption with the same impact as the military by exhibiting positive change from service and the 4-way test – and motivating 1.2 million Rotarians in 250K clubs to become ‘peace builder clubs’.



“We are advocating the emergence of a global peace system that changes the mindset to meet the challenges of goodwill and peace building – community building to mediate conflict,” he said.

On this International Day of Peace, he reminded Rotarians of their important work from helping to orchestrate the United Nations to UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) “The genetic code among Rotarians is for peace,” he said in a reference to Dr. Hood’s work.



President Cathy reminded Rotarians that we are 'an active peace builder club' that meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month at 11 a.m. She opened the day's meeting with fellow Rotarian and SFD chief **Harold Scoggins** with the day's invocation that included a touching tribute to fallen fire fighters. **Don Murphy** led the anthem accompanied by **Burr Stewart** on the piano. **John Steckler** then introduced returning Rotarian, **Joe Heslet**, as a 'boomerang' member (presenting him a real 'Rotary' labeled boomerang) whose sales acumen is well known as he embarks on a new career in public broadcasting.

