

A Jesuit University President's Personal Lessons on Leadership

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By Laura Rehrmann



Nelson Mandela said that he never lost an argument; he either won, or learned something new. George Twiss used this quote in his opening invocation with a reminder to find openness to ideas among us. Don Murphy, accompanied by Marli Iverson, led a rousing national anthem, so much so that President Mark thought it ought to be followed by “Play ball”!

Blood Donations Needed

Club member Dr. Jim AuBuchon, president of Bloodworks Northwest, thanked Rotary members who are regular blood donors and urged all to make blood donations. Bloodworks sent blood donations to Corpus Christi, Texas in advance of Hurricane Harvey, and followed up after the storm with blood donations to Houston hospitals. Your blood donation is vitally important and with Hurricane Irma packing enormous power, it is expected that there will be a life and

death need for blood supplies.

Club Business

President Mark invited any members interested in serving on the Seattle Rotary Board or the Seattle Rotary Service Foundation Board to nominate themselves or someone else. Contact Dave Siebert who is chairing the Governance Committee.

President Mark thanked co-chairs Fedva Dikmen and Jane Tornatore for leading the Rotary Cares Committee and urged members to let them know of life events so that members can offer support.

This Saturday there are two hands-on volunteer opportunities offered by Wellspring and Rotary First Harvest. Kelly Pearson, VP of Services for our Club, invited members and their families, friends, and grandchildren to volunteer for a morning of service. These two organizations received \$37,000 from the Seattle Rotary Service Foundation thanks to our donations.

“I am Jane Doe”, a documentary film highlighting the fight against sex trafficking in America, will be shown on October 3. Virginia McKenzie invited members to join with the Peacebuilders Committee in attending the film.

Details of these events are listed on the Seattle Rotary website and in the Totem newsletter.

Introductory Program



Dr. Roberto Dondisch, Consul General of Mexico and a member of Seattle Rotary, briefly outlined the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and issues the community is facing. He emphasized that as Consul General, he is careful not to criticize the United States' right to make decisions and he wanted members to hear what the community is saying. He listed the requirements for people to be eligible for DACA. They must have come to this country before 6/15/12 when they were younger than 16; they must have completed high school or be enrolled in school, the military service, or have been honorably discharged. They have paid

\$575 to apply for DACA and when approved, received a social security number and card to allow them to work. ICE is not instructed to detain or deport them, however, it has happened in this state and the person detained immediately loses DACA status. There are 1.1 to 1.5 million people in the US who meet the DACA requirements and 787, 580 have applied and been approved. There are 18,000 DACA applications approved in Washington State.

"The most important thing we have to do is know each other better," Dr. Dondisch said in announcing next week's first annual MexAm Northwest Festival. The festival includes film and lectures, food and wine. See the Totem for further information about a special wine tasting for Rotary members on September 13.

The Leadership Series Continues

Father Steve Sundborg, Seattle University's President and a member of Seattle Rotary, introduced his topic, "A Jesuit University President's Personal Lessons on Leadership". Father Steve has been President of the University for 21 years, with 7500 students annually, 1600 faculty and staff, and 80,000 alumni. Seattle University is ranked among the top 10 universities in the West by US News and World Reports in 2017.

Father Steve said that when he was offered the presidency, he felt the job was too big, and he was too small. Seattle University Trustees offered the job despite acknowledging his lack of all administrative experience in academia, lack of fundraising experience, and lack of financial experience. Today he oversees a budget of \$215 million, and must raise \$40 million annually.



"I was chosen because I was a good Jesuit, and that is what I derive my leadership from," he said.

He offered four lessons on leadership which he has developed in his 21 years as president. He said community leaders serving on his board gave him the opportunity to see and talk with them about their experiences of leadership and credited Jim Ellis, Steve Hooper, Phyllis Campbell, Jim Senegal and Bob Ratcliffe among them.

Lesson 1: The Integration of I and It. “It” are the expectations and demands of all the constituencies he serves. He said that if you only follow the “It”, you are living others’ lives, not yours. “The “It” can kill you,” he said, “I know because I had a heart attack in my first year. “

He described the I who is Father Steve as a shy boy who knew at age three that he wanted to be a Catholic priest and said he has a philosophical mind and a poetic heart. However, the “I” alone cannot accomplish the work. He said that you must integrate the I and the It and only when you do that can you deepen and expand your growth.



Lesson 2: Self Renewal. Understand the values and activities that renew and empower you. For him, it is his Jesuit values. He spends one hour a day in prayer, scripture reading, poetry, and journaling. “This is the wellspring of I and I will not miss it. It is the anchor of who I am.” He urged each to find what we need to renew ourselves be it music, outdoors, love of family, athletics because you need to resource yourself even more in leadership. “Burn out is the result of unresolved conflict between the I and the It which are the tectonic plates that create friction in your life and leadership.”

Lesson 3: Students. “You have to love them, roll with them, engage with them. Every student has a glimmering hope or vision within, but it may be buried in anger, fear, street, etc. Accept them as they are on a daily basis and help them find the hidden light within.” He quoted Sherry Turkle’s book, “Reclaiming Conversation in a Digital Age” in which she noted a 40% decline in empathy and compassion among young people and attributed it to a lack of conversation with others. Father Steve urged us to be intentional around a table, in a classroom, with a group of young people, to engender empathy. He cited Pope Francis as a man of mercy, and mercy, care and kindness are the partners of empathy and compassion.

Lesson 4: Confront your ego. “As a leader, you can begin to think your ideas and voice are the most important and grandiosity and exception to norms that apply to all can make you blind to your ego.” He said you must have others to listen to you and guide you and he has regular therapy sessions in order to do that. He also said that the antidote to ego is the reality of others. So get outside of the familiar and talk with the homeless, prisoners, those with downs syndrome, or visit another country for example.

He quoted a bumper sticker, “Don’t believe everything you think”, that reminds him to confront his ego by entering the lives of others.

Finally, Father Steve thanked God for the blessing to serve.

President Mark introduced Father Steve by saying that he was a speaker who he hoped would never stop talking, unlike some. The members apparently agreed as there was an immediate long, standing ovation and President Mark in thanking Father Steve, said, “I didn’t want it to end.”

Father’s Steve’s full remarks follow in this issue of the Totem.