

# What exactly makes the San Mateo Rotary Club so special?



I asked Bruce Bean, the new president of the San Mateo Rotary Club and he answered: “I love the heart of Rotary — the local, national and global reach of “Service above self!” That’s the Rotary motto for clubs throughout the world.

Bean was born and raised in Boulder, Colorado; attended the university there and did graduate work at MIT. He’s in commercial real estate, has served many years on the HIP Housing Board and is the founder of Affordable Housing Ventures.

San Mateo Rotary was started in 1924 when a young San Mateo was in the center of the grand estates belonging to San Francisco’s business, banking and financial elite and was primarily a business club. Its founding members included Horace Amphlett, owner and publisher of the San

Mateo Times; W.J. Glascock, superintendent of the San Mateo Union High School District and San Mateo Junior College; and R.J. Wisnom, owner of Wisnom Hardware. The club continued to grow, as did San Mateo and soon became the civic and business power center of the city.

Then the club was middle-aged all white men until 1987 when three women were admitted. The Rotary Club of today is made up of a variety of business, young professionals and civic leaders. The average age is about 50. The youngest member is 24 and the oldest is over 90. More than one-third of the members are women.

One factor that makes the club so special is that you can find yourself sitting next to San Mateo's mayor, Rick Bonilla; councilmembers Maureen Freschet or Eric Rodriguez; City Manager Larry Patterson; Police Chief Susan Manheimer; Parks and Recreation Director Sheila Canzian; or former finance director John de Russy. State Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, and Supervisor Carole Groom are also members but don't have as much time for lunch as they used to.

Or you could find yourself at a table with County

Controller Juan Ragiosa; County Superintendent Anne Campbell; Joan Rosas, superintendent of the San Mateo-Foster City Elementary School District; Yvonne Shiu, San Mateo High School principal; Pat Kurtz, Aragon High School principal; or former San Mateo Union High School District principals, Don Leydig and Mark Avelar or former Serra principal Mike Peterson. Or you could find yourself next to T. Jack Foster, whose family developed Foster City (even though he is now a San Mateo resident); or Matt Lau, an options trader who is the club's tech guru; or attorney Nancy Nishimura; Kitty Lopez, head of First 5 California; Rachel del Monte, head of the Peninsula YMCA. Or it could be Phil Raiser of Raiser Construction; Dave Bennett, former owner of Mollie Stone's; Anne LeClaire, head of the county's Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the club's first woman president; Cheryl Angeles, head of the San Mateo Area Chamber of Commerce; Jeff Sosnick of See's Candy; Chris Eckert, Realtor; and Margaret Taylor, former head of the county's health department. There is never a dull moment at the luncheon table, lots to talk about and lots to share. Rotarian Don Shoecraft who has written the most up to date official history of SFO was a recent

program speaker. Former secretary of state George Shultz addressed the club last year. There have been famous and not so famous speakers. Some of the best have been the club's own members.

But what makes this club and other Rotary clubs really special is the service they provide to the community. World War I changed Rotary clubs from being just social gatherings for business leaders to organizations devoted to community service. Last year, San Mateo Rotary provided a total of \$123,600 in student scholarships: \$72,000 for four-year colleges, \$19,200 for community college, and \$32,400 for middle school students entering high school. The latter program puts aside a sum of money each year for students it identifies in eighth-grade who have financial need and show promise of success. Rotarians meet with these students several times a year to ensure they are meeting their goals. The funds are put aside for them each year until they graduate high school. The club also donated \$30,500 to various nonprofits last year. Internationally, Rotary is a major player in the fight against polio and provides immunization for prevention and wheel chairs to make life easier for victims. All of this is

made possible by the generosity of Rotary members.

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