

TWO LIGHTS

Rotary Club of South Portland – Cape Elizabeth
February 13, 2019



UPCOMING PROGRAMS:

February 20 – Jennifer Crosby, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
February 27 – Ellen Russell, American Cancer Society
March 6 – Julie Poulin, CASA

ASSIGNMENTS

	<u>February 20</u>	<u>February 27</u>	<u>March 6</u>
Opening Words	N. Irving	S Irving	Gowen
Raffle Gift	Wagner	Yerxa	Veroneau
Conductor	D Bagdasarian	Britt	Hawes
Set Up #1	S. Irving	Kubeck	Healey
Set Up #2	Knupp	Leasure	Higgins

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

February 16, 5-7:30 – Lions Spaghetti Dinner

March 16, 7:30 – 3:30, Rotary Leadership Institute, Concord, NH (see District 7780 website FMI)

April 6, 8-1 – District Training Assembly, York County Community College

June 21-22, 2019 – District Conference at Fort Williams

What's New With Our Members

Happy Birthday to David Lourie - Feb. 21

“WE DIDN’T SEE THIS COMING” – In lieu of a recap of our meeting – since we were snowed out – I am copying excerpts from Bill & Melinda Gates’ 2019 Annual Letter which was released this week. The theme of the letter was 9 things that surprised them last year.

Twenty-five years ago, we read an article that said hundreds of thousands of kids in poor countries were dying from diarrhea. That surprise helped crystallize our values. We believe in a world where innovation is for everyone – where no child dies from a disease it’s possible to prevent. But what we saw was a world still shaped by inequity. That discovery was one of the most important steps in our journey to philanthropy. We were surprised, then we were outraged, then we were activated. There have been good surprises, too. When we first started learning about malaria, we thought the world would never make real headway on the disease until someone invented a long-acting vaccine. But thanks to bed nets and other measures, malaria deaths are down 42 percent since 2000.

DATA CAN BE SEXIST (Surprise #4)

For example, what little data we do have about women in developing countries is mostly about their reproductive health – because in places where women’s primary role in society is being a wife and mother, that’s what researchers tend to focus on. But we have no idea how much most of these women earn or what they own, because, in many countries, income and assets are counted by household. Since the husband is considered the head of the household, everything a married woman brings in is credited to him. When such flawed data is all you have to go on, it’s easy to undervalue women’s economic activity – and difficult to measure whether women’s economic condition is improving.

THERE’S A NATIONALIST CASE FOR GLOBALISM (Surprise #6)

Nationalism is a word we’ve been hearing a lot more often these days. It’s also one of the most loaded words in our 21st-century politics. While it’s come to mean different things to different people (and carry different connotations and insinuations), at its core, nationalism is the belief that a country’s first obligation is to itself. There’s an element of that that I think many of us would agree with.

Bill and I love our country. We believe in what it stands for. We agree that our leaders have a duty to protect it. And for all of those reasons, we consider global engagement our patriotic duty.

We're not alone. You may remember that both times the White House threatened to make severe cuts to America's foreign aid budget, some of the loudest voices of protest came from members of Congress and U.S. military leaders who argued that these investments are vital to protecting American interests.

The reason that countries like the U.S. invest in foreign aid is that it increases stability abroad and security at home. Strengthening health systems overseas decreases the chance of a deadly pathogen like Ebola becoming a global epidemic. And ensuring that every parent everywhere has the opportunity to raise safe, educated, healthy kids makes it less likely that they will embark on desperate journeys to seek better lives elsewhere.

There is nothing about putting your country first that requires turning your back on the rest of the world. If anything, the opposite is true.

Bill: We're going to be making this case over and over in the next couple of years, because this is a crucial time in global health, and the kind of go-it-alone approach Melinda described could cause a major setback.

In 2019, governments will need to recommit to funding for the Global Fund, one of the biggest health efforts in the world. And Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, will need to raise money in 2020.

It's hard to overstate how much good these projects have done in the world. Since 2002, when it was created to combat AIDS, TB, and malaria, the Global Fund and its partners have saved 27 million lives. Since 2000, Gavi has provided basic vaccines to more than 690 million children. That's like vaccinating nearly every person in Europe.

To me these results are astonishing. They show what's possible when we act on the idea that all of us have a stake in the health and well-being of the poorest. It's also incredibly cost-effective: Rich countries spend around 0.1 percent of their budgets on health aid.

But I worry that wealthy countries are turning inward and will take such a limited view of their own self-interest that they'll decide these efforts aren't worth the cost. Or that even if everyone agrees in principle that aid is important, they'll be so polarized that their political allegiances will keep them from taking action.

That would be a disaster. Today more than 17 million people living with HIV get medicine from the Global Fund. Without it, they will die.

That's one reason why Melinda and I are always talking about success stories. At a time when new outrages seem to dominate the headlines every day, we want to keep reminding people that life is getting better for millions of people in the world's poorest countries, thanks in part to smart investments in health. Even if you only care about the welfare of your fellow citizens, these investments are overwhelmingly smart things to do. Progress benefits everyone.

MOBILE PHONES ARE MOST POWERFUL IN THE HANDS OF THE POOREST WOMEN (Surprise #9)

In rich countries, mobile phones make it easier to do things we were already doing – send email instead of snail mail, navigate the world without wrestling with a map, hail a ride without standing outside in the rain. But for the world's most marginalized women, a mobile phone doesn't just make their old life more convenient; it can help them build an entirely new life. That's because connectivity is a solution to marginalization.

If you're a woman who has never stepped into a bank, mobile banking offers you a foothold in the formal economy and a chance at financial independence. If you're expected to do all the cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing, your income potential improves dramatically as you gain opportunities to connect with customers, trainings, and professional organizations – all from your home. If you're worried about the stigma you'll encounter when you ask for contraceptives at your local clinic, an e-commerce delivery platform can help you reassert control over your body and your future.

In other words, women are not only using their mobile phones to access services and opportunities. They're using them to change social norms and challenge the power structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

ONE LAST SURPRISE (MAYBE)

We get asked a lot these days whether we're still optimistic about the future. We say: Absolutely. One reason is that we believe in the power of innovation. But an even bigger reason is that we've seen firsthand that for every challenge we've written about in this letter, there are people devoting their ideas, their resources, and even their lives to solving them.

When we're feeling overwhelmed by negative headlines, we remind ourselves that none of us has the right to sit back and expect that the world is going to keep getting better. We have a responsibility to do everything we can to push it in that direction. In that way, we've found that optimism can be a powerful call to action. And it has a multiplier effect: The more optimists there are working for a better future, the more reasons there are to be optimistic.

The other surprises were:

#1 – Africa is the Youngest Continent

#2 – At-home DNA tests can find serial killers and could also help prevent premature birth

#3 - We will build an entire New York City every month...

#5 – You can learn a lot about processing your anger from teenage boys

#7 – When was the modern flush toilet invented?

#8 - Textbooks are becoming obsolete

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PORTLAND/CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE**
www.sp-ce-rotary.org

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