

Rotary This Week!



Utica, NY, USA

April 15, 2024

ND students visit this Thursday

Notre Dame High School students Sara Aung and Paul Kearney along with their counselor Carla Zupancic will visit our club Thursday, April 18. Their second visit will be May 2.

Both students are involved in athletics and Naval Junior ROTC, and their naval science instructor speaks highly of them.

“Sara continues to perform at an extremely high level,” notes retired Chief Petty Officer Biran K. Janes. “...She lives and breathes the saying, Leadership by Example.”

“Paul has an exceptional aptitude for helping others,” he adds, noting, “he has embraced the Navy’s core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.”



Sara wants to attend Penn State as an ROTC cadet and become a naval officer.

Paul, likewise, wants to become a naval officer by attending the Naval Academy at Annapolis. He is also applying to Penn State and Villanova.



Solar serendipity

Hold on to your protective eyeglasses and recycle them to be used for an eclipse in South America!

That’s the word from Utica Rotarian Dave Jones. Bring or send them to the next Utica Rotary meeting on Thursday, April 18, and Dave will collect them to send to South America for an upcoming eclipse this October. The Public Libraries also announced they were collecting protective eyewear. Talk about serendipity ... as we’re meeting at Mid-York Library.



This week’s featured program speaker

Our featured speaker this Thursday is Hawa Peters, founder and director of Utica Royalties, an organization that helps inner city youth. Utica Royalties is a free program to kids of all ages offering a wide range of opportunities.

Deadline for next newsletter (4/22) is Saturday, April 20 at 3 p.m.; submit to news@uticarotaryclub.org.

Editor Robert Stronach

'Service Above Self' Gala Returns to Stanley Theatre on June 7

By Joe Abraham

The Rotary Club of Utica's 'Service Above Self Gala,' presented by the SBS Marketing Group, will once again grace the famous Stanley Theatre stage on Friday, June 7 from 6 to 11 p.m.

The black tie (optional) event, now in its third year, begins with Red Carpet treatment as guests arrive, followed by a cocktail hour, live music by Soul Injection, and a seated dinner on The Stanley's stage. Tickets are \$150 per person. This year's Gala benefits the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), with proceeds supporting their 'Arts for Many Hearts' day program.

"The Service Above Self Gala is back and bigger than ever," said Gala Committee Chairman

and Utica Rotary Past President Stephen Turnbull. "Thanks to the generosity of past attendees and sponsors, our first two Galas raised nearly \$30,000 supporting causes such as CABVT's Camp Abilities and Utica Zoo's Red Panda Exhibit. We're excited to announce RCIL as the beneficiary of this year's event as their 'Arts for Many Hearts' program offers wonderful activities to caregivers and their loved ones. We can't wait for June 7 and hope you'll join us on The Stanley's stage."

For more info about the Gala, including how to purchase tickets and/or become a sponsor, visit <https://uticarotary.org/page/service-above-self-gala-1>



Help plant 1300 shrubs and trees into planting bed installed last fall.



Where: Veteran's Memorial Park at Routes 5 and 12, New Hartford.

When: April 20, 2024, 10 a.m. until finish.

Bring: A smile, glove, family and friends.

Donations welcome. Already an experienced gardner? Lead a planting crew.

Donate, join and/or lead a crew here: newhartfordrotaryclub.org

VOLUNTEER FOR MOTHER EARTH

Join us for our biannual highway clean up, in honor of Earth Day! We'll meet Saturday, April 27 at 9 a.m. in the McQuade & Bannigan parking lot at 1300 Stark St., Utica.

To sign up, contact Tina Pavlot at cpavlot@mtb.com or 315-731-5204.

Rotary International is committed to supporting activities that strengthen the conservation and protection of natural resources, advance ecological sustainability, and foster harmony between communities and the environment.



Calendar of Events

4/17 Board Meeting | noon | Chamber of Commerce

4/18 Meeting | Notre Dame students noon | Mid-York Library

4/25 Social | TBA 5:30 pm |

4/27 Service | Highway Cleanup 9 am |

5/2 Meeting | NY Mills students noon | Mid-York Library

Editor's travel musings *by Bob Stronach*

'Recuperating' in Rome

Per my cardiologist's advice, I am "recuperating" in the Eternal City, where there is no snow nor earthquakes. Just sunny 70F degree weather, lots of little eateries and fresh fruit stands. And friendly neighborhood faces.

During lunch one day, in a cafe offering homemade pasta and seafood dishes, just a short walk from where we're staying, we met Benedetto, a young actor who wanted to practice his English. He's aspiring to get much better paying gigs, and wants to write his own script, but he has been sad and struggling since his mom passed away in January. My wife Mary, ever the motherly teacher, suggested he indeed has something to write about -- his experience of grief and hope, and possibly a positive ending (or beginning). "Jot down your thoughts and don't worry about organizing them until later," she urged. He perked up and we talked about life in Rome and Utica. By the way, many eateries won't start serving lunch until noon, and if you arrive after 2,



Here we are in a Rome pizzeria with our Roman friend, Laura (left). Laura kept tabs on me while Mary was in Africa.

you're out of luck, as they close for the afternoon. Supper hour may start at 6, but closer to 8 p.m. is preferred.

Bringing sunshine

Days of unrelenting rain came to an end as soon as we arrived in Rome, the taxi driver announced. I'm not sure whether he meant it as a stunning result of our arrival, but I don't mind thinking that Rotarians can bring calm to the storm.

Our ITA Airways Airbus landed at Fiumicino Airport at sunrise, and now riding in the taxi, the rising sun bathed the Eternal City in a morning glow.

Sunny warm days became the trend as I

"worked" out of my mobile office (namely, my laptop computer) at an apartment in the middle of Rome. Mary, meanwhile, took off the next evening, headed for Africa, to visit Christian brothers and sisters in Nigeria and Togo, as the official representative of the Rome headquarters of the secular Franciscan Order (or Third Order). Of course, the weather there was hotter. A 108F, she reported. She said she had never experienced instant perspiration before. As she stepped out of the airport in Lagos, perspiration seemed to erupt from within.

Continued on next page.



Meeting in Nigeria.

She was struck by the rampant poverty. Along a six-hour drive to Benin City, she saw endless clusters of metal and wood shacks, where people lived and worked out of, hawking food and crafts. She was even more struck by the joy of the people. When she arrived at a retreat house in Benin City, the group of men and women she would meet with greeted her with song and hugs. She said the rhythmic swaying and singing almost brought tears to her eyes; it was so joyful and full of warmth.

Franciscan friars put her up for the night at their friary – a walled compound topped with concertina wire. The

wall and razor wire were just a security precaution, a friar told her. (While southern Nigeria has many Christian and Catholic churches, along with mosques, and is relatively peaceful, the northern part of the country suffers from violence and kidnappings.) Mary also had some difficulty getting used to the electricity being turned off at 10:30 every night, and cold showers. After spending two days there, Mary returned to Lagos and took a short flight to Lomé, Togo.

While English is the official language in Nigeria, French is the official tongue of Togo. And it stretched her limited French-speaking ability; but, after four days there, she said she found herself dreaming

in French. The people, too, were just as joyful and welcoming. In both countries they dubbed her “Mama”, and she received abundant hugs and requests for having their picture taken with her.

The economic conditions are better in Togo. In fact, Lomé is a major shipping port.

Unlike in Nigeria, where she was scrutinized at the airport and the subject of multiple police check points, Mary was treated like a VIP in Togo, thanks to one of the group's members who has influence in the government. He is a retired rear admiral, a former mayor, and director of port opera-

Continued on next page.



Meeting in Togo.

LEFT: Everyone wanted a picture.

RIGHT: Mary wears her "Mama" dress, made by the daughter of this couple.

tions and public transportation. Escorts greeted her at the plane, brought her to the VIP lounge, retrieved her luggage, and then cleared the way through customs before taking her to an air-conditioned limousine.

She stayed at a Franciscan house of study (electricity shut off at 10:30) and spent the days meeting with groups of people of faith who came from all over the country.

The joy overwhelmed her. One young woman made a colorful African dress for her. Mary wore it proudly.

Perhaps another young woman, this one in Nigeria, best summed up what Mary was experiencing:

"When you have the right people around you, even without money, you are happy."

Solar eclipse in Italy

I missed the North American solar eclipse on

April 8, and likewise, as my email to PP Tina Pavlot pointed out, I wasn't going to wait for the next total eclipse in Italy, which will occur in September of 2081.

"Oh wow, no sir! I'll be 99 years old!" she screamed back.

I hadn't quite thought of it that way. But hey, maybe she should keep her protective eyeglasses. Just in case.