



# Rotary This Week!

Utica, NY, USA

Feb. 17, 2025

## Program switch: We're going to ThINCubator on Thursday

Because wintry weather forced the club to cancel the Feb. 6th meeting, President Travis Rabbers is switching programs around.

“We will now meet at the ThINCubator on Thursday, Feb. 20, for a program presenting by Hilda M. Jordan of HMJ Consulting,” President Travis said. “We moved

the Children’s Museum/ ICAN meeting to later in the year.” Also, “we will still plan on having food catered” at the ThINCubator.”

Hilda Jordan is a proud first-generation Afro-Latina American with over a decade of experience in leadership development, training, speaking, and program design.



## RSVP for Rotary's 120th birthday!

Join CNY Rotary's Birthday Extravaganza from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 23, in honor of Rotary's 120th birthday.

Clubs in the greater Utica area will gather at 2 p.m. at Gerber's 1933 Tavern, 16 Liberty St., Utica. Please register by Feb. 17 –

it's free – by going [here](https://cnyrotary.org/events/rotary-birthday-extravaganza/): <https://cnyrotary.org/events/rotary-birthday-extravaganza/>



JOIN NORMA: See Page 2.



Rotarian Bob at the Seraphicum with friends from African nations.

EDITOR'S TRAVELOG: See Pages 4-5.

Deadline for next newsletter (2/24) is Saturday, Feb. 22 at 3 p.m.; submit to [news@uticarotaryclub.org](mailto:news@uticarotaryclub.org).

Editor Robert Stronach

# Join the Easter Bag Brigade

By Norma Montagnino-Gemza

**Save the date, Friday, April 11, 2025!**

For the 3rd year, Utica Rotary will participate in the Easter Bag Brigade at Thea Bowman House, 309 Genesee St., Utica. More than 150 children will receive Easter Bags donated by community members. This event, run by Rosemary Bonacci, is in its 8th successful year.

Our club will be donating two types of snacks. Rotarians will place the snacks in bags at the event and help pass them out to children. Volunteers should be at Thea Bowman at 9:30 a.m.

Please email [normamg@yahoo.com](mailto:normamg@yahoo.com) by March 11 if you are available to serve. In the past we have had at least 6-8 volunteers for this fun event.



Previous Easter Bag Rotarians.

## Enjoy soccer at the Biergarten on Feb. 22

By Travis Rabbers

Our February after-hours social will be at the Adirondack Bank Center at the Aud for a UCFC soccer

game on Saturday, Feb. 22, beginning at 7 p.m. We have a discounted group rate for tickets to the Biergarten on the field

level. Here's a link to get tickets at the group rate: <https://empirestatetix.venue.net/promotions/URC>

### Calendar of Events

- |      |   |      |  |
|------|---|------|--|
| 2/17 | Deadline to register for Rotary's 120th birthday party on 2/23    | 2/23 | B-Day Party   Rotary's 120th 2-4 pm   Gerber's 1933 Tavern 16 Liberty Street, Utica (3 pm   district-wide toast) |
| 2/19 | Meeting   Rotary board noon   Greater Utica Chamber               | 3/6  | Meeting   Carl Reistrom president of Human Technologies noon   Mid-York Library                                  |
| 2/20 | Meeting   Hilda M. Jordan CEO of HMJ Consulting noon   ThINCubaor |      |  |
| 2/22 | Social   UCFC soccer game 7 pm   Biergarten at Aud                |      |  |

# Rotary helps drum RCIL's 'Feel the Beat'

RCIL's *Many Hearts Program* is launching "Feel the Beat," a free drum circle aimed at fostering connections among seniors, their caregivers, and the wider community.

Starting February 20, 2025, this event will be held on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. at 1607 Genesee St., Utica, with the generous support of the Rotary Club of Utica.

"We are thrilled to partner with the Rotary Club of Utica to bring this unique event to the community," said Mary Brognano, director. "This drum circle provides a fun, stress-relieving way for participants to connect, bond, and enjoy a positive experience together. We invite everyone to join, regardless of experience."

Utica Rotary's 'Service Above Self' Gala last June raised \$12,432.76 to benefit RCIL's *Many Hearts*.



## Feel The Beat at Many Hearts

**A** free drum circle aimed at fostering connections among seniors, their caregivers, and the wider community. Starting February 20, 2025, this event will be held on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month from 5:15 to 6:30 PM at 1607 Genesee St., Utica, with the generous support of the Rotary Club of Utica.

Open to all skill levels, participants are invited to bring their own drums or use instruments provided at the event. No musical experience is required. This inclusive and fun activity offers an opportunity for stress relief, creativity, and new friendships.

### EVENT DETAILS

**What:** Free Drum Circle for seniors, caregivers, and community members

**When:** 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month, 5:15 – 6:30 PM, beginning February 20, 2025

**Where:** 1607 Genesee St., Utica (Parking and entrance at the rear off Scott St.)

**Contact:** Mary at (315) 272-2976 or [mbrognano@rcil.com](mailto:mbrognano@rcil.com)

## War, peace, and 'una America'

*Rotary's mission to advance understanding, goodwill, and peace was constantly coming to the forefront of my mind when my wife and I attended a world gathering of Franciscans in Rome, Italy last November. We were among 103 attendees from 63 countries.*

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As we approached Rome's Fiumicino Airport at dawn, the crimson sky turned indigo and grey – blue in the west and overcast in the east. While we rode the taxi to the Seraphicum, the sun brightened, its rays penetrating the eastern grey. The cloud cover glowed. Perhaps it was a portent: The radiant grey hinted of war and peace, of woe and joy.

As the meeting's conclusive document proclaimed, the gathering was a time of joy -- the joy of encounter.

Joy, war and peace couldn't help but be on the minds of attendees as they were immersed in the conference theme, "You Are Love." Love of God, love for others and love of self were among the topics explored, plus how to be better bearers of peace in today's world, especially since global conflict was visibly present.

Nicole Abi Assaf arrived from war-torn Lebanon and found herself in the warm

embrace of fraternity. "I found my smile again," she declared, noting that her husband had told her he missed seeing her smile. She also was on a mission to acquire medicines. With the crisis in Lebanon, many meds are simply not available, she said.

Khrystyna Lopochak was smiling, too, saying she was experiencing a strong sense of fraternity. Khrystyna is from another war-ravaged country – the Ukraine. When asked about it, sad eyes quickly replaced the

*Continued on next page.*



**Nicole Abi Assaf**



**The grounds of the Seraphicum in Rome.**

smile. "It's difficult." Even though she lives in the western part of the country near Poland, she can hear the sounds of war and faces the constant fear of long-range rockets and drones. Other attendees expressed their support and said they were praying for her. The smile was back.

Another woman from the Ukraine was supposed to be there but had to cancel when her father fell ill. However, Dina Shabalina was able to address the group via Zoom projected on the auditorium screen. It was an emotional presentation. The New Testament passage about loving and forgiving your enemies hit her hard.

"When the war broke out in Ukraine, for the first time in my life I experienced that the words of the Gospel could make me hurt. My faith has never been tested before in such a severe way. I remember very well the very first weeks of the war when we prayed and listened to the words of the Gospel with my fraternity. It was incredible but at that moment the liturgical readings were about forgiveness and love for our enemies. These words resonated for us in a new way with the sound of air raid sirens and explosions outside the window. But they were still the words of the Good News for us."

And it's what "keeps my heart from hating."

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And then I had surprising encounter on the idea of "one America."

During an evening break in the conference, a woman from Argentina, Sugheil Sanchez, came up to me, grabbed my arms, and started speaking rapid-fire Spanish. She stood chin high with a fiery twinkle in her eyes as she looked up at me and continued her outburst. I didn't understand what she was saying at first, but eventually a couple of words stood out. "Una America." She knew I was from the United States and was telling me that people from South, Central and North America were all Americans.

"Una America!" She smiled, dropped her arms



**Khrystyna Lopochak**



**Dina Shabalina**



**Sugheil Sanchez and Rotarian Bob**

and walked off. What's interesting is that the next day during lunch, as I was sitting at a table with attendees from Latin America, a woman from Peru (Ana Maria Raffo) looked up at me and said: "Una America. Una America."

# Rotarians help 'Feed Our Vets'

For the second time in two months, Utica Rotarians volunteered at "Feed Our Vets" to help pack and distribute food to veterans in need.

Those volunteering on Saturday, Feb. 15, were Karima Wines, Patricia Demma, Kathy Migliaccio-Johnson, Joe Johnson, and Zemira Sakanovic (who provided the photos).





## Feed Our Vets®

### Impact

Jan. 2025



Feeding America's Veterans and families.

<p><b>Impact since inception February 2009</b></p> <p>Vets Served: <u>64,847</u></p> <p>Dependents served: <u>150,000+</u></p> <p>Distributed food: <u>4,840,547</u></p> <p>Distributed gift cards: <u>\$347,195</u></p>	<p>Vets Served: <u>1,026</u></p> <p>New Vets: <u>61</u></p> <p>Dependents: <u>2,238</u></p> <p>Pounds of food Distributed: <u>74,355</u></p> <p>Gift cards distributed: <u>\$6,675</u></p> <p><b>Year to date:</b></p> <p>Vets Served: <u>1,026</u></p> <p>New Vets: <u>61</u></p> <p>Dependents: <u>2,238</u></p> <p>Pounds of food Distributed: <u>74,355</u></p> <p>Gift cards distributed: <u>\$6,675</u></p>
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