

January 9, 2023

'Let every new year find you a better person'



Utica Rotary President Tina Pavlot kicked off the club's first meeting of 2023 with an "inspiring message" from Benjamin Franklin:

"Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better person."

The Jan. 5th program – which was the 13th meeting of the 107th year of the Rotary Club of Utica – featured a presentation by ceramic artist Vartan Poghosian.

But before Vartan was introduced, President Tina reminded Rotarians about some upcoming projects and events.

"Our next volunteer project is Saturday, January 14th," she said. "We'll meet at Meyda Lighting at 9

a.m. (until noon) to build beds for *Sleep in Heavenly Peace*." Contact Tina to volunteer. Family members and friends are welcome.

The next program meeting is Thursday, Jan. 19, when "we'll hear from Hanka Grabovica, president of the Bosnian-American Community Association."

Then, "our annual ski trip to Gore Mountain is Wednesday, January 25th. Please contact Jim Friedel or simply go online to purchase tickets."

The day after the ski trip, on Jan. 26, "we're hoping to plan a new member mixer." Details to come.

"Rotary license plates are now available," she noted. "Contact me to get yours today."



A mountainside monastery in Italy. PAGE 4.



Artist addresses club. PAGE 3.

Deadline for next newsletter (1/16) is Sunday, January 15, at noon; submit to news@uticarotaryclub.org.

Help assemble beds on Jan. 14

The Rotary Club of Utica is planning a service project for Saturday, Jan. 14, to actually build beds for *Sleep in Heavenly Peace* (SHP) to give to families in need.

The service project comes right on the heels of donating bedding and pillows and conducting the “*Not So Silent Night*” auction to raise money for children’s beds.

The SHP production site is in the Meyda Lighting warehouse in Yorkville.

“We plan to be there from 9 to noon, so we’re asking Rotarians to come out with family and friends,” Tina said. “We’ll produce as many beds as we can.” To volunteer, contact Tina (cpavlot@mtb.com).

Ski trip to Gore Mountain

The Utica Rotary annual ski trip on Wednesday, Jan. 25, consists of a day at Gore Mountain Ski Resort in North Creek.

Cost includes one all-day lift ticket and transportation. Bus loading starts at 6:45 a.m. at Friedel, Williams & Edmunds at 13 Oxford Road, New Hartford.

Please sign up by Jan. 13. Questions? Contact Jim Friedel at jim@fwevh.com or 315-525-3551.

To sign up and purchase tickets, go to:

<https://www.uticarotary.org/page/gore-mountain-ski-trip>



Rotary Club Of Utica Annual Ski Trip!

- Wednesday January 25th, 2023
- Bus leaves Utica 7:00am
- Returns approx. 9:00pm
- \$175 Per Person – Includes:
 - Gore Mtn. Day Pass
 - Bus transportation
 - Guaranteed good time!



Gore Mtn.

RSVP @ [uticarotary.org](https://www.uticarotary.org) by 1/13/23

Calendar of Events

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1/14 | Service Project Build Beds
9 to noon, <i>Sleep in Heavenly Peace</i> |
| 1/18 | Board Meeting
Noon, Greater Utica Chamber |
| 1/19 | Program Bosnian-American
Community Association (BACA)
Noon, Mid-York Library System |
| 1/25 | Ski Trip Gore Mountain
Bus leaves 7 a.m. |
| 1/26 | Social TBD
5 p.m. |

PROGRAM SPEAKER

Potter's wheel leads to artistic impact on Utica area



An accelerated video of Vartan Poghosian working on a potter's wheel played on the big TV screen. He molded clay into a big pot with superhuman speed.

"I don't work this fast, but my brain works this fast," Vartan quipped as he began his presentation at the Jan. 5th Utica Rotary meeting.

The ceramic artist recounted how a husband and wife in his native Armenia took him under their wing at the age of 13 to teach him drawing, painting and pottery. And he took a liking to the latter medium. In fact, he concentrated in ceramic arts at the Mkhitar Sebastatsi Educational Complex in Yerevan, Armenia, and continued

his education through mentorships.

After serving two years in the Armenian military, where he was exposed to a lot of music from the United States, Vartan took advantage of an opportunity to travel to the U.S. to conduct an in-residence workshop in Maine. He hasn't look back since, teaching and volunteering at art centers and community colleges.

He settled in upstate New York, starting a for-profit ceramic studio in Utica. He eventually turned "*4 Elements Studio*" into a not-for-profit art center, offering exhibition space and art classes to children and adults, including individuals with disabilities. Regarding the latter, he has conducted programs

with Upstate Cerebral Palsy, Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Arc, and Resource Center for Independent Living. Named after the four elements (earth, water, air and fire) that a potter works with to turn clay into a finished piece, the center is located at 1607 Genesee Street.

During the pandemic in 2020 Vartan founded Clayville Pottery where he produces most of his original and production ceramic work. At the time he was living in Clayville, but has since moved Clayville Studio to Utica, just a block from *4 Elements*.

4 Elements Studio was hosting an Art Expo of 15 local artists from Nov. 25, 2022 to Jan. 12, 2023.



Whose portrait is in a mountainside monastery?



The mountainside monastery, built around a cave, near Subiaco, Italy.

In World War II the allies assaulted and bombed Monte Cassino, a Benedictine monastery atop a rocky hill in the Town of Cassino. They mistakenly thought it was occupied as a strategic observation post by the Germans (who actually were positioned in the slopes below the centuries-old abbey).

Monte Cassino is a little over 88 miles south of Rome and 38 miles east of my wife's birthplace, Scauri, a seacoast village between Rome and Naples. The monastery was founded in 529 AD by St. Benedict, who is credited with bringing monasticism to Europe. It is also regarded as the first monastery of the Benedictine Order.

However, Benedict experimented with his form of spirituality, first living as a

hermit in a cave at another mountain near Subiaco (about 56 miles east of Rome). It all began when Benedict, a young nobleman studying in Rome, became disenchanted with the life of the city and its licentiousness, so he left everything and went to Subiaco to live in Sacro Speco (Sacred Cave). Others were attracted to his developing sense of spirituality, and he eventually headed south and founded the Benedictine Order at Monte Cassino. Sacro Speco became part of the order, too, with a monastery built into the side of the rocky mountain over the centuries.

Perhaps sensing a kindred spirit, St. Francis of Assisi went to visit the monastery around 1223.

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The son of an affluent Assisi merchant himself, Francis, too, had left everything behind to pray in a cave.

“Tradition tells us that Francis had come to visit the Sacro Speco,” Franciscan Friar Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv., noted during a tour of the monastery.

“The tangible sign of his visit can be seen in the monastery’s Chapel of St. Gregory in the form of a beautiful fresco. Historians say that this image of Francis is his first-ever portrait. The painting is

labeled Franciscus and the saint is shown without the stigmata or a halo, indicating it was painted during his lifetime, before 1224.”

Thanks to some monks, apparently impressed with the man who had founded the Franciscan Order, we have an idea of how Francis looked.

In fact, the monastery’s website claims the fresco is “the oldest existing portrait of Saint Francis of Assisi.”



Earliest portrait of Francis of Assisi on a chapel wall in the Benedictine Monastery near Subiaco. Circa 1223.