

Rotary This Week!



Utica, NY, USA

Oct. 16, 2023

PDG Randy Wilson is this week's program speaker

Our guest speaker this week is Past District Governor William R. "Randy" Wilson, who will give us the scoop on the *Polio Plus Society*. The meeting gets underway at noon Thursday, Oct. 19, at Mid-York Library, 1600 Lincoln Ave., Utica.

Randy joined the Rotary Club of Sauquoit in 1978. He was club president three times and continues as club Youth Exchange (YE) officer. His passion for YE developed while he served on the Dis-

trict YE Committee.

Randy is a Rotary Foundation master donor and a Paul Harris Society member. His service continues on the District Foundation Committee as the *Polio Plus* chair since 2020, and as Stewardship chair. He instituted the district *Polio Plus Society* in 2021, with a current membership of 50 Rotarians. Randy serves as *End Polio Now* coordinator for 11 Districts in Zone 32.



President Linda to ring in Red Kettle season

President Linda Iannone is the honorary chairperson for this year's Red Kettle Campaign, the Utica Salvation Army announced. A campaign kickoff is set for 2 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 16, at The Stanley Theatre.

In addition to being a 30-year Rotarian, Linda has a history of volunteer service. She worked on United Way Budget Committees and chaired the Utica National United Way Campaign, was co-chair of in-

house registration for America's Greatest Heart Run and Walk, was director of the Utica National Boilermaker Youth Run, and was on the committee for the first annual Gourmet Guys to the Rescue to benefit the Rescue Mission.

Linda was employed for 35 years at Utica National in various managerial capacities. After retiring, she joined The Stanley where she is director of Booking and Special Events.



Why Drew wears pink

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'Not So Silent Night'

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Deadline for next newsletter (10/16) is Sunday, Oct. 15 at noon; submit to news@uticarotaryclub.org.

Editor Robert Stronach



TAKE ACTION: www.uticarotary.org

MEN WEAR PINK

Drew's reason for running



Drew and Zeus

By Joe Abraham

If you're traveling in the Greater Rome area, you may notice Utica Rotarian Drew DeBlasiis with friends and his dog Zeus out for a run. His reason for running, at least through the month of October, isn't fitness-related, but rather as part of the *Men Wear Pink* fundraiser benefiting the American Cancer Society. Each day, Drew is running at least a mile, meaning his total will meet or exceed 31 by Halloween.

In April 2017, Drew lost his mother Nikki to cancer. Since then, he and his family have been interested in giving back to the community and raising awareness. In honor of Nikki, the DeBlasiis family started a not-for-profit in her name ([NLD Foundation](#)) that focuses on giving back to the Rome Community through educational scholarships and donations to people in need.

In September 2022, Drew connected with Melanie Francis of the American Cancer Society, who felt he'd be a good fit for the [Men Wear Pink](#) campaign. Multiple Utica Rotarians are also participating in the campaign.

"The reason why I wear pink is to give back in addition to the NLD Foundation and expand my territories when it comes to raising awareness," Drew explained. "Breast Cancer affects everyone and that's why I am stepping up to fight it. I am extremely grateful that I have a position to make a difference within my community; therefore I feel obligated to do so."

For more about Drew's campaign and/or to make a donation, [click here](#).



This month's social event begins at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 26 at Five Points Public House at the Irish Cultural Center, 623 Columbia St, Utica.

ROTARIAN DICK ALEXANDER

Former Utica member named Living Legend

By Mary and Bob Stronach

Richard E. Alexander, who is being honored as a Living Legend by the [Oneida County History Center](#) on Oct. 19, has some advice for the next generation, and it can be summed up in one word: WORK.

Working hard. Embracing work. It makes all the difference. It allows one to succeed, and subsequently, to give back to the community.

“I still work,” noted the 1955 RPI grad who went on to drive successful contracting and hotel businesses. “Success is spelled w-o-r-k.”

A lot of his charitable endeavors is focused on struggling families and young people. Among those who have benefitted from his donations, fundraising or construction expertise: Hope House, rehab centers, Scouting, and camps for special-needs children, such as Camp Goodwill and Dodge Pond. Both camps had the long-time support of Rotary Clubs, whose motto is “service above self.” Being a Rotarian himself (“67 years,” he said), Richard regards the work he did at the camps as “a highlight of my life.”

Although he currently is a member of Watertown Sunrise Club, Dick used to be with Rotary Club of Utica.

“Dick Alexander was a very generous member of our club when I joined in the mid-80s,”



recalls Dana Jerrard, past club president and past district governor. “He was the father of the annual spaghetti dinner that raised enough money for Hope House to put a down payment on a new, larger building.”

Everyone knows Dick’s surname as Alexander. But the family name is actually Alexandriani. His father “American-ized” it after immigrating from Italy. As an immigrant family, it is not surprising that Richard grew up in East Utica. Born in Utica in 1933, Dick attended local schools before heading to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). After graduating with

honors, he headed to the U.S. Navy where he was appointed to the Naval Civil Engineer Corps and attended the Naval Justice School. Richard returned to Utica following his honorable discharge and joined the family business, Dick Tile and Marble. In 1974, he founded Alexander and Edgebrook Construction companies and served as president/CEO until his retirement in 2018. His business career also encompassed other enterprises. In 1993 he opened the Ramada Inn in New Hartford and later the Airport Ramada Inn in Oriskany, and the Best Western Carriage House Inn and the Inn at 81 in Watertown. In addition, his nomination form notes, “he established 14 other successful companies, including Mohawk Valley State Bank, where he held the position of president.” Plus, “he devoted 25 years to the Labor Welfare and Pension Funds.”

His philanthropic endeavors included organizing trips to Disney World and Water Safari for underprivileged families.

“Moreover,” the nomination form adds, “his dedication to supporting individuals with disabilities led him to purchase and remodel the Jefferson Rehabilitation Center (JRC).”

Richard gifted the center back to the JRC.

In gratitude, the rehab center now bears his name.

'Not So Silent Night Auction' to ring in holiday

By Travis Rabbers

We are planning our 4th annual Not-So-Silent Night Gift Auction!

Please mark your calendars for Thursday, December 7 at 5:30 p.m.

This is a terrific, fun holiday event in which we raised \$3,000 last year to benefit the Sleep in Heavenly Peace organization and their mission to provide beds for kids in need.

We will share more information about this year's event leading up to it.

We are seeking nominations on who to select as the beneficiary for this year's event. Please email me at trabbers@mtb.com no later than Friday, October 20, and include the following information:

- Name of organization
- Contact information for organization
- Brief summary or explanation of why you think this organization should be the beneficiary

Please let me know if you have any questions. We hope to see you all be *not so silent* on Dec. 7.

Rotarian dances for charity

Rotarian Ralph Imundo and his wife Maryann dance to help raise funds at the Arc Oneida-Lewis Arctoberfest. They performed as part of the Edelweiss Schuplattlers. Photo provided by Heather Evans.



Calendar of Events

10/18 Board Meeting
noon | Greater Utica Chamber

10/19 Meeting | PDG Randy Wilson
Polio Plus
noon | Mid-York Library

10/26 Social | Five Points Public House
5:30 pm

10/28 Service | Urban Tree Project
9 am |

11/2 Meeting | DG Elise Hereth
noon | Mid-York Library

11/15 Board Meeting
noon | Greater Utica Chamber

11/16 Meeting | PDG Don Reese
Rotary Foundation
noon | Mid-York Library

11/15 Service | 'Artists Works in Progress'
| Sculpture Space