

## **PANDEMIC TIMES CAN RESULT IN GOOD CHANGES:**

*BOOTHBAY HARBOR ROTARY RECEIVES AND GIVES EVEN MORE*

*WHILE WE ALL BENEFIT IN EVEN STRONGER SOCIAL TIES*

*Chip Griffin*

As a kid in the 1960s growing up here, I enjoyed our annual Rotary's Boothbay Harbor Auction and Lobster Time, sometimes called Student Aid Day, which began in 1958, thanks to the inspiration of the Boothbay Center PTA, which launched this effort. I recall Newbert "Brud" Pierce, our Hot Dog King, who served as auctioneer during those early decades. Next, professional Robert L. Foster agreed to serve as our incredible auctioneer, always declining any fee and increasing our proceeds, from 1993 through 2019, until the pandemic hit hard in 2020. Our auction has remained our greatest fundraiser, at least during my forty years in Rotary.

Sometimes crises can force us to think, feel, and act differently and create opportunities for even more social glue and charitable giving. One example is here on our Boothbay peninsula: Boothbay Harbor's Rotary Auction. While everywhere most 2020 events had to be canceled, the pandemic forced us to think and act differently, create new goals for socializing while social distancing and wearing masks, and most importantly create an even better sense of community amongst many we know and many more whom we had never met. The goal continued to include raising funds to help mostly people in our community and to a lesser extent those in great need beyond our peninsula and worldwide.

Under the leadership of Irene Fowle, Laurie Zimmerli, and Deb Graves, our goal shifted from raising dollars to creating fun, a safe place, and camaraderie for our community members, many Friends of Rotary, and Rotarians. Our Rotary Barn was transformed from a place to pile up auction and flea market items for a one-day event in early August into a resounding community center throbbing with life and laughter on Saturday mornings. We sold several different groups of items, from furniture and more upscale boutique items on the ground floor to several areas on the second floor such as tools, flea market goods, kitchen accessories, and Christmas gifts.

We focused more on helping and sharing with our community folks, seasonal residents, and visitors every Saturday morning. We continued to drive for months all around our region to bring items donated by people who needed to unload or wanted to donate. Most of us looked forward to each Saturday morning to help our patrons and catch up on news. And some donated even more money than we requested for their items. Miraculously, somehow, amongst the hard work and wonderful camaraderie, we netted more money than ever, all being plowed back into our community and for wider needs. Not a penny from donations goes into Rotary; rather every penny received has been placed in our nonprofit Boothbay Harbor Rotary Foundation and then donated to those in need outside Rotary, and mostly to local charities.

We hope you check us out and join the fun when we reopen later this winter or spring!