

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

Weekly Newsletter

Date: April 29, 2013

Reporter: MIKE McMAHON

Editor: LYLE CONNELL

CALL TO ORDER

President **HAL MICKELSON** called the meeting to order at 12:30. **SALLY TOMLINSON** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

GUESTS

YOSHIO MIYAZAKA of the Hammamatsu, Japan Rotary Club visited our club and presented a banner.



Guests of Rotarians: **BEN THRELKELD'S** guest, Laura Barletta; **JUDITH STEINER'S** guest Nancy Bjork; and **MONIQUE LE CONGE'S** guest, Bryson Halpern.

OPENING REMARKS

GEORGE FITZGERALD talked about one of Rotary's great fringe benefits, visiting other Rotary Clubs when travelling abroad. He discussed one of his memorable visits, to the Dresden, Germany Rotary club in 2007, and the interesting Rotarians he met there.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

GLORIA HOM announced that our club member, **ALEX SCOLLON**, CEO of the Palo Alto Players, will be offering discounted tickets for this coming Sunday's 2:30 PM performance of "Miss Saigon."

The price of lunch increases to \$18 at the next meeting.

PRESIDENT HAL announced that Revisions to our club's Bylaws will be voted up or down at the June 3 club meeting. A question-and-answer session and open discussion of the proposed revisions will be offered by

EJ HONG'S committee at the Palo Alto Art Center at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, May 7, with a duplicate/ back-up meeting at the Art Center at 9:30 am on Thursday, May 9.

There will be a party at the home of **MIKE COUCH** on May 23rd.

PRESIDENT'S CLUB CONTRIBUTIONS

ROSEANNE FAIRTY announced that one of her sons is engaged and one is graduating from the University of Redlands.

LEN ELY contributed in memory of the two-year anniversary of the passing of Len Ely, Senior.

TODD LEWIS announced that his son will attend the University of San Diego without a Merit Scholarship.

JACK WOODSON proudly announced his 6 year-old grandson's unassisted Triple Play! Just like Bill Wambsganss in the 1920 World Series.

LEANNAH HUNT announced her daughter's participation in revamping an East Palo Alto home as part of Rebuilding Together.

VIC ROSASCO'S grandson, Kevin, has been accepted into a Stanford PhD program.

YORIKO KISHIMOTO announced the launching of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's New Vision Plan. Thanks to YORIKO for helping translate for our Japanese visitor.

BEN THRELKELD will attempt to swim, without water wings, from Alcatraz to San Francisco. We hope he makes it.

PROGRAM

ROB LANCEFIELD introduced our Guest Speaker, Dr. Emma Seppala, a Psychologist and Associate Director at Stanford University's



Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. A French native, she received her BA from Yale and completed her graduate studies at Columbia and Stanford Universities.

Dr. Seppala started by talking about stress, how it is sometimes needed, and that there is both good and bad stress. She quoted a prior speaker at our club, Dr. Robert Sapolsky, on "the right amount of stress." Good stress exists for a limited amount of time to mobilize our attention and cognitive skills. It facilitates memory and attention.

Chronic stress, on the other hand, which continues day after day, wears down the human system, exhausts our energy, can affect the bodily immune function, and can affect cellular aging.

Dr. Seppala stated that habits can lead to stress. A normal mind has a tendency to wander. You are never happier than when you are "in the moment." The quality of life is determined by the state of your own mind. There is a negativity bias, a tendency to focus on the negative or dangerous.

She then talked about happiness, both hedonic happiness and eudemonic happiness. Sex, drugs and Rock & Roll fit in the Hedonic category. Plato defined eudemonia as the good composed of all goods; an ability which suffices for living well.

Moving into how social connections affect happiness, Dr. Seppala said that low social connectivity is linked to anxiety, depression, violence, and even suicide. Social rejection and physical pain share the same brain region. Benefits are linked to a subjective sense of social connection. When you are highly stressed, you become focused on yourself. Positive emotions broaden our attention. With high social connectivity, there is a 50% increased chance of longevity!

Humans are wired for connections. Our nervous system is finely attuned to resonate with other's actions and emotions. It is the basis for empathy, the ability to experience someone else's emotion. Charles Darwin said that compassion is innate; compassion ensured our survival. Compassion makes us happy. Charitable giving activates reward centers in the brain. Our reward centers are activated when we see money going to charity. We are happier when we give to others than when we spend on ourselves. Compassion spreads. Kindness "elevates" us; it inspires and moves us. When we experience elevation, we are more likely to help others. It causes a chain reaction; kindness begets more kindness. It does so up to 3 degrees of separation away from the individual. This is how you create a culture!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

May 6 **JOCELYN VILLARUZ**, "Mend a Broken Heart Project in Luzon"

May 13 **George Koo**, "What is Happening in China Today"

May 20 **New Member Talks, HENRIETTA BURROUGHS, ZACK HOU, and MEL MATSUMOTO**

May 27 **Dark**

June 3 **Catherine Crystal Foster**, College Education: Trends and Challenges Facing California Youth

Info: www.rotarypaloalto.org