

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

Weekly Newsletter

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Editor: BRIAN STEEN

Getting the New Year off to a joyous start, PRESIDENT E. J. HONG opened the meeting at 12:27 by calling on her daughters Natalie and Nicole to sing the National Anthem with her. The audience thoroughly enjoyed and applauded their performance.



E. J. then addressed a major refrain of the meeting, memories of the kindness and generosity of former President BILL LOVE. She called on her daughters to sing *You Raised Me Up*.

JOHN KIDD's Opening Remarks paid tribute to BILL by reciting BILL's favorite poem, *Desiderata*



in effect his credo for how to live. BERT ROSE, acting for his and BILL's table, joined the President's Club in BILL's honor. GLORIA HOM also joined, adding to praise of his kindness and graciousness her thanks for his comment when she became the first woman Rotary member, world- wide, by joining our club.

E.J. welcomed Visiting Rotarians Bob Williams of the Palo Alto University Club and Klaus Heineman of the Gualala Club. ROGER SMITH spoke up in praise of Bob Williams, a very public spirited leader of what is best in Silicon Valley.



TOM GRACON asked to hold Thursday, January 29, for the annual speech contest we co-host with the Palo Alto University Club to be held in Palo Alto's Council Chamber.



DAVID HOLLAND, a new member sponsored by WALT HAYS, received his Blue Badge from PRESIDENT E. J.



LE LEVY joined the President's Club in honor of ROGER SMITH, to whom the Palo Alto Weekly made its year-end leading citizen award, noting ROGER's assistance to the city.

THE PROGRAM

ANDREW PIERCE introduced Linda Starr, co-founder and Legal Director of the [Northern California Innocence Project](#), experienced as



both a prosecutor and a defense lawyer. She spoke eloquently and clearly of their mission to free the wrongfully convicted. She started with an overview of the Innocence Project, founded in 1992 by two attorneys in New York City in the aftermath of a report that 25% of persons for whom DNA evidence was available had been wrongfully arrested. She and Kathleen "Cookie" Ridolfi founded the Northern California Innocence Project in 2001. Today there are 88 Projects world-wide. Since 1989, the



The Innocence Project has exonerated over 1,521 convicts including 20 on Death Row.

Ms. Starr summarized the leading causes of wrongful convictions, undoubtedly greater in number than those exonerated, given the difficulties of proving innocence years and even decades after conviction. She explained



the processes the Innocence Project follows in evaluating requests for help from prisoners, 11,864 to date, of whom 17 have been freed, not a bad outcome considering that it takes five to ten years to gain freedom. She noted that many non-DNA evidence cases also show wrongful convictions, in junk science fields such as arson causation and hair “matches”, as well as false confessions, particularly by teenagers.

The Innocence Project engages in public outreach and education as well as legislative efforts to remove roadblocks to proving innocence. It also strives to obtain re-entry assistance and financial compensation for those wrongfully imprisoned \$100 per day under California statutes at present.

Following Q&A for the time remaining, the club warmly applauded her efforts and presentation.

Future Programs

January 12 Vocational Talks: Todd Lewis, Betsy Bechtel, and Daryl Savage.

January 19 Professor Gibor Basri, Vice Chancellor of Equity and Inclusion, UC Berkeley, “Diversifying Higher Education”.

January 26 Arne Croce, Former City Manager of San Mateo and Los Altos, “Community of Bell – What Happened, Corrective Steps, and Current Status”.

Info: www.rotarypaloalto.org