

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

May 12, 2025

Writer: Steve Emslie



Celebrating 103 years of Service

THE MAGIC OF ROTARY 2024-2025

President **REBECCA** called the meeting to order at 12:30 and welcomed attendees and zoomers.

In President Elect Bruce Gee's absence, President **GERALDI** called on members to introduce their guests.

ELIZABETH

SANTANA introduced her Palo Alto Players colleague, Patrick Klein; and **LIZ KNISS** introduced her longtime friend and neighbor, Ann Sonnenberg, a local interior designer and asked members to get to know her. There were no visiting Rotarians.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



MIKE FOGARTY

recalled his recent visit to Half Moon Bay where he encountered this thought: "Every person you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Always be kind."

PRESIDENTS CLUB

JOAN PLASTIRIS joined the President's Club in honor of **BRUCE GEE** because of his extraordinary community service as well as his special paella party he hosts for our fundraiser. She also mentioned her work recently has been to help small companies survive in this volatile economy.

LIZ KNISS joined the President's Club in honor of **KAREN ROHDE** who has stepped up to plan the upcoming debunking of President GERALDI since **LIZ** has been down with pneumonia the last few weeks.

OUR ENDOWMENT FUND DRIVE IS ON

Because this is the endowment's annual fund drive, **TIM**

WATSON

acknowledged DANA TOM'S talk last week which explained the details of how the endowment operates. Of the \$140,000 Rotary grants annually to local nonprofits, \$50,000 comes directly from the endowment's earnings. Many

Rotary Clubs do not have their own endowment funds and rely on Rotary International for fund management, our club has total control of how its endowment funds are distributed. Even funds we raise for Rotary International are returned to the club



by way of District Distributed Funds (DDF) which are used to fund our international projects.

TIM reminded members that there are many ways to contribute: checks are accepted, online donations are convenient, however you can also list the endowment as a beneficiary in your will or trust. He also informed members that required minimum distribution from retirement accounts can be directed to the foundation without counting toward your income. He suggested checking with your financial advisors.

**Further information on the Endowment Funding Cycle is at the end of this Pinion.*

WE CARE FOR OUR MEMBERS

JULIE JEROME, our We Care Chair, will be undergoing shoulder replacement tomorrow and President GERALDI asked everyone to sign the circulating get well card to send her our best wishes.

Rotary DAY OF SERVICE - MAY 17th

Saturday, May 17 -- Rotary International Global Epic Day of Service
Volunteer at Rotary's Global Epic Day of Service – Do More Good!

- Co-hosted with the Palo Alto University Club and the East Palo Alto Bayshore Club, supporting the Non-profit: Environmental Volunteers
- Saturday, May 17th, 9:00 am to noon
- Cooley Landing Park in the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve in East Palo Alto (at the end of Bay Road)
- Indoor and outdoor volunteer activities will be available, all physical abilities welcomed. One is habitat restoration, the other is assembling bamboo plant stake and gopher cages.
- Signup: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/epic-day-of-service-habitat-restoration-at-cooley-landing-registration-1297272068679>
- Space is limited.
- To Join In, see below!
- Email Eric Jensen at

erichorjensen@gmail.com if you don't get in. Other options coming soon

FLAGS ON MEMORIAL DAY - MAY 26th

Monday, May 26 – Volunteer Service (instead of our meeting): Flags on University Ave.

- 8:00 am: Meet at corner of Cowper St. and University Ave. to put up flags. After installing flags, socialize with fellow volunteers at a local coffee shop
- 5:00 pm: Meet at the corner of High St. and University Ave. to take down flags. After putting flags away, socialize with fellow volunteers over drinks at a local establishment
- Co-sponsored with the Palo Alto University Rotary Club

ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS

There is a long list of Rotarians celebrating their time in the club but most notably are

BOB MCCOWAN–49 years, and **ANNETTE GLANCKOPF** and **HAL MICKELSON**–29 years,

There are also a plethora of May Rotary birthdays and shared baby pictures of five of the celebrants: one in error, **DARYL SAVAGE**, **ULLRICH SCHWERTSCHLAG**, **LEN ELY** and **HERSH DAVIS**.

ROTACARE IN AREA 12 (THAT'S US!)

The District is interested in reactivating RotoCare and is seeking representatives from each club in Area 12 to serve on the steering committee. If interested please contact President GERALDI. RotoCare is a mobile clinic serving those without access to health care. The district is interested in locating the clinic in the Sunnyvale area.

PROGRAM



DANA TOM introduced **ELIZABETH SANTANA**, Club Member and Managing Director of the Palo Alto Players. DANA first asked the audience how many have attended a

Palo Alto Players performance and related his first attendance 10 years ago and how much he has regretted not attending earlier. Palo Alto Players is a community asset we should frequently enjoy. Elizabeth was a working actress in New York City before moving into theater management. She has also performed in many local productions and is a graduate of San Jose State University in Creative Arts. Dana asked the club and guest to welcome Elizabeth who will be speaking on "Theater in Crisis? Performing Arts Resiliency in a Post Pandemic Landscape"

In light of the recent administration cuts to federal grant programs, Elizabeth provided some background on the importance of the performing arts on our local economy: arts jobs are real jobs; 4.4% of the US GDP is arts and culture based; in



Santa Clara County, the average performing arts attendee spends \$39 for each event over and above the price of admission. \$384M is spent annually in Santa Clara County. Arts and Culture is a significant economic driver in the County.

She then shared the most recent National Endowment for the Arts report on the condition of the performing arts which stated that the decline in attendance and revenues started before the pandemic. The pandemic only accelerated the downward trends we are currently experiencing. Significant losses include drop in seasonal subscriptions, and aging audience and lack of diverse representation. In the post pandemic era, cost have risen dramatically often resulting in increased ticket prices which alienates many who can not afford attendance.

ELIZABETH then related the impact COVID19 impacted theatrical companies who were dark

for over a year and a half. Many survived by streaming but union relations curtailed the service. Many streaming events are produced overseas due to the US labor issues. COVID19 relief funds and local foundations were very important to the survival of theater companies.

Many in the theater world were certain that the pent up demand in the post pandemic era would produce robust returning attendees. This was not, however, the case which has caused many companies to seriously reevaluate their strategies for economic stability

Elizabeth listed Palo Alto Player's strategies for recovery. First, rebuilding audiences is vital to developing theater patrons, not just attendees. Patrons provide the upfront support once provided by annual subscriptions. The Players introduced flexible monthly ticket programs that do not require subscribing to the entire season. They have also introduced a youth admission price to entice a younger audience. Second, reimaging programming will integrate new more thought provoking material with the old favorite productions. Third, a strong digital content to expand the Players online presence will also attract new attendees. Recent online posting of Players content has produced millions of online views. Fourth, representation and inclusion needs to be expanded to ensure casting and productions include all identities. Players examples include the recent American Sign Language production recently featured in a Palo Alto Rotary talk.

And now the good news: many theater companies are showing signs of recovery and audiences are increasing. Palo Alto Players have seen a 20% increase in attendance. Elizabeth was optimistic that arts and culture will continue to thrive as it is human nature to tell each other stories. The future of live theater rests on all of us and will allow us to defy the odds and return live theater to the robust position it has had in our lives for centuries.

Questions and Answers:

TOM GRACON asked about any outreach the Players were doing on local schools. Not yet, the student matinee program needs to be expanded to reach more younger people.

MARYANN GEE asked about how many costs are recovered by box office receipts. Only 60% of the costs are covered by tickets leaving 40% to be covered by fundraising.

HENRIETTA BURROUGHS asked if musicals are more popular and draw larger audiences than plays. Yes they do and the Players have increased the number of musicals they produce each season. **JUDY KLEINBERG** asked where the audience was coming from.

The Players draw mainly for the Peninsula and the South Bay but they do see attendees from the East Bay. **KATHY TORGENSEN** asked if the royalties for musicals were more expensive than plays. Yes, musical royalties are much higher per performance than plays.

ULLRICH SCHWERTSCHLAG asked about using online streaming. Streaming has been essentially shut off since the pandemic and currently quality is not comparable to the live experience.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

May 19 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Santa Clara Co. Supervisor Margaret Abe-Koga, 5th District <i>Topic: Asian American Stories & How the Board of Supervisors Serve You</i>
May 26 No Club Meeting	DARK: No Club meeting Memorial Day Weekend FLAGS on University Avenue Project happening
May 30 5:30-7:00 pm TGIF	TGIF at Homewood Suites, 4329 El Camino Real, Palo Alto - Thanks, Matt Dolan! Bring a guest and a beverage to share.
May 31 D5170 Annual Conference	District 5170 Annual Conference, 1 Day. San Jose State University 8:00 am - 8:30 pm
June 2 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Dorothy Brown, Prof. of Law, Georgetown University <i>The Whiteness of Wealth: How the Tax System Impoverishes Black Americans - and How We Can Fix It</i>

CLOSING REMARKS

At 1:30, President REBECCA thanked ELIZABETH, our speaker, and everyone for attending.

TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS

Greeter: **Matt Dolan, Nancy Peters**

Welcome Desk: **Katie Seedman**

A/V: **Dana Tom**

Microphones: **Kathy Torgersen**

Pinion Writer: **Steve Emslie**

Pinion Photos: **Eric Jensen**

Pinion Editor: **Ginny Lear**

*INFO ON ENDOWMENT FUNDING CYCLE

Our club asks for your financial support in four ways each year: Beginning in July, we collect your dues to sustain club operations. In October, November and December, we talk about the humanitarian work of the Rotary Foundation and Polio Plus. In January through March, we're focused on our annual major fundraising event. In the fourth quarter of the Rotary year, it's time to consider making contributions to our club's local Endowment Fund.

Our club's members have established an Endowment linked to the club that has grown to \$1.3 million in resources, managed by Sand Hill Advisors. Five percent of its value is paid out each year to support the full range of our charitable activities; that will mean \$57,000 this year, of an overall charitable budget of \$195,000. Cumulatively, disbursements have reached over \$450,000. You can help our Endowment achieve lasting change by making a current gift of cash or

appreciated stock; you can designate the Fund to receive a minimum required distribution from your retirement account; or you can include the Endowment in your estate plans or name the Endowment as a beneficiary of your insurance or retirement plan. Please consider supporting the Endowment Fund as a lasting way to offer *Service Above Self*.

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