

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

March 16, 2026
 Writer: Jack Cabaness



Celebrating 104 years of Service

UNITE FOR GOOD 2025-2026

PRESIDENT BRUCE GEE rang the bell at 12:35 p.m. After the Roomers and Zoomers exchanged greetings, **PRESIDENT-ELECT CHARLIE WEIDANZ** introduced several visiting Rotarians, including Charles Chang, who was a member of Palo Alto Rotary before moving to Hong Kong.



Charles is now back in the Bay Area following retirement, and Tracy Hua who was visiting from the Rotary Club of Shanghai. President Bruce introduced his two guests: Lisa Van Dusen and Jennie Savage (who has submitted a membership application).

fled Ireland and returned to his native Britain. Years later, after becoming a Christian priest and bishop, he had another vision about returning to Ireland, but this time as a missionary and not as a captive. Patrick spent decades in Ireland baptizing converts and establishing churches. Thus, whenever we celebrate St. Patrick's Day, we are really celebrating the man who experienced hardship, faith, forgiveness, and ultimately devoted his life to the people who once held him captive.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STEVE EMSLIE shared that we are about to reinstitute the Le Levy Memorial Bike Ride, and club members should be on the lookout for an email with more information. Very scenic rides.

President Bruce welcomed **HERSH DAVIS**, who is back following major back surgery.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

STEVE EMSLIE summarized the story of St. Patrick, who was not born in Ireland but in Roman Britain in the late fourth century. When he was about 16 years old, Irish raiders kidnapped him, took him back to Ireland, and enslaved him. After six years of captivity, during which Patrick had visions of God telling him it was time to escape, Patrick



"CRABSOLUTELY!" ANNUAL FUNDRAISER



ERIC JENSEN reminded everyone about the upcoming Annual fundraiser: **Crabsolutely!**, which will include a crab and pasta dinner and a mini live auction. This is the primary fundraiser for the year, and funds the charities that our

Rotary Club supports. The date is Saturday, April 18 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Mitchell Park.

Tickets are \$125, and it's possible to reserve tables for eight.

Save the Date!

A live auction item there will be a [cruise by luxury yacht highlighting the UNESCO Treasures of Ancient Greece, circumnavigating the Peloponnese, September 17-26, 2026.](#)

Eric then introduced **REBECCA GERALDI** who spoke about the Dr. Robert Smithwick

Vocational Scholarship Program

, which is one of the charities supported by Palo Alto Rotary. Rebecca shared how in 19 years nearly \$400,000 has been awarded in need-based scholarships, impacting 180 students.

According to Rebecca, "Every student has a story, and most face various obstacles."

Students have included former foster youth, former drug addicts, those who have faced domestic abuse, and those who have lived in shelters. Students have also included former military and those who are very busy with child care and/or elder care. Many students have to commute two or three hours to get to classes. Rebecca noted that the Scholarship committee has very low turnover because the work is so rewarding!

Following Rebecca's presentation, **DUANE KALAR** noted that he had been a close friend to Dallas Wood, owner of the Palo Alto Times, who founded and funded our Scholarship program in the early 1960's, and to Rotarian Dr. Robert Smithwick, founding Board member of Foothill College, for whom the scholarship is named. Duane then opened the fundraiser with a \$4,000 pledge.

PROGRAM

JAKE YOO introduced **Christina Passariello**, CNBC Bureau Chief, speaking on "AI 2026: From a Journalist Perspective." Christina noted

that "AI is no longer a future concept; it is the primary driver of market sentiment." She focused on the "Triple Threat of AI" with regard to jobs, education, and communities.

AI is impacting jobs by eliminating many entry-level jobs as companies re-allocate capital from human payroll to AI computing. And the markets applaud this trend! While top-line national unemployment remains stable, the first rung of the career ladder is disappearing. Unemployment among recent college graduates is hitting 30% as junior roles in research, drafting, and analysis are quickly being absorbed by AI tools.

AI is impacting education as universities scramble to develop degrees around AI. Many universities are trying to emphasize the human element in the loop management, educating students to prompt the AI, check the AI, coach the AI, and work alongside the AI.

AI is impacting communities with the emergence of giant data centers. Surging power demand from hyperscale facilities is straining local power grids and driving up utility prices for residents. There is also a jobs gap, as \$1B+ facilities create temporary construction booms but then require surprisingly few full-time employees to operate the data centers once finished. Politically, voters are wary of negative impacts on the environment, higher energy costs, and loss of jobs.

Following the presentation and Q&A, President Bruce presented Christina with the Rotary 4-way test banner.

BRUCE noted that **AI cannot replace the camaraderie and friendship among**



Rotarians, and that we need to continue to grow and meet together.

MEETING ADJOURNED

President BRUCE closed the meeting, with warm thanks to everyone, especially today's speaker and our volunteers.

MEETING VOLUNTEERS

Greeters: Larry Klein, Mark Stevenson

Welcome Desk: Rebecca Gerald

Hybrid Host: Dana Tom

Microphone: Daryl Savage

Pinion Writer: Jack Cabaness

Pinion Editor: Ginny Lear

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

March 23 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Jon Osaki, filmmaker and E.D. of the Japanese Community Youth Council in SF Topic: Alternative Facts: The Lies of Executive Order 9066
March 30 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Vicki Veenker, Mayor of Palo Alto Topic: Goals and Challenges for 2026
April 6 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Rotary Community Grants Recipients
April 13 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Mark Jacobson, Stanford Prof of Civil & Environmental Engineering Still No Miracles Needed: How Today's Technology Can Save Our Climate and Clean Our Air
April 18 5:30-8:30 pm Mitchell Park	Annual Crabfest and Pasta Fundraiser Proceeds benefit Local Charities and Community College Scholarships