

# Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

April 6, 2026

Writer: Sally Tomlinson

UNITE  
FOR  
GOOD

Celebrating 104 years of Service

## UNITE FOR GOOD 2025-2026



First came the linen choices, then came the dress code: President **BRUCE GEE** opened the meeting in a Hawaiian shirt, and explained that after **GINNY LEAR** nixed black table cloths for the fundraising event, the committee selected bright colors that then demanded a colorful theme. So Beach it is - get out your resort wear! Bruce reminded

everyone that the grantee presentations they were about to hear are the direct result of the fundraiser, and he asked speakers to share not only the work they do but also the impact it has — and to make us cry if they could.

BRUCE welcomed Rotarians joining via Zoom, and gave a special welcome to **GEOFF ZIMAN'S** daughter Shoshana, who is a regular official visitor from NYC.

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

**JAKE YOO** shared a deeply moving reflection. Last November, while visiting Washington, D.C., Jake visited Arlington National Cemetery one early morning and stood at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers.



The quiet of the place made a profound impression on him. "They can't say anything," he said, "but maybe they want to?" As an immigrant to the United States, he described feeling that this was a country worth belonging to. His story was received with quiet appreciation.

## "CRABSOLUTELY!" April 18, 5:30-8:30 PM

**Silent auction is open:**

[32auctions.com/CRABSolutely](https://32auctions.com/CRABSolutely)

Wearing their beachy attire, **REBECCA GERALDI** and **ERIC JENSEN** presented an update on the club's annual fundraiser and online auction, encouraging everyone to bid early and often. Current fundraising is slightly below where the club would like to be at this point in the cycle, so look at the ways that Rotary can add fun to your social calendar:

Again, you can buy **tickets online at:**

<https://2026crabfeed.square.site>

**LIVE AUCTION: CRUISE INFORMATION**

live auction item there will be a [UNESCO Treasures of Ancient Greece, circumnavigating the Peloponnese](#).

**ONLINE AUCTION OPEN NOW:**

An **olive oil tasting**, pairing exceptional oils with wine and expert insights;





The whiskey tasting in honor of the late Matt Dolan, hosted by **ERIC, CHARLIE WEIDANZ, SIMON PENNINGTON, and JAKE YOO** - an intimate gathering of twelve celebrating Matt's memory and friendship;

A **watercolor and wine** evening at the Arts Center, open to all skill levels, where attendees will leave with their own artwork;

A walking tour of downtown **Palo Alto's Privately Owned Public Open Spaces**, hosted by soon-to-be member **Lisa VanDusen** and **KRISTINA LUGO**;

The beloved BRUCE GEE's Paella Party, cooked in Bruce's legendary giant pan;

**Breakfast with the Birds** at the Baylands, a guided birdwatching walk led by Matthew Dodder, Director of the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance, hosted by **KAREN ROHDE** and **BETSY BECHTEL**;

A tour of the **Regional Water Quality Control Plant**; And a hands-on fire extinguisher demonstration with Palo Alto firefighters.

Sponsorship opportunities remain open; please contact BRUCE to add your name. Sponsors to date have already contributed \$35,000 — a terrific head start. In this case, yes, we are in it for the money\$. The money raised supports the club grants to

**Local Charities**  
**Vocational Scholarships**  
**World Community Service**  
**Youth Services**

**PROGRAM: 2026 COMMUNITY GRANTS**



**ACHIEVE KIDS: Karen Klarreich**, Development Director, described

Achieve Kids' two school campuses (Palo Alto and East San Jose) serving students with special needs whose challenging behaviors prevent them from succeeding in traditional public school settings. Programs include special education, mental health counseling, behavioral support, vocational education, and speech therapy. A highlight is the Community Integration Program, which takes students on weekly outings to grocery stores, movie theaters, and parks to practice life skills most of us take for granted. The grant will help resurface basketball courts. As Karen noted: without Achieve Kids, many of these students might not be in school at all.

**AAUW TECH TREK: Natalie McClure**

described Tech Trek, a nationally recognized STEM camp program founded 25 years ago by a Palo Alto resident, now operating across 12 states and 8 California campuses. This year, the Silicon Valley branch is sending 12 girls (ages 12–13, between 7th and 8th grade) to week-long residential camps at Santa Clara University, UC Santa Cruz, and a virtual camp. The program targets the age when girls often begin to doubt their interest in science and math, building confidence, community, and career direction. 90% of Tech Trek alumni go on to college.



**BLOSSOM BIRTH AND FAMILY: Carolina Hahn**, was a client at Blossom as a pregnant mother and credits the organization with changing her life. This nonprofit was founded in 1999 to create a village for pregnant and postpartum mothers. Services include yoga, medical support, CPR, infant massage,



nutrition classes, and a Spanish-language program she has personally developed in partnership with the Ravenswood Clinic to serve East Palo Alto's Spanish-speaking community. Blossom serves families from San Jose to San Mateo.

**CORA** (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse): **Jennifer Kozocki** said that their office erupted in cheers when they learned of the grant. Approaching its 50th anniversary, CORA operates a 24/7 multilingual hotline receiving nearly 10,000 calls a year. When survivors leave, it is a crisis situation for them. CORA provides hotel rooms, food delivery, cell phones, and a path to safety. Fifty percent of clients have children under five. Jennifer reminded us that survivors attempt to leave an average of 8 to 14 times before they succeed, and that the moment of leaving is the most dangerous moment of all.

**GAMBLE GARDENS: Corey Andrikopoulos**, the Garden Director, said that our grant will help with the Roots and Shoots program. Cory attended Roots and Shoots when he was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade! Started 35 years ago as a collaboration with Walter Hays School, this program has grown into a garden-based science education initiative now reaching 13 schools and 700 students annually. The grant will fund a scholarship program so that schools lacking transportation money can still bring students to the garden.

**HIDDEN VILLA:** Sophia Kabahushi of the development team described Hidden Villa's 1,600 acres in the Los Altos Hills, purchased over 100 years ago by Josephine Devenek with the vision of bringing people together to experience nature and engage with social issues. The Environmental Education Program, running since 1970, now serves 11,000 students annually from Oakland to South San Jose — with a focus on students from East Palo Alto who might not otherwise



have access. Students tour the education garden, visit the animals, and hike the property.

**KARA: Kathy Merkel-Raymond,**

Development Director, described Kara's 50 years of free grief support services across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Programs include one-to-one adult services, small peer groups, a Youth and Family Program, Spanish-language services (in their 11th year), and a community outreach team that responds to institutional crises within 24 hours. Kara also offers subsidized therapy through licensed trainees. Camp Cara, a free full-weekend camp for grieving children ages 6 to 17, serves from 90-95 youth each year in Livermore with 60 volunteers and staff, and includes a pool, climbing wall, comfort dogs, and space to share.



**NUUESTRA CASA: Carmela Meehan** opened

with a striking reminder: an English-only form or a missed deadline can cause a family to lose their health insurance. Nuestra Casa, serving East Palo Alto since 2002 and now expanded to Belle Haven in Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks, and Redwood City, helps Spanish-speaking immigrant families navigate public benefits, housing resources, and immigration preparedness. In the current climate, the organization has helped families create Family Preparedness Plans that include legal documents that designate a caregiver for children in case of deportation. Last year, outreach workers reached more than 3,000 people with vital



information. The grant supports continued case management.

**PENINSULA HEALTHCARE CONNECTION:**

**Andrew Navarro** described PHC's nearly 20 years serving Palo Alto's unhoused and unstably housed population, with thousands of patients seen annually at their drop-in center on Sherman Avenue. In addition, PHC has taken over the food closet at All Saint's Church in downtown. Since July 2025 alone, the food pantry has served 5,600 individuals, including 720 children and 1,961 seniors. PHC provides not just food but Medi-Cal enrollment, CalFresh, housing assessments, legal services, glucose and blood pressure monitoring, and soon, CPR training. The grant helps sustain these food services.



**PENINSULA VOLUNTEERS: Stephanie Figeira**

described Peninsula Volunteers' nearly 80 years of service in northern Santa Clara County and East Palo Alto. Programs include Little House (adult day activities, ceramics, current events, lunch), Rosener House (respite for caregivers of adults with age-related decline), Uber/Lyft rides for



seniors with monitoring, and Quiescence (a navigation program for family caregivers). The grant supports their nutrition services: home-delivered meals for seniors in Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, and East Palo Alto, a program that has grown exponentially since launching in 2024.

**ST. ANTHONY'S PADUA DINING ROOM:**

**Joe Krauss** told us that Saint Anthony's has served the community for 52 years, providing warm, nutritious meals Monday through Saturday to over 300 guests daily, along with daily grocery bag giveaways, a clothing distribution center, and blood pressure monitoring in partnership with Stanford Medical School. They partner with five Safeways, Roberts Markets, Second Harvest Food Bank, Costco, and a South San Francisco produce market. After 52 years, their policy remains unchanged: no fees, no questions, no one turned away.



**WEHOPE (We Help Other People Excel):**

**Alicia Garcia** described WEHOPE's work addressing homelessness across Santa Clara, Alameda, and Marin counties since 1999. The organization operates six homeless shelters and its flagship program, Dignity on Wheels, which is a customized trailer with showers, restrooms, and laundry, bringing services directly to encampments and faith communities across five counties and 22



cities. The Rotary grant is funding a new stove currently cooking 400 meals a day, while also training people experiencing homelessness as sous chefs, providing catering to other shelters.

### CLOSING REMARKS

**BRUCE** closed with admiration for the people doing all the hard work. "Our job is easy, we just take out the credit card."

### MEETING VOLUNTEERS

**Greeters:** Jackie Wheeler, Steve Emslie

**Welcome Desk:** Rebecca Gerald

**Hybrid Host:** Ben Threlkeld

**Pinion Writer:** Sally Tomlinson

**Pinion Editor:** Ginny Lear

### UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

<b>April 13</b> 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	<b>Mark Jacobson, Stanford Prof of Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering</b> Still No Miracles Needed: How Today's Technology Can Save Our Climate and Clean Our Air
<b>April 18</b> <b>5:30-8:30 pm</b> <b>Mitchell Park</b>	<b>Annual Crabfest and Pasta Fundraiser</b> Proceeds benefit Local Charities and Community College Scholarships
<b>April 20</b> 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	<b>3 New Member Talks</b>
<b>April 27</b> 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	<b>David Steinberg, New York Times</b> <b>Crossword Puzzle Editor</b>