

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

June 8, 2026

Writer: Sally Tomlinson

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FOR
GOOD

Celebrating 104 years of Service

UNITE FOR GOOD 2025-2026

President BRUCE GEE was away today, so



DANA TOM stepped in to preside. Dana opened by clarifying that he and Bruce do share a few things in common: both went to Stanford, both wear glasses, and both have a

three-letter, one-syllable last name.

President-elect **CHARLIE WEIDANZ** welcomed the day's guests. **BRIAN STEEN** introduced his sister Barbara, visiting from Florida. City Manager **ED SHIKADA** introduced Jennifer Ackerman, the new Executive Assistant to the Palo Alto City Manager, who has recently relocated from Southern California. If you want an appointment with Ed, you now will have to go through Jennifer, so get to know her! **JUDY KLEINBERG** welcomed AJ, who is visiting again from a Rotary club in India and who introduced himself as a scientist and teacher.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Past President **BETSY BECHTEL** offered a passionate defense of local journalism, timed perfectly to today's speaker. Betsy's father and brother had long careers in journalism. BETSY reflected on what local papers do that

no one else does: they sit in the city council chambers, the school board meetings, the



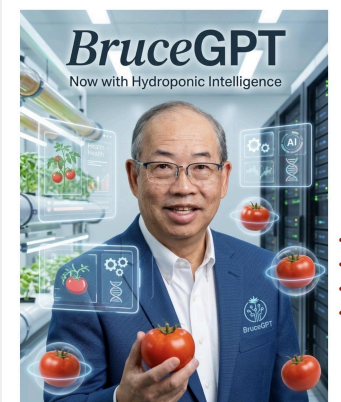
zoning hearings. They are the accountability mechanism for local government. And it is not only politics. They cover the high school sports championships, the new family business, the obituary of a beloved neighbor. When we lose a local newspaper, we lose our shared

sense of facts. We lose the glue that binds neighbors together. Supporting local journalism isn't just about buying a subscription, it's about investing in the survival of our community.

BRUCE'S DEBUNKING

ERIC JENSEN reminded us that Monday, June 29th, is **BRUCE'S DEBUNKING** celebration and the official passing of the gavel to President-Elect Charlie. **DEADLINE for reservations and meal selection is Thursday, June 18th.**

Tickets: <https://paloaltorotary.square.site/>



Address: Michael's @ Shoreline
2960 N Shoreline Blvd, Mtn. View
Time: 5:30 - 7:30

PRESIDENTS CLUB

It's Graduation Season, and Palo Alto Rotary annual Charities benefited with a room full of celebratory President's Club donations! **TOM GRACON, LEANNAH HUNT, RENE MORGAN, GLORIA HOM, and LIZ KNISS** all have remarkable grandchildren who have graduated from various stages of schooling and are the delight of their grandparents' lives. **RALPH ADAMS** joined in appreciation of last week's speaker, who was critical of Stanford, but Ralph raised a toast to all the commendable graduates and professors of Stanford that he has known over the years, and to the world-class institution that Stanford remains. **YUDY DENG** offered her President's Club contribution in honor of Palo Alto's first Pride event this past weekend, and **SUNNY DYKWEL** joined in honor of her son's birthday, which she and he always celebrate together.

AWARDS: THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

Immediate Past President **REBECCA GERALDI** led a presentation of Paul Harris Fellow awards, wrapping up the club's Rotary Foundation giving for the fiscal year. She reminded us that the Rotary Foundation is the giving arm that flows to Rotary International, and that contributions come back to support district grants and global projects. The club had set a goal of \$25,000 for the Foundation and \$5,000 for Polio Plus. Both goals were exceeded, with the club raising \$66,000 total!

Paul Harris Fellow awards, which are cumulative and mark each additional \$1,000 contributed, were presented as follows. New

Paul Harris Fellows (first award): **MIKE GULLARD** and **LEE PFAB**. PHF Level 1: **BRUCE WINTERHOF**. PHF Level 3: **CASH ALAEE** and **RICHARD KELLER**. PHF Level 4: **BRUCE GEE, TOM GRACON, LEANNAH HUNT, SALLY TOMLINSON, and REBECCA GERALDI**. PHF Level 5: **LEE LIPPERT** and **MARK STEVENSON**. PHF Level 6: **ANNETTE GLANCKOPF, IRIS KOROL, and BRUCE SWENSON**. PHF Level 7: **KAREN ROHDE**. PHF Level 8: **ROB LYMAN** and **SUSAN LUTTER**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: TGIF June 19th, 5:30

Mark your calendars for our **last TGIF social of the season on Friday, June 19th**, which will be at **TIM MISNER's** home in Palo Alto. Time: 5:30 to 7:30. Address will be in an upcoming email to Rotarians.

HANDS-ON SERVICE OPPORTUNITY: DANA announced that a new play is coming to the **Palo Alto Players**: "The Cottage," a British farce described as laugh-out-loud funny, feminist in spirit, and reminiscent of a golden-era comedy. The club will be ushering at the Saturday matinee the weekend after opening, from 12:45 to 4:30 p.m. **Volunteer ushers are needed. Email DANA** if you are able to help.

Special Note: NANCY PETERS was on her way in to the meeting, brought by **STEVE EMSLIE**, when she had an episode that required a trip to Stanford Hospital where she will stay a few days. "In good spirits as always", **STEVE** told the Pinion Editor. Give **NANCY** a call of good cheer. She may be home by now.

PROGRAM

BILL JOHNSON introduced our speaker, **Adam Dawes, CEO** of the Embarcadero Media Foundation, publisher of the Palo Alto Weekly and Palo Alto Online. Bill noted that he and Adam have worked together for 14 years, ten with Adam as a board member and four with Adam as CEO and Bill as board chair. Adam earned a degree in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard, and



completed his MBA at Stanford in the late 1990s. He spent 14 years at Google, including several years on the Google News Initiative, a sustained effort to help news organizations around the world develop new business models.

Adam opened by thanking Betsy for her eloquent framing of what is at stake for local news.



Over the past 20 years, more than 3,500 local news publishers have closed, a rate of more than two per week, every week, for two decades. The causes are

interconnected. Readers who once depended on a single daily newspaper for sports scores, stock quotes, and classified ads now get that information from dozens of separate apps and platforms, leaving local news with a smaller and less profitable audience. Advertisers have moved to Google and Facebook, which can target local markets at a scale and precision that local publishers can't match. Fewer local mom-and-pop businesses mean a smaller local advertising pie overall.

For Embarcadero specifically, the pandemic years were particularly hard. Print advertising, which had represented roughly 80 to 85 percent of revenue, declined by 50 percent between the start of the pandemic and 2023. Total revenue fell from over \$5 million to just over \$4 million. In 2023 the organization posted a roughly \$1.5 million operating loss. Federal pandemic relief programs, totaling over \$2 million, prevented the most drastic cuts.

Recognizing that advertising revenue was unlikely to recover to previous levels, Adam worked with Bill and the board to convert to nonprofit status. That transition was completed at the end of 2023. The organization set a fundraising goal of

\$800,000 for its first year and raised \$1.2 million. In year two, it raised even more. The organization has now posted back-to-back years in the black after five consecutive years of losses from 2019 through 2023.

One major initiative underway is reducing or eliminating the paywall, so that all community members can access the Foundation's journalism freely, while preserving and growing the reader revenue that has been an important part of the financial model.

HENRIETTA BURROUGHS asked if tech could be expected to help the local publishers adapt. Adam acknowledged that Google has invested over \$100 million per year through the Google News Initiative and that Facebook had similar programs before discontinuing them. Legislative approaches to require tech platforms to pay publishers have had mixed results; Canada's effort prompted Facebook to remove news from its feed entirely. He sees the relationship with big tech as necessarily complex and unlikely to ever fully compensate for the structural disruption the internet has caused.

Adam identified AI as the next and potentially even more disruptive challenge. Where search engines and social media at least drove traffic to publisher websites, AI assistants simply answer the question directly. The New York Times lawsuit against OpenAI over use of its content is testing the legal boundary between copyright and AI training, with implications that could reshape how publishers are compensated, or not.

LEANNAH HUNT noted that sports coverage has been the most visible gap since the closure of the Times Tribune decades ago. Adam agreed that local sports is consistently the top request from the community, and described a brief experiment with dedicated sports reporters in 2018-2019 that found strong enthusiasm from parents but limited broader readership. He flagged this as an area where philanthropic support for a dedicated beat reporter could make a real difference, and invited anyone interested to reach out.

DANA closed by observing that while the media are unelected, they serve the public just as surely as any elected official. He thanked Adam and Bill for their years of service to journalism and to this community.

WASTEWATER FACILITY TOUR TAKEN

SALLY TOMLINSON recapped a recent club outing to the Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility, taken just an hour before the meeting. The group learned about sludge and scum, UV water treatment, and a major multi-million-dollar project underway to reduce nutrient waste flowing into the bay by 50 percent. Key takeaways: flushable wipes are not actually flushable, and pharmaceuticals and plastics should never enter the water stream. The tour was described as fascinating and, by at least one account, quite fragrant. This tour was an auction item in support of Palo Alto Rotary Annual Charities.

CLOSING

Dana thanked our speaker, our guests, and all who made the meeting possible. Reminders: sign up to **usher for "The Cottage"** at the Palo Alto Players, **register for Bruce's debunking** dinner by June 18th, and join us for **TGIF** on June 19th at Tim Meister's home.

MEETING VOLUNTEERS

Greeter: Dana Tom
Welcome Desk: Rebecca Gerald
Hybrid Host: Ben Threlkeld
Microphone: Andres Calzada
Pinion Writer: Sally Tomlinson
Pinion Editor: Ginny Lear

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

June 15 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Mark Clifford, President, Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation Topic: <i>Jimmy Lai and the End of Hong Kong Freedom</i>
June 19 TGIF Social 5:30-7:30 pm	Home of TIM MISNER, Palo Alto Refreshments provided
June 20 USHER for Palo Alto Players 12:45-4:30 pm	Usher at Lucie Stern Theater for the comic play "The Cottage" contact DANA TOM. A Service Project.
June 22 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	Jim Bender, Author Topic: Boats Building Bridges: Connecting Cultures Through Craft and the Sea
June 29 President BRUCE's Debunking 5:30-7:30 pm NO lunch Meeting	Michaels @ Shoreline Restaurant SIGN UP by JUNE 18th! Online or at a meeting in June \$100 per person

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