Palo Alto RotaryPinion

November 16, 2026
Writer: Sally Tomlinson

CREATE LASTING IMPACT

Celebrating 104 years of Service

CREATE LASTING IMPACT 2026-2027



President **CHARLIE WEIDANZ** convened the meeting on a rainy Monday, noting the cozy atmosphere and suggesting that a little fake fireplace would complete the picture. President-elect **ERIC JENSEN** welcomed the day's guests. Darrin Harvey was introduced as a first-time visitor.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



Eric introduced **RANDA HOFFMAN**, noting that she recently launched a new monthly club update to keep members better connected. Born in Saudi Arabia and raised in Jordan, RANDA moved from IT into finance and now runs her own business helping clients build lives of fulfillment and purpose.

Inspired by Rebecca Dupas, whose poetry in plain and simple language delighted RANDA, so, RANDA decided to try to write her own poetry. She shared with us her very first poem, titled "Then, Now, Tomorrow." It was a reflection on gratitude, tracing a journey from a time when she did not know what gratitude felt like, through a therapist's office, to the present, where gratitude is the warmth she feels for the life she is creating. The room received it warmly.

WE CARE ANNOUNCEMENT



REBECCA GERALDI shared an update on **TRISH BUBENIK**, who was hospitalized last week and has since been moved to Webster House for rehabilitation, room 317B. Trish is bed bound and has lost most of her mobility, but she is smiling and in good spirits. She is lonely, and REBECCA encouraged us to call Webster House to connect with her. The phone number is 650-328-3360. A card circulated for written messages that will be delivered to her directly.

PRESIDENTS CLUB

CHARLIE joined the President's Club to recognize **JAKE YOO, ERIC, JACKIE WHEELER,** and **SIMON PENNINGTON**, who stepped up on short notice to bartend for about two hours at the Chamber of Commerce mixer held at Citizens Private Bank, serving over 80 guests.

DAVE SMULLIN joined to honor **BRUCE SWENSON,** his wife **Barbara**, and **KATHY TORGERSEN**, who flew to Helsinki a few weeks ago and embarked on a three-day convoy driving vehicles to the Ukrainian

border to serve as ambulances and supply carriers. DAVE called it an honor to have members of our own Rotary family doing something so meaningful and courageous.

VOLUNTEER & SERVICE UPDATES



ERIC reminded members of the annual Week of Thanks and Giving initiative, a collaboration between our club, Kiwanis, and the Friday Morning Rotary Club. Last year the effort raised $6,000 for the Downtown Palo Alto Food Closet, with donated funds stretched further by purchasing canned goods at the Moffett Field PX. This year the focus is on raising awareness for the service clubs as much as raising funds. Eric distributed flyers with a QR code linking to the charity donation page and encouraged members to leave them locally, where you go, for others to see.

GIVING TO THE ROTARY FOUNDATION



BRUCE GEE reminded members that this is the season to support The Rotary Foundation and Polio Plus. A letter has gone out to members, and a follow-up email with a donation link will be sent this week. The club Generous gifts have been received from **JACKIE WHEELER** to the Rotary Foundation and Polio Plus, adding to **RALPH ADAMS's** $5000 gift to the EndPolio Now fund, serving as a challenge to the rest of us to chip in toward the club's goal.

HOLIDAY PARTY VENUE 12/10/2026

YUDY DENG announced that she has volunteered to accept the torch from **PATTY MCGUIGAN** to host this year's annual Holiday Party at her home on Thursday, December 10th, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. She is looking for volunteers to help make it a fun and creative evening. Please reach out to YUDY directly if you would like to be involved.

PROGRAM

SALLY TOMLINSON introduced our speaker, **DANIEL FELLS.** Daniel grew up in Fullerton, was named MVP at Fullerton Union High School, went on to play football at UC Davis, and spent ten seasons in the NFL across seven franchises as an undrafted free agent.



In 2015, a MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) infection brought doctors close to recommending amputation. His New York Giants teammates voted him the Block of Courage Award that year. He retired from football but continued to fight, and came to share his story.

Daniel opened by putting his story in context. He was undrafted, doubted, overlooked, underpaid, and underestimated throughout his career. He has had 13 total surgeries. He came within hours of losing his foot. He has nearly died twice. And through all of it, he said, he never dropped the ball.

Daniel was raised by parents who worked long hours and channeled their sons into sports to keep them grounded. His mother's rule was

simple: homework first, no exceptions. That discipline, he said, became the foundation for everything else. He described his path in the NFL from Atlanta to Oakland to Tampa Bay to St. Louis to Denver to New England to New York, teams where he was mostly on the bench or on the practice squad, but he remained determined and was finally on the field when a minor injury did not heal and developed into MRSA. He described his near-death time in the hospital, and the principles that he carries from that experience: Focus, Trust, and Finish. Focus, because even in a team sport you have to focus on your own job. Trust, because there are times when you have to trust others, whether it is doctors or teammates. And finish, because each step must be completed before you can proceed to the next.

Daniel is proud now to see his teenage son creating a project, Fuel Their Future, to help young athletes growing up in situations similar to Daniel's childhood by providing them nutrition to support their athleticism and their academics.
After a range of questions from the audience, CHARLIE thanked Daniel, noting that Rotary's theme this year is "Create Lasting Impact," and that Daniel and his son are doing exactly that.

CLOSING

CHARLIE thanked our speaker and all who made the meeting possible. Reminders: call or write to TRISH BUBENIK at Webster House, room 317B; take a Week of Thanks and Giving flyer and spread the word; plan to attend the Holiday Party on December 10th; and consider a gift to the Rotary Foundation or Polio Plus before year end.

MEETING VOLUNTEERS

Greeters: Jennie Savage, Hersh Davis
Welcome Desk: Rebecca Geraldi
Microphone: Kanika Sabharwal
Hybrid Host: Dana Tom
Pinion Writer: Sally Tomlinson
Pinion Editor: Ginny Lear

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

November 23 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	**Deborah Grant, Executive Director. LaComida, Palo Alto** Topic: Focus on Seniors
November 30 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	**James Horsman, Senior Manager, Public Policy, San Jose Chamber of Commerce** Topic: AI Literacy, how it works and how it will make our work more efficient
December 7 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting	**Gunn High School Choir** A joyful, seasonal half hour of songs
December 14 12:15 - 1:30 PM **Final club meeting of 2026**	**William Durham, Professor of Human Biology emeritus, Stanford University** Topic: The Unexpected Impact of El Niño in the Galápagos





Rotary District 5170

RICHARD D. KING

ANNUAL YOUTH SPEECH CONTEST

2026–2027

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

WHO MAY ENTER?

- Students **in grades 9–12**
- Students attending a public or private high school within Rotary District 5170
- Each student may compete in only **one** Rotary Club speech contest

YOUR SPEECH

- Must be **4 to 5 minutes** long
- Must be the **original work** of the student
- May address any timely topic of interest
- Must clearly relate to the Rotary motto: **"Service Above Self"**
- The theme must be clearly identified in the speech, although it does not have to be the specific topic of the speech

IMPORTANT CONTEST RULES

- **Do not** identify yourself or your school in the title or content of your speech.
- **Do not** include identifying information through your attire or other means.
- Follow the contest rules carefully at every level of competition.
- A student may compete at only **one** club-level contest.

HOW THE CONTEST WORKS

CLUB CONTEST → AREA CONTEST → REGIONAL CONTEST → DISTRICT FINALS

Palo Alto Rotary & University Rotary Club Contest

JANUARY 20, 2027

6 PM

Palo Alto City Council Chambers
250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA

★ THE FOUR-WAY TEST ★

Your speech must clearly relate, apply, or interweave all four principles of Rotary's Four-Way Test:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

WIN UP TO $4,150 IN CASH PRIZES!

CONTEST LEVEL	1ST PLACE	2ND PLACE	OTHER PARTICIPANTS
CLUB CONTEST	$150	$75	$25
AREA CONTEST	$300	$150	$50
REGIONAL CONTEST	$700 EACH (Top 2 Winners)	—	$300
DISTRICT FINALS	$3,000	$1,500	$750 (Other Finalists)

★ A student who wins 1st place at the Club and Area levels, earns the top 2 at Regional, and wins the District Finals could receive up to **$4,150** in prizes!

GET READY!

- WRITE your speech.
- PRACTICE your delivery.
- SHARE your ideas.

YOUR VOICE CAN INSPIRE CHANGE!

GOOD LUCK!

We look forward to hearing your voice!

Questions? Contact: Justin Wang <justin@trifectaed.com> or Annette Glanckopf <annette_g@att.net>