



155th Edition

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President's Message



First, I hope everyone had a merry and peaceful Christmas!! And Happy New Year!!!

As we bid farewell to 2024 and embrace the promise of 2025, let us reflect on the remarkable journey

we've shared as Rotarians. The past year has been filled with moments of joy, service, and camaraderie.

We have witnessed the magic of Rotary firsthand through our engaging social events. From our lively summer gathering at the Wells Estate, a bang-up good time at the Sportsmen club and our harrowing hike along the Erie Attica to our festive holiday celebration at the commons, these moments have strengthened our bonds and fostered a vibrant community within our club.

Furthermore, we've had the privilege of hearing from a diverse range of inspiring speakers. From our outbound and inbound exchange students; Maggie, Clara and Paul, to Sandy Kaufmann introducing us to the trap team at Avon High and most recently our guests from Livingston County. Their insightful presentations have broadened our horizons, challenged our perspectives, and provided valuable insights into a variety of important issues.

Our commitment to service has also shone brightly throughout the year. We have actively participated in impactful projects that have made a tangible difference in our community and beyond. From filling the Avon Inn with donations to organize so flood victims in the southern tier had some relief, our multiple blood drives, wrapping gifts for our Hometown Heroes with Full Circle Home and our dinner in a bag, Christmas cookie edition. These experiences have not only benefited those in need but have also enriched our own lives with a profound sense of purpose.

As we embark on the second half of the Rotary year, let us carry the spirit of service and fellowship forward. Let us continue to explore new avenues for service, engage in meaningful projects, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as Rotarians. There are still many opportunities for us to do good in our community and around the world. I ask that each of you continue to think of ideas that will bring goodwill and service to our community and let me know how Avon Rotary can make it happen.

May the New Year bring us renewed energy, fresh perspectives, and countless opportunities to make a positive impact on the world around us.

Yours In Rotary Service,
Karen



Board of Directors

Karen Vanderbilt, President
Rob Lupisella, President Elect
Katie DeGraff, Senior Director
Tom Honan, Director
Collin Hayes, Member at Large
Mike Ford, Past President
Jaime Lovullo, Secretary
Hans Koomen, Treasurer

happy new year

Avon Rotary Club meets Tuesdays at 6:30 pm

JANUARY

AVON ROTARY MEETING SCHEDULE

*For more meeting details,
go to avonrotary.org*

- Mon. Jan. 6 Board of Directors Meeting, 6:00 pm at Circleview Conference Room
- Tues. Jan. 7 Regular Mtg 6:00 pm, New Member Induction & Outbound Country Reveal
- Tues. Jan. 14 Regular Mtg 6:00 pm TBD
- Tues. Jan. 21 Regular Mtg 6:00 pm **at Six Sprouts** Farm Market, Program: Lending Library
- Tues. Jan. 28 Regular Mtg 6:00 pm, Club Survey/Club Culture



Birthday

- ⇒ Greg Antkowiak
- ⇒ Barbara Herman
- ⇒ Bob House
- ⇒ Jaime Lovullo

Rotary Anniversary

- ⇒ Kirk Vanderbilt 2003
- ⇒ Jim Ryan 2010
- ⇒ Chris Masten 2011
- ⇒ Mike Ford 2017

Wedding Anniversary

- ⇒ Helen Zamboni



INTERACT TAKEOVER WITH RECOGNITIONS & SERVICE PROJECT



December 3: At tonight's meeting, we had our annual Avon Interact Takeover and it was a huge success! Interact is a Rotary-sponsored service club for high school students, where they develop leadership skills, learn the value of service, and make a difference in their communities.

Avon Interact President Abby Schutz led the meeting with several other talented Interact students in attendance. Abby shared her incredible experience at RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards), a leadership camp that brings together young leaders from all over to develop skills and make lifelong connections.

After Abby's inspiring presentation, our club members and Interact students participated in a holiday "cookie in a bag" service project. This is a fun twist on our cake in a bag project, where we packed bags with all the ingredients needed to bake delicious holiday cookies. These bags will be donated to the Avon Food Pantry to help local families enjoy the season's treats.

A big thank you to Abby and the entire Interact team for leading the way in service and leadership. We are so proud of the leaders they are becoming and look forward to all the great things they will do in the future!



Interact students in attendance.

Youth exchange is strong in Avon! Outgoing exchange student Laura Krasinski, current exchange student to Avon from Germany, Paul Pango, and outgoing exchange student Jasmine Flora.



The Avon Rotary Club had the honor of welcoming Past District Governor Julie Carney to our meeting. Julie joined us to present some special recognitions to our club for its outstanding accomplishments under the leadership of last year's President, Mike Ford.

We are thrilled to announce that the Avon Rotary Club has been awarded the 2023-2024 Rotary Citation! This prestigious award recognizes clubs that work diligently to strengthen Rotary and make a positive impact in their communities. The Avon Rotary Club earned this recognition by meeting membership goals, developing sustainable service projects, supporting The Rotary Foundation, and raising awareness of Rotary in our local community.

In addition, we were proud to receive a certificate honoring our financial support for End Polio Now, and a banner acknowledging our club's place as #3 in per capita giving to The Rotary Foundation in a district with nearly 60 clubs!

A huge thank you to Mike Ford for his leadership, and to every member of our club for their hard work and dedication to the Rotary mission. Together, we continue to make a difference in our community and beyond!

Submitted by Mike Ford via social media



LIVINGSTON COUNTY FARM BUREAU



At our **December 10th** meeting, we were honored to welcome Jack Klapper, President of the Livingston County Farm Bureau and a 7th-generation dairy farmer at Noblehurst Farms in Linwood. Jack gave us a fascinating look into his family's farming legacy and the critical work the Farm Bureau does to support farmers and rural communities.

The Livingston County Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization open to everyone, dedicated to advocating for the needs of farmers and rural residents in Albany and Washington. Jack highlighted several areas where the Farm Bureau is making a difference, including:

- Fair milk pricing to ensure dairy farmers are paid equitably.
- Fair taxation policies that help protect family farms from burdensome tax structures.
- Advocating for sustainable labor practices to support both workers and farm operations.
- Promoting legislation that fosters innovation and sustainability in agriculture.



We're grateful to Jack for sharing his expertise and for his dedication to improving the lives of farmers and rural communities. Thank you, Jack, for your leadership and for helping us better understand the challenges and opportunities facing agriculture in Livingston County! *Submitted by Mike Ford via social media*

HOLIDAY PARTY

December 14: Many thanks to all involved with the planning & hosting of this year's holiday party, especially the Board of Directors, Laurie Vonglis, Katie DeGraff, Joe Yantachka (Partyman Catering), & Tom Vonglis. Our event was held at the Avon Commons. The food was plentiful and your dish to pass was much appreciated! Shout out to Katie for organizing the games which were fun and quite spirited! Once again, a very special thank you to Joe for his generous support! We hope everyone enjoyed the fellowship to celebrate the season and time together as a Rotary family.

Enjoy the highlights!



Welcome 2025-2026 Board of Directors

President – Rob Lupisella
 President Elect – Katie DeGraff
 Director – Tom Honan
 Jr. Director – Jaime Lovullo
 Past President – Karen Vanderbilt
 Secretary – Laurie Vonglis
 Treasurer – Hans Koomen
 Members at Large - Jean Antkowiak, Collin Hayes, Nick Lovullo

Many thanks to this year's volunteers!

Several Avon Rotary members came together to ring the bell for the Salvation Army's Avon service unit, supporting our neighbors in need. It was a wonderful opportunity to spread holiday cheer and make a difference in our community. Thank you to everyone who donated and helped make this effort a success! Your generosity will go a long way in bringing joy to others this season.



A ROTARY MOMENT TO REMEMBER

By Mike Ford:

Since Richelle and I took over the Salvation Army's Avon Service Unit in 2019, we've had the privilege of hearing countless stories of how the Salvation Army has touched lives. We've heard stories of families receiving financial assistance, children receiving gifts for Christmas, and even veterans recalling how the Salvation Army's simple offering of coffee and donuts provided comfort during the darkest days of war. These stories remind us daily of the profound impact that service organizations can have on people in times of need.

But during Rotary Week this year, something extraordinary happened that really put into perspective the power of service—and the ripple effect of Rotary's work. As I was bell ringing at Tops, I had an experience that is now, without a doubt, one of the most meaningful moments of my life as a Rotarian.

Less than 10 minutes into my shift, a young man in his mid-twenties approached me and handed me a thick wad of \$20 bills. My first reaction was one of disbelief. Here was a young man, generously donating a large sum of money. I asked, "Are you sure?" And he simply nodded, responding with a heartfelt "Yes," followed by, "God bless you." As he handed me the money, he smiled and said, "As-salamu alaykum"—a traditional Muslim greeting meaning "Peace be upon you."

I was still processing the sheer generosity of his donation when he turned and walked into the store. As he left, I offered a sincere thank you, and he responded with something that completely caught me off guard: "No, thank you. God bless you, and God bless Rotary."

I must have given him a confused look, because he then proceeded to share a story that left me speechless. He told me that he was from Syria, and for the first time since his childhood, he would soon be able to return to his homeland. The reason he was alive to do so, he explained, was because of Rotary.

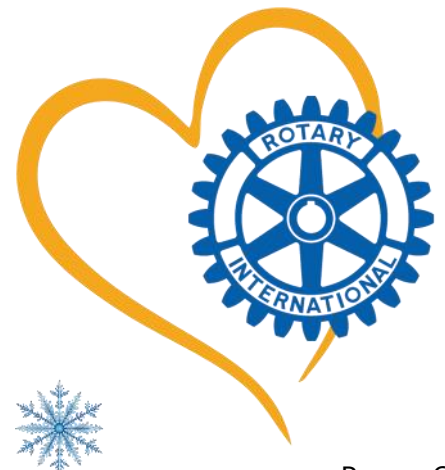
He told me that when his family was fleeing the brutal Assad regime, it was a Rotary Club in Turkey that helped them escape to safety. From there, another Rotary Club in Germany helped facilitate their move to Europe, and eventually, they found a new home in the United States. It was this network of Rotary clubs—working together across international borders—that saved his family and gave them a chance at life.

As I stood there, trying to process his words, I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for the work that Rotary does, often in ways we don't even realize. The moment was so powerful that it brought a lump to my throat, and yes, I'll admit it: my eyes welled up a little.

We often hear our fellow Rotarians mention their "Rotary moment"—that instance when everything about Rotary's mission and impact suddenly clicks into place. Well, this was mine. This encounter, so brief yet so profound, has cemented the pride I feel in being a Rotarian.



What is your Rotary moment?





By Bruce Amey

Happy New Year fellow Rotarians “old no so long ago”. I would venture to guess that on the recent New Year’s Eve you heard the song Auld Lang Syne playing. I remember Guy Lombardo’s Royal Canadian Band playing on the TV with my parents several decades ago. Auld Lang Syne means, roughly, “old long ago.” The song, is Scottish and generally attributed to poet Robert Burns, is about retaining old friendships, that whatever happens throughout our lives, we should remember our lifelong friends and hold them dear. This is an appropriate sentiment as we “ring out the old and ring in the new year.”

I am looking forward to what our new year of 2025 will bring for me, for us. We are expecting to induct a new member this January, possibly two. At our meeting on December 17, we elected our slate of officers for the Rotary 2025-26 year. I am thankful for these members who have agreed to serve in leadership roles for our club: President Rob Lupisella, President-elect Katie DeGraff, Director Tom Honan, Jr. Director Jaime Lovullo, Treasurer Hans Koomen, Secretary Laurie Vonglis, Directors-at-large: Jean Antkowiak, Collin Hayes, and Nick Lovullo, along with immediate Past President Karen Vanderbilt.

January is Rotary’s Vocational Service Month. We need to explore how we can celebrate and support various vocations in our community. District Governor Dave DeMers has made “peace” a focus for his year and has encouraged all clubs to consider working to install “peace poles” in their communities. He included a lot of information regarding this

project in the November issue of the Grapevine. I know a team of Avon Rotarians and others will be heading to Nicaragua shortly for another school build. These projects for Linking Hands For Learning, the brain child of Rob and Jeanine Lupisella, are to me like peace poles but are generally unknown to many in our community. A peace pole project in Avon could illustrate a portion of Rotary’s role within our community and our world.

I believe I have frequently made it known how I view our club and Rotary in my life. You are my “therapy” as I try to navigate my role in Diane’s Alzheimer’s disease care. I hold my relationships and friendships with you dearly and I look forward to every Tuesday club meeting opportunity. I look forward to retaining your friendships throughout my life. Parts of the chorus of the of the song state:

For auld lang syne, my dear, For auld lang syne, We’ll take a cup of kindness yet, For auld lang syne.

And surely you’ll buy your pint cup! And surely I’ll buy mine! And we’ll take a cup o’ kindness yet, For auld lang syne.

And there’s a hand my trusty friend! And give me a hand o’ thine! And we’ll take a right good-will draught, For auld lang syne.

I look forward to our new year together. And, as usual, I have rambled on long enough.



JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICES MONTH

“TEAMWORK IS THE ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER TOWARD A COMMON VISION. THE ABILITY TO DIRECT INDIVIDUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES. IT IS THE FUEL THAT ALLOWS COMMON PEOPLE TO ATTAIN UNCOMMON RESULTS.”

- ANDREW CARNEGIE



THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

The Power of Attendance: Nurturing Community and Personal Growth

In the vibrant tapestry of our Rotary Club, each thread contributes to the strength and richness of our community. At the heart of this synergy lies a fundamental cornerstone: attendance at our meetings. It's not just about being present; it's about embracing the essence of fellowship, learning, and shared purpose.

Supporting Our Local Club

Regular attendance isn't merely a formality; it's a demonstration of commitment to our club's vision and mission. Your presence at meetings symbolizes solidarity, showing that you stand alongside your fellow members in supporting and uplifting our local community. Through active participation, you reinforce the very foundation upon which our club stands: unity, service, and dedication to making a positive difference.

Unlocking the Full Benefits of Membership

Imagine our meetings as vibrant hubs of opportunity, where ideas spark, collaborations form, and knowledge blooms. Attending these gatherings is not just a ritual; it's a pathway to personal and professional enrichment. Every session is an opportunity to glean insights, share experiences, and broaden horizons.

Fellowship and Networking

In the warm embrace of our meetings, fellowship blossoms. Engaging with fellow members creates a sense of belonging, strengthens friendships, and cultivates a supportive network. Through these connections, we foster a community that extends beyond our gatherings, resonating throughout our lives and endeavors.

Continuous Learning and Growth

Each meeting is a trove of knowledge waiting to be explored. The discussions, presentations, and exchanges hold the potential to expand our perspectives, deepen our understanding, and nurture personal growth. By consistently attending, you're investing in your own development, *gaining insights that can elevate both your professional and personal spheres.*

Conclusion

In essence, the importance of attendance at our meetings transcends mere presence; it embodies our collective commitment to a shared vision and the individual quest for growth. Your active participation is the lifeblood of our club, igniting the flames of camaraderie and enlightenment.

Let us continue to come together, to share, to learn, and to contribute. By doing so, we not only fortify our Avon Rotary Club but also embark on a journey of self-improvement and community betterment.

From the Archives: Mike Ford



LINKING HANDS FOR LEARNING

Submitted by Rob Lupisella





2024 Wild Polio Case Counts as of December 31, 2024

<u>Country</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Afghanistan	6	25
Pakistan	6	66
Total	12	91



For more information go to: <https://polioeradication.org/>



Dear Uncle Jim & family of Avon Rotary Club,

I was a Rotary exchange student during my school year in Avon in '97-'98.

My father Gaetano Savona entered Rotary in 1979, funded Rotary Palermo Monreale in 1981 and later on funded Rotary Palermo Mediterranean in 2005.

During the most important year of my life I got the chance to meet great people and to get in touch with the real Rotarian spirit. Jerry Dougherty and Jim Tompsett were for me, more than just friends or host fathers. They were for me inspirations for being a better man.

I entered Rotary Palermo Mediterranean two years ago after my father suddenly passed away. For him Rotary Palermo Mediterranean was a family and the whole family asked me to join them in the club.

It is a great honor for me today to announce that last Sunday, December the 1st, I was elected President of Rotary Club Palermo Mediterranean for the year 26-27.

I proudly share this happiness with you all.

God bless you all, my dear friends of Avon Rotary Club. Manny



AVON FOOD PANTRY

- ⇒ Grocery items needed in January will be sent to us soon.
- ⇒ Watch for an email from David Kilgore.
- ⇒ Collection will be January 21st.
- ⇒ Place in the bin at our meeting. Thank you!



Is a fellow Rotarian ill or in need?

Please contact the club
Sunshine Liaison

Barbara Herman
226-6735

