



CREATE LASTING IMPACT

176th Edition

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**Avon Rotary Club meets
Tuesdays at 6:00 pm**

Board of Directors

Katie DeGraff, President
Kirk Vanderbilt, President Elect
Jaime Lovullo, Senior Director
Tom Vonglis, Director
Jean Antkowiak, Member at Large
Josh Tonra, Member at Large
Helen Zamboni, Member at Large
Rob Lupisella, Past President
Laurie Vonglis, Secretary
Mike Giso, Treasurer

President's Message



October has arrived, and as the leaves begin to change and we settle into a new season, I find myself reflecting on what a busy and meaningful start we have had to our Rotary year.

October is Economic and Community Development Month which feels especially appropriate for our club. One of the things I love most about Avon Rotary is that we don't just talk about our community—we get involved in it. We show up, we listen, we roll up our sleeves, and we look for ways to make Avon a better place.

This month, we will take another important step in that effort through our Community Needs Assessment, that Kirk Vanderbilt has worked so hard to develop. It will be shared with a focus group within our community to help us better understand where needs exist and, more importantly, where there are opportunities for us to provide meaningful service.

That last part is important to me: **meaningful service.**

We are fortunate to have the ability to support organizations financially, but our impact can be so much greater than simply writing a check. Sometimes the greatest need is a volunteer, a connection, an idea, a project, or simply someone willing to ask, "How can we help?" I am excited to see what we learn from this assessment and how we can turn that information into action. It also ties beautifully into our 100 Acts of Service initiative. Every act may be different, but each one represents the same thing—Rotarians choosing to make a difference. Some acts may be big and highly visible, while others may be as simple as

helping someone, making a connection, giving our time, or noticing a need and doing something about it.

And while our focus this month is very much on our own community, October also reminds us that Rotary's reach extends far beyond Avon.

October is Polio Awareness Month, highlighting one of Rotary International's longest-standing commitments: the global effort to eradicate polio. For generations, Rotarians have worked alongside partners around the world to protect children from this devastating disease. The progress has been extraordinary, but the work isn't finished.

I think polio eradication is one of the best examples of what Rotary can accomplish when we think beyond ourselves. A Rotary Club in a small community like Avon may seem a long way from the global fight against polio, but we are part of that same worldwide network of people who believe that change is possible—and that our collective efforts matter.

That is what "Create Lasting Impact" means to me.

It isn't necessarily about one big project or one monumental accomplishment. It is about all of the little things we do consistently, together, that add up to something meaningful. A meal provided. A child given an opportunity. A local organization supported. A community need identified. A volunteer who gives their time. A member who simply says, "I'll help." A contribution toward a global effort like polio eradication. Individually, these acts may seem small. Together, they become something much bigger.

As we continue through this Rotary year, I hope we keep challenging ourselves to look for opportunities to serve—not just when

President's Message cont.

someone asks us, but when we see a need. Let's continue asking ourselves: Where can we make a difference? Who can we help? What can we do—not just to help today, but to make things better for tomorrow? I am incredibly proud of this club and the energy, ideas, and willingness to serve that each of you brings to Avon Rotary. From the work behind the scenes to the projects everyone sees, **you are what makes this club special.**

Thank you for continuing to show up, support one another, and most importantly, serve.

Yours in Rotary Service,
Katie DeGraff, President

OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS

Birthday:

Terry Hayes, Josh Tonra,
Deb Shamaylov, Laurie Vonglis,
Joe Yantachka, Helen Zamboni

Wedding Anniversary:

Rodney George, Terry Hayes,
Rob Lupisella, Jim Varner

Rotary Anniversary:

Kelly Cole 2002
Hans Koomen 2002
Tom Vonglis 2002
Nick Lovullo 2018
TJ Vonglis 2018
Mike Giso, 2021
Collin Hayes 2022



AVON ROTARY MEETING SCHEDULE

For more meeting details, go to avonrotary.org

October 2026: Economic and Community Development Month

Upcoming Events		Highlights
Tues. Oct 6	Regular Meeting 6:30 pm	Veterans Outreach Center Presentation and Service Project
Tues. Oct 13	Regular Meeting 6:30 pm	Caitlin Meyer - Interact President RYLA Recap
Mon. Oct. 19	Board of Director's Meeting 6 pm	Monthly Board of Directors Meeting Moved to Avon Free Library
Tues. Oct 20	Regular Meeting 6:30 pm	Greg Francois presenting on ODED Haiti
Sat Oct 24	World Polio Day	This is the birthday of Dr. Jonas Salk.
Tues. Oct 27	Regular Meeting 6:30 pm	Halloween Meeting!! Details to follow.

Congratulations to Robert Bridges!



The Avon Rotary Club is proud to celebrate Robert Bridges as a recipient of the Avon Rotary Vocational Scholarship!

Each year, our Club awards a Vocational Scholarship to two graduating seniors who demonstrate hard work, a commitment to service and honesty in dealing with others, and who intend to pursue higher education to attain a career in a vocational or skills-based trade.

We were happy to celebrate Robert's achievements and wish him well in his future endeavors at our meeting on **September 1**.

Robert has spent the last two years honing his craft through the Genesee Valley BOCES Building Trades program, where he gained hands-on experience in carpentry, plumbing, roofing, and electrical work. As captain of the Avon football team, he has shown the same leadership and dedication on the field, and he has given back to his community through volunteer work with Special Olympics, local blood drives, flood relief efforts with the Avon Town Fire Station, and time spent at the Avon Nursing Home.

Robert shared that he has applied to the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee Inside Wireman program with IBEW Local 86, working toward a career as a union electrician.

Reflecting on what drew him to the trade, Robert said in his application essay, "Once I've graduated from the apprenticeship after 5 years I will have the knowledge, experience, and skills to have the ability to give back to the community and get a good job that pays well... I will use my experience and knowledge to help others."

Robert's character and work ethic did not go unnoticed by his instructors, as Sean Strathearn remarked in his recommendation letter: "Typically a student with such advanced skill and knowledge tends to be arrogant but [Robert] is one of the kindest, well mannered people I have ever met. He is honest, humble and brings everyone around him to a higher level."

Please join us in congratulating Robert! *By: Collin Hayes*

Foundation Moment

At our **September 1** Club Meeting, Avon Rotary recognized Honorary Member Bob House on receiving his Paul Harris Fellow +3!

Bob has been an Avon Rotarian since 1987, demonstrating four decades of Service Above Self.

Earning a PHF +3 reflects \$4,000 in support for the Rotary Foundation, directly funding humanitarian projects, health initiatives, and community programs, both locally and globally.

Bob's legacy of service continues on through his son-in-law, Rotarian Mike Giso, and his grandson Victor.



Please join us in thanking Bob for his generosity and decades of service to our community! *By: Collin Hayes*

Acts of Service

September 11:

Avon Rotarians participated in the annual District 7120 Golf Tournament held in Naples at Reservoir Creek, which supports District initiatives.

Golfers: Tim Hayes, Tom Vonglis, Katie DeGraff, Mike Giso, Hans Koomen, Laurie Vonglis, Jim Varner, Kirk Vanderbilt, Rob Lupisella, Karen Vanderbilt, Josh Tonra, Terry Hayes.



September 12:

Rotarians Jean and Greg Antkowiak and Nick Westfall volunteered at the Greenway Cycle Challenge event!



September 19:

Shout out to Rotarians Ryan Pacatte and Karen Vanderbilt, who were joined by members of the Avon Central Schools Board of Education and District Office to cook and serve a meal for Martha's Kitchen.

Martha's Kitchen is a service project of the Zion Church Avon that provides free meals to the community twice a month.



One Rotary Summit



September 12:

Kirk and Karen Vanderbilt attended One Rotary Summit to exchange ideas on how to increase membership, engagement, and public image within our community.

Kirk led a break out session and also worked tirelessly on the planning committee over the past few months.

Thank you both for your investment in Rotary!

Avon Receives 25-26 Club Excellence Award



September 22:

Our Club was honored to be joined by Past District Governor Jim Crane.

Jim presented Past President Rob Lupisella and President Katie DeGraff with a Club Excellence Award from District 7120.

The award recognizes Clubs that achieve specific goals throughout the year, such as increasing their membership, engaging members in sustainable service projects, giving to the Rotary Foundation, building awareness of Rotary, and having an up-to-date strategic plan.

Avon was one of eight clubs in the District to receive this award.

Congratulations to our members, our Board of Directors and especially Past President Rob Lupisella and his leadership.

Field Trip to Studio Sales Pottery



September 29: Avon Rotary took their show on the road for the last week in September. Our Tuesday night meeting was held at Studio Sales Pottery Supply Co., where we were hosted by owner Mike Carroll. Mike shared with the Club a history of his business here in Avon, and a little about the old school house that he renovated and now uses as the main Gallery and Gift Shop. What this attendee was not expecting however, was a cool description of the local clays that are available right in our region and how he is now experimenting with their use and different firing, and glazing techniques. He spoke passionately about how he was attempting to mimic pottery methods that may have been used here by indigenous people for hundreds of years. It was clear that beyond Artist, Mike is a passionate historian, geologist, and chemist as well. Mike also demonstrated his art-

istry by throwing a small pitcher on his wheel for us. He made it look pretty easy as his 50+ years of experience of working with clay became evident. Avon Rotary appreciates Mike and the artistry and craftsmanship his local business brings to our local community. Studio Sales Pottery is truly a hub of art culture in our Western New York region. Thank you to Mike for hosting and **SAVE THE DATE** ; June 19th and 20th, 2027 for the Western New York Pottery Festival, celebrating their 15th years as the region's preeminent Pottery Showcase!!

By: Kirk Vanderbilt



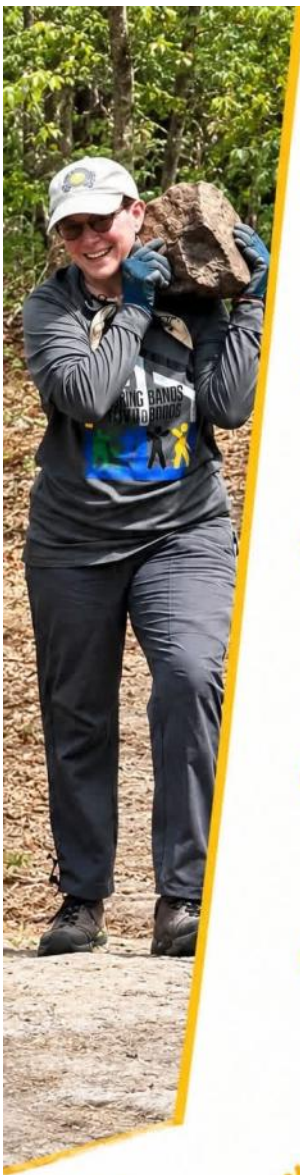
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Our September Member Spotlight shines on Helen Zamboni!

Throughout this Rotary Year, we plan to highlight one of our members each month so they can share why they joined our Club and explain what it means to be a Rotarian.

Helen is a retired attorney who has been a dedicated Rotarian since 2005 and was named our Rotarian of the Year in 2011. She remains active in our community, currently serving as President of the Avon Public Library Board of Trustees. Beyond her local work, Helen has traveled to Nicaragua on several school building trips with Linking Hands for Learning. When she's not giving back, you can often find her out enjoying a bike ride!

Thanks for your service and dedication, Helen!



Why I'm a Rotarian



What first inspired you to become a Rotarian?

I joined Rotary because of my former next-door neighbors, had been after me to join for some time. I finally relented! Because I don't have children, didn't grow up in Avon, and worked in Rochester, I really didn't know many people here beyond my neighbors.



What keeps you coming back to Rotary?

Joining Rotary gave me an avenue to meet and get to know people in the community, while also giving me an opportunity to contribute. Those connections and the ability to make a difference are what keep me coming back.



Which Rotary project or experience has had the greatest impact on you personally?

The work our club members do in Nicaragua has had the greatest impact on me. It is inspiring to see how hard we work while we are there, how the experience broadens our horizons, and how it forges closer ties among those of us who go. It is an experience that stays with you long after you return home.



How has being a Rotarian helped you grow?

I am not, by nature, a "joiner." But Rotary has made me one—especially when it comes to our service projects and activities. It has encouraged me to get out of my comfort zone, try new things, and become more involved in my community.



If someone asked, "Why should I join Rotary?" what would you tell them?

Beyond Avon, Rotary is a remarkable organization that does amazing things around the world. There are so many ways through Rotary to contribute to our local community and to people around the world, all while building friendships, connections, and goodwill. For me, Rotary has been a way to give back, become part of the community, and meet some truly wonderful people.

Rotary
Avon Rotary



People of Action

Some thankful ladies in Nicaragua after receiving the reusable menstrual pads from our 2025 project.

Way to go Avon Rotary!





Avon Rotary

Save the Date

FOR OUR

100th

ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION

100 Years of Service ~ A Brighter Future Together

Tuesday, May 11, 2027

5:30 PM
Cocktail Hour

6:30 PM
Buffet Dinner

Guest Speaker
Rotarian Don Alhart

*Join us as we celebrate 100 years
of service, friendship and community!*

Rambling On Rotary—October



By Bruce Amey
The focus for October for Rotary International is Economic and Community Development Month. I think of Club President Katie's project with the Avon Food Bank and, whereas, this is not international, it is clearly designed to serve our local community members. Good food and preparation of meals leads to community development.

Our club's major international project is supporting Linking Hands For Learning which is a not-for-profit organization that supports school construction efforts in developing countries, specifically at this time in Nicaragua. Our mission is to improve access to education in impoverished areas throughout the world. We are committed to building schools, promoting literacy, and fostering community relationships that will enable children to learn, grow, and thrive. Our goal is to support communities in their efforts to provide quality education to their children by building schools that are safe, functional, and conducive to learning, and is the brainchild and dedication of club member and past club president Rob Lupisella and his wife Jeanine. I hope we can collectively and individually support this year's projects.

Another opportunity to support local economic and community development includes the support for Paul Harris recipient Peter Vonglis and the opening of the new Avon Hardware Store which is opening in early October 2026. We need to continue to support our local businesses like the Village Restaurant, the Avondale, the Avon Inn, T's on Genesee, China Garden, etc., each of these are examples of community development.

RI President's theme for this year is to Create Lasting Impact! In the August edition of the Rotary Magazine, RI President Yinka stated, "This is not about doing different work. It is about doing our work differently, with greater awareness, greater purpose, and clearer vision of the world we are trying to build. Every Rotary project carries potential. Our task is to not unlock it, not by chance but by choice." I strongly believe this is what our Avon club does when we work together towards common goals. We need to focus our projects differently to create lasting impact. My focus has changed dramatically in recent weeks with the passing of my wife Diane but I am committed to have my focus to serve others over myself, where I could easily focus on myself. Our Rotary club is a foundation for me to help me transition my focus from grief on me to focus on serving others. Let us all move forward to serve our community and our world through Rotary together. And, as usual, I have rambled on long enough.





2026 Wild Polio Case Counts as of September 30, 2026

Country	2024	2025	2026
Afghanistan	25	9	32
Pakistan	73	30	4
Total	98	39	36



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

CLUB ATTENDANCE

Date	Description	Rate
9/1	Regular Mtg	68.2%
9/15	Regular Mtg	61%
9/22	Regular Mtg	61%
9/29	Field Trip	35%

September Attendance Rate = 56.3%



October reminds us that change can be beautiful. The colorful leaves, crisp autumn air, and familiar traditions of the season give us a chance to pause and appreciate our community and the people who make it special.

As Rotarians, we have another reason to be grateful: the opportunity to make a difference. Whether through a service project, welcoming a new member, helping a neighbor, or simply offering a helping hand, small acts of service can create lasting impact.

This fall, let's continue to grow, serve, and make a difference together.



AVON FOOD PANTRY

Our monthly collection will be the third Tuesday of October. Look for an email from David Kilgore, with specific pantry needs.

Thank you in advance for your continued support.



Is a fellow Rotarian ill or in need?

Please contact the club
Sunshine Liaison

Barbara Herman
226-6735

