



CREATE LASTING IMPACT

175th Edition

Inside this issue:

President's Message	1,2
Meeting Schedule & Celebrations	3
Rotarians Out & About	3
Maggie Reissig	4
Nick Weslowski	4,5
Member Spotlight	5
Corn Festival	6,7
PHF Presented	8
GVRC Visit	8
Exchange 25-26 Review	9
Rambling on Rotary	10
Polio Update & More	11

**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



August has officially wrapped, marking the unofficial end of summer. As we prepare for shorter days, children heading back to school, and cooler weather that only some of us are truly ready for, it's a perfect time to reflect on an incredible month for Avon Rotary.

I am incredibly proud of us as a club and all that we accomplished in August—most notably, another amazing Avon Corn Festival.

Despite a few hiccups leading up to the festival and a little rain here and there, I watched our club band together, share ideas, support one another, extend our availability, and implement new options outside of our traditions. Without missing a beat with our famous corn and fritters, we also offered festival-goers an affordable option of hot dogs, hamburgers, soda, and water, creating an additional opportunity to increase our revenue and, ultimately, our ability to serve.

But the impact of the Corn Festival goes far beyond the numbers.

Our lasting impact on the community was evident throughout the day. I heard vendors talking about what an incredible organization Avon Rotary is. Families praised the Kids Corner and Corn Eating Contest. And, perhaps my favorite question of the day came from countless festival-goers: "Where is this corn from? IT'S THE BEST WE'VE HAD!"

For 40 years, Avon Rotary has helped bring summer fun to our community through this incredible tradition. What a legacy—and what an example of creating lasting impact. And we didn't stop there.

Following the festival, I loved sitting around the pool at Rodneys and reflecting on the day with our members. We shared ideas about what worked, what we could improve, and what we might try differently next year, all while respecting each other's thoughts and opinions. That kind of fellowship is what makes our club special.

A huge celebration goes out to our club for achieving 99% participation! That number says so much about the commitment and dedication of our members.

We also had the opportunity to see the influence of our club firsthand during our visit to GVRC. The passion, creativity, and incredible ideas that go into the week are nothing short of genius in my eyes. The "in flight performance" had me captivated—and giggling—along the way! My heart swells when I see the smiles and enthusiasm throughout the room, not just from the campers, but especially from the staff.

Their dedication and commitment are unmatched, particularly with the uncertainty surrounding Camp Sam Wood from year to year. Yet, they continue to show up, adapt, and create an amazing experience. They are resilient—and their impact is tremendous.

I was honored to have Nick Weslowski join us and share about his summer at Bowling Green and his future plans. I was impressed by his preparedness and his long-term commitment to leadership already. It was especially exciting to hear that he made a connection back to Rotary during his time there. Investing in young leaders and watching them grow is one of the most rewarding parts of what we do.

Welcoming Jasmine and Laura also gave us the opportunity to hear about their year abroad and the experiences they will carry with them for a lifetime. Their stories remind-

President's Message continued

ed me that Rotary's reach extends far beyond our own community—and that the relationships and experiences we help create will truly last a lifetime.

And I would strike out if I failed to throw a pitch out for our favorite HOME PLATE team at the Red Wings! As we wrap up our season and wait for the "final run" of the numbers, I would say our club walked away with the win! The funds we raise through volunteering, along with the generous tips we receive, help us keep our operating costs low and increase what we are able to put back into service projects and our community.

As we continue to foster our Rotary relationships and spread the word to prospective members, September allows us to turn our attention to Basic Education and Literacy.

This month also gives us an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of Dolly Parton, whose philanthropy through the Imagination Library has contributed to millions of children books across the country and with the partnership of Rotary International, has helped expand its reach.

In a 2010 interview, Dolly was asked how Rotary had supported her work. She responded: "Rotary has been a wonderful partner. It has helped us in all kinds of ways—getting the word out, funding the effort, and finding others to help fund it, and also registering lots of kids." What I love most about the Imagination Library is that income is taken out of the equation. Every child deserves access to books and the opportunity to develop a love of reading, regardless of their family's financial circumstances. The focus is on the community, literacy and children- and that is something we can all get behind.

As we look toward the month ahead, I am excited for our continued efforts to support our youth, celebrate our educators, and identify meaningful ways that we, as Rotarians, can assist with education and literacy initiatives right here in our community.

August reminded me of just how much we can accomplish when we come together.

September gives us another opportunity to ask ourselves: What can we do today that will create a lasting impact tomorrow?

I can't wait to see what we continue to accomplish together.

Yours in Rotary Service, Katie DeGraff, President





AVON ROTARY MEETING SCHEDULE

For more meeting details, go to avonrotary.org

September 2026: Basic Education and Literacy

Upcoming Events		Highlights
Tues. Sept 1	Regular Meeting 6:30	Scholarship presentation to Robert Bridges. Corn Festival De-Brief Meeting, share feedback, areas for improvement
Tues. Sept 8	No Meeting	Happy Labor Day
Fri. Sept 11	District 7120	Annual golf tournament at Reservoir Creek in Naples
Sat. Sept 12	District 7120	Rotary One Summit—Garnsey Road 8:30—Noon
Sat. Sept 12	Service	Parks & Trails of NY—Avon Downs 10:30—1:30, serve coffee & snacks
Tues. Sept 15	Regular Meeting 6:30	Vicky Vorhauer, AG visit
Mon. Sept. 21	Board of Director's Meeting 6:00	Monthly Board Meeting
Tues. Sept 22	Regular Meeting 6:30	Fellowship Fun, more to come
Tues. Sept 29th	Regular Meeting 6:30	TBD

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS

Birthday:
Bill Wall (H)

Wedding Anniversary:
Hans Koomen (H)

Rotary Anniversary:
Josh Tonra 2014



Aug 1: Avon Rotarians celebrate over golf in support of the Tom Moran Memorial Golf Tournament. (missing TJ Vonglis)

Aug 17: Avon Rotarians volunteer to help fellow community member as he prepares for grand opening.



Highlights from our July 21 Meeting

Let's take a look back...

In addition to recognizing Maria Geary as our Linda Kime Scholarship winner, our Club celebrated Maggie Reissig for receiving the Teen Recognition Award from Livingston County last April. The award is given to local high school students who demonstrate empathy, helpfulness and leadership in working to improve their community.

Maggie was our Club's outbound exchange student to the Netherlands last year. She graduated from York this year, where she was active in theater productions and played on the softball team. Throughout her life, Maggie has been involved with Genesee Valley Rotary Camp, where she will be serving in her second year as a counselor this summer. She will attend SUNY New Paltz in the fall to study Geography and Photography. Maggie was nominated for this award by Rotarian Collin Hayes and Sarah Santora, a staff member at York.

In his nomination for Maggie, Collin said, "Maggie's dedication to her community is most evident through her work at GVRC. In 2025, she served as a Camp counselor, a role that demands extraordinary patience, emotional intelligence and energy. I know that Maggie excelled in providing a safe and joyful environment for our campers, and we look forward to her continued service on our Camp staff. Maggie also demonstrated incredible bravery and a willingness to step far outside her comfort zone as the Avon Rotary outbound exchange student to the Netherlands in 2024-2025...I am confident that Maggie will use her experience to inspire other young people to become exchange students. Maggie Reissig is the definition of a well-rounded citizen. She possesses the technical skills of a student leader, the heart of a caregiver, and the courage of a global traveler. She is an asset to her community and I highly recommend her for this award."

Please join us in congratulating Maggie on this honor!

By: Collin Hayes



Vocational Scholarship Award

August 4, 2026

Congratulations to Nick Weslowski!

The Avon Rotary Club is proud to celebrate Nick Weslowski 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 welcome Nick and his parents at our August 4 meeting to celebrate his achievements and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Nick has demonstrated his spirit of service through his involvement with the Avon Rotary Interact Club. He and his family have also graciously hosted many visiting Youth Exchange Students over the years (even after Nick has cleared them out at the poker table on Casino Night). Continued...



Scholarship, Continued

Nick is also an accomplished scholar, having earned recognition as a member of the National Honor Society and as Salutatorian of the ACS Class of 2026. His skills extend beyond the classroom as an athlete competing in soccer, basketball, tennis, and trap-shooting.

Nick will study construction management at Bowling Green State University this fall. Reflecting on his passion for building communities out of empty spaces, which began at an early age, Nick said in his application essay, "To me, it is not just about building structures. It is about building spaces that people can trust and that make their everyday lives better."

Nick's character and determination did not go unnoticed by his teachers, as Leigh Major remarked in her recommendation letter: "Beyond his academic aptitude, Nick embodies a blend of integrity, honesty, and a deep commitment to service... While many student-athletes spend away-game travel time on their phones, Nick is known for utilizing those bus rides to study. This level of focus and work ethic defines his approach to every challenge."

Please join us in congratulating Nick for this scholarship and wishing him the best of luck this fall! *By: Collin Hayes*

★ MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ★

We just wrapped up the first month of the 2026-2027 Rotary Year. Throughout the coming year, we plan to highlight on one of our members each month so they can share why they joined our Club and explain what it means to be a Rotarian.

Our first Member Spotlight shines on Tim Hayes. In 2011, Tim became a member of the Rotary Club of Geneseo, and we were excited to welcome him to our Club last July. He's a retired Superintendent of Schools, former Rotary Club President ('16-'17), Paul Harris Fellow, second generation Rotarian, and lifelong Avonite.

Thanks for your service, Tim!



Why ROTARY



CREATE lasting IMPACT

Tim Hayes



WHAT FIRST INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A ROTARIAN?
I was looking for an opportunity to provide some service in the community where I worked (Geneseo.)



WAS IT A PERSON, A PROJECT, OR A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE?
Rotary was a group where every time our school community needed help, Rotary/Rotarians answered the call. Their generosity allowed us to provide low or no cost trips and events to students who otherwise would never get those experiences. I wanted to help provide those experiences to our kids.



WHAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK TO ROTARY?
Rotarians! Sounds trite but it's the people that make Rotary special. Especially Avon Rotary!



WHAT MAKES YOUR MEMBERSHIP WORTHWHILE YEAR AFTER YEAR?
I get to hang out with cool people. Really! Some of Avon's finest citizens are currently - or have been - in our club. I'm privileged to be among them for fellowship and service a few times a month.



WHICH ROTARY PROJECT OR EXPERIENCE HAS HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOU PERSONALLY?
In Geneseo, we did a Christmas celebration with families in the subsidized housing complexes. We provided families with food, gifts and a visit with Santa! Families really valued this experience. To see the faces of kids light up when Santa - and presents - made the scene was special.



HOW DID IT CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE OR STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMITMENT?
Like many of our projects, it made me see how giving just a little of my time - and sometimes money - could make a meaningful difference for those who are in need.



HOW HAS BEING A ROTARIAN HELPED YOU GROW— AS A LEADER, NEIGHBOR, OR FRIEND?
It has humbled me. I see in our own club many who give more of themselves than I do. Their efforts inspire me and give me hope.



WHAT SKILLS, RELATIONSHIPS, OR OPPORTUNITIES HAVE COME FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
I've gained a great perspective on how connecting with others is mutually beneficial. I'm uplifted after every service project we do.



IF SOMEONE ASKED, "WHY SHOULD I JOIN ROTARY?" WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?
What would you say in one or two sentences to inspire them?
Join Rotary for two reasons: (1) To do good for others;
(2) To make yourself a better person.

TOGETHER, WE CREATE LASTING IMPACT
IN OUR COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD.





To my fellow Rotarians and corn enthusiasts,

I'm pleased to report to you that the 38th Annual Corn Festival was a resounding success and, as in past years, our efforts were met with near universal praise and congratulations from our friends and neighbors.

No thanks to whoever ordered the thunderstorms, but luckily, we were blessed with open skies from about 10 AM to 9 PM, so the show went on.

For the past 40 years, our Club has organized this event as a service to our community. This weekend is the highlight of the summer for Avonites both near and far. Class reunions, family reunions, and all sorts of special gatherings are planned to coincide with the Corn Festival.

I cannot tell you how many conversations I've had with people that grew up in Avon, or have some tangential connection to Avon, who tell me how much they love the Corn Fest. Alongside Tom Wahl's and the Drive-In Theater, Corn Fest is pretty much Avon's claim to notoriety in western New York.

On top of providing a great social opportunity in Avon, we know that the success of the Corn Fest redounds to the benefit of our Club's mission of Service Above Self. This year alone, I had two people approach me at the Corn Festival to learn more about Rotary and ask how they can get involved.

None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of our Corn Festival Committee and everyone in our Club who volunteered and pitched in to support this event.

To my Committee, I know that the many hours that you commit to Corn Fest can feel like thankless drudgery, but I hope you know that I am sincerely thankful to you, that your efforts have made a positive impact, and that I would not have been able to do this job without you sharing your patience and expertise.

Our planning process was a bit unorthodox this year, but I appreciate everyone's flexibility in accommodating my schedule and pulling things together via many emails, texts, and phone calls. We also had a few unexpected obstacles pop up at the last minute; but, as Rotarians do, we rallied and found a way to make it work!

There are too many thanks that must be given, so you'll forgive me if I miss any here, but to highlight (in no particular order):

- Tom Vonglis: for stepping up to be my deputy this year and for letting me stick you with all the jobs that I didn't want to do; most importantly, for taking over as next year's Chair.
- Jaime Lovullo: for doing the math and for commiserating.
- Katie DeGraff: for working with a new team at GVPS to assemble a beautiful program, for revamping our sponsorship efforts and attracting new patrons, for recruiting 50/50 volunteers, and for commiserating.
- Laurie Vonglis: for coordinating our volunteer assignments and for the countless ways that she makes this event possible.
- Helen Zamboni: for taking notes, for keeping me on task with the prep schedule, and for reminding me when it was time to schedule a planning meeting.
- Karen Vanderbilt: for dealing with the kids, for her easygoing attitude, and for commiserating.
- Kirk Vanderbilt: for always being on-call and for finally getting me a connection in the Village Hall.
- Josh Tonra: for his aptitude in email forwarding and vendor registration, and for commiserating.
- Joe Yantachka: for his improvements to the efficiency of the Corn Booth and for taking on the added tasks of selling hot dogs, hamburgers, and drinks with ease.
- Tim Hayes: for assembling a stellar lineup of local musicians on a shoestring budget and for a lot of commiserating.
- Greg Antkowiak: for his attention to detail, coordination with the ACS and consistent check-ins.
- Jean Antkowiak: for her patience in coordinating the logo design, for her flexibility with staffing the souvenir booth, and for her exceptionally positive attitude.
- Shawn Rice: for getting back on his feet (foot?) in time to pass out the letters on Genesee St. and for his consistent communication and coordination with Avon PD.
- Karl Sawicki: for his help with vendor registration and his willingness to deal with the vendors that Josh and I don't



want to.

- Hans Koomen: for the much-needed improvements to the vendor registration system and his much-needed reminders to me and others to provide him with updates to the festival map.
- Bob Mellen: for his critical eye and for his steadfast pursuit of marketing opportunities.
- Rob Lupisella: for his mind towards costs savings, his positivity, and for strongly encouraging me to stay on as Chair for this year.
- Rodney George: for his insights and for hosting the celebration picnic
- Jim Ryan: for his assistance with set-up and security and for recruiting his wife and son to help out.
- Mike Giso: for doing the job that no one else wants to do and for making it a family effort.
- Jeff Herberger: for arranging the corn donation and having it shucked in record time.
- Victor Giso: for providing us with an opportunity to innovate and expand our attractions at the Corn Fest and for successfully implementing his vision.
- Ed Kime: for being Ed Kime.

As always, I remain extremely impressed by the Rotarians and volunteers who made this event possible, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have led this team over the past three years.

I am excited to see how the Corn Festival will continue to expand and innovate over the coming years. Although I will no longer be your Colonel Kernel, I'm looking forward to the ways that I can contribute to this event in a different capacity and under new leadership.

We are fortunate to have Tom Vonglis at the helm next year, he has chaired this event in the past and has been indispensable to me over the past three years, so there should be no doubt that this favored tradition will be in good hands moving forward. Perhaps most importantly, he has Laurie by his side to keep us all in shape!

Thank you all once again for your service to our Club and community. It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve alongside such a dedicated and hard-working crew.

Rotarily yours,
Collin Hayes
Colonel Kernel
(ret.)



Thank you Rodney & Donna
George for hosting another Corn
Festival Celebration!

It was a wonderful
afternoon.



Paul Harris Fellow Presented



In case you missed it, our Club presented a Paul Harris Fellow to Paul Phillips on stage at the Corn Fest, thanking him for his years of service as our entertainment book-er. Congrats Paul!



GVRC 2026

August 11: Our Club was thrilled to make the trip to Camp Sam Wood this past Tuesday to visit Genesee Valley Rotary Camp for the 63rd annual Camp Week. Club members were treated to so after dinner entertainment with a skit performed by the staff. We then met with Camp Director Brian Bartalo before joining the campers for a drone demonstration by the Allegany County Sheriff's Department.



GVRC is a free, weeklong summer camp for children and young adults with disabilities. This year, they welcomed 97 for a week of fun and life-changing experiences, with the theme of "Up in the Air" - all things the float, fly and soar! ☁☁☁

Avon Rotary is proud to be one of the founding Member Clubs of GVRC. Two of our Rotarians currently sit on the Board of GVRC: Ernie Wiard has been a Board member for over 40 years and Collin Hayes has served as Secretary since 2023.

Each of the campers received gift bags that were assembled by our Club at our meeting on July 21, and will have the glow sticks that we didn't get to sell at Corn Fest (because of the rain) for their Camp dance on Friday night. Additionally, several of our Club members participated in a March Madness fundraiser to help purchase t-shirts for GVRC's 90+ counselors and staff.



It's always a treat to visit the GVRC and see the smiles on each of the campers faces. We're inspired by their positivity and resiliency, and we're very grateful to everyone who supports GVRC, especially the staff, who make this week possible.

By: Collin Hayes

Exchange 25-26 in Review



At our **August 18** club meeting, Avon Rotary was thrilled to welcome back our 2025–2026 out-bound exchange students, Laura Krasinski and Jasmine Flora, to hear all about their incredible journeys abroad.

Laura's Year in Belgium

Laura spent her exchange year in Huy, a French-speaking town on the Meuse River. Between studying science at L'Athénée Royal Prince Baudoin à Marchin and traveling across Europe, she fully immersed herself in the culture and language. Her favorite local treats were Belgian fries with spicy samourai sauce, and Liège waffles topped with Nutella and banana. She also had the opportunity to visit Spain, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Croatia, and the Netherlands. Among her favorite memories were Wednesday hangouts with fellow exchange students, bowling, shopping, and taking in the views during peaceful picnics on the Citadel. Laura will be participate in the National Civilian Community Corps through AmeriCorps next year before attending college in Fall 2027.



Jasmine's Journey in Japan

Jasmine shared a glimpse of her daily life as a high school exchange student in Japan. She stayed in Ishikawa, Kanazawa, and studied at Yugakkan High School. Her days began at 6:30 AM with breakfasts prepared by her host mother, after which she would dress in her uniform, grab her bento box, and take the bus to school. Jasmine was heavily involved in local life, joining the Tea Ceremony Club, Volleyball, Mizuki Art, English Club, Igo Club, and Kendo. Between school and extracurricular activities, she kept very busy, but also found time to travel and explore the local scenery. She shared how welcoming everyone was and the close friendships that she made. Jasmine plans to attend MCC in the fall and continue her world travels.



We are so proud of both Laura and Jasmine for stepping out of their comfort zones, making lifelong friendships, representing our community so well, and embracing the experience with open minds.

Thank you to our Rotary Youth Exchange team and host families who make these life-changing experiences possible!

By: Collin Hayes



Rambling On Rotary—September



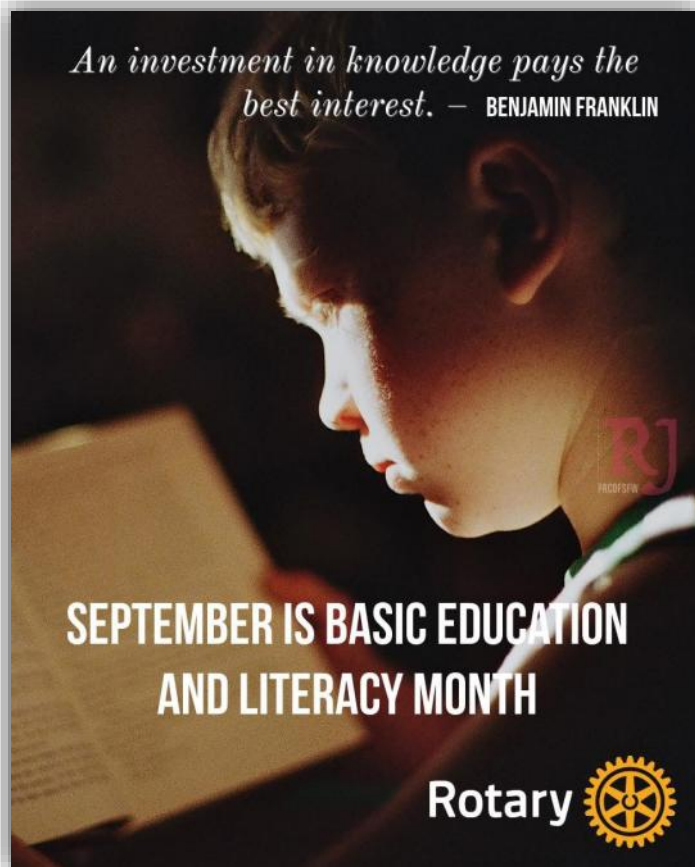
By Bruce Amey
September is Rotary International's Basic Education and Literacy month, which for us is appropriate as school opens for students in public schools. Many of those in colleges have already returned to school to begin their fall semester. One of Rotary's Areas of Focus is supporting education. From RI "More than 775 million

people over the age of 15 are illiterate. That's 17 percent of the world's adult population." A goal of Rotary "is to strengthen the capacity of communities to support basic education and literacy, reduce gender disparity in education, and increase adult literacy. We support education for all children and literacy for children and adults." Our club's support of Linking Hands For Learning helps to address this need in Nicaragua. From the RI web page: "The Rotary Foundation supports education through scholarships, donations, and service projects around the world. Rotary members make amazing things happen, like: Opening schools:

In Afghanistan, Rotary members opened a girls' school to break the cycle of poverty and social imbalance. Teaching adults to read: Rotary members in the United States partnered with ProLiteracy Detroit to recruit and train tutors after a study showed that more than half of the local adult population was functionally illiterate. New teaching methods: The SOUNDS program in South Africa, Puerto Rico and the United States teaches educators how to improve literacy by teaching children to recognize letters by sounds instead of names. Making schools healthy: Rotarians are providing clean, fresh water to every public school in Lebanon so students can be healthier and get a better education. Enhancing educational systems: In Kenya, Rotary clubs are working with the Global Partnership for Education and local and national governments to advance life-long learning opportunities for poor and marginalized children."

As we visited the Genesee Valley Rotary Camp (GVRC) on August 11 we witnessed basic education taking place in the form of how the GVRC provides learning for its campers in other ways. Club member Collin Hayes is an inspiration for all of us with his commitment to GVRC's mission of "Here is Love". The GVRC is an excellent example of RI President Yinka's theme to "Create Lasting Impact", the experience the campers get at GVRC each year creates such a lasting impact for them that many return as camp staff once they age out of being a "camper". Observing some of the activities the campers experience is inspirational for me. Camp Director Brian Bartalo shared some of the history of the camp with us, how he met his wife there as they were both counselors, some of the future concerns as Camp Sam Wood might no longer be available for them in the future, along with camp activities of a hot air balloon launch, skits the campers will create and perform, just the opportunity for the campers to socialize and "live" together are all valuable educational and life experiences for them. Rotary founder Paul Harris said, "Beneath the good works of Rotary is the power of the good will."

GVRC and Linking Hands are just two examples of the good things our club can do because of our fund-raising activities. The funds we raise allow us to do good and spread good will in our community and around the world. And, as usual, I have rambled on long enough.





2026 Wild Polio Case Counts as of August 30, 2026

Country	2024	2025	2026
Afghanistan	25	9	19
Pakistan	73	30	3
Total	98	39	22



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

CLUB ATTENDANCE

Date	Description	Rate
8/4	Regular Mtg	81%
8/8	Corn Festival	98%
8/9	Corn Fest Picnic	53%
8/11	GVRC	38.5%
8/18	Regular Mtg	69%

August Meeting Attendance Rate = 68%

SAVE THE DATE
Tuesday, May 11
Avon Rotary
will celebrate
it's 100th
anniversary!

Details to follow....

AVON FOOD PANTRY

August 18: Thank you, Rotarians, with a special thanks to Tim Hayes for suggesting that those who did not bring a donation for the Food Pantry might want to make a cash contribution. We collected a total of \$172.00. and an especially large collection of cereal and other foods for the Pantry.
 David Kilgore



Is a fellow Rotarian ill or in need?

Please contact the club
 Sunshine Liaison

Barbara Herman
226-6735

