



Overcoming Obstacles IIX



Date:	May 04, 2018
Volume:	2017/18—Issue E16-41
Scribe:	David Still
Photog.	Richard Power
Editors:	D. Still, J. Holst, T. Boag, P. Dirden S. Kellner, H.H.
President 2017/2018:	Jack Blasco



"All the News that Fits We Print"



BEFORE THE BELL



The Rotary Club of Sebastopol held the morning Overcoming Obstacles 2018 event – its eighth annual leadership conference – for six participating West County High School students. The conference was held this year at the O'Reilly building. The students were selected to attend the conference based on their perseverance in overcoming obstacles in their lives- obstacles not faced by most of their peers. The class of 2018 was a remarkable group who hold a clear vision of their future.



Each of the student was paired with a Rotarian "mentor" (guide for the day) who stayed with them during the morning leadership conference and, more importantly, provided support for them as they prepared to speak to the assembled Rotary Club at the noon meeting. Mentors included **Diana Rich, Mia Del Prete, Linda Johnson, Sally Ewald, Bob Cugini, Patrick Dirden, and Harry Simms**



After coffee and snacks and some ice breaking, **David Schreiber**, serving as the morning emcee, called the conference to order at 9:30am. **David** welcomed the students, committee members, and (unknown to the students) three community members who would serve as judges. **David** spoke briefly about the methods and goals of Rotary, described the upcoming events of the day and stressed the importance and value of the morning session with emphasis on networking opportunities.



The first speaker was Neysa Hinton. Neysa is presently Vice Mayor of the City of Sebastopol. She was a member of the Rotary Club of Sebastopol for many years – one of the first women to join the club. She is a third generation Sonoma County resident.

Neysa spoke of the obstacles she faced as a young woman. Her parents abruptly moved the family out of Sebastopol to Montana when she was in the seventh grade beginning an odyssey that would continue for years as they moved again and again. It seemed like each year brought a new school, a new program, often in a new state. From Montana to California to Arizona to Idaho the unstable life continued.

She was fortunate to land a job at a radio station as a seventeen year old and finally decided to end the traveling life by electing to stay in Idaho when her parents planned their next move. She lived on her own and supported herself working various aspects of sales and on-air work. She found that the obstacles don't end when you graduate from high school and she emphasized that you must keep striving. Despite setbacks Neysa has had a successful career in media and now politics. She left the students with this advice – Get a degree.

The second speaker was Jim Leddy. Jim grew up in Monte Rio, raised by a single mother. His upbringing included homelessness, couch surfing and instability. He did have positive role models in his grandparents. His tough childhood gave him a philosophy of hope. He believes that resilience with hope and will leads to success although resilience with rage and anger breeds failure.

Jim's life took him into politics including a long stretch on the school board. He worked with Mike Thompson and Wes Chesbro. He admits to bad times when he let the rage and anger get the best of him but believes now that he is in good place. He urged the students to turn the struggle into a positive.



The third speaker was Armando Coronel. Armando owns what has been described as the “best restaurant in West County.”

Armando was born in Mexico and abandoned by his mother at a young age. He was brought to the United States at age 7 and was forced to adapt. At age 12 he returned to Mexico, only to be brought back to the U.S. at 19.

Armando felt a profound sense of loss and dislocation during his young life. He longed for a family and stability. He had struggles with substance abuse until he got clean and sober 19 years ago. He is the proud father of four children and the proud owner of a successful restaurant. He urged the students to face their obstacles and become stronger for it.



AT THE BELL



President Jack rang the bell slightly early at 12:10.

David Schreibman introduced the participating students in the Overcoming Obstacles class of 2018-
Alana Cree, Alice Donovan, Gabrielle Dahlen, Caycie Hyde, Nik Stires, and Ryan O'Toole.



Dorothy Rodella led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.



Jeff Boal came forward and led the group in *My Country Tis of Thee*.

David Schreibman gave the Thought for the Day.

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

George Bernard Shaw



VISITORS AND GUESTS



Secretary Jack Dunlap introduced Barbara Spangler District Governor Elect.

Governor Nominee



Kathy Flamson District

And Erin Dunn Past District Governor

🍎 Future Programs 🍎

May 11, 2018

**Speaker – Susan Starbird
Olympic Hopes on the Petaluma River**

May 18, 2018

DARK – District Conference

May 25, 2018

**Speaker – Jennifer Strong
The Power of Rotary**

🍎 Future Events 🍎

Learn to Swim – Starts April 23

District Conference – 5/18-5/20

🍎 Miscellany 🍎

MAKEUP NOTIFICATIONS–JackEDunlap@gmail.com

On-line Make-Ups:

www.RotaryEClubOne.org

Domestic Violence Hotline:

707-546-1234

sebastopolrotary.com

Steve Beck
introduced Joyce
Oneco Guest of the
Club



Jerry Warren
introduced his
wife Kay

Larry Ford
introduced his
wife Gerry
Reilly Ford

Jim Pacatte introduced his wife Rosemarie

Jordan Burns
introduced
his friend
James
Kimani
Kuira
from
Kenya



Jeff Boal introduced his wife Jean



Jackson
Collins
introduced
himself
sitting in for
Mike
Ferguson

Mia Del Prete introduced Judy Barbieri



Each Participating student was joined at his or her table by a sponsor or sponsors from the Club. The sponsors help to offset the expenses of the day. Sponsors for today's event included **Diana** and Daniel Rich; **Tony** and Gloria Given; **Jerry** and Kay Warren; **Sally** and David Ewald; **Jim** and Rosemarie Pacatte; and **Larry** and Gerry Reilly-Ford.

THE PROGRAM

Rick Wilson came to the podium to serve as the master of ceremonies of the Overcoming Obstacles program. **Rick** said that he had reviewed the circumstances of the six students on the program and “it is not for the faint of heart.”



Alana Cree

The first speaker called was Alana Cree. Alana said that she has been blessed with a “look on the bright side” personality. Her father struggled with mental illness while Alana was growing up. Bouts of illness, police intervention and all of the attendant circumstances “caused my life to crumble.” She was essentially raised by her mother. She realized that “in order to accomplish my dreams, I would have to work for it.” She is graduating from Analy in June and attending UCSF as a biology major. She said that living with mental illness has taught her compassion for others.



Nik Stires

The next speaker was Nik Stires. Nik was raised in two different households, his mother's and his father's. He never felt safe as a child and along with his four siblings often lived in fear. He found refuge in school. He spent nearly every possible hour at school, his safe place. Teachers and staff offered the support he needed. He also found support among his peers, many living in similar circumstances. In High School, he became more independent working and buying his own car. He even taught himself to drive. He has been working with the Russian River Rotary Club over the years on projects. He is now destined to San Diego to attend college and hopes to transfer to Cal Poly.



Gabrielle Dahlen

The third speaker was Gabrielle Dahlen. Her earliest memories are of a home wracked by domestic violence. None of the five children nor her mother escaped the situation. Eventually the family split up and Gabrielle felt she was encumbered with the tasks of motherhood. Intervention by the courts resulted in a move to California and when Gabrielle felt her mother was no longer taking responsibility she moved in with her Aunt and Uncle. They became her guardians and with the help of therapy and love, she learned what a caring family should be like. She now knows what it is to be a parent. She plans to attend SRJC and continue as a student athlete with a goal of attending UC Davis.



Ryan O'Toole

The fourth speaker was Ryan O'Toole. Ryan is a senior at El Molino and has been selected to be his class valedictorian at graduation this year. Ryan's traumatic upbringing with a parent struggling with mental illness left him with a permanent speech impediment. Although his father has now recovered, Ryan has been through many years of therapy to overcome his stutter. He has obviously made huge strides in his quest. His speech was eloquent and moving. He likes to play guitar and sings in a band called Lilac. He said that when he sings, he has no speech impediment. He will attend UCSB in the fall and major in biochemistry.



Caycie Hyde

Caycie Hyde was the fifth speaker. As a youngster, Caycie had no stable place to live as both her parents struggled with mental illness. She was given the responsibility of raising her siblings without much outside support. Her grandparents warned her that “addiction is in your blood” and she has taken that advice to heart.

Although she lived in seven different homes, school was a constant and she always gave her best effort. She traveled with a non profit throughout the U.S. and some time spent working in a home for Alzheimers patients had a huge impact. . Soon her grandfather became afflicted with Alzheimers and she has provided care for him. She would like to study medicine in the future She said ‘ I will always shoot for the moon because I will then land among the stars.”



Alice Donovan

The final speaker was Alice Donovan. Alice was diagnosed with leukemia at age 8 and began a childhood of isolation and doctor visits. She remembers watching the summer Olympics from her hospital bed. After two and a half years of treatment, she was pronounced in remission, only to relapse at age 14.

Again she was forced to face down cancer. A donor drive in Sebastopol located a suitable bone marrow donor and she had the procedure. Although the procedure was a success, she now had to reenter society and school without the normal socialization of other kids. Her British parents told her to Keep Calm and Carry On. She now aspires to a career in health care.

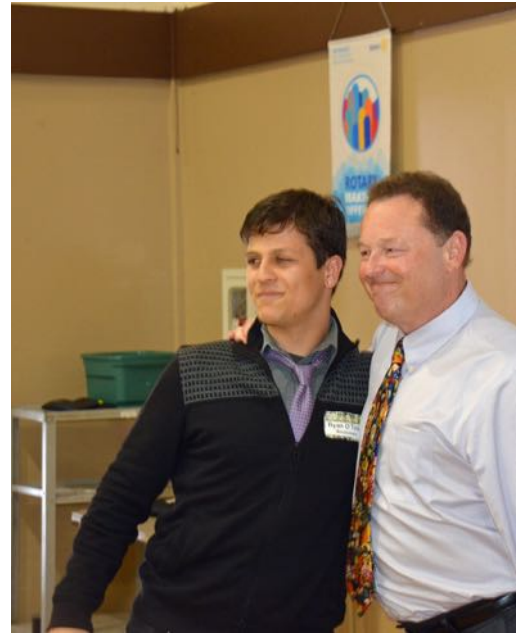
As the Standing Ovation slowly quieted and the judges tallied scores, Guests of the students were introduced. Alana brought Mariya Cree and her partner Bruce Choder. Alice Donovan introduced parents Steve and Emma Donovan. Gabrielle Dahlen brought her guests Jill and Glenn Sullivan. Ryan O’Toole introduced his guest Jocelyn Magnet

Steve Kellner Superintendent of West County High Schools introduced several educators in attendance. Raul Guerrero Principal at Analay High, Carmelina Grant, Lucia Garcia, Amy Miller, Marilu Saldana Kelly Noe, Jolene Johnson and Denise Fisher. He also thanked the participating students for being good role models for other students who are trying to overcome their obstacles.



At this point morning emcee **David Schreiber** took the podium to announce the judge's findings.

All of the six student would receive a scholarship of \$1000 and \$200 cash. Ryan O'Toole would receive an additional \$1000 scholarship



President Jack rang the bell at precisely 1:30pm

🍎 AFTER THE BELL 🍎

Following the Bell- It was revealed that an **Anonymous Donor** had donated sufficient funds so that all of the participating students will now receive a scholarship of \$2000 instead of \$1000. Clearly this will go a long way with these students as they are all well situated to succeed in higher education.



The Rotary Club of Sebastopol wants to issue a huge THANK YOU to the Donor as well as all of the sponsors, other donors and the Sebastopol Rotary Education Foundation for funding this program and these deserving students.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

May 11, 2018: Susan Starbird, Olympic Hopes on the Petaluma River

Expect to hear about, and see, the Petaluma River from the duck's-eye view when Susan Starbird returns to Rotary to talk about kayaking. Rotarians know Susan as a marketing consultant and a past member of both the Rotary Club of Sebastopol and the Rotary Club of Sebastopol Sunrise. She is also a founder of River Town Racers, a youth team dedicated to the Olympic sport of sprint kayaking, and publisher of an irregularly recurring essay collection titled Susan The Magazine. She has been a member of the obscure kayak racing cult since the late 80s, and several times weekly addles with fast teenagers in skinny boats.