



# The Appleknocker

## Sebastopol Rotary Club's Weekly Bulletin

### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



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**President 2020/2021:** Dan Rasmus



Rotary Opens Opportunities

"All the News that Fits We Print"



## BEFORE THE BELL



For the last eleven years The Rotary Club of Sebastopol has given a group of selected students much more than a scholarship and some spending money. A workshop designed exclusively for them is convened prior to the Friday Rotary Club meeting. It is usually far more valuable and can be more significant than mere money. Faced with pandemic restrictions, it was hard to imagine the usual magical interactions occurring while sitting in separate homes. But our desire to give these amazing students what they deserve drove us to find a way.

Three leaders of our community each shared openly the challenges and hardships that they faced in their personal journey of success. After each speaker's talk, we asked each student for their feedback on what had impact on them. When the students were done, others in the meeting offered their thoughts as well.

These winners quickly realized they are not alone in their personal struggles and that virtually everyone has their own story of hardship. They learned valuable life philosophies and much heartfelt wisdom in a safe, supportive environment.

The event is always emotional and thought-provoking. It's not uncommon for our speakers to share things they haven't spoken of in decades. This year's leaders were Efren Carrillo, **Dorothy Rodella**, and **Aleia Coate**. All three share a deep devotion to helping these special young adults who all also want to help others.



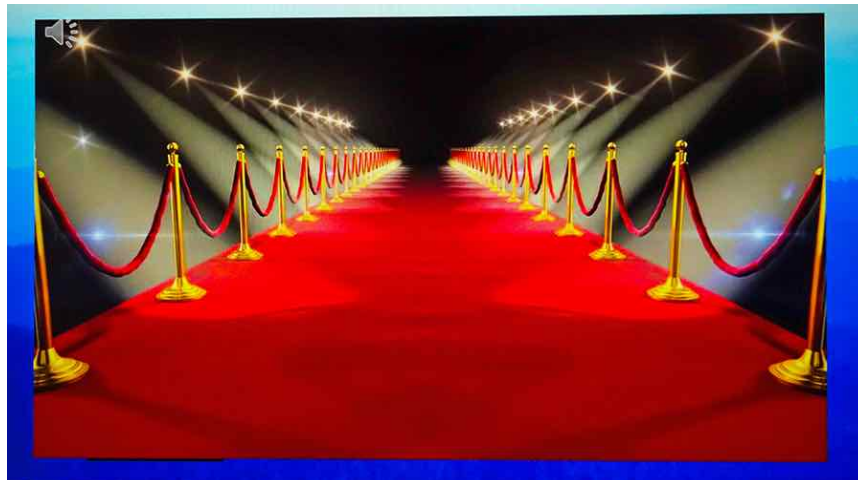
## AT THE BELL



The virtual red carpet rolled out for the Rotary Club of Sebastopol's Overcoming Obstacles 2021 Award winners at 12:15 via Zoom. **David Schreibman** named the seven students who would speak to the club and receive scholarships.



The students were Denise Whitlock, Jashai Limu-Houston, Danielle "Ellie" Bangs, Draven Molinaro, Isabella "Bella" Realini, Jasz Reed-Peebles, and Trinity Safran.



**President Dan Rasmus** offered his welcome and asked **David Schreibman** to give the Thought for the Day:

*So often in life, things that you regard as impediments turn out to be great good fortune.*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



## Future Programs



**April 30, 2021**

**Sandra DeBella Bodley and  
Ellen Bauer**

**Gravenstein Health Action  
Coalition and a Model for Self-  
Healing Communities**

**May 7, 2021**

**Teacher of the Year**

**Coming Events**

**Adopt a Road**

**May 15, 2021**



**Miscellany**



**MAKEUP NOTIFICATIONS: [scottbriggs50@yahoo.com](mailto:scottbriggs50@yahoo.com)**

**On-line Make-Ups:**

**[www.RotaryEClubOne.org](http://www.RotaryEClubOne.org)**

**Domestic Violence Hotline:**

**707-546-1234**

**[sebastopolrotary.com](http://sebastopolrotary.com)**



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



Next up – MAY DAY -MAY DAY -MAY DAY.

That's right, May Day is Derby Day and that means the BIG Sebastopol Rotary Club Raffle. **Aleia Coate** asked that everyone make a final effort to sell tickets ( Always be Closing) and be ready to turn in the money and stubs in time for the drawing on May 1. The drawing will be at the Russian River Vineyards so plan to be there when your winning ticket is drawn.



Want to win a \$1200 gift certificate to Harmony Farm Supply? That's a lot of Tomatoes, folks. Want to invite your friends to a Party for 12 at Russian River Vineyards. Yes, you do.

Then buy some tickets and be ready to celebrate on May Day.

So far the OOA team is clocking in at third place in ticket sales. *Community Grants* is in second. And the *Youth Exchange* team remains in the number one position.



## VISITING ROTARIANS AND GUESTS



As always at an Overcoming Obstacles meeting, some *Very Important People* join us and this year was no exception. **David Schreibman** first thanked the speakers from the morning leadership session. They were Efren Carrillo, **Aleia Coate** and **Dorothy Rodella**.



Visiting Rotarians included PDG Bruce Campbell – Erin Dunn – Maureen and Mike Merrill – Barbara Spangler and Kathy Flamson. That's some Rotary firepower right there.

Also visiting DG Nominee Jennifer Strong.

And with us too was Jose Guillen from Santa Rosa. Jose has spoken at our leadership seminars in past years. Thanks Jose.

**Mia Del Prete** introduced an array of educational professionals on hand for the meeting including



Shauna Ferdinandson, Analy Principal  
Erin Elliott, Analy Vice Principal  
Sandy Frey, Analy Vice Principal  
Linda Ruder, Analy Counselor  
Lucia Garcia, Analy Counselor  
Claudia Camacho, Analy Counselor  
Jordan Brown, Analy Career Center Coordinator

Matt Dunkle, El Molino Principal  
Dani Barese, El Molino Vice Principal  
Marilu Saldana, El Molino Counselor  
Shannon Lawee, El Molino & Laguna Counselor  
Leah Woody, El Molino Career Center Coordinator  
Lana McNamara, El Molino Teacher  
Allie Greene, Laguna Principal





**President Dan Rasmus** then introduced our Master of Ceremonies for the day's program – Past President **Rick Wilson**.

**Rick** welcomed the seven high school seniors, three from Analy, three from El Molino and one from Laguna. He recollected an inspirational thought that was introduced at last year's meeting but that bears repeating.

Rocks in my path  
I keep them all  
With them  
I will build my castle.

Before introducing the students, **Rick** singled out a few of the Overcoming Obstacles Committee members for special recognition.

Chairs – **David Schreiberman, Hal Kwalwasser, and Tom Boag**.

A couple of members who gave extra time to coach and help the students beforehand , **Harry Simms, Pam Graber and Rick Wilson** (himself)

And a special shout out to **Richard Petersen** who rounded up sponsors to fund a big part of the endeavor.



Speaking of Sponsors, we couldn't do it without you:

**Frank and Kathy Mayhew**  
**Jim and Rose Pacatte**  
**Dorothy and Ron Rodella**  
**Karen Daniels**  
**Richard and Trish Power**  
**Jim Passage**  
**And**  
**Jerry and Kay Warren**



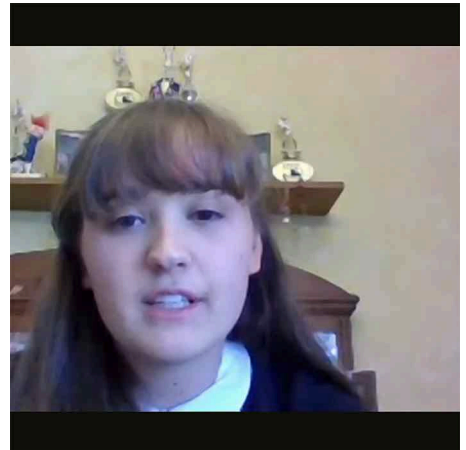
## 🍎 THE PROGRAM 🍎

### Danielle “Ellie” Bengs



Ellie Bengs was our first speaker and after thanking the Club for the scholarship, she noted that young children learn skills. Ellie had to learn the unusual skill of relocating dislocated joints. It became clear around the 7<sup>th</sup> grade that she had a condition that caused her joints to easily dislocate. Not ideal for a young person who loves gymnastics. Her parents helped her to learn about physical limitations and engaged physical therapists to assist. Ellie was a good student and a quick learner. She powered through the tedious physical therapy sessions and exercises.

Today she loves hiking, basketball and badminton. With her outstanding GPA and this scholarship, she plans to attend either Cal Poly SLO (Go Mustangs) or UC Davis. She would like to study physical therapy with an eye on helping others as she was helped.



### Jashai Limu-Houston



Jashai Limu-Houston is a senior at Laguna High School. Her obstacles began before she was born. Her mother developed a serious illness during pregnancy. Jashai got here anyway and has been working toward success ever since. Her first memory is of medications and illness. Her father was unfortunately absent while she was growing up. She helped her mother with her younger sister and resolved to succeed as a model for her.

She will graduate in 2021 and hopes to attend Santa Rosa Junior College. Her first love is art and she would love to study it academically either as a graphic or fine artist. Her dream would be to attend the Academy of Art College in San Francisco.



## Draven Molinaro



Draven Molinaro's obstacles also showed up early. He was diagnosed with ADHD at a young age but with the help of teachers and family he fought through it. As a young teenager, his family home burned down in the Tubbs Fire. While this would knock down almost anyone, Draven persisted. Another knock down came when one of his best friends passed away from cancer. Draven has always loved cars. His father and grandfather instructed him on the fine points of automobiles since a young age. Draven felt another shock when his beloved grandfather passed away in the same year as his friend. He said that he developed coping skills "through cars".

They are his true love and he plans to study auto engineering at Universal Technical Institute in San Diego.



## Isabella "Bella" Realini



Bella Realini's path has not been an easy one. Her parents divorce when she was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade led to many years of instability and change. She tried living with her mother, father, grandparents, and siblings, none of which provided stability. She tried couch surfing and once moved to Texas on her own to live with a sister. The result was attending ten schools between the ages of 10 and 18 including five high schools in 4 years.

Today she has found the stability that everyone needs , living with her aunt and uncle. And she has turned up the success meter working several hours a week and managing a 4.0 GPA at El Molino High School. She plans to attend Sonoma State and wants to study social work.

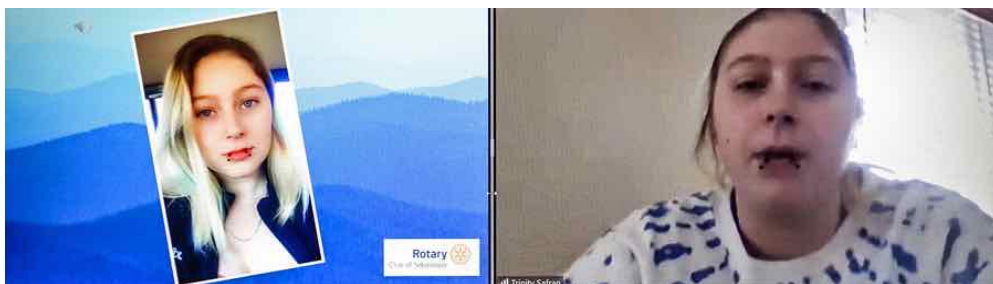




## Trinity Safran



Trinity Safran is the youngest of six siblings and has struggled in an unstable living situation. She feels that she never received the help in school that others have received because her parents were not there for her. At one point she realized that she was failing high school and was ready to give up. Enter El Molino High School teacher Lana McNamara who guided her to a home school program that fit her needs perfectly. Trinity did not give up – she succeeded. She realized that she is interested in construction and joined the North Bay Construction Corp this year to learn construction skills of all kinds. ( Editors note – NBCC is supported by the Sebastopol Rotary Education Foundation.)



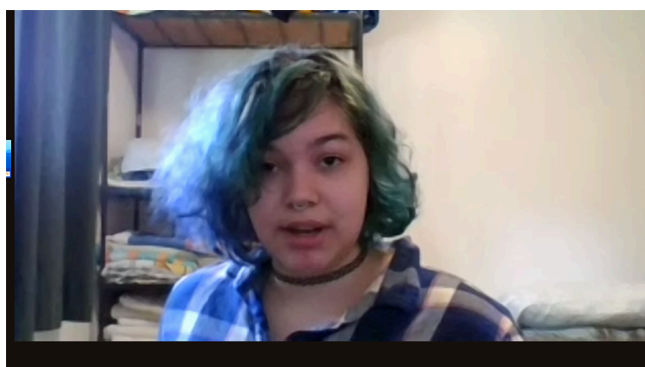
She is on track to graduate from El Molino and said she was especially grateful to Lana McNamara.

## Denise Whitlock.



Denise Whitlock began by acknowledging that every teenager has some obstacles. From her story it was clear that hers were exceptional. After her father passed away when she was 8, her mother felt it best to home school her. Even though she believed she was not getting a proper education and wished to go to school, her mother persisted with home schooling. She tried living with relatives but that was unsuccessful. She was finally able to start attending school with others in the eighth grade, never attending public school from seven years old until then. She took to school in a big way and today carries a 4.0 GPA at Analy High School.

During her time as a home schooled student she always relied on the comfort of pets. Today she would like to study veterinary science. She plans to attend the University of New Orleans.





## Jasz Reed-Peebles



In 2016 Jasz Reed-Peebles was named youth of the year at her Boys and Girls Club but she did not feel successful. Jasz has been burdened with caring for her siblings as long as she can remember. An unstable family life resulted in many obstacles. Jasz remembers trying to live in a house without electricity and using a flashlight for light. She has encountered the foster care system in her life. She did acknowledge the help she got from her sisters father who tried to assist. She has always felt ultimate

responsibility for her three sisters and her greatest fear was that they would be split up. That never happened through the help of family friends.

She was ultimately gratified when her sister was named youth of the year in 2019. Jasz would like to study graphic arts at SRJC.



**David Schreibman** introduced a few of the Club's guests to reflect on the students.

Linda Ruder is a guidance counselor at Analy High School. She described Draven Molinaro as a kind, polite and thoughtful young man. She noted that he had created a Maker Project automobile engine on a 3-D printer that was a work of art.

She characterized Denise Whitlock as a highly intelligent, focused and responsible young woman. She is amazing under pressure and loves learning and thinking about things.

Analy Principal Shauna Ferdinandson knows Ellie Bengs as humble and kind. She is focused on her goals and education. She is highly impressed that Ellie's hardships are leading her to want to live a life of service.



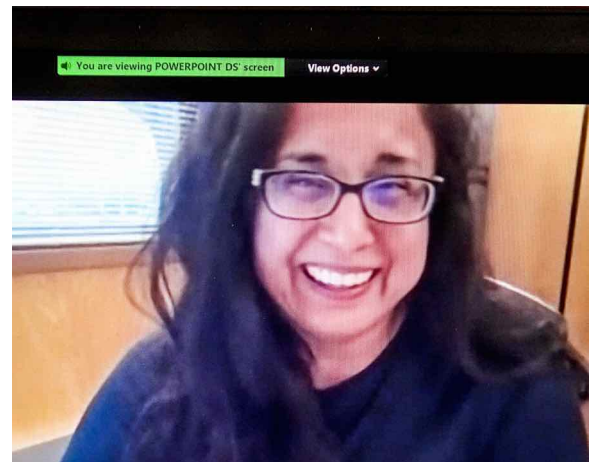


Laguna High Principal Allie Greene knows Jashai Limu-Houston to be a person who embodies the qualities that Laguna High strives for – persistence and strength. She acknowledged that the rocks in the path that Jashai has encountered could build a city. She also acknowledged Jashai's mother Charmaine as a phenomenal human being.

Marilu Saldana, guidance counselor at El Molino High School noted that Jasz Reed-Peebles is a role model to others and a strong human being to share her story with others. She said that Jasz will accomplish her dream.

Marilu also said that Bella Realini is an inspiration to others who will accomplish her life goals.

She also acknowledged Trinity Safran as a young woman of dignity and strength who is respectful and kind. She is an outstanding role model to others and she will be a success in life.



## 🍎 THE FINAL BELL 🍎

At the close, **President Dan Rasmus** again thanked all of the participants and announced that because of the generosity of many individuals, each student would receive \$200 in cash money AND a \$2000 scholarship.



## **FUTURE PROGRAMS**



### **April 30, 2021 - Gravenstein Health Action Coalition and a Model for Self-Healing Communities - Sandra DeBella Bodley**

Dr. Bodley is President of the Gravenstein Health Action Coalition. The Coalition is a collaboration of local organizations, agencies and individuals working together to support policy, system and environmental change to improve health outcomes of all residents of West County Sonoma.

Dr. Bodley formerly served on the Palm Drive Health Care District, elected in 2012 to a 4 year term serving as Secretary of the board and community services liaison. She was a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Nursing at Sonoma State University from 1975 to 2004, and served as Interim Director of the Santa Rosa Junior College ADN Program in 2003–2004.

Dr. Bodley received her B.S.N. from the University of San Francisco, her M.S.N. from California State University, San Jose, and her Ed.D. from the University of San Francisco. She lives in Sebastopol with her husband Walt Bodley.

### **May 7, 2021 - Teacher of the Year**

The Sebastopol Rotary Education Foundation has been recognizing outstanding teachers since 2007 with a cash award and a luncheon banquet in their honor. Students, alumni, parents, community members, and educators from across West Sonoma County submit nominations for the "Teacher of the Year" recognition program, which is open to teachers from public schools (including charter schools) and private schools located in West County. We recognize teachers in each of these categories: New Teacher, Innovative Teacher, and Career Service Teacher. Each "Teacher of the Year" receives a \$1,000 cash award and is recognized, along with their guests, at a Sebastopol Rotary Club meeting. Join us to help honor these stars in West County education.

