

Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Club News

Rotary Club Calendar

September is Rotary's New Generations Month

September 15 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm
James Offord, Black History in Montgomery County



James Offord grew up in Montgomery County during the period of segregated schools. Although he was within walking distance of Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, he had to pay for a bus ride to Rockville to attend Lincoln High School. He served in the Military Police during World War II. His career was with the federal government working his way up from a messenger at HEW to a high-level contracting officer.

He was President of Montgomery County Habitat for Humanity in 1982-1986 and was elected to the Democratic Central Committee in 1990-1994. He has been on the staff of State Senator Karen Montgomery since 1995.

September 15 - 8pm - Board of Directors Meeting

September 22 - 6:30pm - Social - Normandie Farm

September 29 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

Hari Viswanathan - Classification Talk

Quarterly Club Assembly

October 6 - 6:30pm - Service Project at Manna

October 11 - 7pm Manna Food Center Box Packing

October 13 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

October 16 - 12pm - World of Montgomery Festival

October 20 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

Mamie Price, CHI Centers for the Disabled

October 20 - 8pm - Board of Directors Meeting

October 22 - 10:30am - Potomac Day Parade

October 27 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

States Attorney John McCarthy

November 3 - 6:30pm - Service Project at Manna

November 10 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

November 17 - 6:30pm - Meeting - Normandie Farm

November 24 - Thanksgiving Day - No Meeting

September 8 Rotary Club Meeting Report

By President Chinyere Amaefule

Greg Bland is a DC and MD attorney, originally from New York City. Greg discussed how he aspired to work in politics but realized when he began



working that he spent hours doing research for attorneys and wanted to do something more. Greg explained that he started out in the nightclub arena promoting club nights for young professionals. Greg stated people would come out to the nightclub events and he would ask them for their email addresses. He explained just obtaining the email address allowed for him to promote events at little to no cost for the future upcoming events. Then, he created Things to Do DC with the goal to create an opportunity initially for singles to explore the DC area and meet others but he expanded to focus on all interested in attending cultural, outdoor, and educational events, etc. He has



created an over 40 years of age segment of Things to Do DC. Things to Do DC has upcoming wine tastings and an Israeli night

at an embassy. Also, there are two full time staff members and 25 part time workers. He is looking to expand to Austin, Florida, and other states. Things to Do expanded to LA with a focus on entertainment related activities.



[Photo Above] President Chinyere pins our newest member, Nihad Kaibni. Nihad had a career with the International Monetary Fund supervising 25 economists and is now working on a franchise opportunity with his son. [Above Right] Visiting Rotarian Cristina Bautista from the Rotary Club of Olympia in the Philippines. [Left] President Chinyere presents speaker Greg Bland with a Rotary mug.

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[Above] Rotarians from the Potomac-Bethesda and Metro-Bethesda Rotary Clubs join together with a dozen other volunteers for the Manna Food Center Packing Night on September 13. [L-R] Hari, Jerry and Bob from Potomac-Bethesda and President Karl, Wendy, Barton, Ittai and Ed from Metro-Bethesda.

RI General Secretary John Hewko Meets With Bill Gates On Polio Eradication RI News – 9 September 2011

General Secretary and CEO of Rotary International John Hewko (right) met with Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 7 September in Seattle, Washington, to discuss moving forward together to eradicate polio.



General Secretary and CEO of Rotary International John Hewko met with Bill Gates, cochair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 7 September in Seattle, Washington, USA, to discuss moving forward together to eradicate polio and continuing to energize Rotarians to see the eradication effort through to the finish.

"The meetings at the Gates Foundation were very productive," Hewko says. "Bill Gates recognized the enormous contribution of Rotary to the cause of polio eradication and the tremendous capacity of Rotarians to continue the fight. We identified several concrete opportunities to work even more closely together to achieve our mutual goal of a polio-free world."

Polio eradication is within reach. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has made significant steps forward since the launch last year of its new strategic plan and the bivalent oral polio vaccine. Among the four polio-endemic countries, India has reported only one case of the disease so far this year. A recent report

by the GPEI Independent Monitoring Board, while noting some concerns in meeting GPEI goals, nevertheless stated that India is "on track to interrupt transmission this year."

Polio cases worldwide decreased almost 50 percent during the first six months of 2011, compared with the same period in 2010.

Rotarians are raising funds for polio eradication as part of Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge to match \$355 million in grants from the Gates Foundation. The resulting \$555 million will support immunization

campaigns in developing countries where polio continues to infect and paralyze children, robbing them of their futures and compounding the hardships faced by their families.

As long as polio threatens even one child anywhere in the world, children everywhere remain at risk.

Rotarians can help end the disease by providing funding and reminding their communities and government leaders that polio still exists and causes tremendous suffering.

New York Club Honors Heroes In 9/11 Anniversary Remembrance

By Ryan Hyland RI News – 9 September 2011

The Rotary Club of New York will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks with a remembrance ceremony on 12 September, honoring the victims as well as the first responders who heroically spent days afterward looking for survivors.

The tribute luncheon at 11:30 a.m. at the Harvard Club will feature speeches by a New York firefighter, individuals who lost loved ones, and a representative of New York Downtown Hospital, which received a

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new ambulance funded by club contributions in the aftermath of the attacks.

It also will include readings of condolence and support letters from Rotarians worldwide, a screening of two tribute videos, and a harp and piano rendition of "Amazing Grace."

"We are coming together to show compassion for the victims' families, honor the heroes of 9/11, and thank contributors who gave our club the funds needed to give comfort and aid to our community," says Helen Reisler, chair of the club's 9/11 committee, who was club president during the time of the attacks. "I also want the event to serve as a reminder of the spirit our members had after the tragedy, and to continue that spirit moving forward."

Three members of the Rotary Club of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, will attend the event. After the attacks, the club contributed \$100,000 to a 9/11 fund set up by the New York club. A federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed in 1995.

The New York club raised more than \$1.4 million dollars after 9/11.

Artifacts from the tragedy will be on display during the luncheon, including a firefighter's helmet, a photo collage of all the firefighters who died, and images of club members helping out in the community in the days after the attack.

"Just like many New Yorkers, our members forged a powerful bond with each other and were willing to help in any way possible without a second thought," Reisler says. "I hope this remembrance will give our club a sense of achievement on what we accomplished."

Pillars Of Strength

By Helen Reisler As told to Stuart Cleland and Donna Polydoros - *The Rotarian* - September 2011

Illustration by Louisa Bertram

On 1 July 2001, I was installed as the Rotary Club of New York's first female president. The club was about to celebrate its 92nd anniversary, and it

made a big production of my installation. A group from the New York Police Department marched me in, singing "New York, New York"; I announced my agenda for the coming year; everybody toasted. And we thought that would be the historic event of the year.

The morning of 11 September, I was in my Brooklyn apartment getting ready for a club meeting. My daughter called and told me to turn on the television. I watched as the second plane struck, and it dawned on me that I was on an island. My family was not there: My husband was in the suburbs at our home, my children were scattered. I worried that some of the members of my Rotary club were at the World Trade Center - a fear that was later confirmed. I'd never felt so alone.

Then I turned on my computer. Messages from Rotarians all over the world were pouring in - from Lebanon, England, Israel, France. Club presidents were asking, "How can we help?" I spent days at my computer trying to keep up with the messages from people in different time zones. I hardly slept. The checks began coming in. I called our club's executive director and asked him to work with the chair of our club's foundation to open a special account. Then I called an emergency club meeting.

We had 185 members at the time and were fortunate not to have lost anyone in the attacks. I remember thinking it was important to keep the members feeling safe and hopeful. I worried that those who didn't live in Manhattan might be afraid to come to the meeting. But everyone showed up. I recalled how, as a child during World War II, I'd participated in air-raid drills at my school. As the children were hiding their heads in their hands, my music teacher had asked me to run down the halls singing "Home on the Range," just to give them some hope. After 9/11, I felt the same call to inspire the members of my club.



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At every meeting, we played patriotic songs. I invited firefighters and others who'd been injured to attend. I invited people who had lost loved ones: a widow and her child, a father who had lost his son and who continued to attend meetings. I made the club a haven for those who had been affected by the attacks – not only to support them, but to motivate the members of my club.

I often was up until 3 a.m. coordinating the teams I'd organized. That was one of the most important things I did: make personal contact with members, organize and motivate them, give them hope. I had an Internet team to spread the word. We used the Internet to explain to donors what we were doing with their money and to show them the reality of the situation in New York. Another committee organized members to head to ground zero to volunteer their skills. All of our members have unique skills. One is a forensic dentist who helped identify victims in the days after the attacks; one is an officer in the New York branch of the American Lung Association who tested the air quality at the disaster site; another, who owns a courier service, used his van to bring bottled water to the volunteers. We also had an 85-year-old member who helped Salvation Army volunteers serve food.

Then there was a committee to identify people who needed emergency funds. Some of the committee members weren't even Rotarians, but they later joined. I made applications to hand out to people who needed assistance. Team members traveled on foot to churches, synagogues, firehouses, and police stations. Everything was personal and well organized. We went to meetings of the Better Business Bureau and various charitable organizations to find out where the need was greatest. We found individuals with touching stories who needed our help. Some had lost their adult children and suddenly found themselves the sole caretakers of their grandchildren. Another man lost his daughter, who had been helping him pay rent and maintain his home.

When Rotary clubs in Michigan volunteered to assist children who had lost a parent in the attacks, I formed another committee to coordinate that effort. In all, the Michigan clubs adopted eight mothers and their children. For an entire year, the clubs sent the families

money for expenses, along with letters of support. The committee also organized a way to give back to the first responders who worked day and night at ground zero in the months after the attack. Volunteers offered firefighters and police officers weekend family getaways at vacation rental homes in Nantucket. We even sent a firefighter and his new wife to New Zealand and another couple to England; the host clubs and districts welcomed the New Yorkers as if they were their own. One firefighter told me he cried when he got the application for his vacation.

Every year, we honor the firefighters and the police, and every year, I receive a phone call from one of the men and women whom we helped. Last year, I invited John Jonas and his crew to speak at our club. Dubbed the Miracle of Ladder Six, they are a group of firefighters who were inside the World Trade Center on 9/11. The crew recounted how, as they were running down the stairs of the north tower, each carrying 100 pounds of gear, a woman they were helping collapsed from fatigue. Though the building was crumbling around them, they refused to leave her and, as a result, became trapped in the stairwell. Hours later, they were able to escape with the woman. But had they not stayed to help her, they said, the entire crew would have been killed in the collapse. When they finished telling the story, Jonas thanked his men for their bravery. Everyone in the room was clearly moved.

People often remark how terrible it must have been to be the president of the Rotary Club of New York on 9/11. I say just the opposite. I thank God I was in that position. I'm grateful to have used my skills of coordination and my ability to inspire. One of the greatest compliments I received was when one of the men in my club said, "You know, Helen, we were talking about what you did after 9/11. We looked around and asked, 'Who, out of all these men, could have handled that?' No one." I did it for myself and to open doors for other women. Many women have joined the club since then, many of them young. Somehow, I've set myself up as a mentor (that's what the members of my club call me, anyway). And I love it. I love to inspire them. I love to help them feel proud to be Rotarians.

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Project Promotes Literacy For Social Change

RI News – 8 September 2011

Residents of the rural community of KwaNibela, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, face poverty and frequent water shortages. HIV is also prevalent among the 26,000 who live there.

Rotarians are helping to confront these challenges with an innovative literacy effort, arming adults with the ability to read and write while providing lessons in nutrition and health, food sustainability, and basic business skills.

The Adult Literacy Projects – known as KwaNibela and KwaJobe – arose from a partnership among Rotary districts 9270 (South Africa) and 7950 (Rhode Island and Massachusetts), Operation Upgrade, and the International Reading Association.

A staggering two million illiterate adults live throughout KwaZulu-Natal Province. The projects set out to teach men and women to read and write so they could participate in the economic and political activities of their country.

“Learning to read and write alone does not put food on the table, or help with issues like HIV,” says Pat Dean, director of Operation Upgrade and a member of the Rotary Club of Westville, South Africa. “But we can use literacy as a means for social change.”

Rotarians began collaborating with Operation Upgrade, which specializes in adult basic education, to train instructors on topics like nutrition and health, and to deliver an effective curriculum. Funding from The Rotary Foundation provided books for classrooms and community gardens.

Nearly 600 adults are attending literacy classes in KwaNibela, says Dean. The teachers lead group discussions on food security and health and hygiene, including HIV prevention. Topics also include social issues like gender equality. Through the project, Rotarians have helped residents of KwaNibela form six vegetable cooperatives. Because

the co-ops have contracted with traders and schools, they not only provide a sustainable food source but also generate income for residents.

Improved self-esteem

In June, 573 adults took their first literacy exam, and 517 passed. Dean says the classes have produced a change in the students.

“As they progress, you can see the self-esteem in their faces and in what they do – even how they care for themselves,” she says.

Dean recalls how one woman described no longer being embarrassed to take her five children to the local clinic for treatment because she can now read their names on clinic registration documents. Another woman learned to make doughnuts and now runs a thriving small business.

“This project is helping adults take steps to change their lives,” Dean says. “One woman was able to leave an abusive marriage because she had the literacy skills to apply for low-cost housing for herself and her children.”

Dean adds that as the residents are learning more about health topics, they are beginning to voluntarily submit to HIV testing.

The success of the Adult Literacy Projects, especially KwaNibela, was formally acknowledged in 2008, when Operation Upgrade received the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy.

“Literacy has led to a positive change for the communities in KwaNibela,” Dean says. “Adult literacy is so important in a developing country; organizations around the world have adopted this model to integrate development through literacy. The KwaNibela and KwaJobe projects have proved very successful.”



[Photo Above] Rotarians work with Operation Upgrade to train instructors on topics like nutrition and health. Photo courtesy of Pat Dean/Rotary Club of Westville, South Africa