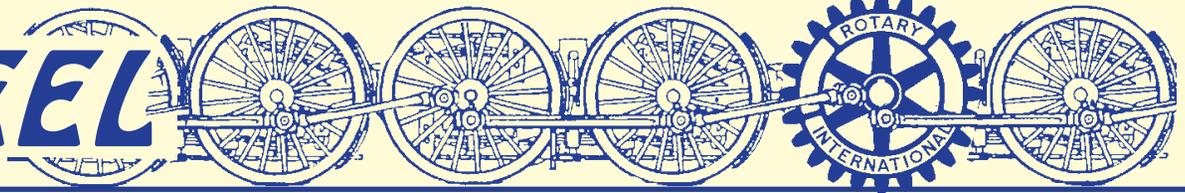


# The BIG WHEEL



Rotary Club of Novato

Chartered April 26, 1954

The Golden Nugget of the North Bay

In The Valley of Gentle Seasons



**December 19, 2025**  
**Vol. 77, No. 23**  
**Editor:**  
**A Winner**

## Call To Order

Opening the last club meeting of 2025, President **Lynn Dawson** thanked all for coming and then promptly introduced **Gloria Dunn-Violin** to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. **Mark Bosch** presented the Thought for the Day, an homage to today's speaker's subject - AI, not the steak sauce! **Mark** went online to have the Rotary Four-Way Test interpreted by AI and did it in the Yardo Italian Mode (Our Club president is Italian, you know!). It was very entertaining!

## Sound System Fixes Coming

**John Reuscher** then proceeded to give us an update on the sound system, which seemed to boil down to the fact that one side of the room is having difficulty hearing what is going on, so the solution was to not set up tables on one side of the room! New things coming in 2026!

## Visitors and Guests

There were no visiting Rotarians, but several guests: hosted by **Beth Rowett**, **Karen Little** was our speaker and was accompanied by **Sue Emmer**; **Charlie Strickfaden**, prospective member was hosted by **Laura Joss**; PP and PDG **Russ Ketron** squired wife **Kathy**; **Susan Rusche** was the guest of President **Lynn Dawson**; PP **Alan Dunham** enjoyed lunch with his wife **Roberta**; **Jorg** and **Linda Westerheide** came together and **Eliza Roesler** brought along her Mom **Deb**.

## Community Care

**Marty W.** announced that electrician extraordinaire **Dennis Baldwin** is finally home from the hospital after several weeks. Cards would be appreciated!

And **Lowell Smith** passed away on December 13. Services will be held after the first of the year.

## Announcements

### No Fine for Embarrassing the Past President...

PP **Gary Bramon**, after being roundly chastised last week for stating that **Rene Prado** would be our first club president born out of the country, compiled a list with wife **Toni's** help of the PP who hailed originally from another land - **Jorg** from Germany, **Peian** from Taiwan, **Brad Williams** from Canada - then he got cute and declared that UP of Michigan was so far north, probably **Chris DeGabriele**, should be included on the list! But of course, there was one more PP that he left off the list, **Al Ángulo** from Colombia!

### Feeding the Unhoused

**Peian Harness** told us about a new project to assist those who are unhoused. The Church of the Nazarene are helping to feed those in need as well as help to find shelter. To this end, **Peian** asked members if they had small, one-two person tents, or tarps to let her know and she would pass them along. Also, if any are looking to donate a van to transport 5-6 people, please let her know.

### Live Auction Items Needed

**Kyle Frazier** announced that he has taken on the task of gathering live auction items for our February 7 Endowment fundraiser. He encouraged all to be creative and donate generously.

### Project Amigo History

**Ron Harness** gave a very brief overview of Project Amigo in Cofridia, Mexico, a project that our club and

## In Memoriam Lowell Smith

August 7, 1931 – December 13, 2025

many other Rotary clubs got off the ground several years ago. We still donate to it annually, but it has broken off and is its own 501C3. In their 2025 annual newsletter they highlighted the initial help that our club had given.

### Homeward Bound Gift Wrapping

**Jim Spilman** recognized **Laura Joss**, **Marty W.** And **Mark Bosch** for signing up for the afternoon shift to wrap holiday presents for the homeless at Homeward Bound. The morning shift had been so efficient, the above-named got the afternoon off!

### Blue Star Moms

**Larry Harrison** announced that the final total for Target cards for Blue Star Moms to pass along to needy vets was a whopping \$4200!

### Nova-Ro Holiday Parties

President **Lynn** thanked the Nova-Ro board for the holiday parties for the residents of each of the three locations. She encouraged members to attend next year and see the good work that is being done..

## Paul Harris Fellows

Foundation Chair **Jorg Westerheide** recognized several Paul Harris Fellows: initial fellow **Beth Rowett**, three sapphires for **President Lynn**, five sapphires for Nova-Ro board chair **Brad Williams**, two rubies for **Sonia Seeman**, and the newest member of Bequest Society, **President Lynn Dawson**.

*Continued on page 3*

# The BIG WHEEL

P.O. Box 657  
Novato, CA 94948

## The Four-Way Test

"Of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?"

## Rotary Big Wheel Sponsor

### Limited Sponsor Opportunity!

Show your support of the RCN and target people that share your commitment to supporting Rotary.

#### Limit of two sponsors!

Size: 1/4 column

Frequency of publication: 3x or 4x per month

Distribution: Over 130 like minded recipients

Open Rate: 68%

Cost \$600 per year, \$15 per issue (Prev. 3yr avg.)

Contact Bill Vespa: zip@sonic.net

## Christian Thwaites

### Driving Ukraine

Thurs., January 22, 2026

7 pm to 8:30 pm

Christian has volunteered to deliver front line vehicles to Ukrainian military and aid organizations the last two years.

In his talk, Christian will share his volunteer mission insights, life in Ukraine, personal stories about the Ukrainians and volunteers he met, Ukraine's resilience amid war scenarios, and thoughts about Russia/Ukraine economy and their journey towards peace.

Tickets: Adults \$30 • Students \$15

[www.novatospeakerseries.com](http://www.novatospeakerseries.com)



## Upcoming Programs & Events

### December

Dec. 26 No Meeting

### January

Jan. 2 No Meeting

Jan. 9 Novato Rotary Endowment Presentation

Jan. 16 Club Assembly

Jan. 22 Novato Speaker Series - Christian Thwaites

Jan. 23 Club Social - Music at the Harness' home.

Jan. 30 Mental Health & Rotary

### February

Feb. 6 Brad Howard

Feb. 7 A Dinner You Can't Refuse

Feb. 13 No Meeting

Feb. 20 Chinese New Year

Feb. 27 Prof. Andrew Reddie

# Rotary



Club of Novato

**YES, BIG WHEEL EDITORS  
ARE STILL  
NEEDED**

*Support the most interesting  
Rotary Club ever!*

*Help share our meetings  
with family, friends  
and members unable to attend.*

*All you need to do is supply typed  
notes of the meeting. NO Formatting!*

Contact Bill Vespa at  
[zip@sonic.net](mailto:zip@sonic.net)

## ROTARY CLUB OF NOVATO 2025/2026 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

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*Vice President*

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**Chris DeGabriele**  
*Treasurer*

**Francesco Arezzo**  
*R.I. President*

**Mitone Griffiths**  
*District Governor*

**Judy Johnson**  
*Assistant  
District Governor*

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**John Reuscher**  
*Logistics & Facilities*

**Phil Dougherty**  
*Public Image & Awareness*

**Marcus Combs**  
*Community Service*

**Gloria Dunn-Violin & Randy Baker**  
*Environmental Sustainability  
(NR-CAT)*

**Holly Axtell**  
*International Service*

**Jorg Pühr-Westerheide**  
*The Rotary Foundation (TRF)*

**Ross Millerick**  
*Youth Service*

**Patty Dougherty & Sonia Seeman**  
*Membership*

**Sonia Seeman**  
*Jonas Center Liaison*

**Peter Oser**  
*President, Nova-Ro Corp.*

**Brad Williams**  
*Chair, Novato Rotary Endowment*

**Tom Rickey**  
*Past President*

## Speaker

Our speaker **Karen Little** was then introduced by one of the people who knows her best, her mother, our member **Beth Rowett**! She was there from the very start! **Karen** has always dreamed about doing something impactful with her life. She graduated from the University of San Diego (member **Suzanne Bales**' Alma mater) and has gone on to build bridges between the for profit and non-profit worlds. She lives in San Rafael and has two daughters.

At PayPal, **Karen** is Global Lead, Rapid Response and Strategic Partnerships. She chairs the Charitable Contributions and Rapid Response Committees, co-chairs the Tech Sector Disaster Working Group, and manages the Social Impact team's donor-advised fund. Her work centers on small business resilience, equity, disaster philanthropy, climate action, and thought leadership. Currently, she's exploring AI for good, ownership investing, Gen Z engagement, and trust-based philanthropy.

Her talk, entitled "Unwrapping AI-The Gift that Keeps on Giving" was terrific, at least to your very uninformed editor. **Karen** instructed us to think of AI as an assistant – it thinks, reason and makes decisions. The people of AI were chosen as the 2025 Time Person of the Year with such companies as open AI with ChatGPT, Google's Gemini and Claude from Anthropic.

In the computer era, we moved from mainframes, to PCs, WiFi to Smartphones to Generative AI. The goal is Super Intelligence which would be smarter than humans. AI keeps on learning by studying – in a matter of seconds – huge amounts of examples and then making the best guesses.

AI will facilitate a move over time to new jobs, and some current jobs will no longer be needed. The shift will be toward creative, strategic and human-centered work that requires human intelligence such as therapy and nursing. There will be major breakthroughs in medicine. In creative fields such as books, poems and essays, AI can help but is not creative. The worst-case scenarios will be disrupted labor markets without safety nets for

retraining, and the technology uses a huge amount of electricity and water – not in abundant supply right now. And, as was mentioned at my table, young people are not learning grammar, because they don't need to!

**Karen** then led us through several simple examples that we could use without too much prep. Use AI to write emails or figure out an itinerary before you travel, create a meal from what you currently have in the refrigerator, write a short, funny poem about Rotarians during the holidays.

She advised if you just need to know the hours a certain café is open, just use Google. Use ChatGPT for more sophisticated inquiries. Just remember the information can be incorrect; this is called hallucinations. And AI is not a substitute for expertise or judgment; it is best used as a helpful partner. For a fun, informative blog, one can try out Hard Fork in the New York Times.

It is easy to get started, one can just go to ChatGPT.com and sign up for free. Self-described Luddite **Burt Hoffmann** asked what if one is concerned about cyber safety. **Karen** suggested using Claude from Anthropic, they have stronger rules in place to not use your data.

**President Lynn** thanked **Karen** for a very helpful overview and wished all our members a very Happy Holidays!

## Congratulations Eliza!

**Tiffany Fischer** has one very happy last announcement! **Eliza Roesler** was accepted into a Phoenix, AZ nursing program for her BNS. Congratulations, **Eliza**, we will miss you but hope to see you back here in the future!

## Raffle

The 25er was won by **Larry Harrison** – Happy Chanukah!

## Until 2026...

And thus, with the exception of the 2025 Holiday Brunch on Sunday, we closed out 2025! See you next year!

## Homeward Bound Gift Wrapping

December 15, 2025



*Rotary Club of Novato's Community Service Director Jim Spilman (r) and his wife Diane (center frame) help wrap gifts for Homeward Bound.*

**ITALIAN SUPPER & MUSIC**  
**THE ROTARY CLUB OF NOVATO PRESENTS**  
**A DINNER YOU CAN'T REFUSE**

Bill & Adele Jonas Center • 1800 Ignacio Blvd., Novato

**Saturday, February 7, 2026**  
 5:30-6:30 Purchase Signature Cocktails  
 6:30 Dinner  
 Auctions through the Evening  
 Cocktail Attire Encouraged!

**Silent Auction**      **Live Auctions**

**Live Entertainment, Music & Dancing**  
 Featuring "Frank Sinatra"!

**NO Tickets at the Door!**

Event tickets are \$100 subject to availability, purchase before Jan. 30, 2026

**Rotary Club of Novato**

THE NOVATO ROTARY ENDOWMENT IS A 501(C)(3)  
 ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT COMMUNITY,  
 YOUTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, VOCATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS.



*We had good attendance for the last meeting of 2025.*



*John Reuscher (l) and Ross Millierick (r) set up for the meeting.*



*P.P. Gary Bramon announcing past RCN presidents, who were born outside of the U.S.*



*Eliza Roesler with her mom, Deb. It was announced that Eliza will be leaving the RCN to attend Nursing School.*



*Christmas sweaters proudly worn by Roy Pfeifer, Reggie Winner, Craig McCurdy and Debbie Brusatori.*



*Karen Little, who uses AI tools daily, talks about the best and worst potential directions of AI. It is likely we end up somewhere in the middle.*