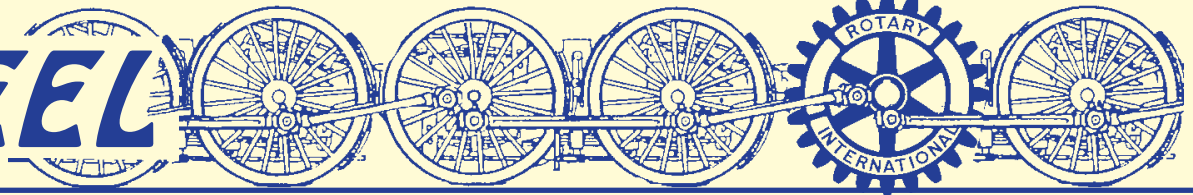


# The BIG WHEEL



Rotary Club of Novato

Chartered April 26, 1954

The Golden Nugget of the North Bay

In The Valley of Gentle Seasons

**February 20, 2026**  
**Vol. 77, No. 30**  
**Editor:**  
**Suzanne Bales**



## Pledge & Thought

Long time Rotarian **Moses Jacob** led the pledge. **Kyle Frazier** shared multiple thoughts of the day. Acknowledging we had a few visiting therapy dogs as part of the program **Kyle** quoted **Andy Rooney** "The average dog is nicer than the average person". **Kyle** also referred to this month's theme stating "Live with intention, laugh with humility and love with acceptance". And remember a simple smile can change a person's entire day.

## Visiting Rotarians

**Cyndy Simms** visited from Foster City. She will be District Governor 2028-2029.

## Guests of Rotarians

**John Reusher's** brother **Tom** was visiting via Zoom. **Russ** introduced the two **Kathys...Ketron** and **Botko**. **Chris DeGabriele** with **Joni**, **Bill** with **Vicki McDill**, **Gary Lam** with wife **Linda**. He announced they have been married 36 years. **Alan Dunham** with spouse **Roberta** topped him with 63 years of marriage. **Tiff Fischer** introduced **Elizas** mother **Debra Roesler**. **Laura Joss** is with husband **Skip Meehan** and **Heidi** was with inductee of the day **Charlie Struckfaden**, **Sasaha** was with her husband.

## Happy New Year!

**Maggie Shao** provided information on Chinese New Year **Maggie** dressed in red explained that is a lucky color. Because it operates on the lunar calendar it is celebrated at various times. This is the year of the horse. Ask **Maggie** about the ox and the rat. We also had a delicious Chinese themed lunch.

## Community Care

**Gloria Dunn Violin** could use some cards and **David Gabriel** is recovering from surgery

## Announcements

**President Lynn** had a few announcements

### Food Packing

Save March 31st to help with food packing. Check with **Larry Mazzotta** for additional details. March 6th we will meet at City Hall.

### Rotary District Assembly

Don't forget to register for the District Assembly on March 21st, location is Redwood High School

### Items to Be Claimed

There was some mention of left behind Silent Auction items. PLEASE CLAIM THEM! **Marsha Molloy** held up a pair of womens shoes leftover from the event. **Kerry Beissmann-Bacho** claimed them. How do you leave the event missing shoes?

### Our Italian Dinner Was a Record Breaking Fundraiser!

**President Lynn** next extolled all who made the fundraiser a success. Thank you to **Mike Morrisey** who gave \$500 to top off the fundraiser at \$80,000,

the most money ever raised for the Novato Rotary Endowment!!

**President Lynn** asked the following to stand. **Peter Pelavin**, Chair; **Frank Bruno**, MC; **Kerry Beissmann-Bacho**, decorator and provider of friends crewing as bartenders and cigarette girls; **Marsha Molloy**, handling the caterer; **Reggie Winner** appetizer platters and organizing the desserts; **Jim Spilman** tickets and event website; **Kyle Frazier** live auction; **Bill Vespa**, printing & signage; **Bill Vespa** and **Jim Carriere** sponsorships; **Chris DeGabriele** clean up. Wait there are more!!

**Rene Prado**, **Laura Joss**, **Marisa Remak**, **Matt Chiang**, **Andy Czajkowski**, **Patty Dougherty**, Check-in or Check-out; **Mark Bosch**, bar. Then **President Lynn** asked anyone who had purchased a ticket to also stand. 99% of the room was standing. Good job to everyone that made this event such a success! And yep it takes a village!!!

## Our Newest Member!

Next up **Larry Harrison** to induct **Charlie Strickfaden**. His sponsor is **Laura Joss**. **Charlie** and **Laura** have a long shared work history. **Laura** mentioned **Charlie** had met his wife **Heidi**, who was raised in Marin. Thus the pull to work with **Laura** again at Golden Gate National Recreation area and keep local **Heidi** happy. So the seeds were sowed! Welcome **Charlie**, you will be an asset to the club!

*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

## 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

## Captain Gil Rud

### From the Prairie to the Pacific: A Blue Angels Journey

Thurs., April 23, 2026  
7 pm to 8:30 pm

Captain Gil Rud will share his journey from rural North Dakota to the cockpits of U.S. Navy jet fighters, and ultimately captain of a flagship aircraft carrier, USS Constellation, responsible for the welfare of 5,000+ sailors.

His success as a naval aviator led to the ultimate reward- "Boss" of the world-famous Blue Angels, overseeing their successful transition to the F/A-18 Hornet.

Tickets: Adults \$30 • Students \$15  
www.novatospeakerseries.com



## Upcoming Programs & Events

### February

Feb. 27 Prof. Andrew Reddie

### March

Mar. 6 Meeting at City Hall - City Leaders Panel  
Mar. 13 West African Project Fairs - Mike Morrissey  
and Evan Blacksea  
Mar. 20 Meeting - TBD  
Mar. 27 Club Social - TBD

### April

Apr. 3 No Meeting  
Apr. 10 CAT/Environment Services - Randy Baker  
Apr. 17 Novato Sustainability - Gretchen Shubeck  
Apr. 23 Novato Speaker Series  
Apr. 24 No Meeting

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

### OFFICERS

**Lynn Dawson**  
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**Peter Pelavin**  
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**Holly Axtell**  
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*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*

## Featured Rotarian

**Laura Joss** was our featured Rotarian. Husband **Skip Meehan** was in the audience

**Laura** started her career as an intern at Mesa Verde NP (National Park). She was still in college and made a whooping \$6 per day. **Laura** stated she has moved nine times for her career. On to Glen Canyon where she meet **Skip** who was in law enforcement. Then to Denver, then to Yellowstone NP. **Skip** worked interpretive duties while there. **Laura** became Chief of Cultural resources and even designed a building. Then onto Fort McHenry NP in Baltimore. **Laura** became Superintendent while at Ft. McHenry. Then onto Hampton National Park in Maryland, part of Ft. McHenry. Onto Arches NP in Utah. Back to Denver where **Laura** served in the NPS Intra Mountain region.

Because her husband **Skip** was a fifth generation San Franciscan, **Laura** looked at being Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Park Area. This includes Alcatraz and Muir Woods. As an aside, new member **Charlie Strickfaden** was working public affairs at the same time.

Whew!!!! **Laura** did retire, BUT is now working with the Land and Water Conversation Fund. She with **Charlie's** wife, **Heidi**, volunteer with Marin County Parks and also do a turtle monitoring project.

Wow!!!!!!

## Speaker

Next up our speaker and our visiting therapy dogs. **Sasha D'Amico** introduced **Michelle Detrick** a retired paramedic/firefighter. Take a look at <https://firstrespondertherapydogs.org> to learn more about this group

The dogs are chosen and trained because they want to give love. A free service will bring the dogs to any first responder just needing a doggie kiss or a cuddle. Founded in 2020 and has 500 teams nation wide. **Michelle** mentioned over 150,000 first responder visitations so far. The therapy dogs and handlers participate at no charge to all types of events. A proven fact is that these dogs reduce first responders stress levels.

As an aside one of the very new therapy dogs that visited did not like clapping. It was a sight to see everyone one at the meeting waving hands in approvals instead of clapping. We train up pretty good!

## 25er

\$25 won by **Jim Carriere**

## NEW MEMBER NOTICE

The application for membership of the following was (were) approved by the Board of Directors and the Membership Committee:

- **Randall Lee: Non-Profit CFO**
- **Laurie Vogensen: Hospice Nurse, Retired**

If there are no objections by:

**Thursday, March 6**

he/she/they will be inducted on or about:

**Friday, March 13**

*Marisa Remak*

Secretary

## Rotary Big Wheel Sponsor



845 Vallejo Avenue, Downtown Novato  
www.handjtire.com  
hjtire@vbbn.com

Burt Hoffmann  
John Da Silva

(415) 897-1185

- Tires
- Brakes
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## 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



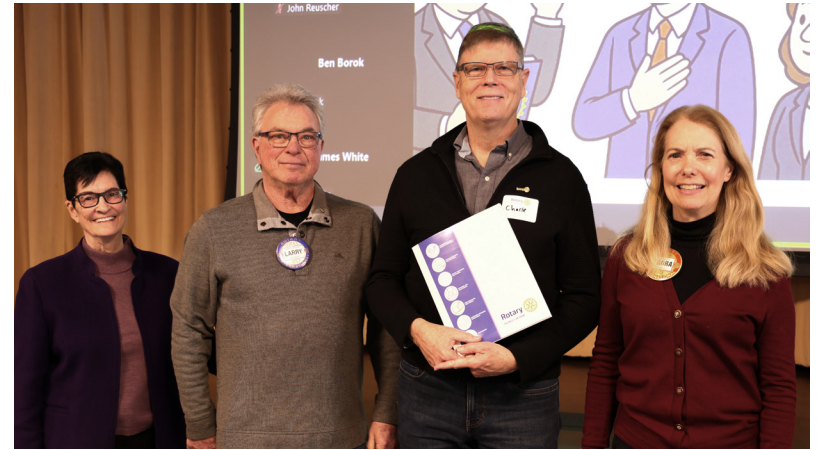
Moses Jacob led us in the pledge.



Kyle Frazier had thoughts for the day.



President Lynn talks about the Italian Supper Club Fundraiser.



New Member Induction! (l to R) President Lynn, Past President Larry Harrison, new member Charlie Strickfaden and Charlie's Sponsor Laura Joss.



Sasha D'Amico introduced our speaker.



Michelle Detrick, was our speaker.



Michelle Detrick (l) & Brandess (r) flanked by their First Responder Therapy Dogs.



Maggie Shao talked about the Chinese New Year.



Laura Joss was our Featured Rotarian. Laura spent her career with the U.S. Park Service.



Joy Fillman (l) and Vicki McDill (r) got some canine stress relief.

