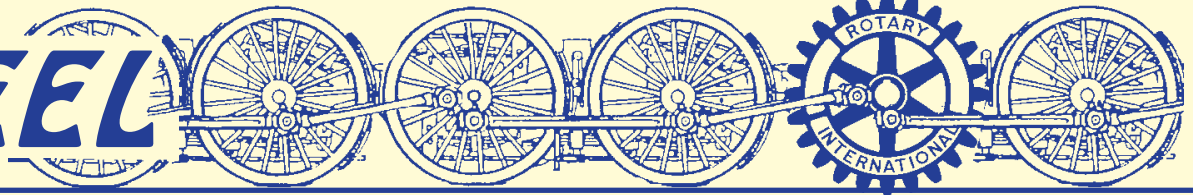


The BIG WHEEL



Rotary Club of Novato

Chartered April 26, 1954

The Golden Nugget of the North Bay

In The Valley of Gentle Seasons



September 18, 2026
Vol. 78, No. 9
Editor:
Maggie Shao

Additional Note from Editor - I attended the **Bruno's** Bocce Fundraising Event on Saturday September 12th along with 45+ others. **Robin** and **Frank Bruno** were incredible hosts, tasty delicious handmade appetizing pizzas **Frank** baked in minutes from the fiery pizza oven and then pasta, meatballs, sausages, and salad for dinner and lovely Italian delicacies for dessert. Bocce balls were rolled, putting on the green, good times had by all. Talking with **Frank**, when they first held this event 15 years ago, 8 people came and they raised \$250. This year over 50 people participated raising \$7000 for the Endowment Fund. Mille Grazie **Frank** and **Robin**.

In the Beginning

President Peter rang the bell (after a tutorial from **John Reuscher** on how to ring the bell properly) at 12:15. **President Peter** led the pledge and the thought for the day was in reference to International Peace Day. This day is observed annually on September 21 to strengthen the ideals of peace and promote a 24-hour global period of non-violence and ceasefire. Thoughts shared include taking action for Peace, and seeking understanding.

Guests and Visitors

Visiting Rotarians: **Steve McElfresh** is visiting Rotarian from Idyllwild, CA a town of 3500 people and elevation of 5600 feet above Palm Springs. **Daniel Mikkola**, from Rotary Ignacio came to promote Empower Tomorrow. **Russ Ketron** introduced his wife **Kathy**, and **Alan Dunham** brought his best friend and wife, **Robertta**.

Announcements

Nepal Flood Relief

Jeff Slavitz announced that over \$4125 has been raised for Nepali Flood victims from our club and he will be wiring the money today to help those displaced.

NAMI Walk

Jeff put on another hat to announce the NAMI Walks Marin County on October 3, 2026 starting at 9:00am at McInnis Park in San Rafael. **Jeff** appreciates all contributions towards the walkathon, and he would really like you to walk and show support. Novato Rotary Clubs Sunrise and Ignacio are lending support as well as District 5150. There will be Rotary shade canopy up and he looks forward to a great turnout.

Coastal Clean-up & Pollinator Garden

Randy Baker announced two environmental programs for us Rotarians to participate. One event is the District-wide Coastal Cleanup at Scottsdale Pond and cleanup of Warner and Novato Creeks on Saturday, September 19 from 9am to 12noon. Bring gloves, rubber boots or waders especially for the creek cleanups. Second event is helping the Novato Garden Club Pollinator Garden at Pioneer Park on Sunday September 20 from 8:30am to 12pm. The main tasks are to spread compost and mulch that the Novato City has already delivered to the site. Bring gloves and water.

Hand Held Microphone Usage

John Reuscher learned about another way to hold a microphone effectively and reemphasized proper placement of the microphone near your chin and to speak over the mike. **Rene Prado** added it is important during announcements to speak into the microphones for those on Zoom to be able to hear as well.

Project Amigo Potluck

Peian Harness wanted to invite everyone on Friday October 9 at 5pm to her and **Ron's** home for a potluck to welcome **Dora Zuniga**, CEO of Project Amigo who will be presenting at our club meeting earlier that day. Please bring a favorite finger food to share.

Bahia Lagoon Clean-up

Jim Spilman pointed to **Jim Carriere** as one of the lead volunteers for the ongoing Bahia Lagoon clean-up on Saturday September 26 from 9 to 11am. A dumpster will be ordered and contact **Jim Spilman** for the exact location.

Blood Drive

Jim also announced a Blood Drive that will be coming up at Homeward Bound.

Extra Raffle Cash

Marty Wickenheiser announced she is now in charge of the adjunct raffle that **Moses Jacob** had conducted for those who want to play the odds and maybe win a little extra cash at our meeting.

Los Robles Mobile Home Project

Marty also announced an upcoming clean-up day October 17th at Los Robles Mobile Home Park. More details to come regarding installing smoke detectors in association with **Kay Tsenin**.

Empower Tomorrow

Daniel Mikkola from Ignacio club and Novato School District announced the third year of Empower Tomorrow, a program for Novato 8th graders, an annual career exploration and college readiness event being held on Friday October 2, 2026 at College of Marin, Indian Valley. Booths about programs like Marin School of the Arts at Novato High. Novato Water District, Fire Department, Police Department will be represented and

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?"

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Rosie Casals

A Golden Return

Thurs., October 22, 2026
7 pm to 8:30 pm

Rosie Casals is an International Tennis Hall of Fame inductee, 12-time Grand Slam champion, and a revolutionary force who fundamentally reshaped professional sports. Rising from the public courts of San Francisco as America's first prominent Latina tennis player, the 5'2" powerhouse defied the era's traditional tennis mold with an acrobat's speed and an unyielding, fiery court presence. Globally celebrated for her historic doubles partnership with Billie Jean King, Casals captured 112 professional doubles titles—the second-most in tennis history. More than a champion, "The General" was a fierce social advocate and one of the courageous "Original 9" players who risked their careers in 1970 to form the first women's professional tour, breaking gender barriers to pave the way for modern player equity and equal prize money.

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



Upcoming Programs & Events

September

Sept 25 **Offsite Social** - Greystones Lounge

October

Oct 2 **Offsite Meeting** - Miwok Park Potluck & Fun
Oct 9 **Meeting at Jonas** - Dora Zuniga, Project Amigo
Oct 16 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD
Oct 22 **Novato Speaker Series** - Rosie Casals
Oct 23 **Non Spaghetti Feed** - The McDill's Home
Oct 30 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD

November

Nov 6 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD
Nov 13 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD
Nov 20 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD
Nov 27 **No Meeting**

ROTARY CLUB OF NOVATO 2025/2026 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

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Chris DeGabriele
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Joy Fillman
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Marcus Combs
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Randy Baker
Environmental Sustainability (NR-CAT)

Jeff Slavitz & Holly Axtell
International Service

Jorg Puh-r-Westerheide
Andy Czajkowski
The Rotary Foundation (TRF)

Ross Millerick
Youth Service

Rene Prado
Membership

Sonia Seeman
Jonas Center Liaison

Jim Carriere
President, Nova-Ro Corp.

Jeff Slavitz
Chair, Novato Rotary Endowment

Lynn Dawson
Past President

TGIF

Friday September 25th • 5:30 - 7:00 pm



Greystones Lounge
7377 Redwood Blvd, Novato

*You buy a drink and
Rotary will provide some appetizers*

Rotary will have a table. **Ross Millerick** and **David Gabriel** will be at the Rotary table, and more volunteers are needed and **Daniel** handed out a clipboard with a sign-up sheet.

Community Cares

Reggie Winner shared that **John Cutrufelli's** father, at 101 years old passed away. Thoughts and cards to **John** are appreciated.

Program

Maggie Shao stepped up to present on District 5150 40th RYLA camp that took place August 1 - 5, 2026 at Redwood Glen Camp in Scotts Valley. RYLA stands for Rotary Youth Leadership Academy, a program for high school students in San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties focused on self-confidence, leadership and team building. This year, 123 campers, 20 Alumni, and 30+ Adult Facilitators and Staff gathered for an immersive experience in the redwoods to foster leadership development. The activities at camp are focused on 5 principles of leadership: MODEL THE WAY (Set the example, actions align with shared values); INSPIRE A SHARED VISION (Enlist others in common vision and aspirations); CHALLENGE THE PROCESS (Seek options to grow and improve, learn from mistakes); ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT (Promote cooperation, build trust); ENCOURAGE THE HEART (Show appreciation, celebrate excellence). A slide shared a camper's goal on the first day "I hope to meet people, be comfortable being uncomfortable, learn things I carry into life." Another key part of RYLA's curriculum is self knowledge, all involved (campers, Alumni, Facilitators) are asked to take a personality test before camp that shows their dominant personality type. Koalas are modest, seeking consensus, caring, Owls are insightful, analytical, process oriented, Lions take action, strong-willed and self-centered, and Peacocks are independent, expressive, wanting the spotlight. All of us have aspects of these personalities, and knowing the advantages and disadvantages that are part of that personality help us be

better leaders and work better in team situations. Many of the activities at camp are opportunities requiring communication and teamwork. **Jeff Slavitz** came up to share his experience at RYLA. He mentioned he had first heard of RYLA from **Maggie** a couple of years ago, and this summer he had the time and wanted to work with high school students. On the campers first day, they were uncertain and he was amazed as the days went on they became best friends, were together outside of the team activities. The team spirit garnered by popular characters, his team, the Super Mario Brothers help with team spirit with their goofy caps and mustaches. **Jeff** commented on the Affirmation cards, notes sent to others encouraging the heart, and showed the cards to his wife to prove he was a good guy. **Jeff** also said the cookies at camp were awesome. **Randall Lee** shared his initial interest in RYLA was for his niece at Novato High. He was encouraging her to apply and then noticed that there was a need for adult volunteers. Being a local sports coach and working with youth, he knew he wanted to participate this summer. **Randall** explained it was a bit of a process with a lengthy interview, and then the Rotary Youth Protection Certification (DOJ Live Scan background check), to become a facilitator. He and co-facilitator **Kathy Diaz** came up with team swag for the Minions, bright yellow knit caps with googly eyes and **Randall** fashioned DIY Minion goggles from foam, modge podge and elastic band. He mentioned the final night of camp with the team skit incorporating the 5 principles of leadership. **Charlie Strickfaden** was so happy he got to go to RYLA. He wished he would have been able to come as a teen, or even 15 years ago with what he learned about leadership and teamwork. He mentioned his career in the government would have been easier, the lessons learned at RYLA would have helped him in his work. **Charlie** said he and **Randall's** first 36 hours into camp, felt like they were in a bit of a daze, but then things came together and appreciated being teamed with an experienced facilitator to model the way. **Charlie** wanted to encourage everyone to participate, as there are different needs, being a bus chaperone, meeting the campers at the bus departure, leading workshops.

Maggie came back to summarize, and said she wanted to bring the peacock part of her personality forward as she shared some of her affirmation cards, handwritten notes to acknowledge and high five someone that made their day. One especially meaningful - "Hi **Maggie**, I was in your team last year and I just want to thank you for helping to create such a welcoming space where I could be my authentic self. The space and experience you facilitated was what truly inspired me to come back as an Alumni and I am incredibly grateful to create this experience for others this year." The final slide is a selfie of **Todd St.Vrain**, the camp director from San Francisco Rotary #2, Alumni behind him and all the campers. A text sent to **Todd** immediately after camp "Thank you **Todd**. I thought to extend my heartfelt thanks to you and the entire RYLA team for putting together such an incredible program. **David** has been raving about his experience since he got home. He made wonderful new friends, love the activities, and came back more confident, inspired, and excited than ever. It is clear how much thought, care and dedication went into making RYLA such a meaningful experience for every participant. As a parent, I am truly grateful to you and everyone who volunteered their time and energy to make this program such a success. Thank you for investing in our young people and creating memories and lessons that will stay with them for years to come. With sincere appreciation, **Joy (David's Mom)**."

For more information with fun information videos filmed by Past President **Christina Stroeh** are available at the website: ryla.camp.

\$25 Raffle Winner this week

\$25 Raffle Winner this week, **Dean Heffelfinger**.



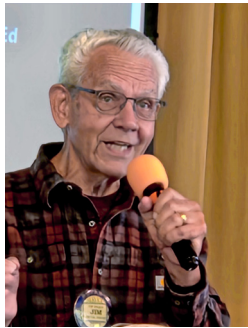
President Peter Pelavin



Marty W. announcing the next Los Robles Project.



John Reuscher demos proper mic technique.



Jim Spilman announces blood drive.



Randy Baker has two environmental projects coming up.



Peian invites us to potluck welcoming Project Amigo.



(Clockwise from top left) Jeff Slavitz, Charlie Strickfaden, Maggie Shao and Randall Lee reported on the RYLA event that took place on 8/1-5, 2026.

Phase 1 of the Pollinator garden at Pioneer Park Sunday, 9/20/26.

Our Climate Action and Community Services Committees worked with the Novato Garden club removing old weed cloth, putting down a cardboard weed barrier, then spreading compost, and mulch.

Jim Spilman, Charlie Strickfaden, and Randy Baker were on hand.

