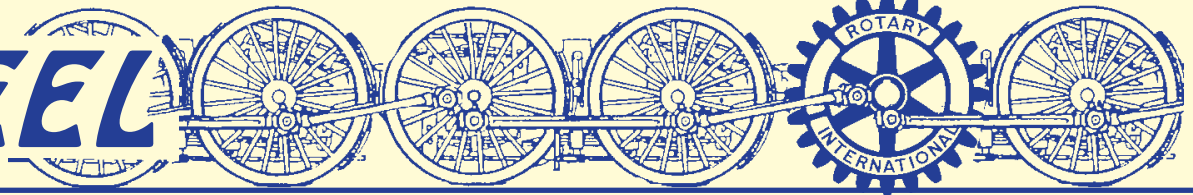


The BIG WHEEL



Rotary Club of Novato

Chartered April 26, 1954

The Golden Nugget of the North Bay

In The Valley of Gentle Seasons

September 4, 2026
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Editor:
Maggie Shao



In the Beginning

President **Peter Pelavin** rang the bell at 12:15 and **Jeff Slavitz** led the Pledge of Allegiance and the thought for the day, since we are hosting Novato Police K9 Foundation "Rotary and law enforcement share something at their core -- both ask ordinary people to show up, again and again, for a community that doesn't always say thank you. Service above Self isn't just a Rotary motto, it's the job description for anyone who wears a badge. So the next time we see a police officer, let's take a moment and say thanks."

Guests and Visitors

Visiting Rotarians: **Henry Choi** from Rotary Club of Ignacio introduced himself, it was his first time visiting our club and had 2 reasons, he is the President Elect for Ignacio and he wanted to promote their upcoming fundraiser. **Hideo Oe** from Kyoto South Rotary Club of Japan came to visit. **Hideo** is in the US visiting his host family when he came on a student exchange to Turlock, CA in 1981. His host family has since moved to Novato and came to visit them 45 years after his student days. **Hideo** sells solar panels and liked the shade structures over the parking lots at COM for the solar panels on top. We had many guests today, **Chris**

DeGabriele introduced his wife **Joni** who also helped with check in, **Jim Spilman** brought the love of his life, **Diane**, **Tiffany Fischer** introduce **Hilary Forte** from the Institute of Aging (potential member), **Laura Joss** brought husband **Skip Meehan**, and **Melinda Durfee** introduce **Joseph Carlo** and **Saandra Bewlus** of Pink Owl Coffee in San Rafael.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

The first week of the month we recognize our members. **Al Shirley** had a birthday Sept 1, and he gladly didn't do anything on his birthday, **John Reuscher's** birthday is the 13th and following **Al's** lead doesn't plan on doing anything. **Hanna Simon's** birthday is at the end of the month and plans on grandpa **Dean Hefflefinger** treating her to a nice dinner. **Larry** and **Chris Harrison** are celebrating their 53rd wedding anniversary and he wants to do a Sushi/Sumo wrestling event in December to celebrate. **Christopher Mychajluk** corrected the number: it's not 13 it's 39 year anniversary (and their 35 year old daughter is legit). **Dean** and **Jo Hefflefinger** are celebrating their 61st anniversary. **Roy Pfeiffer** has been in Rotary for 6 years and he only recognized people from the chest up, since he joined during COVID and Zoom meetings.

Sunshine Report

Gloria Violin is undergoing treatment for leg related cancer. Send her a note to support her.

K9 Quiz

There was a 20 question quiz on each table to question our knowledge on law enforcement and animals, specifically dogs. The winning table answered 7 correctly and got very cute Novato K9 swag (T-shirts, K9 plush dog, hats - that could also be bought for \$30 to raise money for K9 foundation) as prizes.

Blue Badge Earned

Prez **Peter** announced and presented **Charlie Strickfaden** his Blue Badge.

Program

Keith Wheeler is the current president of the Novato K9 Foundation (501c3 non-profit organization), taking over from past president of K9 our own **Peter Pelavin**. **Keith** introduced us to Officer **Alleean Solana** and his partner **Koda**. Prez **Peter** changed the agenda order so we could meet to **Koda** and Officer **Solana** who were waiting in the wings. One interesting fact is that the cost for a police dog is \$17K-18K dollars. **Koda's** former name was **Ares**, and Pleasant Valley Elementary School's 4th grade class in a naming competition renamed **Koda**. **Koda** is a weapons dog, able to smell gunpowder residue. **Koda** is a 4 year old Dutch Shepherd, and Officer **Solana** spent 8 weeks training with **Koda** before becoming partners. Commands are in Dutch - **Koda** was very keen and focused on the orange sponge microphone throughout the presentation. Questions from the

Continued on page 3

Annual Non Spaghetti Feed



**Friday, October 23rd
5:30-7:00 PM
at The McDills'
18 San Luis Court, Novato**

Vicki and Bill McDill will be opening their home for the Annual Non Spaghetti Feed. Everyone should bring a finger-food to serve 4-6 people and their good humor, so we can enjoy the fellowship and celebrate Fall. Spouses and significant others are encouraged to come and join in the fun.

Hosted by Bill & Vicki McDill



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 18 **Meeting at Jonas** - TBD
Sept 25 **Offsite Social** - Greystones Lounge

October

Oct 2 **Offsite Meeting** - Miwok Park Potluck & Fun
Oct 9 **Meeting at Jonas** - Dora Zuniga
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** - Dora Zuniga

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audience asked about flashing green light on his collar, it's a stimulus to redirect and refocus **Koda** activated with voice commands. Asked how long **Koda** will be in service and depends on health but perhaps another 4 years. Asked what was the last encounter **Koda** was involved in and **Officer Solana** explained **Koda** is a "show of force" when approaching a subject or suspect, often the suspect will stand down in fear of possible attack from **Koda**, especially if he sees the shiny Titanium capped canine teeth. One last question was the vest **Koda** was wearing, it is a stab and bulletproof vest. We said goodbye to the K9 team and **Keith Wheeler** continued with the presentation. This Novato K9 foundation was started as a result of Leadership Novato training, an 8 month course where leaders in the community learn about how does Novato get its water, where does your poop go when you flush the toilet, where does Novato dump its garbage, introduction to Fire and Police Departments, Buying **Koda** in 2025 was fundraised through Novato K9 foundation at all the local events with their canopy, table cover, and K9 swag to build awareness. Police dogs make everyone safe. History of 7 surrenders since **Koda** came into the Police force, those are 7 instances where potential harm or gunfire was averted. Novato K9 raised funds to buy another dog, a narcotics focused trained dog that can sniff fentanyl and cocaine. Officer **Edwardo Vasquez** has been chosen to be the handler and the Belgian Malinois is going through 10 weeks of training and when it passes, the Novato Police Department can partner up with **Officer Vasquez**.

Keith also announced on Sept 17th, there is an Evening Gala fundraiser at the Key Room at Homeward Bound for Novato K9 foundation from 4 to 7pm. This funds will help support these

K9 dogs in retirement to cover vet and care bills for a respectful retirement serving the Novato Community.

Announcements

Nepal Global Grant

Jeff Slavitz announced that the Global Grant for Nepal was not in a location affected by the tremendous floods. To aid Nepal during this time providing housing and support for those displaced, you can make a donation to the Endowment and they will forward those donations to Nepal.

Club Excellence

Past Prez **Lynn Dawson** announced we received the Rotary International Club Excellence Award, one of only six clubs so honored.

Novato Speaker Series

Mark Bosch reminded us of the Speaker Series and the postcards on table to help market the series, the target is to have season ticket sales matched, and that will underwrite the whole year's expenses for the Speaker Series.

BBQ Brews and Comedy

Henry Choi of Rotary Club of Ignacio announced there is still time to attend the BBQ Brews and Comedy Fundraiser at the Jonas Center this upcoming Saturday, Sept. 12. Not only a good cause but a good time with 4 very funny comedians.

\$25 Raffle Winner this week

John Reuscher (heard this was 2nd week in a row!)

TCIF

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 Club of Novato Sunrise
Presents

*Cruising
Through the
Decades*



October 17 • 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Greek Orthodox Church, 1110 Highland Drive, Novato, CA
*Come aboard for an elegant evening of fine dining and
music you can dance to!*

- Complimentary "Champagne" upon arrival
- Appetizers and Dinner
- Complimentary wine with Dinner
- An evening of everyone's favorite music from the last few decades
- Silent Auction with something for everyone

Tickets - \$100 per person
This is our major fundraiser supporting over 40 community service projects
Use QR code to buy tickets or go to www.novatosunriserotary.org





Officer Solana, K9 is Koda and K9 Foundation President Keith Wheeler. Koda is specialized to detect scent and has responded to 70 Calls. Koda arrived to NPD with Titanium capped canine teeth & lives with Officer Solana. All K9 funds raised by the non-profit K9 Foundation that our Community Service Committee has donated to are for another K9 and to provide Medical Care for retired NPD K9's. - Penny



Marisa Remak and Pam Juckas putting the final pieces of irrigation pieces together for the "Dirt Club" garden at Marin Oaks HS. Group shot with club members, Mark Bosch, Jim Spilman, and Randy Baker along with Erica Durwood, Morgan Smith, and Ceilidh Douglas of Sustainable Marin Schools. Now students, volunteers, and staff can rely on an automatic drip system to irrigate vegetables, fruits, and flowers as a learning tool for students. - Randy, Chair, ESCAT



**Golden Gate Bistro
Social 8-28-26**