

	ROTARY CLUB OF OCEANSIDE			
	SHORELINES			
2026-2027	Tom Brault Editor-in-Chief	Janet Lacy Photographer	Roger Vanderwerken Reporter	PRESIDENT Renee Richardson

September 11, 2026

The Oceanside Rotary Club kicked off its first formal meeting of the new Rotary Year on Friday, September 11, 2026, exactly 25 years after the horrific terrorist attacks that took place in New York City, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. Once and future President, RENEE RICHARDSON, rang the gavel at exactly 12:30 p.m. (One would expect nothing less than perfect punctuality from such a seasoned Rotary vet.). Our meeting took place at a brand-new location: The Broken Yolk Café, at 2434 Vista Way, in Oceanside.



RENEE led us in the pledge of allegiance. Past-President ROGER VANDERWERKEN led the recitation of the Four-Way Test. ROGER also introduced his guest, retired Marine Corp Helicopter Pilot, DOUGLAS LINDAMOOD. DAVE HALL led us in a rousing rendition of our welcome song (to the tune of “Anchors Away –



evoking a smile from our Marine Corps guest), and then we got down to business.

RENEE shared the following **Announcements**:

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Board Meeting -- 1;00 PM Via Zoom

Evening Social at the Moonlight – Dinner at 5:30 PM, Show at 7:30

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

DISTRICT GOVERNOR JEB BAKKE VISIT

Sister Club Signing with TJ Rotary

New Member Induction/Paul Harris Presentation

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

DARREL LARSON with the
1ST female to row 10,000 miles across the Pacific
Raising funds for clean water for 10,000 people

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

IVEY RANCH HOEDOWN – **Volunteers Needed!**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

Board Meeting -- 1;00 PM Via Zoom

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17 - 1:00-6:00 PM

DISTRICT 5340 OKTOBERFEST

Rancho San Jeronimo – 2012-A Sunset Ave, San Diego
Fundraiser benefiting the Youth of San Diego County
\$20 per person – “Family Fun for a Great Cause”

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

Program: Girls on the Run

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

“Feeding America” service project together w/San Marcos Club

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

DARK – NO MEETING

RENEE then introduced our **Guest Speaker**, JOE STABLEY, a leader with the Wounded Warrior Project. Joe’s bio reads as follows:

Joe Stabley grew up in challenging circumstances in Southern California. He wasn’t in the best neighborhood and was pulled into a gang lifestyle that promised a bleak-looking future. Seeking to escape this path, he joined the Army at age 17 in September 1997, leaving for boot camp in July 1998. “I joined the military just to get out of there,” Joe reflects. “And sure enough, I found what I was looking for.”

Joe’s decision to serve was influenced by a strong family history of service, including a grandfather who was a 26-year veteran of the Army. This legacy showed what military service could offer – a brotherhood with meaning and purpose.

Joe came in as a medical specialist, later becoming a special forces medic. He loved the versatility and camaraderie the job provided. Over five deployments to Baghdad and beyond, Joe helped people

who experienced the worst of humanity. “It was the ultimate higher calling to help heal people,” he says. But treating women and children in combat zones created deep moral turmoil and survivor’s guilt.

After being medically retired in 2021, Joe struggled with undiagnosed PTSD, sleep apnea, and other service-connected conditions. “The story that ultimately led to my medical separation began when a friend gave himself a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head and I had to treat him.” Joe shares. “It’s still one of the biggest things I’ve struggled with.”

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) was the organization that ultimately helped Joe when no other single organization could. WWP helped him get to 100 percent VA benefits after years of fighting the system. Through WWP Talk, Joe found healing by having someone there to listen. He has also participated in health and wellness programs, “Project Odyssey,” and the “Carry Forward” 5K. The timing was transformative – after reaching 100 percent service connection in March 2025, Joe decided to go full-in with his involvement in WWP and quickly discovered a path forward.

Now, Joe is using his gifts to give back, working in psych and addiction with first responders while learning entrepreneurship at USC. “WWP gives you purpose,” Joe explains. “That’s what keeps guys like me going.” Working under the WWP flag, Joe is building a mission that combines first responder work, mental health, and men’s health. His goal is clear: “Time to give back and help others.”



Joe was extremely candid and vulnerable with us and incredibly real. War is simply horrible. On September 10, 2024, Joe suffered a herniated disc because of an earlier combat injury. He was forced to drop out of the MBA program he was pursuing at USC. It took four months to get the needed surgery from the VA. During that time, he was forced to take powerful pain meds to ease the misery. After 20 months of pain meds, he was finally able to kick the addiction and finish up his MBA at USC. But then, last week he broke a tooth, and just yesterday had it extracted. The pain

was terrible, and he felt that he needed to cancel his speech at Rotary. Instead, he again took pain meds to “push through” it and speak to us. Joe admitted that the meds were “clouding his thoughts,” so he took the time to write out and then read to us the following moving story:

Twenty-five years ago, on September 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people woke up expecting an ordinary Tuesday. They kissed their spouses. They dropped their children off. They went to work. They boarded airplanes. And then, in less than two hours, the world changed. We remember the towers. We remember the Pentagon. We remember Flight 93. We remember the firefighters climbing upward while everyone else was trying to get out.

But September 11 did not end when the smoke cleared. It became wars. It became deployments. It became folded flags, empty chairs, prosthetic limbs, traumatic brain injuries, survivor’s guilt, moral injury, addiction, broken marriages, and children who grew up with a parent deployed, injured, emotionally absent, or never coming home. It became Afghanistan. It became Iraq. And the suffering did not stop at America’s borders. It reached an Iraqi mother shielding her child during a firefight. An Afghan interpreter wondering whether helping Americans had condemned his family. A refugee carrying everything he owned in a plastic bag. A young soldier trying to stop the bleeding of his best friend. A spouse lying awake, afraid every knock at the door might change her life.

Millions of people, across generations and across the world, were pulled into the aftermath of that single morning. I know part of that story because I lived part of it. I enlisted in the Army at seventeen. I served as a medic with the 101st Airborne, later became a Special Forces medic, and deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As a medic, I was trained to move toward suffering. Stop the bleeding. Protect the airway. Treat the wound. Complete the mission. But nobody teaches you what to do when you bring the war home inside your own body. Nobody tells you what happens when the mission ends, the tribe scatters, the noise stops, and you are left alone with everything you saw, everything you did, and everyone you could not save.

For many of us, September 11 never completely ended. It followed us home as PTSD, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, traumatic brain injury, substance use, and suicide. Some wounds bleed where everyone can see them. Others bleed silently for decades.

And yet, here is what I have learned from soldiers, first responders, patients, refugees, families, and people from every walk of life: Suffering is not a competition. We do not need to compare scars to determine whose pain is worthy of compassion. Because eventually, the suffering of millions becomes the suffering of one person. One person sitting alone in a parked car, trying to gather enough strength to walk inside. One person staring into a bathroom mirror, barely recognizing the face staring back. One person whose body hurts, whose mind is exhausted, and whose strongest emotions are telling them to withdraw, give up, or disappear.

And that person still shows up. Today, that person is me. Less than twenty-four hours ago, an oral surgeon was cutting into my jaw to remove infected fragments of a tooth after a failed extraction left me in pain for a week. I had about 20 months of time that passed since I detoxed from opioids. Last week, I had to take them in order to push through. I'm here right now...self-medicating, so I can just push through.

I could have canceled today. Part of me wanted to. But then I remembered the people who could not be here. I remembered the friends we carried home. I remembered the families who continue carrying grief. And I remembered that courage is not the absence of pain. Courage is deciding that your pain will not make every decision for you. Real courage is rarely cinematic. Sometimes courage is simply putting your feet on the floor. Sometimes it is asking for help. Sometimes it is taking your medication, going to therapy, calling a friend, apologizing to your family, or making it through one more night.

Sometimes courage is showing up at the Broken Yolk Cafe with a swollen jaw because you made a commitment to stand before a room of people and say: We may go down, but we do not stay down. That same courage exists in every person here. You demonstrate it whenever you override fear, fatigue, grief, pain, or self-doubt to show up for the person next to you. That is how communities survive. That is how families heal. That is how we honor the dead without becoming buried beside them. Rotary calls it "Service Above Self." But service does not require saving the entire world.

Sometimes service means noticing the one person who has gone quiet. Sitting beside them. Listening without trying to fix them. Reminding them that they still belong here. And sometimes the person you must refuse to abandon is yourself.

September 11 showed us the worst of humanity, but its aftermath also revealed something powerful: When the world is burning, ordinary people move toward one another. We carry strangers. We give blood. We hold the line. We become the lifeline. Sometimes that lifeline is a medic. Sometimes it is medicine, faith, purpose, or a hand reaching through the darkness. And sometimes it is simply another human being saying: "I see you. You do not have to carry this alone."

We cannot change what happened twenty-five years ago. We cannot undo every war, restore every life, or erase every wound. But we can influence what happens next. Heal yourself. Serve others. Build tribe. Leave a legacy. And when suffering tells you to disappear, do the most courageous thing you can: Show up. Show up wounded. Show up imperfect. Show up afraid. But show up for one another. Because, in the end, that is what matters.

Thank you.

Joe's message was timely and sobering. War is not something to be taken lightly; it should not be rushed into heedlessly. Several questions followed his presentation:

LAURA BASSETT asked, "why did you pursue an MBA?" Joe replied that he had been practicing medicine for 12 years as a PA and found himself frustrated with the slow response of the VA and with overprescription of meds. He felt that the MBA would help him to serve more effectively as an advocate, liaising the VA with non-profits to help improve efficiency.

ROGER asked about the use of psychedelics in therapy. Doctors are using these drugs in controlled environments, where they are used to reset neuro-pathways. Navy SEALs, in particular, are benefiting.

Following Joe's presentation, RENEE presented him with a succulent from ANCHISA FARRANT'S garden. Our speaker was deeply touched. He has found gardening to be a very therapeutic hobby.

Happy Dollars were then offered. **(Reporter's Note: You'll have to forgive your scribe. I did not capture all the happy dollars in my notes. I wanted to catch our speaker and get a copy of his speech before he left.) (Managing Editor's Note: If your happy dollars missed being reported in this edition, let Shorelines Editor TOM BRAULT know and he can add it to our next newsletter.)**

TOM BRAULT was \$25 happy to the Club's Foundation endowment for his daughter GERILYN's role in "Come From Away" at the Moonlight Amphitheatre and that her sister ROBYN flew in to see the performance.



ROGER VANDERWERKEN was \$20 happy for his 6-month-old granddaughter Phoebe and shared the biblical significance of that name.

DANA ALBERT was \$20 happy for the great interest in the Oceanside High School Interact Club, and for the undefeated girls' golf team that he coaches.

The club was genuinely happy about our new location. The food and service was great. And with our large Rotary Banner displayed outside the meeting room and with the heavy foot traffic going in and out of the restaurant, many of the Broken Yolk patrons could become aware of Oceanside Rotary.

TERRI HALL held the winning number for the **opportunity drawing** but failed to win the big prize.



RENEE RICHARDSON closed the meeting at 1:28 with a resounding gong on the ship's bell.



RENEE'S REPORT: Camp Big West: Rotary, Ducks, Dancing & a Midnight Flood!

Your President Goes Back to Camp

A quick flight to Arizona, a short ride to the beautiful Wigwam Resort, and just like that, your President was off to Camp Big West Zone Institute 2026!

The weekend brought together hundreds of Rotarians for learning, fellowship, inspiration—and, because this is Rotary, plenty of fun along the way.

Thursday: Learning, Fellowship & a Block Party

Thursday afternoon jumped right into workshops covering AI and technology to grow membership, peacebuilding, Project Fairs and Fellowships, and Youth Services. There were plenty of ideas to bring home and, perhaps more importantly, plenty of conversations about how Rotary can continue to grow and stay relevant in our communities.

Then the workday ended and the fun began with a Block Party featuring a mariachi band, food and dancing.

Ducks for Polio!

The evening included an End Polio Duck Derby, with participants purchasing ducks to support PolioPlus.

Throughout the weekend, approximately 500 Rotarians raised an incredible \$130,000 while having fun doing it!

We also heard that our District is the second-highest giving district in the world to PolioPlus, with \$352,597 in giving. That is something to be incredibly proud of!

And then came the after-party at 9:00 PM. Yawn... Your fearless leader was already sound asleep!

Friday: Back to Work

Friday morning came quickly, with workshops including Building Our Rotary Future, Transformational Journeys with Fresh Perspectives, and Our Peace Mission.

One of the most entertaining programs was a Rotary-style Shark Tank, where three clubs pitched their Global Grant projects to Rotary International Directors

and others in the audience, generating additional financial support for their projects.

Fellowship dinners followed—because some of the best Rotary conversations happen around a dinner table.

And Then...The Rotary Drama

Of course, no Rotary adventure would be complete without a little drama.

At approximately midnight Friday, I was awakened by the unmistakable sound of running water coming from my bathroom.

My first thought was, "Ugh! Did I leave the water running in the sink?"

I jumped out of bed and discovered a stream of water pouring from the ceiling directly into my bathtub!

Naturally, there was no maintenance staff available at midnight. After a call to security and a little investigating, we discovered the culprit: the guest in the room above me had taken a bath—and overflowed the tub.

So there I was, at midnight, standing in my bathroom watching someone else's bathwater come through my ceiling. I guess that's what I get for skipping the Friday night after-party!

Fortunately, by Saturday morning it was back to Rotary business—and another full day of learning, fellowship and celebration.

Saturday: Recognition, Shoes & Rotary's Future

Saturday brought a very special moment for District 5340 as we watched our own Marge Cole be inducted into the Arch Klumph Society.

If you aren't familiar with the Arch Klumph Society, it is Rotary's recognition for its highest tier of donors.

Named for Rotary's sixth president, Arch Klumph, the Society recognizes individuals whose cumulative lifetime contributions to The Rotary Foundation have reached \$250,000 or more. What an honor to see someone from our own District receive this recognition!



Another highlight involved shoes! Incoming Rotary International President-Elect Larry Lunsford is passionate about providing new shoes to young people in need. Camp Big West participants answered the call by donating more than 500 pairs of shoes.

Saturday evening's Starry Night Gala celebrated the graduation of the District Governors who will lead their districts in 2027–2028.

The Question I Brought Home

Membership was a major topic throughout the weekend—not just during seminars, but in conversations over meals and around tables.

"Is our Rotary Club inclusive of our community—or is it inclusive of what we

have built within our club?"

That is good food for thought.

As we look at growing Oceanside Rotary, we should ask ourselves whether our club truly reflects the community around us. Are we creating a Rotary Club that new people can see themselves becoming part of?



All joking aside, Camp Big West was an energizing few days filled with new ideas, inspiring Rotarians, tremendous generosity and reminders of why we do what we do.

I came home with plenty of ideas for Oceanside Rotary.

Stay tuned...your President went to camp, and she was paying attention!

COMING SOON TO OCEANSIDE ROTARY

September 18 – 1 pm - Board Meeting on Zoom

September 18 – Rotary Night at the Moonlight Amphitheatre for “Come From Away” - 7:30 pm showtime for those who reserved tickets with our group, with Dinner at Renee’s house (720 Silver Drive, Vista) at 5:30 pm beforehand (Just \$10 for pizza, salad, and wine) – RSVP for the dinner to Renee



September 25 – Official Visit of District Governor JEB BAKKE – Noon – Broken Yolk Café (2434 Vista Way, Oceanside)

October 9 – Regular meeting – Noon – Broken Yolk Café - Program DARREL LARSON – First female to row 10,000 across Pacific to raise funds for clean water

Saturday, October 10 – Ivey Ranch Hoedown Fundraiser event – 4:30 to 8:30 pm (110 Rancho del Oro Drive, Oceanside) Volunteers needed.

October 16 - 1 pm - Board Meeting on Zoom

Saturday, October 17 – 2 to 6 pm – District 5340 Oktoberfest (Rancho San Jeronimo – 2012-A Sunset Ave, San Diego) – \$20 per person – “Family Fun for a Great Cause” - Fundraiser benefiting Youth of San Diego County



October 23 – Regular meeting – Noon – Broken Yolk Café - Program: Bridgette Ouimette – Girls on the Run

Saturday, October 24 – “Feeding America” service project with San Marcos Rotary – Assembling meals for distribution to needy – Support World Hunger Month

October 30 – Fifth Friday of the month – DARK – No meeting