

GIVING THANKS 2020

Rotary vice-president takes pride in club’s projects around Geauga

By **BRIAN DOERING**



Luoma

Lisa Luoma of Chester Township loves being able to give back to the community. There is no better place than Geauga County, she said.

“Being born and raised here and then moving back as an adult, my community means a lot to me,” said Mrs. Luoma. “There were some years where I moved around quite a bit, even living overseas, and it is really true that there is no place like home.”

Mrs. Luoma, 51, works for the Chester Township Road Department and has been a member of the Rotary Club for about a year and a half currently serving as vice-president. “When I joined rotary, one of the club members told me that the weekly club meetings were among the best hours of his week. I agree with this statement completely, I cannot imagine my life without Rotary,” she said.

Rotary International was started in Chicago in 1905 as a way for professionals to exchange ideas and form friendships as well as working on behalf of the community. Chesterland Rotary, recently renamed the Geauga West Rotary, celebrated its 30th anniversary last year and has members that have been part of the club since its inception.

“Our club currently has 34 members, and we would love for anyone committed to the idea of ‘service above self’ to attend one of our meetings to learn more,” said Mrs. Luoma. “We currently meet at 7 a.m. on Wednesday mornings at Metzenbaum and also via Zoom, we do good things locally, nationally and internationally.”

Mrs. Luoma said some of the projects Geauga West Rotary is involved with include

purchasing groceries to assist residents of the Geauga County Next Step Home, purchasing and distributing dictionaries to all third-grade students in the West Geauga Local School District, including St. Anselm’s School, and providing several scholarships to high school students who are pursuing higher education at trade schools or universities.

“It is always fun to see the kids get excited about getting their very own dictionaries or selecting books at the book distributions. It is encouraging that kids still seem to get excited about that, even in this ‘high tech’ era,” said Mrs. Luoma. “We visit Lindsey and Westwood schools at the end of each school year and do a book distribution there and each student gets to select a few books to take home and keep.”

Gauga West Rotary is also famously known for decorating at Parkside Park for the holidays, filling a police cruiser with donations for the USO, hosting its annual Breakfast with Santa event and ringing the bell to earn money for the Salvation Army. “It’s fun to see the kids meeting Santa and Mrs. Claus at Breakfast with Santa,” Mrs. Luoma said.

The club also supports 4-H by bidding on and purchasing chickens at the Geauga County Fair, and this year they donated the chickens to the Next Step Home. “I think supporting

the Next Step Home has been one of the most important projects we have taken on, I have really enjoyed being able to help out with that,” said Mrs. Luoma.

Book distributions to children locally and regionally, as well as involvement with international projects including helping to build a library in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and providing children in Nicaragua with care packages are also among the activities the club has been involved with.

Mrs. Luoma said she loves all yearly activities that Geauga West Rotary is involved with and it is challenging to select which one is her favorite. “I enjoy Breakfast with Santa and Winterfest because these events give us an opportunity to bring some joy and happiness to the entire community,” she said. “One thing that we do that is just a lot of fun is marching in our Briefcase Brigade in the Independence Day Parade.”

Up until this point, the pandemic has not affected the club’s activities too profoundly, and this past August they were able to host their annual golf outing fundraiser and to continue with their 2019-2020 project purchasing groceries and delivering them to the residents of the Geauga County Next Step Home.

“One special thing we did this spring was

to provide lunch for University Hospitals Geauga [Medical Center] employees as a way of thanking them for their service during the pandemic,” said Mrs. Luoma. “With the cooperation and participation of local police and fire departments, we caravanned out to the hospital to deliver lunch from Bada-Bing Pizza, it was an uplifting and fun experience.”

Unfortunately, due to rising case numbers of COVID-19 cases in Ohio right now, Geauga West Rotary will not be hosting its annual Breakfast with Santa event this year.

“The event is very popular with families and children, and we will miss being able to do that,” said Mrs. Luoma. “We still plan to have our annual Winterfest event at Parkside Park and have already started decorating.”

In addition to their annual projects, Mrs. Luoma said the club is planning to partner in 2021 with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to provide books to children from birth to age five who live within the West Geauga Local School District.

“It has been a challenging year, and the two things that have gotten me through it have been my husband Chris and [the] Rotary,” Mrs. Luoma said. There is such positive energy within the club, and when we get together and work on projects it is a real mood booster.”

Police briefs

Man sleeping in parking garage

On Nov. 23, Orange police were patrolling the Pinecrest parking garage. An officer found a 30-year-old Garfield Heights man sleeping on the third-floor bridge that connects that parking garage to 200 Park Ave., according to the report. There is an active trespassing order against the man from Silverspot Cinema, the report states. He was advised of the order and escorted off the property.

Driver cited for brake lights

On Nov. 20, Woodmere police stopped a vehicle on Chagrin Blvd. westbound that only had one working brake light and passed another vehicle on the right side. Troy McClellan, 58, of Cleveland had two active warrants and multiple open suspensions, according to the report. Police found marijuana in his pocket, the report states. Police said that Mr. McClellan was cited for two brake lights required and driving under suspension noncompliance. He was given a Bedford Municipal Court date.

Business reports stolen sign

Simply Greek, 33700 Aurora Road reported to Solon police that a sign was stolen from the lawn in front of the businesses sometime between Nov. 14 and 17, police said.

Two charged in traffic stop

Two Cleveland men were charged in a Nov. 17 traffic stop.

At about 1:30 p.m., a Solon officer stopped a vehicle on Aurora Road for speeding and illegal window tint. The driver, Davonte Little, 25, refused to exit the vehicle, according to the report, and the passenger, D’Mario Little, 28, refused to identify himself.

While searching the vehicle, officers discovered a loaded Smith & Wesson handgun. Police charged both men with improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle and obstructing official business.

Groceries, purse missing

A 77-year-old Aurora woman reported to Solon police on Nov. 18 that she may have accidentally loaded her groceries and purse into someone else’s trunk, according to a police report. Her purse and groceries were not recovered, the report states.

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