

## **Granville Rotary Club**

### ***Highlights of the first 90 years***

The Granville Rotary Club was formed and organized 90 years ago in 1924 with the sponsorship and help of the Glens Falls Rotary Club. On May 9, 1924 the charter from Rotary International was presented to the Club's first President, William J. Norton, by District Governor Raymond J. Knoepfel. From the very beginning the Granville Rotary Club was and continues to be involved in sponsoring numerous local community projects as well as national and international projects. Significant contributions have been made to the Granville community both as a Club and by individual members.

The Granville Rotary Club has continually endeavored to serve the community. Club members led the drive for the construction of the present high school building in 1929. Through the efforts of the Club the need for a new hospital was pointed out and stressed and fund raising was carried out which resulted in the construction of the Emma Laing Stevens Hospital where some of us were born. The Club was involved in annual financial drives for many years. The Club's help with a hospital for the community did not stop there. Some years later in 1973 the Club and its members personally fully supported the construction of the new regional hospital in North Granville and our Club underwrote the cost of a new room and its furnishings in the new hospital. During World War II the Rotary Club sponsored all war bond drives as well as drives for scrap-metal and for clothing for the needy overseas. The Club has fully supported both the Slate Valley Museum and the Pember Library & Museum.

Youth activities have been a main focus and major service provided by the Club. The Club organized and sponsored Boy Scout Troop 44 in 1938 and continues to do so right up to the present time. Not only has the Club provided financially for Troop 44 but also the leadership of the Troop. George Woodard, a Rotarian, was the scoutmaster of the Troop when I was in scouting. The Club continues to have a close relationship with the scouts and their leadership who are invited to an annual meeting where the Club is kept up to date as to what is happening with the Troop and what assistance they need which we readily provide. Our Club through the leadership of Rotarian Albert Berkowitz sponsored the formation of the Granville Youth Commission, the first Youth Commission in New York State. The Youth Commission has sponsored for many years a swimming program at nearby Lake St. Catherine whereby many children of all ages have been taught to swim and life saving techniques and have obtained Red Cross Life Saving badges. The Club was instrumental in constructing a community ice rink just off Main Street in the Village of Granville and arranging and maintaining the ice rink for many years which was used by not only many children but adults as well. Another well received Rotary Club project was setting up a ski program whereby students were transported including my daughters by a bus to the Pico Ski Area where many children learned how to ski. A summer school playground was arranged by the Club. The Club also arranged with the Lions Club the establishment of a playground at the Little League Field. Speaking of the Little League the Club for many years continuing right up to the present time has sponsored a Rotary Little League baseball team. The Club had in connection with Radio Ads sold by Club members for some period of time arranged for a high school track meet conducted by Rotarians. This was a very big track meet with 30 schools participating.

The Club has been involved with the youth of all ages. The Club once a month has and continues to invite a high school senior student selected as the student of the month and his or her parents or parent or guardian to a weekly meeting. Each student is recognized and speaks which makes quite an impression on the student and club members. At the end of the Rotary year a student of the year is selected and

comes again to a Club meeting. The Club encourages scholastic achievement on the part of the high school students. For many years a scholarship award in the amount of \$1000 is given to a graduating senior based on service to the school and community. This does not stop there. Individual Rotarians with the guidance of the Rotary Scholarship Committee have provided for seven additional \$1000 scholarship awards annually based on scholarship, service and need. Further a graduating senior boy and girl who attain the highest scholastic average receive annually a gold medal. The Club is very fortunate to be participating in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards program. The Club has promoted this program and has been able to select and send for training more than the allotted number of local RYLA students who have appeared at weekly Club meetings and related to the Club their invaluable experiences. The Club has further provided each year dictionaries for all third graders at the Granville Elementary School.

To encourage good sportsmanship and to lessen the high emotion and tensions between the Granville and Whitehall communities the Granville and Whitehall Rotary clubs jointly sponsored for many years annual football banquets held a few weeks after the Granville-Whitehall football game which was always the last game of the football season at which trophies were awarded to outstanding players which was well received. This really did help to lessen the tensions and high emotions between the players and the communities.

It should be noted that a real special project of the Club was the financing and erection of a modern electric scoreboard at the Granville High School football field. Not only was the scoreboard dedicated in memory of Sam Eppolito, my long standing Coach and the Coach at the Granville High School for over 30 years and Granville Rotarian BUT the Club arranged for the football field to be also dedicated in memory of Coach Eppolito and is known as the Eppolito Field.

The Club had been engaged for many years in an annual flea market which not only provided for fund raising but also gave people in Granville and the surrounding areas the opportunity to purchase all kinds of items at reduced prices. Similarly the Club now participates each year in a town wide yard sale by arranging for various vendors to pay a fee to display their goods which as with the flea market not only raises funds for the community but gives the community the opportunity to purchase items at a reduced price.

One of the most important Granville Rotary Club projects of many years is the annual Christmas Spirit also known as the Warm the Children spaghetti dinner held at Bernardo's Restaurant each year. Most of the members either working in the kitchen or serving. All proceeds are used to purchase warm winter clothing for needy children. Another important project that the club takes pride in setting up each year is Trivia Night where many teams from the surrounding areas including Vermont compete in trivia questions which the Club prepares. Club members operate Trivia night which provides for substantial fund raising and also provides for a night of much needed educational stimulation. The Club this year set up a food booth at the long run annual Chamber of Commerce antique car show and it appears this will be an annual fund raising event with much exposure on the part of the Club to this well attended car show.

The Granville Rotary Club has always as indicated above done everything possible to help and assist the youth of the community. In this regard the Club has enthusiastically participated in conducting mock interviews with graduating senior high school students at the high school following a format designed by the Club's sister club in Wales, Wrexham Erddig. The format was developed by Rotarians in Wrexham with the help of tutors from a local college and former secondary school students. Most of the members of the Club participate in the interviewing process which absolutely improves the interviewing skills of the many students who participate which prepares them without a doubt for college or job

interviews. Much good feedback has been received from the students and the school. It has been a very rewarding experience for the students as well as the Club members.

The Granville Rotary Club has a very good and established excellent relationship with area Rotary Clubs. The Club is very proud to have sponsored the formation of the Salem Rotary Club in 1967 and has a very close relationship with the Club members. Present at our 90<sup>th</sup> Celebration Dinner held at the Fair Haven Inn Restaurant on December 5, 2014 in addition to our District Governor Dave Hannel were four charter and current members of the Salem Rotary Club, Al Baltz, Al Cormier, Jim Carrolan, and Charlie Perry. Al Cormier presented our Club with a Certificate of Appreciation of the Club's sponsorship which he read.

The Granville Rotary Club is well aware of its obligation to participate in international projects and the Fourth Object of Rotary to advance international understanding, goodwill and peace. The Club has supported big time the Rotary Foundation since its establishment in 1931. Many members are Paul Harris Fellows. In 1962 the Club had the honor of have a Granvillian, Jonathan Harrington, selected as a Rotary Fellow. Jonathan who I knew personally was a top individual and student, whose mother use to play the piano at Rotary, studied at Cambridge University in England. The Club had for some time participated in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program having sent local students and received students from other countries. The Club has actively been involved in eradicating polio which is Rotary's top priority. The Club has raised substantial funds for mass immunizations and Rotary is at this time in the final stages of polio eradication. Through the leadership and efforts of Rotarian Steve Williams the Club has provided funds over a period of time for various projects in Bangladesh including Cataract removal and IOL implants completed in April 2011 and provided equipment for a second operating theatre for the specialized ENT hospital at Mahakhali, Dhaka, catering especially to children completed in June 2013, and training midwives in techniques for life procedures for just born babies at the Kumudin Hospital. Steve himself went to Bangladesh during the course of these projects. All of this was done in partnership with R.C. of Dhaka West. The Club has further been involved with the Rotary Foundation in providing for Shelter Boxes for Indonesia and Haiti and has also provided funds for pure water in Danli, Honduras.

The Granville Rotary club in its first 90 years has become an established community service Club frequently living up to and exemplifying the Rotary motto of Service above Self . The Granville Rotary Club has served the Granville community in innumerable ways and the Club has always publicized with great publicity in the Granville Sentinel by Rotarian John Manchester, the Editor & Publisher, that all moneys from the numerous fund raising projects go directly back into the community. The Granville Rotary Club looks forward to our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and continuing to serve the community to improve its quality of life.

I do want to acknowledge that in researching the history of the Granville Rotary Club that information compiled by my father, Albert Berkowitz, greatly helped me in setting forth the highlights of the history of the Club.

Philip A. Berke