

RYLA District 6420 Presenters 2026

Friday, May 8, 2026- "Let's Power Up!"



Carl & Dianna Cole have been working with youth and young adults for over four decades in the Greater Rockford and Freeport region through their non-profit organization, Sounds of Good News and the Young Eagles Success club youth character program. This year's workshop experience will focus on success tips that will inspire and empower the participants to embrace "POWER"- (*Positive Outcomes With Every Resource*) and "UP"- (*Ultimate Positivity*) on their new journey. Topics will include: current challenges in education and society, attitude and altitude, choices and consequences, and unity and peace. Professor Carl Cole and his wife, Dianna, have received several regional and state community service awards as well as national recognition for their efforts in working with young adults!

Saturday, May 9, 2026- "Stop Chasing Butterflies"

Bill Carlson has been in public speaking for over 25 years and has a degree in finance from Arizona State University. He is a business owner, has over 25 years of experience as an investment advisor, and is the father of two children. From the outside, it appeared that Bill was living the "American Dream" including a large home in a Chicago suburb and a vacation home. Unfortunately, a series of bad decisions led to losing it all. Bill has a passion for helping individuals become better versions of themselves by illustrating the importance that gratitude plays in one's life. During this presentation, Bill shares the importance of how living a life filled with gratitude can help individuals avoid engaging in unethical behavior. Students will also learn the far reaching impact that our own actions have on those we care for the most in our lives. His story is designed to help the audience pause, gain awareness of one's place in the world, and reflect on how each of us lives out our lives every day.



Saturday, May 9, 2026- "Rotary Showcase- Living Lands & Waters"



Dan Breidenstein started as a Living Lands and Waters volunteer in 2010. He was invited to officially join the staff in May of 2013. Dan is known as a modern day renaissance man with many talents! Dan is a professional disc golfer, a technologically savvy guru of trash collecting, a soccer goalie, skateboarding whiz, snowboarder, sage photographer, prospective American Ninja Warrior, and he plays one mean kazoo! During this presentation, Dan will share the story of Chad Pregracke, who noticed a problem that no one was tackling, and he decided to step up and take action. Dan will share the value of the Mississippi River and the importance of waterways...keeping them clean for ourselves and future generations. Dan discusses how we all can make small changes in our everyday life to help with this very important cause...and that one person can truly make a difference!

Saturday, May 9, 2026- "Rotary Youth Exchange"

Ciara Stahly may be young, but she has been around Rotary for a long time! She started her Rotary journey as a Rotary Youth Exchange student in Sweden in 2011-2012. Developing an immediate passion for the Youth Exchange Program, she became a volunteer for the program immediately upon her return to the area. Ciara served as a youth exchange volunteer from 2012 to 2017. Ciara served as President of Loves Park Rotary from 2019-2020 and went on to become the Youth Exchange Officer for Loves Park from 2018 to 2022. She became the District 6420 Outbound Coordinator for Youth Exchange in 2022 and continues to hold that position. Last year, she and her husband, Noah, were host parents to the Loves Park youth exchange student, Sofie, who is from Denmark. Ciara studied Psychology at Rockford University and currently works for Rockford Promise as the Director of Fund Development. Her presentation will discuss Rotary's Youth Exchange program and the impact that youth exchange has on our community and world.



Sunday, May 10, 2026- "Your Next Chapter: Building the Story of your Life"



Dr. Lauren Ives is a Family Medicine Board Certified M.D. She is currently the site lead Physician at Newburg Clinic, part of University of Wisconsin Health System and Proxy Medical Director of Northern Illinois Hospice. Dr. Ives has volunteered at many community engagements over the last 9 years including media and news outlets for the University of Wisconsin and Rotary. She is the mother of three: Caleb, Dylan, and Addison and has also been hosting au pairs for the last 10 years. Dr. Ives was a Rotary Youth Exchange student during the 2002-2003 school year to Germany and was also a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to Venezuela in 2007. This closing presentation on Sunday is a reflection of Dr. Ives' journey and her development through Rotary, her study of medicine, reflections on life's lessons, and a discussion on the importance of mental health and purpose. She will discuss building your story through intentional exploration, curiosity, and adventure!