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Weekly Bulletin of the Rotary Club of Eureka



**June 13, 2013**



This was the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Rotary Year 2012-2013. The meeting was held at the Wharfinger. Since our illustrious President was out of town at the annual worldwide Rotary conference, being held in Portugal, past President Don Leonard led the meeting. Next week, which will host our debunking of out-going President Nancy Dean, is our last week at the Wharfinger. The week after that we'll be meeting at the Elks Club "temporarily" until further notice.

Flag Salute was led by the longest standing Rotary members present, James Howard (1973) and Al Crnich (1955). We later acknowledged that two other long-standing members were also present: Dick Nash (1954) and John Winzler (1961). A touching invocation was given by Eric Bergel.



We had visiting Rotarian John Cunningham from Dublin, Ohio, which is near Columbus, Ohio, at our meeting this week. We also had two guests of Rotarians. Dick Storre graced us with his lovely wife Debbie, and Jason Eads introduced us to Scott McAnich, who's going to law school at Golden Gate University and who's an intern at Jason's office

this summer.

Larissa Toelke our Exchange student from Germany announced that this was her 10 month anniversary, and reminded us that she just graduated from Eureka High School last weekend. Larissa also shared that while students were advised to not “decorate” their graduation outfits, she couldn’t resist decorating her cap with her & Franco’s photo. That was very thoughtful Larissa – well done!



Also present was our new Exchange Student from Italy, Bibianna Fabri, who introduced her sister Genevra, and her mother Diana. Diana is a former Rotarian and Rotary President from Bergamo, Italy.

We acknowledged the birthdays of four Rotarians this week: George Owren and Richard Whitaker celebrate their birthday on June 19<sup>th</sup>, Aaron Tilch’s festive day is on June 21<sup>st</sup>, and Bruce Rupp’s name day is June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

While we have long list of head table birthday folk who could have and should have been seated (I counted 11 who could have sat up front), only Greg Seiler and Eric Bergel took their place. Well done lads!! Also seated at the head table was our guest speaker and Rotarian, Sheriff Mike Downey.

Wedding Anniversary announcements this week include John and Jackie McBeth on June 17<sup>th</sup> and Kay and Jim Hunter on June 20<sup>th</sup> (who celebrate their 32<sup>nd</sup> year of bliss).

We also announced two Membership Anniversaries – Greg Seiler (June 20, 2011) and Dale Stockly (June 22, 2011).

We had a number of announcements this week:



First, there were two special announcements. This week marks the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Lane Strobe joining Rotary, and this week Sue Bosch celebrates her 57<sup>th</sup> year with Humboldt Land Title Company. Both are remarkable achievements worthy of mention.

Second, we were reminded that the Backpacks for Kids fundraiser is still on! The winner will be selected Aug. 30th. Tickets are \$10 each or packs of 12 tickets can be had for \$100. The prize is \$3500 Vacation Getaway. There's a second prize too – a Pierson's Gift Certificate! Let's go Rotarians...we need as many of you as possible to step up and get some tickets. Let's not forget who this is for!



Finally, and most importantly, we held a vote on where our “temporary venue” for lunch meetings will be held. There were three options (Wharfinger, Elks Club & the Ingomar Club), a paper ballot, and an added vote on the question of paying extra for linens should we end up choosing the Elks Club. The Elks Club was chosen by a large majority, with no linens being paid for. So, starting the week of July 1, when incoming President Donald “Ziggy Ziegenfuss begins his year as President, we will be meeting at the Elks Club “temporarily” until some future vote on the matter is held.

We had two winners for the Spengler “Science Fair” Raffle Tickets – unfortunately I forgot to write those names down. Please forgive me. Mea culpa!



Our speaker, Sheriff Michael Downey, was introduced by previous President Don Leonard. Sheriff Downey, who is a member of our Rotary chapter, was there to discuss the California AB109 Realignment bill, which essentially mandates that state prisons in California reduce its prison population by 55,000 inmates. The end result of this bill is that the counties must take on a greater role in housing and processing inmates who are released to county responsibility. The inmates who are to be sent back to the counties must be non-felony, non-sexual and non-violent prisoners. In addition, the bill stipulates that the county can hold these inmates for up to 3 years. The state is providing some funding to the counties to cover the extra costs of the realignment.

AB109 poses a number of challenges for the counties. Aside from the added financial burden the counties must take on, county level facilities are not sufficient enough to take on the extra prison population. This leads to overcrowding problems, which in turn leads to a change in prison population dynamics, plus increased violence. The challenge of managing this growing prison population suggests that the counties also need enhancements to their prison programs.

Some of the county prison statistics makes all of these points clearer. County facilities are currently limited to a maximum population of 391 inmates, of which 55 are earmarked for women. Current daily rates at the county lockup are running between 375 and 385 inmates per day. This is close enough to the maximum capacity to essentially be full. Furthermore, the maximum population count assumes double-bunk units; so, when particular inmates require single housing cells, it creates further constraints to the system. This can and easily does lead to overcrowding, which means that the county must many times release inmates who previously would have been kept in the system. This is further aggravated by the fact that they average inmate stay is 155 days, which means that there's precious little room to bring new inmates into the system. To address these problems a new classification protocol for inmates has had to be developed, and lawbreakers who previously would have been brought in for police and court processing before being released are now in some cases simply being given citations. Needless to say these program changes would normally require new hiring to help handle the extra work loads, but with freezes in hiring, the county currently has 16 unfilled correctional officer openings, and 13 unfilled Deputy Sheriff positions, to name the most obvious positions.

Some other stats also paint a very troubling situation. The current county prison population is made up of 17% sentenced prisoners, and 83% non-sentenced inmates. Moreover, 92% are in the facility for felonies and 7% are in for non-felonies. Equally troubling is the rapid rise of gang members in the prison; in 2009 there were 104 identified gang members in the country prison, and then up to 197 in 2010, 640 in 2011, 1028 in 2012, and already 446 as of May 31, 2013. Drugs are also an issue in the prison, with 45 incidents in 2009, 25 in 2010, 31 in 2011, 23 in 2012, and 23 so far this year through May 31, 2013.

While AB109 is something that the county will need to continue dealing with, there are other factors that are impacting the Sheriff's Department being able to handle them efficiently and cost effectively. The Occupy Eureka movement soaked up a lot of manpower and resources, ongoing Transient Clean-ups, and a number of manhunts have impacted the department's ability to deal with AB109.

Presented in Rotary Service by Bruce Smith