

# Monthly Newsletter



## Message from Heidi:

Hi Everyone,

Rotary calls us to put Service Above Self — and nowhere is that spirit more quietly evident than in the dedicated work of our **Club Foundation Committee**.

Month after month, without fanfare, they have served our Club with exactly the kind of selfless commitment that defines what Rotary is all about: keeping our Foundation account secure and allowing it to grow responsibly, so that our capacity to serve this community continues to deepen.

It is my honor to recognize Chair Janet DiBenedetto for her steady and principled leadership, and Michael Prioletti, whose financial expertise has been the guiding hand behind our fund's responsible growth. To Phillip Roach, James Mullen, Mike Rusk (Treasurer), and Kim Anderson (Secretary) — your service above self is felt by every member and every life we touch.

Thank you for the trust you carry on behalf of us all..

*Heidi*



### In this newsletter you can expect:

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Other  
Happenings

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Member  
Birthdays &  
Anniversaries

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Speaker  
Highlights

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Upcoming  
Events

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Member  
Spotlight

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Rotary  
International  
Foundation

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## Other Happenings:

- Club members Heidi Versames, Janet DiBenedetto, and Brad & Catherine Robinson attended the Rotary Club of Sarasota's Centennial Celebration last month, where they had the honor of meeting Rotary International's President Elect, Yinka Babalola.
- We've started a new feature of our club meetings: Club/Member Happenings. Members can submit photos and share stories about what's been going on in their lives.
- A special thanks to Joerg Meyer for running four Josh the Baby Otter water safety classes at Funtime Academy in Naples, as well as food packing that he and Wayne Hemstead from the Bonita Beach Sunset Club organized with the Bonita Springs Assistance Office. The students from the Interact Club at the Bonita Springs Charter School packed 650 lbs of food into 760 little sacks or ziplock bags.
- Beginning in April, our weekly club meetings will now be available via Zoom. You can log on at 11:45 am. If there is no one logged onto the Zoom meeting at 12:10PM, we will end the Zoom portion. To join via Zoom, use the following link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82664139672?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82664139672?pwd=Wpxhnc8Y60GMVQ2ASAnN4UK3r2GJNd.1)

[pwd=Wpxhnc8Y60GMVQ2ASAnN4UK3r2GJNd.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82664139672?pwd=Wpxhnc8Y60GMVQ2ASAnN4UK3r2GJNd.1)



Wishing all the best to:

5/1 - Jim Fabry

5/3 - Rosi Haller

5/7 - Anke Tracey

5/15 - Vickie Helbing

5/27 - Lin Dworkin

"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate" ~ Oprah Winfrey



Happy Anniversary

5/1 - Mike Prioletti

5/31 - Bob Bornstein

"Rotary changes us and those we server. I believe we can change the world one life at a time."

~ Paul Harris

## Speaker Highlights



**Donnie Keller**

Donnie started **Wilson's Fit Futures** so that he could teach young people how to train, eat, and live with purpose so they can grow into strong, capable leaders in their homes, schools, and communities. To find out more, visit [www.WilsonsFitFutures.org](http://www.WilsonsFitFutures.org)



**Mike Prioletti**

Mike presented a very informative overview of our new world of artificial intelligence, including what it can be used for and how to make the most of it. The member discussions were so lively that Mike was not able to finish his presentation. Hopefully, he'll be able to take us through the rest at some future meeting.

## Upcoming Speakers & Events

- **5/7** - Wendy Blair Stephan - Florida Poison Information Center
- **5/14** - Dana Hollenzer - Special Equestrians
- **5/21** - New Officer Installation
- **5/28** - Cassy Kelly - Right at Home
- **TBD** - Keep a look out for our upcoming summer club socials to support Pints With a Purpose sponsoring breweries.



**Janet Ortenzo**

As President of the Board of Directors for the **SWFL Coalition Against Human Trafficking**, Janet shared an overview of the Coalition's extensive network of more than 95 partner organizations that provide various direct services to survivors of human trafficking across SW Florida.

For more information, visit [www.SWFLhumantrafficking.org](http://www.SWFLhumantrafficking.org).



**Leah Mason, PhD**

Leah, Executive Director of **Literacy Council Gulf Coast**, shared they build confidence, opportunity, and independence within our community through free programs that teach reading, writing, speaking and navigating daily life. Heidi then presented her with a Rotary donation.

For more information, visit [www.LiteracyGulfCoast.org](http://www.LiteracyGulfCoast.org).



## Save The Date!

May 21<sup>st</sup> will be the 2026-2027 Bonita Naples Rotary Club's **Installation of Officers and Directors** at The Stage beginning at noon. District Governor-elect-designate, Sue McConnell, will do the installation ceremony.

Let's make this a grand celebration! Spouses and guests are welcome to attend.

Please let Heidi know if you have any guests attending as Campbell is having an upgraded buffet.



# Member Spotlight - Joerg Meyer

When Joerg and his wife Celia first decided to retire and move full time to Bonita Springs back in 2019, his friends and former colleagues asked what he'd do in his spare time. His response varied from "Nothing" to "Travel" or "Give back to the community".

He figured out the first two pretty quickly ... but it wasn't until 2023 that he finally addressed the third goal. It was through past club president, Art Nor, that Joerg was introduced to Rotary in general, and our club specifically.

That first year was definitely a whirlwind. Together with members of the other Area 2 Rotary clubs, he led the effort to create the "Just Soups" cookbook as a fundraiser to help combat food insecurity in our community. Additionally, he spearheaded the Restaurant Gift Card Raffle where \$3,000 in gift cards donated by area restaurants were raffled off to members, family and friends.

Additionally, he offered to help out with several of the club's youth services programs, including the Interact Clubs at the BS Charter School and the Gulf Coast High School, as well as the Josh the Baby Otter Water Safety program, all of which he is still leading until today. At the club level, he has been on the board since late 2023, and has been the Club Public Image Chair since mid-2025, where he is in charge of the website and other online presence. Although Rotary isn't about recognition, he was nevertheless very proud to receive the 2023-2024 district "Rookie of the Year Award".

In his spare time ... LOL... he enjoys traveling with his wife, mainly in the form of spending time in France (they love the food and the way of life) and Brazil (which is where Celia is from). Additionally, together with his sister and fellow club member Anke Tracey and her husband Doug, they can be found on a cruise or two every year. While at home, Celia and Joerg enjoying the near daily swim in their pool with their dog Charlie, or encouraging their two children: Lukas, who recently completed his Commercial Pilot and Flight instructor licenses, and their daughter, Olivia, who will be finishing her Masters of Architecture and Masters in Urban Design degrees.

So, after nearly 3 years as a Rotarian ... what has Joerg learned? He now understands what many warned him about at the beginning ... "get involved, but don't overdue it, otherwise you'll get burned out". However, the most important learning is how fun and fulfilling it is to help others, and, "In a time of chaos and deep division in our country, Rotary is my place of refuge. Politics and Religion are left outside, we get together to enjoy each other's company, and find out how to help others".

He's happy to say that his initial 3 goals are settling into a state of equilibrium ... which is "Beneficial for All Concerned".

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| <p align="center"><b>ROTARY CLUB OF BONITA<br/>NAPLES</b></p> | <p align="center">MEETING THURSDAYS AT NOON</p>  |
| <p align="center">BonitaNaplesRotary.com</p>                  | <p align="center">The Stage Restaurant<br/>9144 Bonita Beach Rd<br/>Bonita Springs, FL 34135</p> |



As part of a two-part focus on Foundations, this month, we'll tell you about [The Rotary Club of Bonita Naples Foundation.](#)

### **Our Club Foundation: A Legacy of Stewardship, A Promise for the Future**

Thirty years ago, the members of the Rotary Club of Bonita Naples had the foresight to create something lasting. With a deep belief in service above self—and an eye toward the long-term strength and vitality of our Club—we established **The Rotary Club of Bonita Naples Foundation**, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to supporting our mission for generations to come.

From the very beginning, the Foundation was built on a simple but powerful idea: that by saving a portion of the proceeds from our fundraisers each year, and investing those funds wisely, we could create an enduring source of support for our Club's charitable work. Thanks to the generosity, discipline, and commitment of Rotarians over three decades, that vision has become a reality.

Today, the Foundation's long-term investment account has grown to **over \$500,000**—a remarkable milestone that reflects not only sound investment stewardship, but also countless hours of service, fundraising, and fellowship by our members.

Just as importantly, the Foundation is not an end in itself. Each Rotary year, it plays an active role in supporting the charitable priorities of the Club. At the beginning of every Rotary year, a portion of the Foundation's assets is thoughtfully returned to the Club's President and Board of Directors to be used for charitable giving. This ensures that our Club has a **reliable, predictable minimum level of funding** available each year to support meaningful projects and causes—both locally and beyond.

Last year, the Foundation's Trustees took an important step forward by formalizing this process through a clear and transparent policy. Under this policy, a specifically budgeted amount of Foundation charitable dollars is made available to each incoming Board of Directors at the start of the Rotary year. This gives Club leaders both flexibility and responsibility—providing the resources to pursue charitable opportunities while maintaining careful stewardship of the Foundation's long-term health.

The annual charitable budget is calculated using a consistent formula based on the **June 30 year-end value** of the Foundation's long-term investment account:

- If the account balance exceeds the current target valuation of \$500,000, 4% of those assets are allocated to the upcoming year's charitable budget.
- If the balance is below \$500,000, 3% is allocated.
- Should the balance ever fall below \$425,000, no distribution would be made in the following Rotary year—an important safeguard to protect the Foundation's principal.

Any portion of the annual charitable budget that is not distributed by the end of the Rotary year is returned directly to the Foundation's investment account, allowing those funds to continue growing for future use.

This approach reflects two goals that matter deeply to our Club: **supporting today's charitable efforts while protecting and growing the Foundation for tomorrow.** It ensures fairness from year to year, provides clarity for Club leadership, and reinforces our shared commitment to long-term stewardship.

The Foundation stands as a quiet but powerful expression of who we are as Rotarians—thoughtful, generous, and forward-looking. It is a testament to what can be achieved when many hands contribute over time, united by a common purpose.

As we look ahead, we can take pride in knowing that the Rotary Club of Bonita Naples Foundation will continue to strengthen our ability to serve, today and for many years to come.