

Year in Review... “Building Communities, Bridging Continents” by 2010-11 President Jon Niebergall June 27, 2011

Before beginning the new Rotary year, 38 Rotarians and guests had the opportunity to enjoy a relaxing evening of reflection, optimism, and fellowship as we gathered for our annual Recognition and Installation Celebration, which was held Monday evening, June 27, at the Eau Claire Golf & Country Club.

The evening began with an enjoyable cocktail hour, a welcome by **President Jonathan Niebergall**, our traditional meeting prayer, and the delicious meal provided by the ECGCC staff. We were entertained by a jazz group comprised of three former Memorial High School students.

After dessert, it was Jon’s time to put an exclamation point on the 2010-11 Rotary year. Jon began by thanking the Club for the opportunity to serve as our president, and for the opportunity for him and his wife Stephanie to attend the Rotary International convention in Montreal. He commented on how the RI convention experience changed his vision of Rotary and what Rotary stood for. Jon returned with a commitment to introduce “Rotary Visioning” to our Club, an RI initiative to assist Clubs with their long range planning efforts. Even though it took most of the year to schedule and hold the initial Visioning session, that first step has been taken and, according to Jon, “we will see the journey through”.



Getting ready to enjoy dinner at this year’s banquet are, from left: **Sara Antonson, Mike Antonson, Pat Thoney, Julie Thoney, Stephanie Niebergall** and **Jon Niebergall**.

Jon then reviewed many of the activities and accomplishments of our Club. He noted that throughout the year we were privileged to listen to a wide variety of speakers including Senator Herb Kohl, Wisconsin Secretary of Tourism Kelli Tremble, Judge Tom Barland from Wisconsin’s Government Accountability Board, and BJ Farmer on piloting a B-24 bomber during World War II. We also held two of our Monday meetings at area businesses... a tour of the newly constructed Luther Building and the construction site of the new UWEC Davies Center.

Our annual fund raiser... the poinsettia, chocolates and coffee sale, along with member donations, provided our Club with \$13,000 with which to support numerous community and international programs. These programs included the Boys & Girls Club of Chippewa Valley for their teen center renovation, the Chamber of Commerce Youth Leadership program, the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra, Junior Achievement in support of their 2011 Business Challenge, the UWEC Foundation, Special Kids Day, and several others. We also supported eight area high school seniors by providing a total of \$5,000 in scholarships to help them fund their college education.

In the International Avenue of Service, under the leadership of Mark Morse, our Club supported numerous activities, including a water project in Ghana and the Rotary Foundation's general programs fund. We hosted Natan Goncalves, a high school exchange student from Brazil, and sponsored Phillip Bachman who spent his exchange year in Japan. Finally, we hosted a Group Study Exchange team from India for several days during their four week cultural experience in our District 6250.

Jon then recognized the officers, avenue-of-service chairs, and other committee chairs who have all given of their time and talents in service to the Rotary Club of Eau Claire.

Next a Paul Harris Fellow was awarded (see article below).

Finally, Jon recognized the past presidents that are still members of the Club, and then conducted the Installation of Officers ceremony (see article below).

“What Does Rotary Mean to You?” by 2011-12 President Sara Antonson

(Editor's Note: After being formally inducted as our 2011-12 President at the Recognition and Installation Celebration, Sara Antonson addressed the group. The following is the complete text of her remarks.)

When I attended my first Rotary meeting almost five years ago, I thought Rotary was about networking. Oh sure, I knew that it was a service group, but I didn't understand the depth of the organization. Over the years, I have enjoyed the fellowship, the learning opportunities within the community and much further abroad, but it wasn't until last March when I attended the President Elect Training Conference that I fully began to understand what being a Rotarian really means.

So what does Rotary mean to me? Well, it is a time for me to network with other community professionals in a fun and informative way. But it is so much more than that for me. My entire life I have been taught to give back. To help others that have not been as fortunate as I have. Rotary gives me that opportunity. During the PETS conference, everywhere I turned I saw, I heard or I read about "Service Above Self". Those words are so meaningful to me. When I attended the PETS training, I was a little ashamed of myself for not taking advantage of the opportunities that Rotary provided. I wasn't living those words "Service Above Self" in Rotary. I know there are many areas of my life that I have given back, but honestly, I attended Rotary and listened, and donated, but I didn't truly understand the opportunities that Rotary offered to give back.

As we work on our vision for our Club, I believe that our first step is to work together to determine what Rotary means to each of us. Everyone may have a different meaning. There isn't really a right or a wrong answer. The key is that we bring our visions together so we can effectively achieve our goals.

This year, I need your help by participating with your feedback. Our presenter had to cancel on July 11, so I'd like to begin by holding a Club Assembly that day. Please join us for our first meeting here at the Country Club and bring your ideas.

- What would you change about our weekly meetings?
- What types of programs would you like to see?
- What do you think are the most important factors in retaining current members?
- How can our club recruit new members?
- What changes would increase your participation in club service projects?
- What are the reasons you do or do not contribute to The Rotary Foundation?

My goal this year is to help to make this club meaningful to its members. I am hoping that by working together, we can take what we learned from our visioning process and strengthen our foundation. We can begin by defining what Rotary is to each one of us and building a vision that we all see. I am hoping that by beginning there, we can increase our Avenues of Service and bring meaningful opportunities to our members in the areas of Club Service, Vocational Service, Community Service, International Service and New Generations Service.

This year, I am the Club Leader, but truly I understand that in order for me to succeed I need to listen and learn from all of you. Would you please help me out? Can you tell me a few word description of what Rotary means to you? I'd like to do this so I can begin to get an idea of what Rotary means to you.

Answers from the Group:

- Group Study Exchange
- Youth Exchange
- Building a stronger community
- International understanding
- Fellowship
- Getting to know Eau Claire
- Personal growth
- Lunch on Monday ☺
- Networking
- Service Above Self
- International Community

I appreciate your input. As I said, I am confident that I will be learning what Rotary means to you this year and it is my sincere hope that I can help to bring that meaning to life for each of you.

What does Rotary mean to me? Expanding your horizons, meeting interesting people who stand for business and professional ethics, making friends, networking, performing acts of kindness and contributing to something larger than yourself, being part of an organization where your professional expertise, your moral character, your energy and your financial contributions can make a difference both in our community and in the world. That's what Rotary is to me.
