

Rotary



Wilton Rotary Drummer

Wilton, Connecticut

www.wiltonrotaryclub.org

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Editor: Paul Burnham

Today's attendees: Boucher, Brown, Burnham, Carreiro, Freedman, Glass, Goldman, Hansen, Johnson, Kent, Lauria, Lavin, Meehan, Russo, Sharlach, Smith and Tai-Lauria. No guests or visiting Rotarians this week.

Coming events –

Sunday, January 26. This is the Chamber's Winter Carnival day. We will have our Rotary inflatable at the Gazebo (hopefully someone will insure that the power is turned on) which will direct the hoi polloi to Schenk's Island and our fire pit where we will offer s-mores to the young ones, and assorted fine beverages to our volunteers. Firewood, sticks, marshmallows, graham crackers, etc., all arranged. Rotary brochures to be disseminated hopefully. Set up at 11:00 AM, guests to arrive starting at 12:00; last will be leaving at 4:00.

Foundation minute: Christene advised that the Rotary Foundation is contemplating adding a seventh area of focus – something regarding the environment. When challenged she came up with the other six – mother and children, economics, water and sanitation, world peace, disease prevention and literacy. Impressive.

Having the floor, Christene then put in a plug for the District Conference in Mystic the weekend on April 24-26, a day of service at the Dorothy Day House in Danbury (a soup kitchen for the homeless sponsored by the Freedman's other club (Newtown) and the March 7 swamp romp at the Y's outdoor pool. Once again, if you give more than \$50, Christene promises to duck her head under the surface.

Planning ahead – our club's next meetings -January 31 at Rolling Hills, the speaker will be Fran Normann, the executive Director of the Housatonic Habitat for Humanity in Danbury; February 7 will be at the Y and will include a tour of the new facilities; there will be no meeting on the 14th of February, and our February 21st meeting will be at a location to be determined, as Rolling Hills cannot accommodate us that day.

Richard advises that we need two speakers in March, and we have only one scheduled for April at this time.

The 50-50 pot continues to grow – now well in excess of \$800.00. Bud's ticket was drawn but due to exceptionally skilled shuffling by your humble servant named below, Bud drew the Ace of Hearts, not the Joker. There are now only six cards left.

Today's speaker was Jane Ferreira, the President and Executive Director of the Mercy Learning Center in Bridgeport.

The Mercy Learning Center is located in Bridgeport on Railroad Avenue, less than a stone's throw from I-95. Its mission is to provide basic literacy and life skills training to low-income women. It is successful in its efforts, but it cannot hope to address the needs of all the women of the community. It has 1,100 students – many times that number could benefit from its programs.

The Bridgeport School system is broken, as Bill Glass confirms. It is possible to graduate from one of the high schools with no more than fourth grade reading and arithmetic skills. Mercy picks up the pieces for some. Some of its students have gone to college, others have continued their educations even further. How many more lives could be enhanced if Mercy and others could meet the needs of all. And the children of the graduates themselves benefit from their mother's successes.

While many of the students at Mercy are immigrants, and may not have had the benefit of the schooling opportunities we in Wilton take for granted, others have lived their entire lives in Bridgeport. Basic life skills may not have been learned, ether. Women may never have learned how to cook a meal properly, or take care of routine issues. They do not realize that they have some level of control of their lives, nor how to go about exercising it.

An example of the divide between the suburbs and the streets of Bridgeport. Billboards encourage the donation of turkeys for Thanksgiving dinners. Very, very few of the folks in Bridgeport have ovens with the capacities to cook a turkey, let alone any idea as to how to do it.

Jane then mentioned how there were at least 2,000 charitable organizations in Bridgeport but little or no co-ordination between them. As exemplified by the turkey story, there is much private money going to waste. Education, education, education. And the public schools and the city government cannot be trusted.

Thank you Jane for opening our eyes to the unimaginable (for us) needs of our near-neighbors.

See you Friday.

Paul