



Rock Island Rotary Weekly Review



March 28, 2023: Volume XXX, Issue 39
MEETING MONDAY NOON - QUAD CITY BOTANICAL CENTER



Jeff Coussens Penguin Project

Jeff Coussens is the former Chairman of the Augustana College Department of Theatre Arts. Since 2016 he has served as

Executive Director of The Penguin Project of the Quad Cities. Jeff is a Moline native and a graduate of Moline High School, Augustana College, and Indiana University where he earned his Master of Fine Arts (MFA). The Penguin Project of the Quad Cities, Augustana's chapter of the national organization, gives children with special needs a chance to develop creative skills in the theatre arts. Established in 2004 by Dr. Andy Morgan, a pediatrician in Peoria, IL, the Penguin Project is now a national program with chapters across the U.S. The Quad Cities chapter of the Penguin Project was founded by Mr. Coussens in 2016. At the time there were just 12 chapters, Peoria and 11 others mostly in the Chicago area. Mr. Coussens said when he first started they hosted a meeting inviting anyone with a disabled child who was interested in participating. Six families attended. Concerned Jeff contacted Dr. Morgan and asked what to do. Dr. Morgan advised him to just go forward. Word will pass by word of mouth, and all will be okay. That is exactly what they did and by the time they were ready to present their first performance there were 30 families, each with a young actor, singer, and dancer, on board. It quickly grew into the largest chapter in the nation by 2020. The pandemic caused a one-year shut down of all chapters nationwide, but the Quad City Chapter remains one of the largest Penguin Project Chapters in the nation. It is the only Penguin Project housed on the campus of a college or university and the only one that uses professional help to provide sets, lighting, and costuming. Dr. Morgan cites the Quad City Chapter as the ideal model for others to follow. The Q.C. chapter rehearses for 90 minutes twice each week at the Center for Living Arts in Rock Island and presents their performances each January at the Brunner Theatre Center at Augustana. Roles are filled by young artists with developmental disabilities. The young artists are joined on stage by a "peer mentor" who has volunteered to work side by side with them through months of rehearsals and the final performances. In a pinch the peer mentors act as understudies if a young artist is unable to take the stage for any reason. Augustana students help behind the scenes to ensure each production's success. By providing access to community theater, The Penguin Project demonstrates that the special challenges of a disability should not handicap a child's ability to participate in life's experiences. The program has demonstrated that participation in the performing arts has therapeutic value by enhancing social interaction, communication skills, self-confidence and self-esteem. The impact of the program has reached beyond the stage to create a social network for children who previously had very few friends and limited social opportunities. It has also provided a pathway for parents and families of children with disability to meet and become friends with families with similar issues and difficulties. There are no charges for any participants. Funding is provided via grants, donations, and ticket sales for performances. When asked how the organization got its name, Jeff said Penguins have wings but don't fly and they survive in terribly difficult circumstances. "Our penguins may not be able to fly, but that does not prevent their spirits from soaring." The Penguin Project accepts prospective artists and peer mentors by application. Applicants are screened and selections made based on an assessment of how the program can assist the child, if the child is capable of participating (Jeff said the standard is can they breathe on their own!). Peer mentors are selected based on their ability to attend rehearsals and performances and the belief that they have the compassion and patience for partnering with a disabled child. He said disabilities range from Down syndrome to non-verbal, to blind, to those impacted by multiple other medical issues from stroke to injury to mental disorders. The Penguin Project strives to serve as many as possible but caps their annual "cast" at 30-32 artists and an equal number of peer-mentors. Thanks Jeff for a great program!

Mar. – May Calendar

- Apr 4 - Laura Mahn – NEST Cafe
- Apr 11 - Bert Blood Scholarships
- Apr 18 - Rotary Awards Luncheon
- Apr 25 - Dr. James Patterson "Getting to Yes or No" – negotiating skills
- May 2 - Mary Ann McLeod - "Living in the 4th Quarter with No Regrets"
- May 9 - Sara Leonard - Earl Hanson School
- May 16 - Ed Tibbetts – Community Journalism
- May 23 - Sara Cross - First Tee Quad Cities update.
- May 30 - The I-74 Bridge Demolition - Image Consultants



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Officers

Cindi Gramenz, President
Eric Westphall, 1st Vice Pres.
Sue Rector, 2nd Vice Pres.
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Justin Peterson, Past President

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Mariah Johnson, Director
John Phillips, Director
Monta Ponsetto, Director
Kathy Trone, Director
Bob Swanson, Sergeant at Arms

Program Chairs 2022-23

July	- Tom Hammar
Aug-Sept	- Tyla Sherwin-Cole
Oct - Nov	- Rebecca Arnold
Dec-Jan	- John Wetzel
Feb-Mar	- David Hodge
Apr-May	- Gary Rowe
Jun-Jul	- Tom Hammar

Club Notes & Announcements!

- ❑ **WELCOME GUESTS** – Today we welcomed six guests. Kim Moran was a guest of hubby, Jim Moran. Alleman Jr. Rotarians Jane Hunter, Jack McLaughlin, Lincoln Dorsey, and Jake Casel attended along with Alleman sponsor Lindsey Honert. We hope you enjoyed our meeting and will join us again in the future.
- ❑ **BERT BLOOD SCHOLARSHIPS** – Will be presented at our Tuesday, April 11th meeting. We anticipate a number of guests that day including the students competing for scholarships, their families, and representatives from the Illinois Extensions Service and 4H. Typically, members of the local 4H Foundation attend. Please make all guests feel welcome and if needed relocate your luncheon seat so that guest families can sit together.
- ❑ **ROTARY AWARDS LUNCHEON** – Will be held at our Tuesday, April 18th meeting. As with the Blood Scholarship meeting we anticipate many guests. Parents of our six students who will be honored are planning to attend as are the winners and immediate family members of the Community Service, Professional Excellence, Luckenbill-Wray, and A.T. recipients. Please be welcoming to all guests and if needed, please help ensure that family members are able to sit together.
- ❑ **BIRTHDAY BOOKS THURSDAY** – Birthday Books at Earl Hanson school will be this Thursday, March 30th at 2:15. Just enter the school and tell the secretary you are there for Rotary Birthday Books. Go up the stairs just across from the secretary's window and enter the first door on the left side of the 2nd floor hallway. The books and cookies will already be there. You just greet the kids and help them select books. Autograph the book and Enjoy the kids!
- ❑ **ANNUAL ROTARY RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE!** – Get your raffle tickets from Gary Rowe. Proceeds fund our "Service Above Self" scholarship for Rock Island High School students. Tickets are \$5 or 5 for \$20. There are FIVE prizes, each for a \$200 gift card for a local Wine & Dine establishment! See page 5.
- ❑ **HAVE ITEMS FOR OUR NEWSLETTER?** – Send to bobdebswanson@att.net
The Weekly Review is distributed each Tuesday afternoon.



FOUNDATION RAFFLE

Today's raffle featured a 50/50 cash drawing and a bottle of fine wine. Mark Mayeski had the first winning ticket and took the cash and donated his winning to our Club Foundation. Amber Wood had the second winner and took home a bottle of fine wine. Thanks to all who participated! Proceeds go to the Rotary International Foundation.



FINES – HAPPY/SAD DOLLARS

In the absence of V.P. Sue, President Cindi asked for Happy/Sad dollars. First to speak up was Mark Mayeski offering \$5 Gonzaga University's win last Thursday putting them in the Elite 8 in NCAA men's basketball and lamenting their loss on Saturday with U Conn keeping them out of the Final Four. Ruth Lee had a happy dollar for seeing Duncan Cameron joining us via ZOOM. Amber Wood's happy dollar was celebrating SAL's new 0-3-year-old program. Jim Nordquist a Hawkeye alum had \$4 celebrating the Iowa women's basketball team winning their way into the NCAA Final Four with a win over Louisville. Frank Lambert paid \$5 to announce that he and Bud Phillis have renewed their Cubs vs. Cardinals monthly bet. Whichever team has the better record each month starting in April will cost their supporter (Frank for Cardinals, Bud for Cubs) a \$5 happy dollar donation. They invite any other members interested in the Cubs or Cardinals to join the bet! Monta Ponsetto had a Happy Dollar to celebrate Rocky graduate basketball star Brea Beal and her South Carolina Gamecocks women's basketball team for remaining undefeated and in the NCAA Final Four. Next opponent is Iowa so it should be interesting! Thanks to everyone who donated.

FOUNDATION MINUTE

RI's Month of Water and Sanitation

The news this week is fresh from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, where WKU senior Molly Parker Robinson of Benton will use a \$50,000 Rotary Foundation Global Grant Scholarship to pursue dual master's degrees in the political economy of development. She will study human rights and humanitarian action at Sciences Po in Paris, France and development management at London School of Economics in London, United Kingdom. The daughter of Paul and Paula Robinson, the new RF Global Scholar will graduate with majors in international affairs and economics and a minor in nonprofit administration in May 2023. She is pursuing a PhD in economic development and then work for an international nonprofit. An internship at the International Center of Kentucky, a nonprofit that ensures safety, dignity, and opportunity for refugees, asylees, survivors of war, and displaced populations rebuilding their lives in Bowling Green, enabled Robinson to discover a sense of purpose for her professional pathway. "During my time at the Center...I became enamored with the idea that I could spend my whole career making an impact in the way that I had in only a few short months at the Center."

The Rotary Global Grant is helping Robinson make more possible. To apply, she secured endorsement by the Marshall County Rotary Club and prepared seven short essays detailing her plans for the grant period and how they will contribute to a career of humanitarian impact, as well as three letters of recommendation. Then, she participated in a mock interview featuring local scholars and Rotarians that was assembled by the Office of Scholar Development. "I had the opportunity to speak with wonderful and inspiring Rotarians who are bettering their communities all over Kentucky," said Robinson. "I'm so grateful for their support and encouragement as I move into the next steps of my education and career."

Earl Hanson BIRTHDAY BOOKS!

This Thursday

**Rotarians are needed at 2:15pm. If you can spare 30 minutes, please do!
Come to Earl Hanson Elementary School**

JIM MORAN HONORS WIFE AS PAUL HARRIS FELLOW

President Cindi Gramenz had the pleasure of presenting Paul Harris Fellow Honors to Kim Moran, wife of Rotarian Jim Moran. Jim funded the honor for his wife who he said has helped him through many years including rising through the chairs and serving as our Club president. He urged others to support the Rotary Foundation and to follow his lead in earning their own Paul Harris Fellow award and then by honoring those they care about by presenting Paul Harris Fellow honors to them. Congratulations Jim and Kim!



CLUB BOARD HOPES TO CREATE NEW FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

For many years members who offer to chair fundraisers end up also having to do all the fundraising for their event via recruiting sponsors, selling raffle tickets, etc. This means that in addition to lining up a location, recruiting helpers to run the event, gathering all materials and supplies needed, and overseeing the entire project, the chairman is also facing the task of recruiting sponsors, selling tickets, and possibly finding silent auction and/or raffle items for the event. The task gets so big and exhausting that few are willing to chair events and those that do get burned out trying to cover everything.

The Board hopes to split the duties so that the event chair and committee can concentrate efforts on planning and running a fun and successful event. The Fundraising Committee will concentrate on recruiting sponsors promoting ticket sales, and if part of the event, lining up raffle and auction items. They will leave the details of the event up to the event committee.

The separation of duties will make everyone's job easier and will allow those who have contacts and a knack for fundraising to do what they are good at and let those that are good event planners and enjoy running the actual event do what they do best.

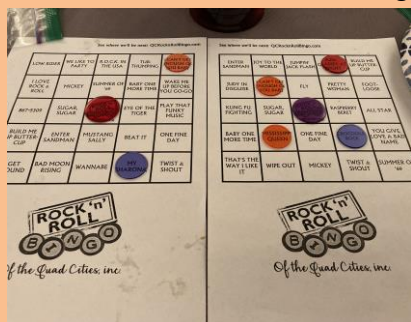
So, if you are interested or are asked to serve on the Fundraising Committee, please give it careful consideration. We need all Club members to share their talents and skills in the way most enjoyable for each of us.

ROCK & ROLL BINGO A FUN NIGHT!

100+ Rotarians and friends gathered at the Rock Island Holiday Inn last Friday for our 2nd Annual Rock & Roll Bingo Fund raiser. Lots of prizes were award, raffle prizes won, and a huge 50/50 drawing (thanks to Steve Morenz) built up to over \$600!. Chair Kathy Trone and her committee did a great job. Kathy reported financial numbers indicate over \$2,000 was raised not counting sponsorships! Bingo game prizes ranged from tee shirts to Whitey's Ice cream gift cards, to restaurant gift cards. The music was fun and at times challenging, but the emcees were quick to provide the song title for each one played. Gary Rowe was on hand selling our Wine & Dine Raffle chances and Sue Rector handled selling chances on the prizes that were raffled off. But, let the photos tell the story!



Steve demonstrates Moon Walking!



Rock Island Rotary wishes to thank our Sponsors: GOLD SPONSORS: American Bank; TBK Bank; Edward Jones, Mark Mayeski; Studio 483 Architects, Jeff Dismer; Fred Luckenbill Memorial Scholarship; Anonymous. : FRIENDS OF ROTARY SPONSORS: Zimmerman Honda; Fred and Virginia Houlton; Rock Island Holiday Inn Rock Island.

More photos next page -

ROCK & ROLL BINGO



Gary Rowe staffs the Wine & Dine Raffle Ticket table while Sue Rector assists Rick Emery with tickets for the Rock & Roll Bingo Raffle bags. Prizes were donated so every ticket sold helped raise funds for Rotary Club



Fun for all ages! You don't have to be cute to play Rock & Roll Bingo, but Dave & Leah Hodge's daughter shows that it sure doesn't hurt! She knows her music too!



Wine & Dine Raffle

5 Prizes! \$200 gift certificates will be awarded to one of the following:



Bayside
Bistro



Skylight
LUXURY LOUNGE

Tickets: 1 for \$5 or 5 for \$20

Drawings will be held May 23, 2023

Proceeds go to the Fred Houlton Service Above Self Scholarship

Rotary



Rock Island



1 ticket: \$5



5 tickets: \$20

**Purchase tickets by scanning the QR Code of your choice,
OR Email us at rotaryclubrockisland@gmail.com, OR
control/click the link of your choice below.**

1 Ticket for \$5.00

<https://checkout.square.site/merchant/PEB6ZBFH2TVTE/checkout/FXUGYO74Y25BCKJBBX7EWDVK>

5 Tickets for \$20

<https://checkout.square.site/merchant/PEB6ZBFH2TVTE/checkout/FT7I5FEJZUD2OHZNADQHZM2P>