

My Year as Leavenworth Rotary Club President 2012-2013

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2012-2013 RotaryFest: “Peace, Love & Rotary Fest”!

The International theme for this rotary year was “Peace Through Service”. I learned of the theme at “Pre PETS” training held in Ellensburg in February. While driving home from training I came up with the theme we would use at our main fund-raiser, Rotary Fest that up-coming November of “Peace, Love & Rotary Fest”!

I joined the Leavenworth Rotary Club in 2007 so by the time I became president in 2012 I more than understood the importance of our annual Rotary Fest event from the stand point of how much of the club’s fundraising depended on this event being financially successful. I formed a Rotary Fest committee and Ken Kohnhorst was chairperson of Rotary Fest. We began meeting for Rotary Fest in April, 2012 as a committee to prepare for the November, 2012 fundraiser.

Rotary Fest was very successful my year and after expenses the club netted approximately \$40,000. We spent a fair amount of money on decorations for the Fest Hall which were retro 1960’s with lots of Peace, Love and Out of Sight memorabilia! The Fest Hall is boring inside so I felt we really needed the place decorated up to help people feel the theme and do a time warp back to the 1960’s. All attendees were encouraged to “dress 1960’s” and we had a costume contest for first, second and third place winners. Liz Saunders, Karl Ruther, Dave Wagner and Dean Johnson were the epitome of the 60’s groovy and peace protesting love children! We did keep expenses lower than in previous years on the food, flatware, plates, napkins, cups and entertainment (music) costs so this helped the bottom line of what we were able to net.

PR for Rotary Fest included articles in the Wenatchee World, Leavenworth Echo, Wenatchee Business Journal plus I went on KPQ and KOHO doing interviews for the event. Ken updated the program from the previous year having 500 copies printed in August, 2012 so that we could give these to the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce to insert in the September/October, 2012 membership monthly newsletter. The Leavenworth Echo printed us up 250 posters and those were distributed to businesses downtown, plus posted in the Post Office, grocery stores, etc. In addition, I and other club members we visited our other rotary clubs in then Area 6 which included all the Wenatchee clubs, Cashmere, Chelan and Okanogan clubs. We submitted an article to District 5060 about our fundraiser and I sent an invitation to then District Governor Doug Everett and wife Jacque to attend our event and they happily came to it, dressed in retro 1960’s attire and had a blast from the past!

The other PR expense for “Peace, Love & Rotary Fest” that we did was having tee shirts and aprons printed with the theme on them. In hindsight and now looking back at the event we should have given everyone that sponsored a table or donated an auction or raffle item a tee shirt or apron as a thank you and token of good will on our club’s part. We did give our FLBA volunteer kids tee shirts which was great. If all the tee shirts and aprons were handed out there would be nothing left over and it would provide PR/goodwill exposure for the club.

My Goals as Club President:

During my installation as president I told members I simply wanted to get more “Rotary” in all our members. I wanted people having fun and participating on many levels in Rotary and hoped that they would look forward to our weekly meetings, fundraisers and events. For me club president I had a goal of our club attaining the Presidential Citation from the 2012-2013 International President. The club missed achieving it in 2011-2012. I formed a committee of past club presidents to help with the effort and we were successful in this goal being achieved! Every month during my year as president I chose someone in our club as “Rotarian of the Month”. It is important to acknowledge and praise those doing good deeds! And just about every week I wrote a column entitled “The President’s Perspective” as another way of communicating information to our club members.

Weekly Programs: The program committee did a great job of providing us good variety on programs. I wanted a mix of Rotary and non Rotary programs and I did not attend their meetings because I wanted them working together as a committee coming up with what they saw were programs being a good fit for our club without me as president seeming like I was micro-managing their efforts. We met off site at Mountain Meadows for one meeting plus out at the Club Course for one meeting. District Governor Doug Everett visited the end of August my year and we had the Cascade Select Choir perform Christmas songs right before Christmas.

How I Conducted Weekly Club Meetings:

We met every week for our Friday meeting other than the Friday after Thanksgiving. We met the week near Christmas and New Year’s because our meetings fell far enough away from these holidays that I didn’t see it a problem for the club to meet. I also felt the continuity of us meeting each week helped consistency for member’s attendance. The thing that was really important to me as club president my year was people having fun! I have always felt if people were having fun they would be more engaged in club activities.

Here are the things I did every week:

Always Have Your Phone On to Watch the Time but Have Your Ringer Off!

At my first weekly meeting I gave every club member a pin with the “Peace Through Service” motto on it as chosen by the International President and I encouraged members to always wear a Rotary pin of some kind every day to spread the awareness of Rotary.

We always had a prayer or reflection by the greeter, we did the Pledge of Allegiance AND the club members always sang at least one song every week! I had people sing every week because you got everyone focused for 3-5 minutes doing the same thing as a unified team!

The 4-Way Test was done at every Friday meeting by someone; It might people with red socks on!

I gave out a weekly consolation prize to the ticket winner if they didn’t win the money for the drawing.

The weekly agenda I used was always the same including a Rotary Moment, a thought to Reflect On, and Club Announcements. I gave trivia facts and info every Friday from the Rotarian magazine & calendar and also “What Happened On This Day in History” to keep meetings interesting and meaty. I also reminded club members every Friday what was focused on each month in Rotary and they could find this info in the Rotarian magazine!

Lastly EVERY Program Speaker was given a small “Rotary” gift for being our Friday Program. I felt it was extremely important and respectful to acknowledge and thank people with small Rotary gift as often our Program Speakers have traveled a long way to be our program.

What I Learned as Club President from Our Weekly Meetings:

Be flexible! Pretty much every week I had people wanting to make an announcement about something because they did not get hold of me by “Wednesday Night” like I had asked folks to. My goal was to prepare agenda on Thursday for the Friday meeting but realize folks just forget!

Always be respectful and glad for club member participation! I wanted more Rotary in our club members and there were many times that meetings got a little loud but what I realized when I looked around the room club members were having fun! Goal achieved!

If you are struggling with conducting the weekly meetings seek help from any of our past presidents! We have great members and many have been club president so they know the frustration you might be feeling from time to time and they are more than glad to help.

For my year as president Jim Willems was a true blessing. Jim always had my back on things and would make me aware of anything I needed to know as soon as I got in on Friday. This was one of the biggest gifts I received my year as president and it gave me peace of mind. I also asked three past presidents to be extra eyes and ears for me with the club so if I was missing a beat on something they would tell me and that was Dean Johnson, Tony Banks and Ross Frank. I was very fortunate to have people looking out for the club and me so the year went really well for all of us.

How I Conducted Board Meetings:

Our board meetings were held at the Leavenworth Fire Hall and overall I guess I ran our meetings fairly loose but they were fun and respectful of all who attended and we accomplished a pretty good amount of work that year! I provided cold bottled water July-Sept plus treats at every meeting during the year. At the first board meeting in July I handed out the Board meeting date schedule for 2012-2013 Rotary year so all board members knew the meeting dates.

I did not change meeting dates as I felt consistency was really important. I was lucky events like the District Conference did not conflict with any board meetings. The Board meeting dates were also posted in the weekly newsletter and club members encouraged to attend so they knew what their board was working on!

Other Club Committee Meetings:

I stayed on the Funded Local Project and Membership committees which I had served on for several years. As the club president I rarely attended another committee meeting such as Scholarships, Exchange Student, International, or Programs. This was intentional for a couple of reasons: First I think it is important for committees to work as a committee and the president to not be viewed as micro-managing the committee. In my opinion people need to work and function on a committee with their vision and goals in mind. The other thing I asked of main committees like International, Funded Local Projects and Membership was that they had a monthly meeting schedule, keep to that schedule and publicize that schedule to the membership so that a make up meeting can be done or members can attend a committee meeting to see if they would be interested in joining that committee.

I also did not have time beyond the committees I was already serving on, plus conducting the weekly club meetings and monthly board meetings to attend more club committee meetings. During my year as president all club presidents in Area 6 were expected to attend the quarterly meetings with our Assistant District Governor J.C. Baldwin so we attended a lot of meeting!

PE Committee Meetings/Committee Support:

Being a member of the PE committee was one of the most educational & supportive things for me personally prior to my year, during my year and even after my year as president. This committee was formed as a result of a great idea that Ross Frank had. Ross would be the first one to tell you that as club president “it is your year to serve”, but with that said, we don’t want people by the time they reach the end of their year as club president to feel totally burned out or like they want to go and hibernate like a bear does during the winter! As a past club president I cannot write any words that would be strong enough to emphasize the importance of attending these quarterly meetings in the years prior to your year as club president, during your year as president and the year after your presidency when you will serve as the committee chairperson of this committee for one year. We learn from others what works and what doesn’t and we all need to feel supported when we are in a leadership role. This committee is instrumental in the sharing of information and the supporting of the person who is club president each year.

Other Club Fund-Raisers/PR Exposure We Did:

2012-2013 was the second year that we did the Bavarian Trip Raffle. Bill Forhan came up with this idea his year as president in 2011-2012 and I continue with it. Bill was kind enough to over-see the raffle and we netted approximately \$13,000 this year after expenses. I came up with the idea that we would partner with the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce and give the trip away on the Saturday of Mai Fest week-end. This worked out well benefiting Leavenworth Rotary and the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce for one more thing happening during Mai Fest!

In addition to handing the trip out during Mai Fest, we donated a small amount of money to the Wenatchee Sunrise Club as they were building a Rotary Float. Gary Clooney was kind enough to bring the float to Mai Fest in May, 2013 displaying the float all day on Saturday so this gave some great PR exposure for Rotary overall in our NCW region!

The last fund-raiser we did was the annual Strawberry Sale usually held the latter half of June whereas we are selling 15 lb. buckets of cleaned, cut and no sugar added strawberries that are grown in Mount Vernon, Washington. After expenses we only netted about \$2,000 and it was more than clear to see that club members were tiring of this long-running way of trying to raise funds. Steve Schwind was kind enough to volunteer to over see the event and Mike McCommas again went and got the strawberries in Mount Vernon. We distributed in Leavenworth at Dan’s Market plus also in Chelan at the Chelan Mirror Newspaper and in Wenatchee at the Grocery Outlet.

Events & Trips I Attended:

I was fortunate enough to attend the International Convention in New Orleans in May, 2011 with Bill Forhan and his wife Carol. My husband Charlie and I went plus Liz Saunders and Gary Schuster also attended from our club. Attending this event really connected the dots for me about all the good work Rotary does around the world. When you are able to attend an International Convention you see the totality of Rotary and all that Rotary accomplishes. In February, 2012 I attended Pre PETS training in Ellensburg and in March, 2012 I attended PETS training in Seattle. In May, 2012 I attended the International Convention in Bangkok, Thailand. Attending this convention was just an incredible event and I signed up and became a member of WASRAG (Water and Sanitation Rotary Action Group). In May, 2013 I attended the District Conference in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. Attending a District Conference helps you to see how much gets accomplished by all of the clubs combined in your district and it also serves as a source of great ideas that you might be able to use in your own club.

Fellowships/Events:

Rotary Fest was held in November and Penny Carpenter was kind enough to have the club Christmas Party at her house in December. The setting was of course superb and folks had a great time. We did another fellowship around St. Patty's Day and our annual installation on June 30, 2013. In hind sight I wish we had had more fellowships. Even when there isn't a lot of turn at any one fellowship event it is an opportunity for Rotarians to get together and they do want to fellowship with each other. A few people did get together after every monthly Board meeting and that is something that we should have publicized a little more, so other club members would have known and felt welcomed to attend!

The other thing I would highly recommend is fireside events for newer members. I attended one at Jim Willems house with Bill Forhan. Jim and Liz Saunders were a wealth of information about Rotary overall but most especially about the history of the Leavenworth Rotary Club. These kinds of meetings are absolutely critical for continuity of club history and traditions.