

North Notes

Spokane-North Rotary Club

November 4, 2024

Calendar: (See Club Meetings listings, luncheons are Noon at The Bark unless noted. No meeting on 11/11, Veterans Day.)

Announcements:

- Club President **Melinda Keberle** said, “We still need a president-elect soon, someone to go to PETs training early next year.”
- A subcommittee of the board met Nov. 4 to discuss possible topics for a District grant. Joining **Melinda** were **Nancy Hanson, Lenore Romney, Michelle Fossum, and Chuck Rehberg**. Topics included ideas for an international and/or a local grant, with more discussion to continue.
- Gift tags for the club’s “\$60 for 40” holiday program for needy families at Holmes Elementary School will be available at the Nov. 25 luncheon meeting, when the district governor will be attending.
- A club holiday still is in the planning stage.



Dave and Jerry singing Veterans Day version of America the Beautiful

Tours and activities:

- Club activities chair **Laura Zahn** said “lots of kids” came to the Joya “trunk or treat” Halloween celebration Oct. 30. Laura, Lenore, and Sheila Fritts handed out the treats.
- Only a few members have indicated they would attend a tour of the City of Spokane Wastewater Plant after the Nov. 18 luncheon. Contact Laura or use SignUpGenius.

Happy Bucks:

- **Ron Noble** celebrated his 50th year as a Rotarian.
- On the eve of its first game, **Janine McKorkle** said “Go Zags!”
- **Steve Boharski** was happy to watch an amazing dance troupe.
- **Laura Zahn** was happy that her son is following the RI motto of “service above self.”
- **John Mailliard** was happy for the coincidence this week of his 55th wedding anniversary and anniversaries of his flight medal, and the 240th year of the Marines.
- **Melinda Keberle** was happy that son Landen’s LC Tigers made the playoffs and his tackle was shown in a Spokesman-Review photo.
- **Jerry Logan** was \$2 happy, one for that LC win and another for reaching the age of 76, which, he said, is a typical mortality rate for males.
- **Michelle Fossum** was happy that she and husband Terry had a relaxing stay at the hot springs in Paradise, Mont., to celebrate a birthday.
- **Sheila Fritts** was \$5 happy “to have three visitors on a rainy day.”

Lessons in prison and prison release



Dennis Mossburg

Dennis Mossburg has worked for the prison system for 22 years, far longer than most of the inmates he has worked with.

At the club's Nov. 4 luncheon, Mossburg discussed the categories of criminals and "a focus on prison release."

Mossburg, 53, is a transition and specialist with the Washington State Department of Corrections. He worked at the Airway Heights Correction Center for 17 years and spent three years as a community corrections officer. Now he helps incarcerated individuals plan for release.

During his career, Dennis said he was deployed to the state and nationally to address prison riots, forest fires, volcanoes, hurricanes, and COVID.

Washington prisons now have 13,600 people incarcerated. He said prisons usually house felons, while jails hold others with lesser charges, typically with a year or less to serve.

Mossburg said people often confuse Airway Heights, which has 2,300 offenders, with Geiger Corrections Center, a World War II-style facility.

He said the state has 10 men's and two women's facilities.

With the closing of the Pine Lodge facility in Spokane County, he said it means that family and others may now have to travel across the state to visit inmates.

The Walla Walla Penitentiary, he added, was a territorial facility built in 1886, when residents there picked the prison, rather than building WSU, a land-grant college in Pullman.

Inmates with capital crimes would not be executed, Mossburg said, because the current governor said there would be none in his term and that "the Supreme Court said 'no' even if the governor said yes."

In general, he said, while the Spokane County jail "is a mess," with overcrowding and the state of the facility, "the prison system is pretty good."

Asked about overcrowding, he said, "yes and no." Some prison wings have been closed, but could reopen if needed, he said.

Retention of staff and recruiting has not been a problem, Mossburg said. He added that in Clallam County, though, most workers are either at the prison or work as loggers. And "there are some problems at the Monroe Correctional Complex, especially traffic," he added.

He said pay is good, "based on what may happen and what they have seen, including suicides."

Good mental health treatment, stopping drug use, and finding positive support systems are keys to the path to prison release, Mossburg said. Another key is getting away from "friends." In Spokane, he added, that may simply be moving from the Spokane Valley to the North Side.

“It’s hard to adjust” after incarceration, he said, but organizations help and those like Catholic Charities and the Union Gospel Mission “are all great to work with.”

Mossburg concludes: “If you are looking for prisons to solve your problems, you are looking in the wrong place. It’s a community problem.”

Bulletin editors: Chuck Rehberg and Scott McKorkle. Photos by Janine McKorkle.