*Sent to all Members*

December 29, 2024

Dear {%FName%},

Rotary Minutes are provided by District 6220 Governor Roger Utnehmer (Oot-name-er).

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“In another six months my service as your District Governor will be over.

My hope is that you will judge my leadership on our ability to achieve one goal together. That goal is to build good will and better friendships with our American Indian neighbors.

If Rotary’s Four Way Test can be applied to the challenges that divide non-native and Indigenous communities throughout Wisconsin and Michigan, I will believe that I will have served with a sense of accomplishment.

If I, as District Governor, with my efforts can open hearts and minds and create respectful conversations between non-native and Indigenous Americans, I will have served with a sense of accomplishment.

It will be measured by inducing productive conversations, uncovering service opportunities, and creating a sense of welcome for our Indigenous friends at Rotary clubs throughout the district.

Our American Indian neighbors have lost more than their land. They have been robbed of their language, culture, and independence. They feel mocked by mascots. By listening respectfully to stories of children forced to leave families to attend boarding schools and being punished for speaking their language our hearts may be opened.

Homicide is the third-leading cause of death for Indigenous girls and teens. More than half of American Indians have experienced sexual violence. Their murder rate is three times that of non-Hispanic white women. In 2020, almost 1,500 were recorded as missing in the FBI’s National Crime Information Center, 578 of whom were women.

Without respectful conversations the problems faced by non-natives and Indigenous will never be resolved. Our differences will never be diminished.

Civil dialogue solves problems. May Rotary accept the challenge of being part of the solution to what divides our communities. It is a high and noble challenge.

And it is one for which Rotary is well-equipped to accept.

ROGER UTNEHMER
Rotary District 6220
District Governor 2024-25
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