

Rotary
District 6960



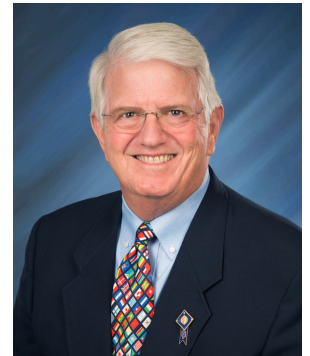
CREATE HOPE
in the WORLD

June 2024

District 6960 Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT GOVERNOR ALFRED CURRENT

Rotarians worldwide celebrate Rotary Fellowships during the month of June. Rotary Fellowships are international groups that share a common passion. Being part of a fellowship is a fun way to make friends around the world, explore a hobby or profession, and enhance your Rotary experience. Rotary Fellowships include groups such as Antique Car Collectors, Coffee Lovers, Military Veterans, Pickleball, and many, many more. Visit Rotary.org/fellowships for more information. If you are involved in a Rotary Fellowship, you may consider showcasing it at our District Conference scheduled for 12-13 July 2024 in the House of Friendship. Contact James Williams, Rotary Club of Punta Gorda (techjunc@gmail.com or (650) 575-9825) for details.



I would like to welcome The Rotary Club of Ave Maria to our District 6960 family. The club was officially admitted as a member of Rotary International on 24 May 2024. PDG Don Thomas, our District 6960 Membership Chair, took the lead from Gerard Sola, our former Membership Chair and soon to be District Governor-Elect, to shepherd this club into being. JD Ribali will serve as its charter president. There are twenty-four (24) charter members that are joining our family to enjoy fun, fellowship, and service. Details for their Charter Night Celebration will be forthcoming.

Other exciting news is that your Rotary District 6960 will start the new Rotary year with a new structure. Our clubs voted to adopt a formal structure, Rotary International District 6960, Inc. and a set of bylaws for our governance. This brings us into compliance with the State of Florida as a not-for-profit corporation. A Board of Directors of 15 voting members shall oversee the business and affairs of the District. The District Finance Committee shall consist of the same individuals as the District Board of Directors. The Bylaws will be made available in DACdb under the public documents section for your convenience and review. The inaugural Board of Directors is announced elsewhere in this newsletter.

Our District Conference Registration is now open on DACdb. Scroll on the 'Calendar' link to 11 July 2024 and click on Register to begin the process. You will notice that all activities and meals are 'à la carte' so you can plan your participation based on availability and budget. Look for additional information in this newsletter. Book your hotel on your own. The links for the hotels with 'favorable pricing' can be found at the bottom of your individual registration page.

Last, but not least, I want to thank Ethan Wolfson, a member of The Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch, for his amazing work as our newsletter editor. It has been my honor to work along side of him this year.

Thank you for doing good in the world

Alfred

Alfred Current, District Governor 2023-24
Rotary International District 6960

2023-24 District 6960
Rotary Foundation Team

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THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

by Jim Hinck, District 6960 Foundation Chair

As we turn the page on the 2023-2024 Rotary year, we can look back with pride as our District 6960 continued the tradition of going above and beyond in our Rotary Foundation giving.

To start, I would like to thank each and every Rotarian in our District for their generosity and continued support of our Rotary Foundation this year. Many thanks go out to my entire Foundation Team! It was a total team effort this year in bringing more education on the various parts of our Rotary Foundation to all in our District. I would like to thank all the clubs that invited our Foundation team members to speak. We received warm welcomes and hospitality during all of our Foundation presentations. The opportunity to be invited and speak at those clubs was a treat and we look forward to visiting even more clubs in the upcoming Rotary year!

In the first half of this Rotary year, the Annual Fund contest brought excitement again to a topic many still know very little about. I am certain that contest brought increased awareness to our grant program. How giving to the Annual Fund provides the fuel or District Designated Funds (\$) which allows us to do good in the world. We do this locally through District Grants and globally through Global Grants. I suspect the Annual Fund contest may make another return in the upcoming Rotary year. Stay tuned!

The Foundation Gala in February was a special night as we celebrated our Rotary Foundation. We welcomed Mark Daniel Maloney, Past Rotary International President and The Rotary Foundation Chair-Elect as our Keynote speaker. Mark was honored to provide an update on our Rotary Foundation and present several presentations to new District 6960 Major Donors as well as new Triple Crown Society members

If by chance any Rotarian still wants to make a gift this Rotary year there is still a little time left. The fastest way is to log onto Rotary.org. It allows you to make a credit card payment in a secured environment. The other way is to send a check payable to the Rotary Foundation, at 14280 Collections Center Drive, Chicago, Illinois, 60693, USA. NOW is the time for any club treasurer or Foundation Chair to send in club money so that your club members will receive the proper credit for this year, if it has not already been sent in. Remember the new Rotary year starts on July 1st.

Thank you again for your generosity this year!

2023-24 District 6960
Membership Team

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Gerard Sola

District Membership New Clubs
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ROTARY MEMBERSHIP

PDG Don Thomas, Membership Chair

On May 24th, a new club chartered in our District - The Rotary of Ave Maria. The Charter President is JD Ribali, Charter President-Elect Jason Kurek and Charter Secretary Nester Levesque. This Rotary club is starting with a total of 24 business owners and community leaders. The club will consist of three former members of Rotary; all three are from outside of our district, and one of the Rotarians comes from the Philippines. That leaves 21 members that have never been Rotarians before.

I have included the email address of the three charter officers, President JD, jd@bizkidusa.org President-Elect Jason, jason@valerieshouse.org and Secretary Nestor, nhl4195@gmail.com.

Please send them an email and congratulate them for working hard to get this club up and running so fast.

We will have a charter night in the near future. I am asking to have the clubs turn out for their charter night and support them. (The date will be determined soon.) I am also asking your club to send their club money or purchase something that will help them to get started.

Presidents-Elect and Club Secretaries: Now is the time to go on myrotary.org and enter your club's information regarding your membership numbers for Rotary year 2024-2025. It is imperative that this information gets to Rotary International.

The clubs with the best net members growth are the Sarasota Southside with a plus 14, Lakewood Ranch and Sanibel-Captiva plus 10, Bonita Springs and Punta Gorda plus 9, Wellen Park plus 7, Marco Island Sunrise plus 6.

PLEASE FINISH STRONG!!!

I want to congratulate DG Alfred on an outstanding year as our Governor. Governor Alfred has shown his great concern and passion for the youth in our district.

Your District 6960 Board of Directors

2024-2025

I am thrilled to announce the very first Board of Directors for Rotary District 6960, a team of exceptional individuals who bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and passion to guide our organization forward into a new era of growth and success.

Each member of our new board brings a unique perspective and set of skills that will undoubtedly enrich our Rotary District 6960 and empower us to achieve our goals. Their diverse backgrounds and collective wisdom will be instrumental in shaping our strategic direction, ensuring accountability, and fostering innovation



Kelsey Mitchell

District Governor
2024-2025

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Kelsey Mitchell

District Governor
2024-25 | [Bio.](#)



Alfred Current

Immediate Past
District Governor 2023-2024



Gerard Sola

District Governor Elect | [Bio.](#)



Dennis Wallace

District Governor Nominee



Richard Hall

District Treasurer | [Bio.](#)



Janet DiBenedetto

Vice Governor | [Bio.](#)



Phil Arnold | [Bio.](#)



John Bodenburg | [Bio.](#)



Susan Courter | [Bio.](#)



Kerri Goldsmith | [Bio.](#)



PDG Rich Kirschner | [Bio.](#)



Don McDonald | [Bio.](#)



Tony Power



PDG Bob Stowell | [Bio.](#)



Joe Timm | [Bio.](#)

Get Ready for the District 6960 Conference!

July 11-14th

We are excited to invite you to the upcoming District 6960 Rotary Conference 2024, which will take place from July 11th to July 14th at the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center located in downtown Punta Gorda on the harbor. This year's conference promises to be a memorable and impactful event, featuring inspiring speakers, valuable breakout sessions, and plenty of opportunities to connect with fellow Rotarians.

One of the highlights of the conferences will be our Casino Night Extravaganza on Friday evening July 12th. Join us for an evening of fun and excitement, complete with a variety of casino games, including poker, blackjack, roulette, and more. Whether you're a seasoned player or a curious novice, this will be a fantastic chance to unwind and enjoy some friendly competition. There will be a photo booth sponsored by the Area 2 Rotary Clubs, which always makes for memorable photos!

An added bonus will be the opportunity to watch as Ashley Spitsnogle, the illustrator of the book, *Josh the Baby Otter*, does a live painting during the evening. She is a spectacular artist from Omaha, Nebraska and we are thrilled to have her join our event!

Please register for the conference on DACdb by Friday July 5th. Hotel reservations can also be made on DACdb. Hotel reservations for the Rotary room block deadlines are as follows:

- **Springhill Suites by Marriott, Punta Gorda Harborside – June 20, 2024**
- **Four Points by Sheraton Punta Gorda Harborside – June 20, 2024**
- **Wyvern Hotel, Punta Gorda – June 12, 2024**
- **Sunseeker Resort, Charlotte Harbor – June 11, 2024**

The conference starts Thursday evening July 11th at 5:00pm with a relaxed and casual gathering at Laishley Park to enjoy a Paella Dinner and fellowship. Registration opens Friday and Saturday mornings at 8:30am – grab a cup of coffee before the Opening Ceremony starts each morning at 9:30am (breakfast is on your own). Enjoy hearing from the following dynamic speakers:

- Our own Past Rotary International Director (PRID) John Smarge
- Rob Raylman, CEO, Gift of Life International
- Ryan Rowe, CEO, HANWASH
- David Behring, President, Wheelchair Foundation
- Tiffany Ervin, Executive Director, The CART Fund (also our conference MC)
- Bill Tobin, Rotary Relations Manager, ShelterBox USA
- Blake Collingsworth, Founder/Director, Joshua Collingsworth Memorial Foundation
- Leslie Glass, President, Reach Out Recovery Services

You will not want to miss Saturday evening's festivities as DG Alfred Current recognizes Clubs and Rotarians for their good works throughout the year. He will then hand off the baton to DGE Kelsey Mitchell. The conference will close with a Polio Walk starting at 9:00am Sunday morning.

We can't wait to see you there for an unforgettable weekend!

Best, Karen Current & Conference Committee

The Rotary Club of Marco Island Noontime Raises over \$75,000 for Heart Surgeries for Children



The Rotary Club of Marco Island Noontime held its annual Spirit Of Marco Island Awards Gala on April 27. Great Gatsby was the theme which was embraced by many attendees who dressed for the occasion. This year's honorees were the Marco Island Historical Society, Jennifer Tenney, Michael Stanczak, and the Marco Island YMCA.

The Gala Team chose to focus on the most populated country in the world, India, and the most vulnerable in that population, the children, with our special call for action. Touching Little Hearts provides heart surgeries to children who would otherwise not survive. The average annual income in India is less than \$400/month USD. 1 in 100 children in India are born with congenital heart disease with less than 2% chance of survival. The surgeries for these children is a matter of life and death. The actual cost of the Surgery is over \$10,000.00 however, thanks to the Generosity of other donors, Rotary International & District Grants, along with hospital contributions, every dollar donated is matched several times toward covering the full cost of the surgery and post op. Therefore a donation of \$2500 saves a child's life.



At the fabulous gala evening, the generosity of over 200 guests raised over \$75,000 saving 30 children's lives. As we all know, Rotary gives ordinary people the power to do extraordinary things because of the power of our network. Together there is no limit to what we can achieve. The Rotary Club of Marco Island Noontime thanks attendees, both club members, guests, and the many volunteers who contributed to saving the lives of these children.

Rotary Club of Fort Myers Sunrise Sets Records

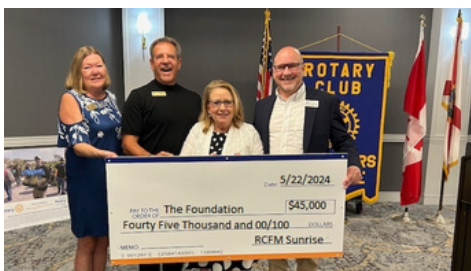
The OneDigital-Sunrise Rotary ProAm Classic is the signature fundraising event of the Sunrise Rotary Club. This year, they set records.

On Friday, May 3 the Fort Myers Sunrise Club hosted their 10th annual "Drive for Education" ProAm Golf Scramble at the Forest Country Club located in south Fort Myers. They welcomed a record number of golfers with 20 foursomes for the morning flight and additional 20 foursomes on the afternoon flight.



In addition to the round of golf, attendees were treated to on course beverages and snacks provided by various sponsors of the tournament, including Millennial Brewing Company. The club also invited golfers and attendees to purchase raffle tickets and bid on silent auction items such as overnight stays in Captiva, golf clubs, Tesla rentals, stunning jewelry and much more. The highlight of the raffles was undoubtedly the wheelbarrow filled with a large variety of spirits and liquor.

OneDigital was the presenting sponsor of the tournament and over 45 additional sponsors participated in the outing through attendance or financial support of the club's mission to support education.



The tournament raised \$158,611 and after expenses of \$34,984, the Sunrise Rotary Club netted \$123,927 for educational programs. At their breakfast meeting on May 22, the club began the fund distribution and presented a \$25,000 check to IMAG as part of a 3-year commitment to the IMAG theater. They also presented a \$45,000 check to the Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, which in turn will be matched by State funding, resulting in a \$90,000 donation to the Foundation.

Rotary Club of Bonita Naples Accepts \$1000 Donation for the Wheelchair Foundation from Naples All Star Events

The Rotary Club of Bonita Naples has proudly accepted a \$1,000 donation from Naples All Star Events for the Wheelchair Foundation, a cause strongly supported by Rotary International. This generous contribution was raised during the Naples All Star Event Legends V at the Hilton Naples in March.

Jim Fabry and Gary Dworkin, members of the Bonita Naples Rotary Club, received the donation check from Michael Byrd, the founder of Naples All Star Events.

The Wheelchair Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness and meeting the needs of individuals with physical disabilities, received a portion of the event's sales. The organization aims to provide wheelchairs to children, teens, and adults worldwide who need one but cannot afford it, bringing them hope, mobility, and independence.



More information about their mission can be found (<https://www.wheelchairfoundation.org>).

"We are extremely grateful for this donation, which will help cover the \$56,000 cost of a wheelchair container," stated Fabry. "Rotary District 6960 clubs from Bonita Springs, Bonita Naples, Naples, Estero & Charlotte Harbor and the Kiwanis Club of El Salvador contributed \$28,000, which was matched by the Wheelchair Foundation." Each container holds 280 wheelchairs, significantly improving the lives of the recipients and their families by providing much-needed mobility and easing the burden of care.

To date, the Wheelchair Foundation has distributed over 1.5 million wheelchairs worldwide. Byrd strongly supported the Wheelchair Foundation, acknowledging it as a worthy cause and expressing his hope to continue donating annually.

Rotary Clubs worldwide, including the Bonita Naples Rotary Club, support the Wheelchair Foundation and other local and global charities.



2024 Lemon Bay Sunrise Rotary Scholarship Awards

This May, the **Rotary Club of Lemon Bay Sunrise** gave \$67,000 to local high school seniors to further their education. The Lemon Bay Sunrise Rotary Scholarship Trust was established in 1992 with contributions received as tax deductible gifts and become corpus (principal/investments) of the Trust since no gift received is allowed to be spent. All gifts are invested, only the income generated is available for scholarships on an annual basis. The LBSR Board of Directors are the Trustees and Cliff Gielow is the Trust Manager. The Scholarship Committee is responsible to select the graduates from applications received. The Trust has given over \$1,094,000 in scholarships since its inception.