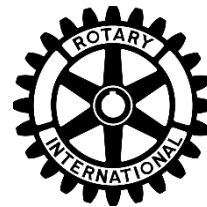


The Peal

Rotary Club of Canandaigua



Meeting Thursdays 12:15 p.m.
American Legion Post #256
454 North Main Street

www.canandaiguarotary.org
Club # 4765, District 7120
Organized Apr. 24, 1919

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Official Newsletter of the Canandaigua Rotary Service Foundation

Today's Program: Matt Parsons - Parsons Organ Company & Building Organs

Next Week: Jenny Goodemote – Wood Library Annual Update

Meeting Notes from: April 9, 2026

Pledge: Kent Gilges

Invocation: Margie LaTourette - Desiderata

Song: Sean Buck – Rotary Anthem

Guests: Chris O'Donnell (guest of **Rocco Pietropaolo**), Josephine Sita (guest of **Peter Wolak**), Jason Richards (VA Hospital Veteran's Outreach Coordinator)

Visiting Rotarians: Gareth Evans.

Announcements: President **Kent Gilges** reported the following Board meeting activity: we are actively looking for a 'Facebook Guru' to assist in amping up our social media presence, it was mutually decided to not participate in a Bingo night event with the Legion, and the Uganda nutrition project is well on its way to achieve full funding. He also explained the reasons the club dues will rise in the coming year. Individual dues will be \$195 and corporate dues \$290 for the 2026-2027 Rotary year. A quarterly and semi-annual payment plan will also be available for an additional \$5 per payment to cover administrative costs. **Kathi Nevin** announced her Light Hill Walk-a-thon team is close to raising their goal funds to qualify for the club's 2 for 1 match up to \$2500. **Greg Gullo** reminded us of the annual Arbor Day tree-bagging event will be at his house (3740 West Lake Road) on 4/16, starting at 5:30pm.

Happy Dollars / Fines: **Paul Harvey** was notified of his appointment as 'Optometrist of the Year' by the New York State Optometric Association following in the footsteps of his brother who was a prior recipient of the same award. **Dave Korpiel** was happy he had the winning score combination for the Superbowl pool

back in February. **Kathleen Draper** reported on the improving condition of **Jodi Kaufman**.

Program: Name: Gina Deck – Veteran's Administration Serenity Garden



The VA is an integrated healthcare system. They are renovating that facility so they can bring back more veterans again whose primary issues are homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

There are 3 pillars to their programs: volunteerism, donations, and community partnerships

Historically, the VA was built as a therapeutic farm. There were pigs, livestock, greenhouses, and orchards. Today they want to be able to have and maintain it as safe place for veterans, where the focus is on quality of life in a safe, serene environment for healing.

Veterans don't come to the V.A. because they're feeling great. They come because they need us. They need some support and to have a safe space that's outside of the norm.

A beautiful residential neighborhood, environment for the veterans is being developed, where they can reside, have their own kitchens and their own bathroom. And they're able to enjoy this oasis in the Serenity Garden.

The Serenity Garden was established approximately 40 years ago. It is located in the center of our courtyard, and it lies within the VA Grounds, where our former domiciliary is located.

It's a very large garden, somewhere around 4000 square feet. During COVID, it got a little neglected. But post-COVID, Dave Hutchings, and they came together. They walked through the 'jungle'. Dave said, "I think we need a new blueprint". And the VA answered, "where do we start?"

Together with Sonnenberg resources were identified. A new blueprint was created that would have more symmetry within the garden space and make it more manageable. Sections were designed for annual maintenance by volunteer groups, and to make it manageable so its beautiful legacy of being an oasis that people counted on for their mental health could be carried on.

You will find veterans sitting with loved ones, maybe family members grieving over a loss on our hospice unit. You will find volunteers escorting veterans around the garden walks around the paths. Maybe they're even getting their hands in dirt, picking out a couple of weeds. Maybe they're doing a peaceful meditation. Sometimes there is a musician in the garden playing music.

There's a lot going on over at VA. The gardens are an adjunct to the residences being developed for the veterans. They're building many cottages because all of our veterans, within probably a year and a half, will be moving out into the mini cottages.

Part of that focuses on the veteran being at the center, and the things that a veteran will need to maintain their mental health, their spiritual health, their physical health. Gardening and horticulture falls in that category too.

We do rely solely on volunteers to maintain the garden. We are able to partner with our ground crew and provide different tools and equipment, so people of all physical abilities are able to participate. We've got stools and scooters and adaptive equipment.

This is where we have a call for action. We want to come together and we're asking you come in and get your hands dirty in the garden.

There are so many beautiful health benefits to giving back in this way, personally for mental health, the health in your community, your physical health.

The next opportunity is April 30 at 1:30

Joker Draw: **Nancy Stelnyk** drew the 8 of clubs. **George Herren** won the 50/50 of \$13 and donated it the Holiday Cheer fund orchestrated by **Preston Pierce**

Upcoming Rotary Events: **District Conference – May 1-3, 2026**

Holiday Valley Mountain and Conference Center, Ellicottville, NY.

Join Rotarians from across District 7120 as we **Unite for Good** during a powerful weekend filled with fellowship, leadership, and inspiration. Set in the beautiful Holiday Valley, this event is an exceptional opportunity to come together, strengthen our community, and engage new ideas.

Sign up at:

rotary7120.myeventscenter.com/event/2026-District-7120-Conference-122301