

Lafayette Today

March 2009

Serving the Lafayette Community

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Prospers, Contributes to Community

By Tom Black

Rotary International is represented by local clubs in towns large and small across the nation. More-populous cities have multiple clubs. Lafayette ranks among few cities its size – roughly 24,000 – to boast not one but two clubs.

The senior of the pair is The Rotary Club of Lafayette. Founded in 1946, it meets Thursdays at noon at the Oakwood Athletic Club. The junior is The Rotary Club of Lamorinda Sunrise (LSR), established in 1987. (The



Roughly half of the 48 members of the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary pose for a picture after their weekly breakfast meeting at Postino restaurant in Lafayette.

word “Sunrise” indicates that its weekly meetings are conducted over breakfast. Thus members need not interrupt the business day.)

Rotary International (RI), headquartered outside Chicago, has 33,000 affiliate clubs in some 200 countries; total membership worldwide exceeds 1.2 million.

Like all local Rotary clubs, LSR is entirely self-sustaining; it receives no monetary support from RI. Membership dues and proceeds from a variety of annual fundraisers fully fund general operations and service endeavors.

Although service organizations in general are struggling to maintain healthy membership levels, not so with LSR. With a headcount of 48 active members – including two newly inducted last month – it is very much alive and well. One distinguishing feature of LSR lies in the demographic mix and relative youthfulness of members.

“Many not familiar with our club,” said sitting president Pat Flaharty, “assume we’re a bunch of retirees looking for some way to kill time. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some of our members are in their thirties. We also have a sizeable number of women as members.” (Rotary clubs worldwide have been admitting women since the 1980s.)

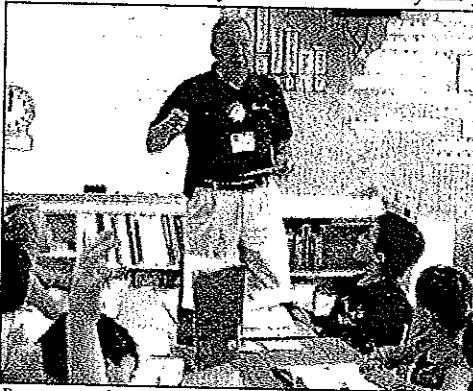
“Of course we socialize,” he added, “but we are primarily hands-on in our approach to tangibly aiding the local community. Year after year, there’s plenty of sweat equity reflected in our service projects. We prefer not to write no-sweat checks.”

This year LSR’s signature hands-on project, *Pat Flaharty* in partnership with Lafayette Tree and Landscape, entailed relandscaping the main building at Las Trampas, a Lafayette-based nonprofit dedicated to enriching the lives of developmentally disabled adults. The total shared cost was approximately \$9,000.

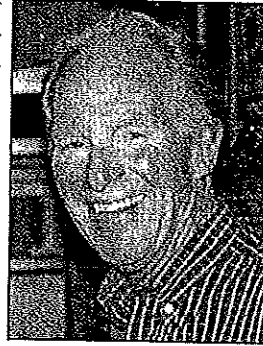
“Every year we try to accomplish at least one major community service project,” said Flaharty.

Two years ago, LSR – likewise partnering with Lafayette Tree and Landscape – invested roughly \$2,500 in the construction of a walkway from the south parking lot at the Lafayette Community Center on St. Mary’s Road to the then-newly built Petanque court. A bronze plaque on a large rock along the path commemorates the feat.

The principal ongoing local service program entails annual distribution of personal copies of a children’s dictionary to every third-grader in each of Lafayette’s four public elementary schools. The outlay this year ran close to \$5,000.



Rotary member Walt Nelson explains to pupils at Happy Valley School how to use the children’s dictionaries



In addition, LSR has a history of extending a helping hand to the needy in foreign lands. Several years ago, it fully underwrote construction of a much-needed pedestrian bridge in a remote community of Tanzania.

The member who spearheaded that effort, Joanne Luscher, a past president, said she joined the club “as a way to participate in the community. The personal rewards I reap by helping others, both locally and globally, are immeasurable.”

LSR meets Fridays at 7^{am} at Postino restaurant, 3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Guests are always welcome. Learn more about the club at www.lamorindasunrise.org.



Rotary member Ernie Furtado carves donated pumpkins with children at the Garden Park Apartments in Pleasant Hill.

Other programs include:

- Sponsorship of a Rotary foreign exchange student attending Acalanes High School.

- Sponsorship of Interact, its high-school club counterpart at AHS.

- Co-sponsorship of the annual Three-Quarter Century Club luncheon, which honors local residents 75 years of age or older.

- Monetary and hands-on contributions to the Contra Costa Food Bank.