

Rotary Club sets course for community involvement

Joe Awad
Harrison Press Editor
jpresseditor@cincinnati.rr.com

What began as a business club about 15 months ago has blossomed into the Greater Harrison Rotary Club with the focus on helping the community and its residents.

The fledgling group meets weekly at the Harrison Perkins to plot its direction, which is beginning to take shape.

The Rotary has formed an informal partnership with Love, Inc., which is Greater Harrison's local clearinghouse to help people in need of food, clothing, utility bill payments, furniture and medical expenses.

The Rotary will make a financial contribution to Love, Inc.'s annual golf outing Saturday, July 7, probably through money raised at a door-prize bidding booth. Members also will play in the outing, said club president Rich Eyerman, West Harrison.

"We wanted to do something for the community. ... It just naturally went in that direction," said Eyerman, Amerifirst Home Mortgage, Lawrenceburg.

"When we shifted to Rotary, there was much more satisfaction with helping others. It has impacted me a lot. It made me feel good, and I feel that way about the others too."

The Rotary, which now has 20 members, is looking for about five more charter members ASAP, so it can become a Rotary chapter. The group now is sponsored by the Cincinnati Rotary, said Eyerman.

That formality, however, has not stopped members from selecting the Kid's Cafe as one of the primary projects they intend to help fund.

Kids Cafe, which has 20 locations in the Tri-State, provides free, hot, after-school meals to youths who might otherwise go hungry.

Children also participate in recreational activities, get help with school work, and are mentored by adults.

There are more than 1,500 cafe sites in America serving 122,000 kids annually. Cincinnati's first cafe took hold in 1996.

The Rotary also has formed an alliance with the Veterans of Foreign Wars Duwell Post 7570. The Rotary intends to

make a contribution through a split-the-pot game at the Post's August cruise-in. Two Post leaders, Paul Hilmer and Commander Jack Long, are in the Rotary.

Meanwhile, the club is looking to the Fairfield Rotary for guidance and advice. In a city similar in size to Harrison, the Fairfield gang is extremely active and successful, said Eyerman.

"They go out in a bunch of different directions, and help the community in a ton of different ways. We hope to learn from them, see what has worked best for them, to help make our road a little less bumpy," he said.

The Thursday breakfast meeting also is a hubbub of laughter and bantering, but no one misses a business networking opportunity.

Each member is required to give a 30-second presentation weekly. Members talk about causes they possibly can support, project ideas, and their products and services.

Keith Froschauer, Krieg Press, Dent, plugged his business, which is producing the Rotary's information folder. Donna Metzger, The Harrison Press, talked about great deals coming up in the paper's special sections, and Gary Nelson, Prudential, distributed copies of a periodic table of investment returns, with advice about diversification over the long haul.

The club also features a weekly speaker, either a member or guest, who gives a 10-minute presentation on business or a cause.

Rotary members also are keen on helping the Southwest Local School District during these challenging times, and moved meeting with Superintendent Chris Brown and principals to the top of their list.

After an extensive amount of information was bantered about, Froschauer suggested the club publish a monthly newsletter.

"We do," came a voice from someone seated at the horseshoe-shaped table. "We just don't do it with you," which got a big laugh in between bites of egg sandwiches and gulps of coffee.

The tone grew more serious when group co-founder Rick Niklas, West Harrison, talked about the Rotary becoming involved with his company's golf outing to award a scholarship in connection with the battle against cystic fibrosis.



PHOTO BY JOE AWAD/HARRISON PRESS

Members of Harrison's new rotary club are, front row, from left: Frank Dipuccio, Dipuccio Auto Service; Bill Jackson, William Jackson CPA; Mark Katenkamp, Markamp Electric; Rich Eyerman, Amerifirst Mortgage; Garry Nelson, Prudential Financial. Middle: Donna Metzger, The Harrison Press; Dennis Bischoff, Bischoff Realty; Rick Niklas, HTT Insurance Agency; Howard Rechel, BHC Development; Gwen Hessler, Miami Savings Bank; Bob Whalen, Whalen Auto Body. Back: Pat Conners, First Title Co; Jack Long, Harrison VFW 7570; Paul Hilmer, Harrison VFW 7570; Keith Froschauer, Krieg Press. Not pictured: Jeff Diersing, Guardian Protection Services; Don Rechel, Rechel Communications; Bob Seeger, Seeger Glass; Stevie Nowlin, Nowlin Plumbing.

Over nine years, the company has raised \$50,000 in memory of Niklas' two nephews who died of CF before age 30. The event is slated for Tuesday, Sept. 25, at Circling Hills Golf Course in Harrison.

"It's a fun outing, and good therapy for my sisters and brother-in-laws," said Niklas.

Most of the members have joined through friendships and business relationships, said Eyerman, who is anxious to build the Harrison Rotary Club into a 50-member group that will leave its mark on the community.

For more information, call Eyerman at 812-221-4270.