



Rotary Club of Santa Rosa West

Bulletin for January 19, 2009 Methamphetamines in Sonoma County

By Chuck Stark

Preliminaries



President Dave called the meeting to order declaring that this was the "fun club that gets things done!" This is now in addition to our Santa Rosa West being the "go to" club and the "cool" club. Casey Williams led the membership in the Pledge of Allegiance and also gave the Rotary moment that volunteers are important to our country, both before and after 9/11, and that it is not the government that creates civic spirit. This was a quote from our illustrious former president, George W. Bush.

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Coming Up:

1/26 - Sonoma County
Transportation Authority,
Suzanne Smith

2/2 - Sonoma Land Trust, John
Brosnan

2/9 - Jerry Meshalum, Rotoplast

2/16 - Dark

2/23 - Renata Billinger, Climate
Protection Campaign

Yours truly (**Past President Chuck Stark '00-'01**) was introduced as the pinch-hit newsletter writer for the day without any applause. No loss there, but the cost of being such a volunteer comes with editorial privilege. During the meeting, and thinking back since, I am increasingly disturbed by the failure to even mention either the name or legacy of Martin Luther King once, even during a Rotary meeting held on his national holiday, and especially so, after the fulfillment of Dr. King's dream in the Obama election. This is not the first year our club has failed to meet its own four way test on MLK day, but I pray it is the last. *(And your Editor seconds that as well! After all, it took me almost my entire lifetime to convince the right people that we should have a National Holiday (MLK Day) on my birthday.....of course then they went and screwed that up by deciding that just like other important days of commemoration, that we should do that on.....some other random day, instead of on January 15th, his actual birthday @ !)*

Announcements & Such

Bill Dodson announced that the live auction is already set and the program is ready for printing.



Bob Zeni reported that we only have 15 tickets left, plus any previously distributed tickets that are yet unsold.

Susan Nowacki indicated that we have approximately 100+ silent auction prizes, but can still use more.

Ginny Pitts announced that the social committee will meet next Wednesday at her home, and that the club monthly happy hour would be January 20, 2009, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Portofino, with appetizers provided. (This was subsequently moved to the Cantina.)



President Dave announced that the Sonoma County Association of Rotary Clubs meeting will be held January 29, 2009 in Petaluma at Mr. McGoo's Restaurant and that Santa Rosa West will be hosting the SCARC meeting on March 26, 2009 at our normal meeting place at St. Rose Business Center. He asked for volunteers to put together a meaningful program while hosting the 17 Sonoma County club presidents, secretaries and invited guests. All Santa Rosa West members are encouraged to attend that meeting as well.

NEW MEMBER: **Chris Lapore** was introduced by **Casey Williams** as a guest and prospective member.

President Dave, in recognition of our long history, announced that he would periodically have long-standing members present recycled craft talks. He called upon **Bill Fisher** who explained that he lived in the orient until the Second World War, leaving Hong Kong in 1938 and moving to Santiago Chile and then Rio de Janeiro for four years. He graduated from Santa Rosa High School in 1946 and attended the Santa Rosa Junior College, where he was a star sprinter and was recently installed in the J.C. hall of fame. He commuted to UC Berkeley, and gave up graduate school to help with the family business. He noted in his commute that the Richmond San Rafael Bridge did not then exist and he had to take the ferry to Berkeley. He has managed the Culligan Water Company since 1956 and has had perfect attendance since he was our charter president in 1965.



Recognition

Jim Sullivan, Phil Talamantes, Chuck Olson and Pete Lamonica were each recognized for \$20 for their camaraderie while golfing badly in Kona.



BRAGGING BUCKS

Bragging bucks were offered by **Gil Lucas**, who announced that his daughter recently graduated from CSUSF in

computer science and was employed with Agilent.

Louis Capuano contributed that he had his entire family, including grandkids, at Cancun over the holidays and his only difficulty was arranging dinner reservations for a table for 15.

Fred Zmarzly recently visited his son in Los Angeles and his 3-½ year old granddaughter while also doing some business with a wine representative.



Ken Dansie once again demonstrated his unique British humor by bragging about his visit to his elite North Carolina vacation home only to have a tooth abscess upon arrival and a root canal upon his return home to Santa Rosa. All the members shared the pain with Ken on that story.



Phil Talamantes spent Christmas Day with his grandkids at Disney World and had his face painted as an eagle. We're hoping that there will be a photo to follow.

Raffle

There are 18 marbles, with the black marble worth \$425. Winnie Sipe drew the cats eye and **Bob Zeni** obtained a bottle of Albertina wine.

Program: Methamphetamines in Sonoma County, Deputy Public Defender John Abrahams

Deputy Public Defender **John Abrahams** presented a very interesting program regarding methamphetamines in Sonoma County. He works with 34 other attorneys and has thousands of cases. He has been in law practice since 1984 and has been a deputy public defender since 1991. The P.D.'s office handles criminal, elderly, mentally disabled and juvenile clients. John is the chair of the Sonoma County Task Force on Drug Abuse, which has played a very important role locally and nationally, since Valerie Brown is presently the president of the National Association of Counties.



John explained that methamphetamine is a stimulant that is two times more powerful than amphetamine, which has legitimate uses for weight reduction, alertness in the military, and cold remedies. He explained that in addition

to the societal costs of the abuse of methamphetamine, there are also tremendous environmental health hazards caused by the manufacturing because of the toxic chemical byproduct of the manufacture of methamphetamine.

It is very quickly addictive, with 47% of first time users becoming addicted. The use pattern is very different than other drugs and its effect is toxic to the brain. Heavy users can be recognized by extreme weight loss, tooth decay, prenatal cardiovascular disease and anxiety and psychosis.

In 1994 there were 526 hospital admissions in Sonoma County as a result of methamphetamine usage. The cost of usage in 2004 was estimated at \$600,000. The drug now extends to the 18-25 age group and is primarily used in the 25-35 year age group, where there is a coincidence of crime along with the drug usage, which has steadily increased since the 1990s. 11th graders in Sonoma County use twice as much methamphetamine as the national average and three times as much in the high-risk youth category. 34% of homeless people report previous usage.



13 years ago Sonoma County established a drug court primarily because of the explosion of methamphetamine use and manufacture here, while 10 years ago methamphetamine usage was unheard of on the East Coast. There has been a decrease over the last few years because it is more difficult to get the ingredients to manufacture. However, the manufacturing process is simple enough that enterprising manufacturers can produce several ounces in 24 hours in a motel room, which then is left as a toxic waste dump. On the other hand, the primary production is now in super labs in Mexico where the chemicals are more readily available and smuggled to the United States. Sonoma County is a major distribution point to the entire northwest and Western United States. Methamphetamine usage is now also related to other crimes, particularly identity theft, domestic violence and other violent crimes because of its affect on the brain.

The courts cannot even deal with a methamphetamine user until the user is first detoxed. Drug treatment in Sonoma County costs \$14,000,000 per year, and 50% of those patients are on methamphetamine. There are other unknown but significant costs as a result of absenteeism at work, with the family, and the toxic exposure. Drug treatment does work, but for methamphetamines it needs to be more intense and longer. After a two-year follow-up, 60% of the addicts remained clean and sober. John's task force identified that 412 people need treatment, but do not have access to it on any given day in Sonoma County. Treatment either needs to be paid for privately as insurance is extremely rare and thus the best ticket to treatment is to commit a crime and have the criminal justice system pay for the treatment.

Obviously, the task force is advocating for prevention, dealing both with the demand for the drug and the availability of the drug. Drug usage is related to latch-key children between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. and the often-resulting gang involvement. The task force made their report to the Board of Supervisors in July, 2006, urging "upstream investment" in prevention before the commission of crime. Those recommendations are now competing with all other budget conflicts. The entire report and more information are available on the Sonoma County Department of Health Services Website.

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