

The Rotarygram



Rotary Club of Van Nuys

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Club 724 — District 5260

January 26, 2005

Meeting Highlights



John Schroeder, right, and Program Chair Cherie Spamer,

Thirty-six years in the education field have given our speaker, John Schroeder, a broad understanding of the what's going on in our public schools. Schroeder is Director of Elementary Schools for Region 1 of LA Unified Schools, with 20 schools under his supervision. In his years with the District, he has been a classroom teacher, school principal and worked on the State committee for charter schools among other assignments.

Schroeder pointed out that with 746,000 students, the LA public school district has 1% of all the K-12 students in the US...a huge district. Over the last several years, LA has seen test scores go up with improved academic performance. Some schools are achieving excellent performance levels, such as Balboa Magnet which ranks 4th in California.

Overcrowding is being alleviated with the addition of 40 new schools in the district this year. This will allow most schools now on a year-round schedule to return to the summer vacation for all students and kindergarten to go to full-day rather than half-day.

Further improvement is the transition to hiring only credentialed teachers and instituting requirements for students to reach specific standards before being allowed to graduate from high school.

Ahead, there are still many hurdles that public education faces:

- Federal standards that mandate 100% of students to be functioning at grade level by 2013
- A gender gap in public schools — we're seeing many more boys dropping out, filling our prisons and needing special education, while there are many more girls going on to college
- Charter schools drawing the higher performing students
- Need for early education — "1st Five" — pre-school kids do better at all levels.

There is no single issue in education today, everything is connected...for the schools and for our society. A very thought-provoking presentation. Thanks, Cherie, for bringing this great program!

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

-- Alan Kay, Inventor

Student Recognition



Honorees today were from Van Nuys High School. Each honoree is awarded a Commendation Certificate from the Rotary Club of Van Nuys and a \$50 US Savings Bond.

Pictured above left, are Club President, Carlos Rivera, joined by Nilsson Ramirez, Bilingual Coordinator, and honorees Leonor Henriquez and Delia Gutierrez, and Victoria Castillo, our Student Recognition Chair.

Visitors

Rotarians:

- Tom and Lynne Harris, Kerry Beal and Harley Malloy from the provisional Frasier Park Club.
- Matt Schaaf from Woodland Hills, Chair of District 5260 RYLA.

Guests:

- Ed Anderson introduced Paul Yen.
- Dan Tate from Frasier Park.

Announcements

- Matt Schaaf put forth all the great reasons to encourage applications for this years' RYLA camp to be held March 4-6. See Hot Dates on page 4.
- Ken Benson gave an impassioned 3-minute pitch on "Why I Like Rotary."
- Remember Bob Rice, in rehab (physical); Major Julie Beauchamp, recovering from surgery; Don Stout's son, a LAPD officer, recovering from injuries sustained in the Tuesday morning train crash in Glendale.
- Jim Sullivan heralded the upcoming blood drive, painting the Tierra del Sol building and a new 'Van Nuys Rotary Avenue of Service.'
- Leo O'Biecunas was selling 'opportunities' to fund the Super Bowl pool and announced that our computer literacy project needs an Internet connection.

The Spotlight's On...

CHERIE SPAMER



Cherie Spamer likes to compare her job as principal of Cohasset Street Elementary School to that of a symphony conductor. "It as if I'm the conductor of the philharmonic," she says. "I have the teachers, the parents, the support staff and, of course, the children, and we're all playing the same tune. We are all dedicated to instruction."

A Denver, Colorado native, Cherie started on the road to teaching when she grew bored with her life and went back to school. She had married a physician a year out of high school with dreams of being a stay-at-home wife. She soon found she needed more, she recalls, and began investing in real estate and taking classes to pursue her education. After 7 ½ years, she had earned her bachelor's degree, was collecting rent from four houses and had given birth to two children – daughter Melissa and son Luis.

The family moved to Los Angeles in 1975 when her husband opened a private practice in Gardena. Cherie continued going to school, investing in real estate and raising her family. Within two years, she earned a Master's Degree in Education with an administrative credential from UCLA and a second Master's Degree in Computer Science from Pepperdine. She and her first husband also divorced.

Cherie's second husband, Eugene Barnett, was also a physician and an international speaker, she says, and the family traveled all over the world until he passed away.

In between trips, Cherie was a classroom teacher who taught all grades and mentored new teachers as a demonstration master teacher before leaving the classroom in 1989. She then served as a literacy coach, a Title I and Bilingual Coordinator and assistant principal of Rosemont Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles before being chosen to head Cohasset Street Elementary School in Van Nuys.

With 50 teachers and 900 students to lead, Cherie works up to 12 hours a day and takes work home, too. "I purposely waited to go into administration until my kids were raised," she says about the long hours. "I'm highly computer literate and highly organized, and that's half the battle," she adds.

On her watch, student scores at Cohasset have risen from an API of 436 to the latest API of 717 – a phenomenal growth, she says, considering the 27 languages and 32% transience rate at Cohasset. She attributes the higher scores to her teachers' dedication and to LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer's decision to bring in the Open Court reading program and teacher training. "We used to have seven different reading programs," she says, "It's a tremendous boost to have just one. We are standardizing so many things in the district and now know that all children have access to the core curriculum."

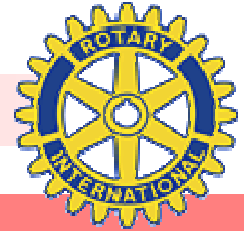
Cherie also believes the activities and safe, secure environment at Cohasset support student learning. She and her teachers have started several new programs, including science and art fairs, multiplication and spelling bees, a child author fair and a huge math and literacy night for families.

Cherie feels blessed to be at Cohasset and to work with the teachers and parents to educate children. "It's a very nice place to be," she says. "It is such a joy to see children grow and change," she adds. "They're doing so well."

When she's not working, Cherie enjoys relaxing with needlepoint in her Brentwood home that she shares with her mother. She's proud, too, of her children. Her son, Luis — also a real estate investor — lives in Phuket, Thailand and her daughter, Melissa, is a talent agent who just returned from the Golden Globe Awards and is headed off to the Sundance Film Festival. She doesn't see as much of her children as she might wish, she says. "I have no one to blame but myself," she adds with a laugh, "for taking them all over the world when they were young."

"It is such a joy to see children grow and change."

"Service Above Self"



Rotary Club of Van Nuys

Upcoming Programs

- Feb. 2 **Burma-Shave Signs** — Don Durkee will fill us in on how this '50s advertising innovation entertained and sold shaving cream...**and there will be a mini car show in the parking lot!**
- Feb. 9 **Valentine's Day Luncheon** — Bring your sweetheart(s) to celebrate. Joe DiFatta promises music and fun! Sign-up with Barb Baerg right away.
- Feb. 16 **LAPD Ed Davis Training Center** — Officer Michael Dutton, Facilities Management Unit, will give us his insider's view.
- Feb. 23 **Elmer Jordan, Past RI Director**, will talk about **100 Years of Rotary**. To be held at the Airtel Plaza Hotel.



President Carlos has declared that February (the month Rotary was founded) will be "100 % Attendance Month" for Van Nuys. He urges every Rotarian to be at every meeting in February! (If you can't make it on Wed., do a make-up.)

BIRTHDAYS

- Jan. 29 Vickie Smith
- Feb. 3 Ruben Corona
- Feb. 4 Marsha DiFatta
- Feb. 10 Dan Schlick
- Feb. 13 Leslie Cordaro
- Feb. 13 Molly Winnick

HOT DATES

- April 23 **25th Annual Van Nuys Invitational Track Meet** at Birmingham High School. Victory Blvd. at Woodley.
- May 19-23 District Conference, Doral Resort Hotel in Palm Springs.
- March 4-6 RYLA — get all the info on the web at <http://www.rotary5260.org/ryla/>
- June 18-22 RI Centennial Convention, Chicago, IL Celebrating 100 years of Rotary!

We're on the web! VanNuysRotary.org

Rotarygram Staff

Publisher: Guy Mangia Optimumdentistry@aol.com
Editor: Don Reinken don@reinken.com
Reporters: Guy Mangia, Barbara Baerg
Photographer: John Alexander

Club Officers

President: Carlos Rivera burimex@aol.com
Pres. Elect: Barbara Baerg barbaerg@pacbell.net
Secretary: Ken Benson kjb028@earthlink.net
Treasurer: Peter Satuloff peter.satuloff@asmmcpa.com