

Rotary News, September 13, 2021, Submitted by Charles Ofstein

President Sid Ellis called our meeting to order at approximately 12:15 PM. The club opened with a rendition of the star-spangled banner. Our invocation was presented by Past-President Seth Weeldreyer, while arts news was presented by Rotarian Dann Systma. Please support our local arts community as we recover from the pandemic. Information about all current arts events can always be found at <https://www.kalamazooarts.org/>.

Visiting Rotarians included District Governor 6360 Nominee Sharalyn Davis (Cereal City Sunrise). There were no guests this week.

Announcements:

- Per President Sid, the club is still working on a permanent venue for in-person meetings.
- Per Kevin Garrison, the Career Connections committee is ramping up. If you are interested, please contact Kevin.

Happy Bucks!

- Amy Remmert recently survived a trip to Texas.
- Charlie Ofstein recently survived a trip to the Big House with three teenagers.
- Jim Cupper contributed to honor Amy Remmert and Rick Briscoe for their recent hard work on club activities.

Presentation:

Rotarian Christina Dorett introduced our speaker, Marcy Peake. In addition to being affiliated with Western Michigan University as the Director of Diversity and Community Outreach Initiatives in the College of Human Education and Development, she is the founder of the Center for Cultural Agility. She has the pleasure and joy of working with young people every day.

Marcy described to us a day in the life of a teenager in Kalamazoo. She noted that the world no longer “goes to sleep” for our youth. It is therefore up to the adults to intervene in their lives in a positive way. She gave examples of positive interactions. She described their almost immediate effect on youth.

Marcy identified logos and stereotypes that every teenager must face every day. She identified, through her own experience, a stereotype of her that did not fit. She encouraged us to look beyond stereotype to the person within for each encounter.

Per Marcy, “leaders are not born, they are made.” It is up to us, as leaders in our community, to nurture the young leaders through our interactions. We should stop expecting everything to work immediately. Our persistence will pay off.

Scott is the Chief Executive Officer of Residential Opportunities, Inc. He joined "ROI" in 1983. He has been the organization's CEO since 1988.

Scott began his presentation with a brief history of ROI. The non-profit began in 1978 as an outgrowth of a community centered planning process focused on transitioning individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities from regional institutions into the community at large. The organization now provides services for individuals with all types of disabilities, with a strong focus on specialized residential and affordable rental housing.

It took three decades, but ROI now serves 600 people annually. Their areas of focus remain with specialized residential housing and affordable rental housing. But they also service individuals needing assistance with supported living alternatives, Representative Payee services, and autism services.

After a brief video presentation, Scott updated the club on ROI's current initiatives and its status during the COVID-19 pandemic. Per Scott, ROI's staffing shortages mirror the current state of the economy. Employment is down to 350 from a peak of 450 pre pandemic. The shortages effect the services that ROI can offer. The non-profit has recently announced a wage increase to pick up their staffing numbers.

Scott then took questions on the state of his non-profit. ROI's good work continues! Their success and their challenges can be found online at:

<https://www.residentialopportunities.org/>