

23 July 2020

**Rotary Club of Punta Gorda**

#4337 District 6960  
Chartered April 22,1925  
P.O. Box 511132  
Punta Gorda, FL. 33951-1132  
Puntagordarotary.org



**THE COG**  
**ROTARY CLUB OF PUNTA GORDA, FL**  
**ZOOM & IN PERSON MTGS: Thursday at 12 Noon**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday – 10 AM Club Board Meetings**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday - 8 AM PG Rotary Charity & Education Foundation Board meetings**



Now that 99 percent of the world's population lives in regions certified polio-free, the goal of eradication is closer than ever. [Endpolio.org](http://Endpolio.org)

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**

- July 23** James Parish – GM Punta Gorda Airport (Isles and Zoom)
- July 30** Mayor Nancy Prafke – (Isles and Zoom)
- August 6** Newer member Classifications: Peter Wilkins, Terry Cole, and John House
- August 13** Rex Koch – The unique situation of having a Rotary Club and a Rotary Foundation

**Please be sure to text 303-927-9437** if you are planning to attend our Club meeting in person at the Isles YC. **Walk-ins will not be allowed** because the IYC needs to prepare the meals in advance.

Last week we had 13 members for lunch and 13 “Zoomers.”

Happy/Sad and Birthday dollars will be donated this month to CART (Alzheimer’s).

Disaster Recovery Plan – please respond to the request for the contact form to be completed and returned. This request will come via email. We will be collecting information on each Club member so that our Club’s Disaster Relief Committee can contact you, and check up on you, in the event that, God forbid, another hurricane hits our area.

**Hits of the Brits** – The Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Nov 8, 2020. But, the head count needs to be in to Karla Gerner, [jetbiker1800@gmail.com](mailto:jetbiker1800@gmail.com) by July 30. Tickets are \$45.50 PP. Payment is taken later.

Our exchange student, Emma Giordano has provided her final letter of her exchange year. Welcome back, Emma to the good old USA.

Darcy was last week’s speaker. She told us everything about the National Ski Patrol, except where the St. Bernards keep the brandy.

At our meeting on July 9, Crag Esterly reported that our Club’s Foundation had a balance of \$508,248 in its account with Raymond James; and, that we gave a total of \$54,791 in grants during the ’19-’20 Rotary Year. The Foundation Board will elect this year’s officers and prepare its annual budget at its July 22, 2020 meeting.



# The Four Way Test

of the things we think, say and do

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

One of more than 33,000 Rotary Clubs Worldwide. All are welcome!

**CLUB OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

President	Darcy Hanley
President Elect	Alyson Burch
Past President	James Williams
Vice President	John Houser
Secretary	Peter Wilkins
Treasurer	Terry Cole
Assist. Treasurer	Laura Knutson
Sergeant at Arms	Robin Adair
International	Craig Esterly
Youth Services	Paul Blaine & Charles Marsee
Club Service	Karla Gerner
Community Service	Donna Calderon
Vocational Service	Frank Bell

**Committees:**

Membership	James William
Public Image	
Newsletter	John Duzark
TRF Liaison	Charles Marlowe

**PG ROTARY FOUNDATION BOARD**

President	
Vice President	
Treasurer	
Secretary	
Trustee	
Trustee	
Trustee	
Trustee	
Standing Trustee	Darcy Hanley
Standing Trustee	Donna Calderon
Standing Trustee	Alyson Burch

District Governor **Darryl Keys**

RI President **Holger Knaack**

**GLOBAL GRANT: WATER4MOZAMBIQUE**

Facebook Page:  
[facebook.com/puntagordarotary](https://facebook.com/puntagordarotary)

July 2020

Dear Rotary Club of Punta Gorda,

After 321 days abroad, I am finally home! There is so much to be said about my last month and a half in the Czech Republic because it was hands down the best part of my exchange.

Once again, I went on another trip to Prague. This time I met up with some students so we could go visit the Franz Kafka museum. Franz Kafka was a writer who was born in Prague who had a very interesting life. They even have a giant futuristic sculpture of his head in Downtown Prague. Later that day, we visited the narrowest street in the Czech republic. This street consisted of a small alleyway that had an official plaque and a traffic light for walkers. After that, we all walked down the deserted Charles Bridge before going home.

I once again had the opportunity to visit the castle in Hluboká nad Vltavou. One of my friends had never been there so we both went together along with one other student. We decided to take a tour of the castle which was different from the other tour I had been on before. We got to see the living quarters of one of the previous families. When we were finished taking a lot of photos, our small group made our way to Ceske Budejovice to drop off our friend and take a quick stroll throughout the town center.

At the end of May, my host family and I, along with a few other families, went on a canoeing/rafting trip in Cesky Krumlov. We spent the weekend at a campsite where we slept in wooden huts. The first day on the water, we paddled along the river that ran right next to the castle. There were many drops in the water so we all got wet! It was still a bit chilly out so we had to bring changes of clothes. On the second day, I spent the morning in the raft along with most of the children who were on the trip. It was nice being able to talk to them using my Czech that I had been practicing in quarantine. In the afternoon, my host Dad and I shared a canoe. At the end of the day, our canoe hit a giant rock and turned over at a place where the water was pretty rough. When it turned over, I hit my knee on the bottom of the river and got a decent cut. The water was freezing cold and it shocked both of us. My knee ended up being fine, but I will forever have a scar that will remind me of this fun trip!

In early June, an exchange student from Florida who was located in Prague hosted an International party with his host parents. At this party, the Mexicans made tacos, the Brazilians made Brigadeiro, the Americans made Pecan pie, and many others created dishes that represented their cultures. There were about 15-20 exchange students at this party and a few host families came as well. The host parents had prepared a quiz for us about Czech culture that was also written in Czech. The best part was when we all reviewed our answers and laughed when most of us misunderstood the questions. The rest of the night we all danced to latin music and spoke Czech with the host families.

The next day, a smaller group of us decided to visit a castle that is located just outside of Prague with the same host family that hosted the party. The Konopiště castle is famously known for being the last residence of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. While we were there, we toured the expansive halls of the armory as well as the elegant library and a few studies belonging to previous residents. Towards the end of the trip, we walked throughout the castle gardens which were full of statues but most noticeable were the many peacocks. Another fantastic day trip.

In the following days, I visited friends who lived in Olomouc and Prostejov which are cities located closer to the Eastern border of the Czech Republic. We did the usual; explore the town, visit the cathedrals and castles, eat some food, and spend quite a while on the train or bus. I remember we ran into a group of English speakers who were giving away flowers to spread positivity.

Right before the final farewell trip with all of the students, I decided to make a quick trip to the capital of Slovakia. Bratislava is located along the Western border of Slovakia and is relatively small for a country's capital. When I was there, I met up with the 5 remaining students who lived there. We visited the cathedral, castle, beautiful town square, and walked along the Danube River that separated the city into two parts. I even got the chance to meet some of the other students' classmates. They all attended a bilingual school so their amazing English was a pleasant surprise. I spent about two nights there and each night I spoke to my friends host family. I spoke in Czech and the family spoke in Slovak but I was excited that I understood almost everything they were saying. Funnily enough, it's mostly basic things like greetings which are different in Slovak.

The group of Bratislava exchange students and I all travelled together to our last Rotary meeting that was being held in Valtice which is a small town in the Czech Republic. This meeting was meant to be just for the inbounds to say goodbye one last time, but since many students left and the outbound orientation meeting was cancelled, outbounds also came to this meeting. On the first day, the exchange students were so excited to see each other, so of course, there was hugging, dancing, singing, etc. This was very strange for most of the outbounds to see since none of them have experienced exchange life yet. While the outbounds were discussing their future exchanges with the Rotarians, all of the current inbounds and I took a tour of the Valtice castle.

That night, we watched all of the outbounds do presentations about themselves and their sponsor clubs. We also got to play some sports together. The second day consisted of a 52km bike ride with all of the students. Along the bike path were many historical sites that we would stop and take photos at. There was even a photo contest going on. Of course, almost the entire day it was raining, so riding on the muddy trails was a bit difficult. The plan for the third was supposed to be rafting all day on the Vltava River, but due to rain and high water levels, it was cancelled. The Rotarians told us that they have been doing this trip for 10 years and this was the first time the rafting was cancelled. We were all pretty upset but they made an alternate program for us. Instead, we took a quick boat ride and walked around the historic Moravian villages that were still intact. Later on there was our exchange graduation ceremony where we all received our certificates for completing exchange. The end of the ceremony was tear filled for most of us and we all had a very emotional time writing messages on each other's flags. Towards the end of the night, we had some sort of dance party which went from the Brazilians teaching us dances, the Americans doing the Cotton eye joe, to Czech party songs, and finally the songs we had planned to sing for the district conference which made us all do a giant group hug. The next morning was even more emotional, we had to say goodbye to our fellow inbounds as well as all of the outbounds we became friends with over the past weekend. After many hugs, and many tears, we all said goodbye.

I feel very lucky to say that I had the opportunity to visit Italy with my host family. Two days after I returned from the farewell weekend, my host family and I made the 7 hour drive to their apartment in Lido di Jesolo which is a beach town very close to Venice. The drive through Austria and Northern Italy was full of gorgeous mountains and I even spotted a few castles along the way. The morning after we arrived, we took a short walk from the apartment down to the beach. I spent most of the time playing with my two year old host brother and enjoying the sun. That night, we walked around the town and had some delicious gelato. The following day, we took a car ride to another harbor before hopping on a boat to Venice. The second I stepped off the boat, I fell in love with Venice. The beautiful canals, bright colors, and overall feeling that comes from this city is indescribable. My host parents have been here before and they said there were usually many more people. We walked around St.Marks square before entering the Basilica. The inside of the Basilica was covered in small golden tiles and the ceilings were extremely tall. I think this Basilica, along with the St.Vitus Cathedral in Prague are tied for the most Beautiful buildings I have had the privilege of visiting. Throughout the day we explored the narrow streets and had a wonderful lunch outside. I of course had to order some Pasta which was fantastic. We saw so many statues and random pieces of art on the streets everywhere. It's crazy for me to think that if Eurotour was never cancelled, there would be 70 exchange students walking around here! On the boat ride back to our car, we all fell asleep immediately because walking around in the heat all day made us pretty tired. Our last full day in Italy we spent at the beach and walking around Jesolo some more. I'm so glad I got to experience a small part of this amazing country before leaving Europe.

About a week before I left, the other exchange student in my city and I threw a going away party. We both invited all of our classmates and some exchange students. We all got to meet in the city and go to a nice restaurant. We all laughed about how terrible our Czech was at the beginning of the year and all of the fun times we had in class. It was so nice to see my classmates all together one last time after months of not seeing them because of quarantine.

I spent my last few days visiting some cities with some other students so we could all see each other and buy some gifts in Brno and Prague. I left on July 9th from the Prague airport. There were three of us leaving on the same day and some other students wanted to say goodbye so there were about 10 of us all in the airport. We spent about an hour or so talking, taking pictures, and hugging goodbye.

I had the same flight to Amsterdam with one other student so we were able to keep each other company for a little while longer. The flight to Amsterdam was full but only about 2 hours long. While we were both waiting in Amsterdam, we ran into two other Rotary exchange students in their blazers who were also returning home. It turns out that those two girls would be taking the same flight to Atlanta with me. The flight to Atlanta was about 9 hours long but almost completely empty. In a row of 8, there was only me and one other person. I had a three hour layover in Atlanta that was followed by a few delays but eventually I arrived home around 12:30 am. I was extremely tired because it would be 6:30 am in the Czech Republic and I didn't really sleep on the plane. I was greeted by my family with balloons and signs. When I was grabbing my bags, a lady asked me if I was a Rotary Exchange Student because she was one in Brazil many years ago. I told her yes and then she said welcome home before talking about how exchange changed her life.

It has definitely been very strange being home for the past few days. My fellow past exchange students and I have agreed that it feels like it was all a dream and it never even happened. This is because pretty much everything has stayed the same at home so it feels like no time has passed. Getting used to being home will definitely take some time, that's for sure.

Finally, I just wanted to say once again how grateful I am to have had this opportunity. I was only able to do this because of the club's help. This year has been hands down the best year of my life. I have learned so much about not only the Czech culture, but about the entire world. This process has also taught me a lot about myself and how I see the world. I can't wait to put everything I have learned to good use. I know that we exchange students are going to change the world one day, and you have all helped us to do that. Thank you so much for everything. I look forward to seeing you all in person soon.

- Emma Giordano