

THE STAFFORD ROTARY HIGHLIGHTER

April 3, 2024



Rotary Club of Stafford  **People of Action**

April 3 - Lena Gonzalez Berrios and Donna Almborg - DDF Grant Project in El Salvador



Lena Gonzalez Berrios is a passionate librarian, dedicated to serving the community and promoting literacy around the world. She has worked as a professional librarian for the Greensboro Public Library (NC) as the Multicultural Services Coordinator, the SEED Public Charter Boarding School (DC) as the school librarian and the Central Rappahannock Regional Library (VA) as a Youth Services Manager and Branch Manager.

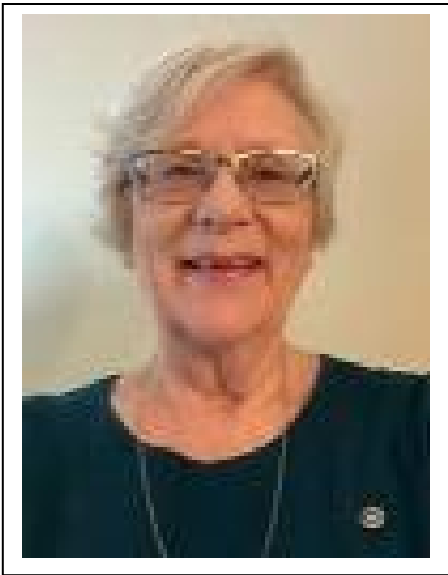
She is currently the Programming Librarian at the Montclair Community Library, Prince William Public Library System (VA). She is also the International Library Lead for e3kids International and is building school libraries in Kenya and Guatemala. She holds an MLIS from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign and a BA in English and Spanish from UNC Greensboro.

Donna Almborg - It all began on a small family farm in NW Missouri; I was born at home and grew up in a family with six siblings. Growing up on the farm instilled the values of hard work, the importance of education, and a foundation built on strong family ties.

After working my way through college at the University of Missouri,, earning my MA, I married John A. Almborg, whom I met in DC when working a summer job at the Dept. of Interior. At first, we were just friends, debating issues of all kinds, always with opposing views. Since I lived in Missouri and he in DC, we had to make a decision early on about our relationship, was it worth maintaining over the miles? After a romance conducted through blue air-o-

Club Calendar April Is Maternal and Child Health Month

- ❖ April 3 – Lena Gonzalez Berrios and Donna Almborg
- ❖ April 10 – UMW Alumni
- ❖ April 17 – Rotary History
- ❖ April 20 – District Youth Summit
- ❖ April 22, 4:00pm to 7:00 pm - Thurman Brisben Center - Help us cook and serve dinner
- ❖ April 24 – Stafford Rotary History
- ❖ April 27 - District Training Assembly - April 2024
- ❖ April 27 – Relay for Life
- ❖ May 2 – Virginia Naturalists
- ❖ May 25-29, 2024 -Rotary International Convention in Singapore
- ❖ June 30 – Installation of District Officers.
- ❖ July 13 – District Training for the new Rotary year. Membership and TRF
- ❖ July 14 – Installation of New Club Officers
- ❖ August 11-13 – District trip to RI HQ
- ❖ September 28, 29 -Via Colori
- ❖ October 4-6, 2024 – District Conference



grams and phone calls – almost no face-to-face time, we tied the knot and have been married over 50 years. Over the years, I have always found a balance of work and family that felt right for me. I earned a MA +30 and taught at Anne Arundel Community College, Carroll Park Junior High in Baltimore, University of Maryland in southern Germany, Ankara MS/HS in Turkey, Gayle Middle School in Stafford County, Quantico Marine Corp MS/HS, and back to Stafford County at the Heather Empfield Day School. In the early 80's I worked as an administrative assistant and building committee coordinator for St. Peters Lutheran Church Mission congregation.

Our greatest treasure is our ten beautiful grandchildren who have brought inexplicable joy to our lives. It is no surprise that in Rotary, I am working in youth services, both for my club and my district.

March 27 Meeting

President Jamie presided and also gave the thought for the day: “Leadership is not about being in charge. It’s taking care of those in your charge.”

Announcements:

- ❖ The tour of Channel 9 is scheduled April 29. President Jamie has sent out a signuop sheet. The group will meet at 4 pm at the station. At 5 the group will be the studio audience for the 5 pm news. Beginning at 5:45 very small groups will visit the control room. At 7:30 pm the group will go to dinner at a restaurant across the street. There is parking available in front of the station.
- ❖ District Training is scheduled for April 27.
- ❖ DG Rene went to “Coffee with a Cop” with some students in the morning before our meeting.
- ❖ There is potential for a field trip to Richmond with Delegat Cole to tour the capitol and the executive mansion. This is something our club did regularly when Bill Howell was an active club member.
- ❖ July 13 is the District Membership and Foundation training.
- ❖ Dues will be increasing substantially next year.



March 27 - Tommi Marsans

Associate Director, Marketing Technology, Verizon Business Group

President Jamie introduced our guest speaker Tommi Marsans. A former member of the North Stafford Rotary, recruited by DG Rene, Tommi is currently between clubs because of her work in Northern Virginia. She addressed the concerns people have with AI:

- ❖ Job loss
- ❖ The danger of AI taking over human life.

Tommi explained that at its core, AI is a tool, and she gave examples of AI driven applications in our daily lives: Echo, Alexa and Siri; photo filters; online banking fraud detection. In these examples the computer program is always learning, becoming more perfectly tailored to your personal preferences.

She described it in terms of a conversation between the customer and the AI tool, which has access to the customer's profile, account, and everything that it has learned from actions or purchases to lead them further along in the journey. She shared a story of her recently giving a speech that was entirely generated by AI. No one in the audience had a clue until she told them.

Here are some insights she shared:

- ❖ Testing is imperative. Errors need to be detected quickly. She discussed the importance of training the AI model by continually asking it something and rewarding it when it delivers good outcomes, watching the tool improve and evolve over time.
- ❖ AI is only as dangerous as you train it. Machine learning works just as humans learning works, but much faster.
- ❖ AI Justice. Machines can discriminate in harmful ways. We often assume machines are neutral, but they aren't. There is a large gender and racial bias in AI systems sold by tech giants like IBM, Microsoft, and Amazon. Tommi discussed "baked in" bias towards an outcome, inadvertently influencing the AI behavior and encouraging it to repeat the same approach each time, rather than an innovative approach to a problem. The solution is to build in some novelty to push the tool to provide completely different ways to reach an outcome.

Tommi said that ethical AI training should follow the "Four Way Test".

During the lively Q&A session Tommi covered the sources used by generative AI. Our computer searches become part of the sources used by AI. Here are some memorable quotes from Tommi:

- ❖ "If it's free, the price you pay is your information."
- ❖ "Technology is outpacing our ability to govern it."
- ❖ "Your world is being curated."
- ❖ "Expectations of privacy are almost entirely absent in the younger generation."

Thank you for a highly informative program, Tommi.

My Purpose, Passion in Rotary – And Pet Portraits

Posted on March 28, 2024

By George Lewis, Rotary Club of Venice-Nokomis, Florida, USA

Extraordinary.
Amazing.
Spectacular.

This is how I feel about Rotary. I'll be 90 years old in June and joined Rotary at a relatively late age. I went on my first volunteer trip to Guatemala in 2006 to help install stoves for Mayan families. Those stoves changed their lives, and the experience changed mine.

As we installed stoves, I enjoyed talking with the families and asked them what other assistance would be helpful. Most often, someone would reply that clean drinking water would be the most significant improvement. I promised them I would help, and that became my purpose in Rotary.

One of Lewis' oil paintings, a pet portrait.



When you reach my age, you realize that without a purpose, you are like a rudderless boat. Purpose with a capital “P” gives one the excitement to live. I learned how Rotary Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) grants worked and began putting them together. I realized these grants could be extraordinarily impactful because they used both district funds and matching funds from The Rotary Foundation.

I approached other clubs in my district and elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada. Amazingly, the idea caught on. Soon, we were doing grants for clean water all over the world. As of 2023, these water projects have helped more than 2 million people in 34 countries. If that's not spectacular, I don't know what is! My Purpose has become a Passion. I think about it day and night.

Since it worked once, I'm trying it again. My new Passion is to help kids with cleft lip and palate deformities. When I retired in 2000 after a career as a stockbroker with Merrill Lynch, I took an adult education class in oil painting and got hooked. I use only one palette knife and no brushes. I now use the hobby to support cleft palate surgeries. I have painted almost 800 pet portraits to raise money for this cause. The funds go to support Rotary global grants. (Watch my one-minute video to learn more.)

It breaks my heart to see kids in that condition, and thankfully, Rotary allows me to help change their lives. Before the surgeries, they are outcasts. They have a hard time eating and drinking. Surgeries fix all that, which brings me great joy and happiness.

It wouldn't have happened without a Purpose that became my Passion. My excitement keeps me going – even at 90.


A note about George Lewis. He is currently battling an aggressive case of melanoma, yet he keeps painting and raising funds for the Rotary Foundation through the sale of his paintings.

April Is Maternal and Child Health Month

APRIL DESIGNATION IS MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH MONTH

"Every child deserves a chance at a life filled with love, laughter, friends and family."

Marlo Thomas

Rotary  TAKE ACTION: Join Rotary, Get Involved

