

Rotary

Club of Oakland



Speakers

October 15
Linda Shively

October 22
Dr. Emil Kakkis

November 5
Matin Mirramezani

November 12
Dr. Denise Saddler

November 19
Mark Wolf

Special Events

Rotary Halloween Party

October 29
Chapel of the Chimes

Service Projects

Tree Planting

October 24
9:30 am – 1 pm
also on Nov 7
and Dec. 5

SOS Meals on Wheels

October 26
9:15 – 11:30 am
Contact Karen
Friedman for
Information.

Birthday Greetings

Happy Birthday!



Next Club Meeting – October 15, 2026 – Linda Shively

Mack McFadden announced next week's speaker will be Linda Shively. Her topic is The Joy Pivot: Why Emotional Alignment is the Secret to Navigating Change. She is a neuroscience and mindset expert, best-selling author and international award-winning speaker.

The meeting will be at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts. Fellowship starts at 12 noon and the program begins at 12:30 pm. The meeting will be in person as well as on Zoom.

For those joining on Zoom, use this link [Thursday Club Meeting](#)

Rotary Meeting Highlights – October 8, 2026

Call to Order

President Merlin Edwards welcomed Rotarians and Guests to the regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Oakland, the 3rd oldest club in the Rotary world. **President Merlin** acknowledged the packed room and full meeting agenda.

Visiting Rotarians and Guests

Sadly, having no visiting Rotarians **President Merlin** moved promptly to introductions of members guests. **Past President Michael Bruck** introduced John Loh (Jillian's father) and former Oakland Mayor and State Assemblymember Elihu Harris. **Past President Linda Boessenecker** introduced several guests in attendance to support and honor **Dr. Joel Parrott**. These included **Chantelle Burnett, Nikki Van Ausdall and Joel's wife, Laura**. Several Rotarians including **Mack McFadden, Isaac Kos-Read and Keith Uriarte**, introduced their guests.

Celebrating are:

October

02 – Ruth Stroup
04 – Lorna Padia Markus
09 – Tommy Edwards
09 – Andrew Shalauta
09 – Pat Williams
10 – Pauline Fox
11 – Isaac Kos-Read
12 – Wise Allen
13 – Cristy Johnston-Limon
16 – Jason Wizelman
17 – Tobi Ogedegbe
18 – Sean Marx
19 – Ama Torrance
20 – Mike Melone
22 – Nadine de Coteau
26 – Bob Lee
27 – Ed Brail
28 – Maurice Arnold
29 – Shanna O'Hare

Membership Anniversaries

Thank you for your years
of service to the Club
and the community!

October

Leslie Hilger – 48 years
John Protopappas – 41
years
Ana Chretien – 26 years
Joe Goralka – 24 years
Stephanie Casenza – 16
years
Steve Nicholls – 16 years
Preston Pinkney – 10
years
Ruth Stroup – 9 years
Greg Annis – 8 years
Maren Amdal --- 5 years
Isa Chu – 5 years
Ursula Jones Dickson – 1
year
Kira Pascoe – 1 year
Danny Wan – 1 year



Thought for the Day – John Avakian

John Avakian took the stage to provide today's thought. **John** shared that in today's environment with concern over guardrails for AI, he decided to reference Isaac Asimov with the 1940's laws of robotics.

"A robot may not injure a human being; A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings; A robot must protect its own existence; and **Most Importantly**, the Zeroth Law: a robot may not harm humanity."

And this is where we are today, struggling with how to use the power and promise of AI while harnessing its foreboding potential.

Reintroduction of Dr. Joel Parrott

President Merlin invited **Jillian Loh Kearns** to the microphone to reintroduce **Dr. Joel Parrott**.

There's a saying that one man cannot change the world, yet the world can change because of one person. And in getting to know **Dr. Joel Parrott**, **Jill** understands how true those words can be!

Joel is the youngest of 5 children. Born in the Adirondacks of Lake George, New York is where he learned to love nature. The family called him "Nature Boy", the kind of kid who'd go slogging through the Everglades chasing wildlife for fun or spending time skindiving with his brothers in the Florida Keys. He moved to Miami for middle school and high school where he continued to love the outdoors, and always summering back at Lake George. **Joel** was only fourteen when his father passed away at just 49. It was his mother, an administrative nurse at a Cuban refugee center, who held the family together and taught **Joel** what hard work looked like. She had a huge impact on his life and who he would become.

Joel attended Colorado State University, where he spent ten years earning his undergraduate and veterinary degrees. During vet school, he did an internship at

the Denver Zoo where he met his lab partner, and future wife, Laura. **Joel** and Laura married in 1983 and moved to the Bay Area, where he opened a private veterinary practice in Castro Valley specializing in wildlife medicine and exotic pets. Laura practiced small animal veterinary medicine in Concord. It was during this time that **Joel** began as the consulting vet at Oakland Zoo.

In 1984 Oakland was ranked among the ten worst zoos in the country. The Examiner printed a scathing article on the zoo and there was a lot of pressure on the Director, William Penn Mott Jr., to do something about it. In 1984, Joel applied for Assistant Director and he got the job! A year later, the zoo's Director, **William Penn Mott**, (and Oakland Rotary Past President) was recruited by the Reagan administration to run the National Park Service, and **Joel**, barely a year in, was suddenly the one running the zoo. **Joel** later forgave Mott as he stabilized the National Parks and brought wolves back to Yellowstone. Once **Joel** became the Director, in 1986 he joined our very own Oakland #3.

It took from 1985 until 1988 to rescue the zoo from financial insolvency. **Dr. Parrott** began relentlessly, and successfully, rallying the City of Oakland for the financial support needed to save the Zoo from certain closure. It was under Elihu Harris that the Zoo received funding from the East Bay Regional Parks that stabilized the zoo.

What followed was over a decade of rebuilding and pulling the zoo back from the brink of closure and building the funding and public support. **Dr. Parrott** quickly began making improvements to the Zoo infrastructure that supported his long-term vision of the nationally accredited, award-winning, progressive, conservation and education-focused, 100-acre Zoo it is today. When **Jill** asked him what his greatest career accomplishment was, looking back, he is most proud of saving the zoo from closing.

Joel became a national voice for animal welfare. After the zoo lost a keeper to an elephant in 1991 – something **Joel** calls the lowest point of his career – he helped pioneer "protected contact" elephant management, a trailblazing practice separating zookeepers and elephants with barriers and use of rewards rather than discipline to incentivize animals.

With **Dr. Parrott's** advocacy, other U.S. zoos also began adopting the protected contact husbandry practice, and after 20 years, it became standard practice at almost every accredited Zoo to have bull hook use banned in circuses, with the outcome that Ringling Bros. soon thereafter closed their doors permanently, sending their elephants to sanctuaries in Florida.

Dr. Parrott's grandest vision took over two decades of planning, lobbying, fundraising, and construction to build the 56-acre California Trail, bringing the Zoo to 100 acres including a state-of-the-art veterinary hospital, electric gondolas, and stunning Bay Area views. The Oakland Zoo is now regarded as one of the top 25 Zoos in the country and a leader in animal welfare, rescue and conservation. After 37 years, **Joel** retired in 2021.

Through all of it, family has stayed the center of **Joel's** life. When asked about his

life and career, **Joel** thinks of himself as just a family guy. He and Laura raised two kids - Tyler, born in 1991, who's now living in Minneapolis, and Lindsey, born in 1993, who lives in Portugal with **Joel's** two grandchildren, ages 2 and 4, Diogo and Danielle. He coached 14 years of soccer for his kids. Laura, whose dad grew up in Fort Collins, later inherited her family vacation home in Colorado on the Estes River which is now where they spend a lot of their time.

These days, you'll find **Joel** traveling, playing piano, guitar, or the Celtic folk harp. He is also a bicyclist and loves home improvements, he actually built his home addition! He is active in the Oakland community. and right here at Oakland Rotary.

A Rotary member forty years and counting, he is currently the Chair of the Environment committee. **Joel** took 21 groups to Africa, many of them Rotarians, on Safari and through East Africa. Many Rotarians regard these safaris as incredible and life changing, but above all else, the respect and care the people of Africa have for **Dr. Parrott** and vice versa, only shows how much he has enriched, inspired and changed so many lives – beaked, 4 legged or 2 legged, and he has forever left and changed us all everywhere he has gone in life – in Colorado, in Rotary, in Oakland, at the Zoo, in Africa and in the world.

After a standing ovation and rousing applause there were many bell ringers in honor of **Joel**.



Nominating Committee

Past Presidents Shannon Hackley and **Michael Bruck** led the members through the process of selecting members to serve on the Nominating Committee which will be tasked with selecting four new directors for the board of directors and the next president elect nominee. Election of nominating members will occur on October 26. Nominees included: **Dana Sack, Mary Geong, Wil Hobbs, Dudley Thompson, David Stein, Harold Lowe, Keith Uriarte, Stephanie Bolden, Allison Bliss, Andrew Brown, Teresa Weyand, Wise Allen, Stephanie Casenza, Mary Rudser, Fred Morse, Shannon Hackley.**

Self Introduction – Erandy Lombare

President Merlin invited **Erandy Lombera** to the microphone to present his three-minute introduction.

Erandy's parents came from Mexico and taught him to love this country and appreciate the opportunities available to him. They shared with him the challenging journey they had in getting to the United States, including walking for two days. His dad instilled in him the value of hard work, although he wasn't too excited about those lessons! He would go to work with him fetching tools and doing other jobs as assigned. As he got older and stronger he was digging trenches and carrying concrete. Saturdays meant getting up early to help dad, even if he had been up late gaming with friends. His dad taught him to do the right thing even when no one was watching. This is a big part of why he started Lombera Construction—to provide people with honest service. He loves working with his family.

Last year he started the Lombera Construction Scholarship for Lighthouse Seniors with the idea of encouraging students to reflect on how they give back to their community in the future. It was at Career Day at Lighthouse that **Erandy** met several Rotarians which brought him to the club!

President Merlin presented **Erandy** with his permanent badge.



Announcements

President Merlin reminded members of the following:

The RI International Convention begins on June 26th in Barcelona, Spain.

Registration fee is \$795. Sign up before the price increases.

The annual Halloween party will again be held at Chapel of the Chimes (**thank you, Ed Brail!**) on Oct. 29th. Lots of fun and prizes for best costumes. Families

are welcome. No charge!

On December 17th there will be a fashion show.

Information on a new member social event will be forthcoming.

New Member – Ben Stolurow

President Elect Kerry Hamill introduced our newest member, **Ben Stolurow**.

Ben is a Stanford graduate currently pursuing his Doctoral degree through the University of Chicago. He has worked as an educator across the country and with many museums. Welcome **Ben**!



Speaker for the Day – Clifford Stoll

Allison Lindquist introduced the speaker of the day, Clifford Stoll, author, astronomer, educator, and hacker.

Clifford shared that while he was working as a system administrator at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, he discovered that someone was hacking the system which led to the arrest of the hacker. Clifford authored the book, *The Cuckoo's Egg*, in which he details the crime. He is also the maker of the Klein bottle, a zero volume, one-sided, non-orientable 3-dimensionable Euclidian bottle.

Clifford shared his thoughts on Artificial Intelligence and its use in education. He suggested that we all think about what we want our children to learn in school and how or what role AI can play in our desired outcomes. AI is good at helping students with basic instruction but not helpful in emotional intelligence, physical and social maturation. If we want students to go beyond basics, AI will not provide that.

The audience was then invited to present their questions.

Question: What discussions/arguments do you have with your daughter who works in Open AI?

Answer: She believes that anything AI can do is good and that textbooks should be replaced by AI.

Question: How can people avoid getting “sucked into” AI scams?

Answer: Be aware and recognize that scams usually begin by complimenting people.

Question: Did you contact authorities when you discovered the earliest hacking?

Answer: Yes, I contacted Oakland FBI. When they asked what the damages were you responded and they indicated you should contact them again when it was more money.

Question: How dangerous do you feel AI is?

Answer: The most important thing you can do is think. Do not allow Open AI the opportunity to do that for you.

President Merlin then thanked Clifford and announced that a contribution has been made to Meals on Wheels in his honor.

Bellringers

Jim and **Linda Boessenecker**, **Issac Kos-Read**, **Jack McAboy**, **Dudley Thompson**, **Carla Betts**, **Ed Jellen**, **Don Sheppard**, **Ces Butner**, **Debra Barnes**, **Dana Sack**, **Joe Goralka**, **Ralph Sklar**, **Steve Blair**, **Michael Bruck** and **Shannon Hackley** rang the bell in honor of **Joel Parrott**.

Fred Morse rang the bell for **Joel Parrott** and Elihu Harris.

Joel Parrott rang the bell for Elihu Harris and in honor of the Club.

Adjournment

President Merlin adjourned the meeting at 1:30 pm.