



## Welcome our new President to 2025-2026

By James C. Williams



Punta Gorda Rotarians welcome their new president, **Alicia Oates**, for the Rotary Year 2025-2026. Alicia is a graduate of the Rotary Leadership Institute and of the 2025 Emerging Leaders Class run by Rotary District 6960. She also received District and Club "Rising Star" awards in June. We are all very excited to support her and work for her during the coming Rotary year.



Emerging Leaders graduates, Rotary District 6960, June 2025

## A Message from our incoming President

By Alicia C Oates

New Year, New Energy!!!!

As we turn the page to a new Rotary year, I am honored to begin this journey as your next club president. Stepping into this role is a privilege, and I couldn't be more excited about the road ahead. We have a fantastic board of leaders who are full of ideas and enthusiasm, and have enough experience to make sure we stay true to our core values!

With a fresh calendar and renewed energy, we have the chance to dream big, serve boldly, and strengthen the bonds that make our club so special. Whether it's launching new service projects, supporting youth programs, or simply sharing laughs over lunch, I believe this year will be both impactful and enjoyable.

One of my personal goals is to ensure that every member feels seen, valued, and engaged. Rotary thrives when all voices are heard, and every hand is willing to help.

### Club Meeting

Punta Gorda  
Meets at FOUR-POINTS SHERATON HOTEL  
33 Tamiami Trail  
Punta Gorda, FL 33950  
Time: Thursday at 12:00 PM

### Club Leaders



**Alicia C. Oates**  
President  
Webmaster



**Andrea Ariens**  
President-Elect



**Peter R. Wilkins**  
Past President  
Secretary



**Barbara Boncompagni**  
Public Relations Co-Chair



**Theresa Brackett**  
Bulletin Editor  
Public Relations Chair



**Darcy Hanley**  
Club Foundation Chair



**Nancy A. Johnson**  
Training Officer



**Breven Baima**  
Sergeant-at-Arms



**Charles F. Marlowe**  
Rotary Foundation Chair



**Richard D. Sell**  
Membership Chair



**Joey M. Alonso**  
Community Service Chair



**Betty Kedziora**

From our seasoned members to those still learning what District 6960 means, we each bring something important to the table.

So, as we dive into this new chapter, let's keep our Rotary spirit high and our sleeves rolled up. Together, we can make this year one of purpose, growth, and a lot of fun. Here's to a great year ahead!



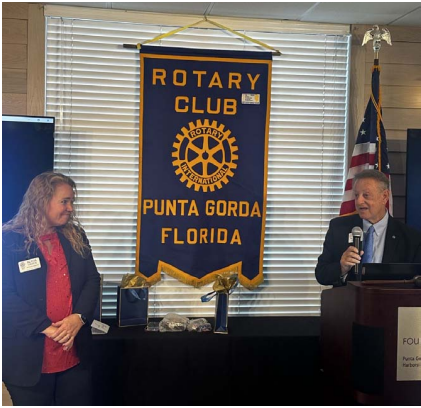
## Change of Watch

By James C. Williams

The Change of Watch luncheon occurred on June 26 at the Four-Points Sheraton. The outgoing president, James Williams, thanked his board of directors and recognized each of them, as well as several club members, for their hard work and generous spirit throughout the year.

Past District Governor Rich Kirschner had the honor of inducting the new club president, Alicia Oates, and her board of directors. The club is looking forward to a tremendous new Rotary year, and we are all sure Alicia will make us proud!

As a part of the festivities, Darcy Hanley was recognized as the Punta Gorda Rotarian of the Year.



**President-Elect\*\***  
**Programs**  
**Secretary**  
**Treasurer**  
**Sgt at Arms**

Andrea Ariens  
Betty Kedziora  
Peter Wilkins  
James Williams  
Breven Baima

**DIRECTORS**  
**Club Service**  
**Community Service**  
**International Service**  
**Vocational Service**  
**Youth Service**  
**Membership**  
**Public Image**  
**Strategic Planning**

Chrisanna Wright  
Joey Alonso  
Arnie Eastburn  
Ed Davis  
Paul Blaine & Kristin Mangas  
Rich Sell  
Theresa Brackett  
Nancy Johnson

## Garden Mission in Honduras

By James C. Williams

Kevin & Cynthia Johnson founded The Garden Mission in Honduras in 2021. Nearly half of the population in rural Honduras suffers from malnutrition, with a staggering 23% under the age of 5 facing irreversible, lifelong effects due to lack of proper nutrition. The Garden Mission provides more than 1,200 nutritious meals monthly to children in these rural communities.



The Garden Mission's school scholarship program also provides impoverished children with the opportunity to receive an education and strive for a better tomorrow. Last year, the Punta Gorda Rotary Club Foundation provided a grant for new school desks for elementary school students at the Garden Mission.

## 100 Years of?? 100 Years of Service Service, Fellowship & Impact – Punta Gorda Rotary Turns 100!

By Darcy Hanley



Club Programs Chair



Chrisanna K. Wright  
Club Service Chair



Arnie Eastburn  
International Service Chair



Ed Davis  
Vocational Service Chair



Kristin Mangas  
Youth Services Chair



James C. Williams  
iPast President



Paul F. Blaine  
Youth Services Project Chair

## Punta Gorda Rotary Charity and Education Foundation

No Committee Selected

### Events

- July 1st  
**Public Image Committee Meeting**  
**Speaker:** Theresa Brackett, Chairperson
- July 3rd  
**Punta Gorda Mural Committee Meeting**  
**Speaker:** Darcy Hanley
- July 9th  
**Punta Gorda Rotary Club Board Meeting**
- July 10th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- July 15th  
**Public Image Committee VIRTUAL meeting**
- July 17th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- July 21st  
**Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting**
- July 24th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- July 31st  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- August 5th  
**Public Image Committee Meeting**
- August 7th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- August 13th  
**Punta Gorda Rotary Club Board Meeting**
- August 14th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- August 18th  
**Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting**
- August 19th  
**Public Image Committee VIRTUAL meeting**
- August 21st  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- August 28th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- September 2nd  
**Public Image Committee Meeting**
- September 4th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- September 11th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- September 16th  
**Public Image Committee VIRTUAL meeting**
- September 18th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**
- September 22nd  
**Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting**
- September 25th  
**Punta Gorda Weekly Club Meeting**

It all began in April 1925, when a visionary group of Punta Gordians came together to form what would become a cornerstone of community service—the Rotary Club of Punta Gorda. And now, 100 years later, we celebrate a century of purpose, progress, and people-powered impact!

From helping build the community medical center to contributing to the I-75 bridge project, our club has never shied away from big goals. We've left a lasting mark with projects like the creation of Rotary Park at Ponce, and in 2000, we established our own Rotary Charity and Education Foundation (a 501(c)(3))—laying the groundwork for long-term local giving.

In 2007, thanks to Robin and Mary Frances Adair, we launched the now-iconic Taste of Punta Gorda, a delicious tradition that celebrates local flavor and funds big dreams. Then came the breathtaking Healing Field of Honor, where 1,000 American flags flew proudly in Lashley Park, honoring heroes near and far.

Even a global pandemic couldn't stop us—we adapted with Zoom meetings, proving that Rotary spirit is stronger than any challenge.

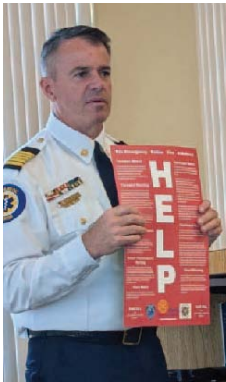
As we enter our next century, we continue to grow, welcome new members, and champion the Rotary mission of Service Above Self.

To those who built this legacy: thank you.  
To those who carry it forward: cheers to the next 100 years of service, fellowship, and unstoppable impact!



### HELP/OK Poster for Hurricane Season

The Punta Gorda Rotary Club partnered with the Punta Gorda Fire and Police departments to help residents prepare for future disasters with a new double-sided HELP/OK poster. In addition to providing an overview of disaster-related personal safety, the posters can serve as visual rescue requests for emergency services.





2024-25 Club President James Williams showed off the poster design, with a bright red “HELP” indicating a home in need of rescue and a cool green “OK” for those sheltering in place. Roughly 10,000 posters were distributed for use during the 2024 hurricane season throughout Punta Gorda and to some surrounding areas.

Fire Chief Holden Gibbs asked if we could provide additional posters for this year’s hurricane season, and we delivered several boxes of them to the central fire station the last week in June. They will be available at Punta Gorda Fire Stations as well as at the public library.

Gibbs, as well as Police Chief Pam Davis, made clear that residents need to prepare now for the season by testing generators, buying new gas for them if necessary, and assembling other supplies to use in the event of a hurricane.

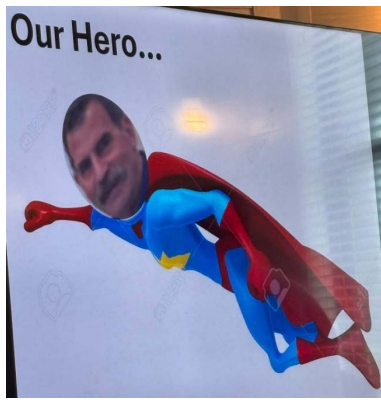
Residents can use the double-sided HELP/OK posters after a storm if they are having trouble with electricity or other needs. The posters can be placed on the front door or a window and are a clear message to neighbors as well as first responders who are out in the community providing help.

## Rotary Supports Future Trades Professionals

By Ed Davis

Punta Gorda Rotary recently participated in a Program Action Committee meeting at Southern Technical College alongside local HVAC employers and students. Our “**Tools for Trades**” drive was a huge success, thanks to the generous donations from club members. So many tools were collected that a Rotary Foundation grant was secured to purchase a large tool chest—now permanently located at the school and proudly named the “**Rotary Tool Box.**”

Impressed by our support, College Director Rick Pucci commissioned a banner to honor the partnership. Starting this quarter, the Vocational Committee will recognize top students in the HVAC and Electrical Trades programs with Certificates of Appreciation and \$50 gift cards. In October, we plan to present “**Student of the Year**” awards to two standout graduates, each receiving a key tool for their careers.



## A Year of Connection, Impact & Inspiration!

By Richard D Sell

### A Year of Connection, Impact & Inspiration!

What a fantastic Rotary year it's been! From energizing new initiatives to standout speakers who brought our meetings to life, this year was truly one for the books.

#### Greeters with a Smile!

We kicked things off—literally—with the launch of our brand-new **Greeter Program**. Every meeting began with a warm welcome from a fellow Rotarian, creating instant energy and connection. Even better? Every new member was scheduled to greet within 30 days of joining. It was a perfect way to get involved, get connected, and get smiling! This program was such a hit that we're proudly continuing it into the next Rotary year.

#### Speakers Who Inspired and Ignited Us

Our meeting speakers kept us informed, inspired, and sometimes even in awe. Though we wish we had photos to share, the memories are unforgettable. Here's a look at some of the highlights:

- **Pam Smith**, Punta Gorda Chief of Police, gave us a powerful perspective on community safety.
- **Tiffany Ervin**, Executive Director of CART, shared the mission of funding cutting-edge Alzheimer's research—and reminded us of our impact: over **\$5,000 contributed by our club!**
- The fierce and fabulous **Dragon Ladies** (made up of several PG members) wowed us with their strength, spirit, and solidarity.
- **Joey Alonso** introduced us to the **U.S. Naval Sea Cadets**, who not only inspired us with their dedication but also lent a huge helping hand at **TOPG**.
- The students of **Charlotte Academy** melted our hearts during the **Christmas for Kids** event (yes, even **Santa** stopped by!).
- Our very own exchange student **Natsu** shared her amazing journey and cultural exchange experiences.
- **Dick Carr** moved us with the story of the **Vietnam Wall's** arrival here in Punta Gorda.
- And **Rick Pucci** from Southern Technical College opened our eyes to the incredible impact of the **Tools for Kids Program**.

Each speaker brought something special, helping make every meeting an experience worth showing up for.

As we wrap up this incredible year, one thing is clear: connection is at the heart of everything we do. Thank you to every member who helped make this a year of growth, service, and a lot of FUN!



## Cheers to our CART Fund Crew!

By Theresa Brackett



*Theresa Brackett - Club CART Fund Chair, Tiffany Ervin - CART Fund Executive Director, James Williams - Club President*

Punta Gorda Rotary Club is proud of our Blue Bucket Buddies - George Miller, Ed Davis, Chuck Marlowe, and Theresa Brackett — for championing Alzheimer's research this past Rotary year through the CART Fund program!

- \* We raised over \$7,000
- \* A special shout-out to George and a generous anonymous match!
- \* 100% of donations go straight to Alzheimer's research. Let's keep the momentum going!

## Rotary Mural Materializing

By Darcy Hanley

In honor of our **100th anniversary**, the Rotary Club of Punta Gorda is embarking on a colorful new adventure—a **community mural** to celebrate our charter year of **1925** and the legacy we've built ever since!

With full support from both our Club and Foundation boards, this project is officially in motion—and we couldn't be more excited. A huge thank you to **Bari A.** (last name to be confirmed!) for her incredible dedication and leadership. She's been the creative force and key connector between our club and the **Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society**, helping to shape this vision every step of the way.

An **artist has been selected**, and the **proposed location search is in progress**. This vibrant mural will not only honor our past—it will stand as a lasting symbol of Rotary's presence and impact in our community.

We're thrilled to share that we've already received almost **\$13,200 in pledges** toward our fundraising goal of **\$25,000**. And here's something special: **donations of \$2,000 or more** will be honored with a **bronze plaque** placed at the mural site.

If you'd like to be part of this legacy project, **now is the perfect time to pledge**. Together, we'll turn 100 years of service into a beautiful piece of public art for all to enjoy!

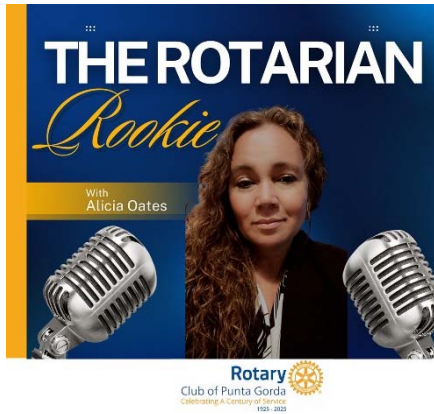


## LISTEN TO OUR ROOKIE'S PODCAST!

USE A SMARTPHONE TO READ QR CODE or the link will have you download the PODBEAN app in order to listen or visit link: [rotarian-rookie.podbean.com/](https://rotarian-rookie.podbean.com/)

### PRIZE:

The first Punta Gorda Club member to listen to this Podcast and answer the question about who influenced her to volunteerism to this cell number: text 207-400-0525 (Theresa Brackett) before 7/25/25 receive a prize at 7/25/25 club lunch meeting.



## MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP!

By Richard D Sell

2025/2026



## MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERSHIP!

(Yes, a fresh wave of leadership and a buzz of energy that's turning heads across the district, the Rotary Club of Punta Gorda is charging full speed ahead into a new Rotary year focused on one big goal: **GROWTH!**)

We're not just talking about any growth—we're on a mission to welcome **more members, younger members, and more engaged community leaders** into our club. It's about building the future of Rotary right here at home.

- **Did you know?** We offer a *special financial program* to make it easier for younger professionals to join! It's our way of saying: "We see you, and we want you on this journey with us." Curious? Just ask **Rich Sell**—he's your guy for the details!
- **We're going social, too!** We're actively recruiting on Facebook—so be sure to **like, follow, and share** our page. Check us out and help spread the word! <https://www.facebook.com/puntagordarotary>

**Come Join Us for Lunch—It's On Us!**

## Honoring Heroes: Healing Field of Honor

By Alicia C Oates

Our annual Healing Field of Honor fundraising project is underway! This powerful visual tribute at Laisley Park features 1,000 flags—each representing a veteran, first-responder, healthcare worker, Rotarian, or local hero.

The flags are available for sponsorship in honor of someone special, creating a dramatic display of unity, hope, and healing.

**New this year:** we're adding the Canadian flag to our field in honor of Remembrance Day—expanding our tribute to include our northern neighbors.

This event is more than a fundraiser—it's a moving pause for our community to reflect, express gratitude, and connect. Planning has begun, and we need your help with logistics, outreach, flag dedications, and volunteer support. Meetings are open to all club members—check the calendar at [puntagordarotary.org](https://puntagordarotary.org).

Stay tuned for sponsorship pricing and volunteer sign-up opportunities.

Let's come together to build a Healing Field that honors our heroes and uplifts our community—Rotary's mission in action!

Logo in progress! Feel free to contact Theresa Brackett with feedback.



## Where are our Exchange Students?

By Paul F. Blaine

Summer brings exciting transitions for our Rotary Youth Exchange club:



Natsuki Asano Blanca Ruiz Rian Twogood

**Natsuki (Natsu) Asano**, an inbound exchange student from Japan (2024–25), departed June 25 to celebrate her 18th birthday. She called her time with us a dream—"Charlotte High School was my dream school!" Thanks to host families Amy & Greg Thomas and Randy & Cindy Francis for making her feel at home.

**Sam Thomas**, outbound student to Brazil (2024–25), returned June 27. After a fulfilling exchange, he landed safely at RSW and will start his senior year at FSW Collegiate High School next month. Look for his fall presentation on his Brazilian experience.

**Blanca Anguiano Ruiz**, our incoming student from Spain (2025–26), arrives July 26 on Lufthansa 4392 at 5:35pm. A bright, athletic 15-year-old with excellent English, she'll be hosted by the Thomas family first. We're seeking two more host families—please reach out to help welcome Blanca!

**Rian Twogood**, outbound to Thailand (2025–26), just graduated from Charlotte High in three years with straight A's while learning Thai! Departure is likely in mid-August. We'll celebrate Rian and present her gifts at a July meeting.

For details on hosting, refer students, or recommend host families, please contact Paul Blaine at 419-305-6224.

## S4TL: Seminar for Tomorrow's Leaders

By Kristin Mangas

S4TL is a week-long, immersive leadership seminar for rising high school seniors, hosted each June at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, FL. Sponsored by Rotary clubs in Districts 6890, 6850, and 6960, it brings together up to 165 delegates to live on campus in dorms and experience college life from Father's Day through the following Saturday.

The students participate in lectures, motivational talks, "rap" sessions with Rotarians, group projects, and recreational activities — all rooted in Rotary values. Sessions cover leadership, integrity, effective communication, empowerment, decision-making, personal development, and service. Each day closes with the Rotary "4-Way Test"



Charles Marsee, Kristin Mangus, Alicia Oates, Yellow and Red Shirt attendees  
James Williams, and Aryn Frances

A unique tiered leadership model allows students to return and grow each year:

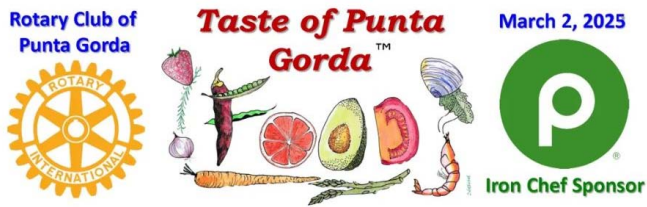
- **Yellow Shirts:** first-year delegates;
- **Red Shirts:** rising college freshmen mentoring groups of Yellow Shirts (18 selected annually);
- **White Shirts:** third-year leaders who oversee program operations (10 selected);
- **Baby Blue Shirts:** two alumni who assist the Seminar Director after a gap year

The program is managed by a board of directors and supported by senior Rotarian staff, fostering leadership growth and continuity, from delegates to senior staff.

**Experience with S4TL? Interested in sponsoring or referring students?** Contact Paul Blaine at (419)305-6224.

## 2025 Taste of Punta Gorda Success!!!

By Andrea Ariens



This year's Taste of Punta Gorda, the Punta Gorda Rotary Club's largest annual fundraiser, was a resounding success, drawing over 3,500 people to Laishley Park on Sunday, March 2, 2025. The event showcased the best of Punta Gorda's culinary scene, with local eateries and food trucks competing for top honors.

### Winners and Highlights:

- **1st Place:** The first-place winner was UnWINEd Wine & Beer Bar with their gourmet dishes that included Portuguese-style grilled octopus and meatballs
- **2nd Place:** Tamiami Tavern secured second place with their mouth-watering Beef on Weck and artfully swirled lobster bisque
- **3rd Place:** El Guero Tacos, a new brick-and-mortar establishment, took third place with their authentic tacos and birria consommé

This event wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of over 60 volunteers, including youth volunteers from the Sea Cadets, Leo Lions Club at Charlotte High School, and our very own Interact Club. All of our volunteers demonstrated exceptional commitment and teamwork, embodying the spirit of community service that defines our Rotary Club.

The Taste of Punta Gorda highlights the strong sense of community in Punta Gorda, with local businesses and community members coming together to support the Rotary Club's mission. A big shout-out to Publix Supermarkets, Crews Bank, Amerilife, Smugglers, Bankers Life, Florida Southwestern State College, Farr Law Firm, SYSCO, Suncoast Beverages, Suncoast Credit Union, Rich and Cheryl Voight, Ken Ewing, and all our other sponsors.

Mark your calendars for next year's Taste of Punta Gorda on Sunday, March 8, 2026 and join us in making an even bigger impact!





## Save the Date



- 7/10 Annual Club Foundation Meeting and Elections, 12:00 PM, Four Points Sheraton
- 7/21 Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting, 4:30-6:00 PM, Four Points Sheraton
- 7/23 Social Trivia Night with Charlotte Harbor Rotary. 5:30 PM, Moose Lodge, Port Charlotte.
- 8/16 Rotary Leadership Institute, 8:30-3:00, Woodland Middle School, North Port
- 8/25 Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting, 4:30-6:00 PM, Four Points Sheraton

9/22 Taste of Punta Gorda Team Meeting, 4:30-6:00 PM, Four Points Sheraton

11/1-2 Punta Gorda International Airshow

11/9-12 Healing Field of Honor, 9:00-5:00, Laisley Park, Punta Gorda

## RLI - Saturday August 16 - Sign Up

By Theresa Brackett



### Join us and elevate your Rotary experience!

Register NOW for Rotary Leadership Institute Gulf Coast Florida Division Parts 1,2,3.

RLI provides in-depth knowledge of Rotary and essential leadership skills that will benefit you in both your professional and volunteer endeavors. You don't need to aim for a Club President role to participate; these sessions are valuable for any Rotarian! Plus, it's a fantastic opportunity to connect with Rotarians from different clubs and exchange ideas.

Did you know your club offers reimbursement for attending these valuable sessions?

RLI Parts I, II, and III will take place on **Saturday, August 16th**, at Woodland Middle School in North Port. Check-in starts at 8:30, with classes running from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

## 2024-2025 Club Sponsors



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