



THE ROTARY ANCHOR



The Weekly Newsletter of
THE ROTARY CLUB OF NEW LONDON

District 7980 Club 6741

Chartered April 11, 1917

PO Box 654, New London, CT 06320

CLUB NEWS JANUARY 29, 2026

Upcoming Events for Rotary Club of New London

1/29 Rotary After Hours
Tony D's, New London
@ 5 PM - 7 PM

Rotary International Foundation

Giving to the Rotary International Foundation is a great way to make a difference in the lives of millions. Programs in the United States and around the world benefit from your generosity. It's easy to give through automatic withdrawals and there is no minimum—every donation matters! To donate to Rotary International, please go to myrotary.org/donate or scan the QR code below.

If you have not yet registered, you will need to log in with password. Choose amount of donation and Fund you would like it to go to. Please be sure to include Club number 6741 and your Rotary membership number. If you do not have it, please contact Ed Cramer at winetalk177@aol.com.



Community Meal Center

Our club volunteers on the **2nd Thursday of each month** to serve at CMC. Please let Anna Lathrop know if you can help, anna@gourmet-galley.com. We begin at 4pm and are done by 6:15pm. Your help is always appreciated.

Little Free Libraries

Our Little Free Libraries are in need of children and young adult books. The libraries at our parks were very busy this summer and we have depleted our supply of children's books. We have a strong flow of adult books but children books are in need. Please pass on to your family, friends and neighbors for children and young adult book donations.

We are happy to pick up or they can be dropped off at the Lighthouse Inn. Contact Val West (westv8804@gmail.com) or Gail MacDonald (gbraccimac@gmail.com)

*"I help people as a work on myself,
and I work on myself to help people."*

— Ram Dass

Rotary projects around the world

Philippines

An auto repair program that trains electric vehicle technicians at a Philippine university is getting a boost from the Rotary Club of Iloilo. With the support of a \$32,000 Rotary Foundation global grant, the club provided equipment that is benefiting more than 300 students and faculty members, says Herman Lagon, a club member and college spokesperson. The university also plans to offer community-based training for youths and adults, with a goal of reaching 120 trainees annually through 2028, he says. The club partnered with the Rotary Club of Namweon Central in Korea. "The grant is of great help for the studies of the poor but deserving students, as well as a genuine service to the community," Lagon says.

TODAY'S PROGRAM

ROTARY AFTER HOURS

at Tony D's
NO NOON MEETING

Weekly Meeting 12:00 Noon

at THE LIGHTHOUSE INN
6 West Guthrie Place, New London

Feb 5 Marvin Espy

Feb 12 Member
Appreciation Week

Feb 19 Evening Meeting
No Noon Meeting

For those unable to attend in person, please join us for our weekly Rotary meeting via Zoom. Go to [ZOOM.COM](https://zoom.com) and click "JOIN A MEETING" and enter the info below.

ID: 889 4401 1589
PW: 573867

GREETER / SONG LEADER

Jan 29 RAH - No Noon Meeting
Feb 5 Christine Hammond
Feb 12 Mel Foti

BIRTHDAYS

Jan 29 Mildred Devine

ANNIVERSARIES

None

CLUB NEWS JANUARY 22, 2026

COMMUNITY SERVICE AN ESSENTIAL FOR MACDONALD

New London Rotary Club's President-Elect Gail B. MacDonald first experienced the rewards of community service while she was in high school.

An Interact Club was established at Windham High School where she was a student, and she not only joined, but became its president. The club raised money to sponsor a child living in poverty in a developing country and to support the World Wildlife Fund's efforts to end the practice of killing baby seals.

"I also recall another project in which members of our club visited residents of a local nursing home," MacDonald said. "One friend and I were paired with a resident who had been an artist, but had lost interest in the pursuit. We would draw and paint with her to try to rekindle her interest."

While it was not until many years later that MacDonald joined New London Rotary in 2022, community service remained an important endeavor to her in the intervening years.

"I stayed focused on serving the community because it was also a huge focus for my husband," she said, referring to Bruce MacDonald, who was president-elect of New London Rotary when he died on June 1, 2022. "He was president of the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center for years and was always ready to help anyone in need. It also was important to us to raise our daughter with an emphasis on giving back. We were so proud when our daughter and a friend sponsored a Peanut Butter Day food drive at their elementary school. They were only in second or third grade."

MacDonald grew up in the rural community of Willington, Connecticut, located near the University of Connecticut's main campus in Storrs. She graduated from Windham High School in 1977 and then earned her bachelor's degree from UConn, graduating in 1981.

She studied journalism at UConn and began working as a newspaper reporter for The Chronicle of Willimantic while still in college. She was a summer reporting intern at The Day of New London in 1980 and was hired there as a full-time reporter in 1981.

She loved the newsroom atmosphere and using her writing and reporting skills to tell meaningful stories that kept the public informed. She especially enjoyed writing about local history and stories that focused on the powerless.



In 1986, shortly after they married, she and Bruce traveled to the poorest country in the western hemisphere - Haiti. They lived there for several months, meeting all types of people dedicated to helping the Haitians. They worked as freelance writers telling these people's stories.

MacDonald was especially proud of one story they sold to a newspaper in Peoria, Illinois. That story focused on a retired Peoria doctor who was living and working in Haiti. The article resulted in a large donation being made to install a water system in a Port-au-Prince slum.

After leaving daily newspaper work, MacDonald spent many years as a freelance writer. She wrote articles for many newspapers and magazines and was a regular contributor to The New York Times and Hartford Courant. She won journalism awards for some of her articles, including one about the lack of mental health services for children in Connecticut.

In 1990, MacDonald returned to school to earn a master's degree in journalism with the goal of teaching journalism at the college level. The family moved to Arlington, Virginia so she could complete her degree at American University in Washington, D.C. They returned to Connecticut a few years later when Bruce got a job with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. She was later hired as a journalism professor in residence at UConn, from which she retired in January 2025.

MacDonald was long active in the town of Stonington, where the family lived for 25 years in the village of Pawcatuck. She served in many capacities related to the public schools while their daughter Cara was growing up, and was elected three times to the Stonington Board of Education. In 2017, she and Bruce relocated to New London.

In addition to journalism, MacDonald loves history, has led history-themed tours for the Thames River Heritage Park and at Cedar Grove Cemetery and is working to help establish a tour business in New London. She also has written three history-focused books. Her third book, "Abolitionists of the Northeast, Black Leaders of the Antislavery Movement" will be published in April by Globe-Pequot.

CLUB NEWS JANUARY 22, 2026

CLUB SUPPORTS NEW LONDON LIBRARY

The Rotary Club of New London honored four of its members through support of the Public Library of New London's Adopt-A-Book fundraiser. This project is in concert with Rotary's focus on the promotion of literacy and sharing the gift of reading.

The honors were announced at the club meeting on Jan. 22.

The honorees and books chosen are:

- In memory of Rotarian Margaret Mary Curtin, who died in November, *"Own It! Lessons Every Woman Should Know."*
- In honor of Carmelo Foti, club president in 2024 - 2025, *"Master Of Rome; A Life of Julius Caesar."*
- In honor of Julia Kushigian Secor, founder of the club's Little Free Library program, *"Remain A Supernatural Love Story."*
- In honor of Victoria Mueller, Rotarian and member of the library's Board of Directors, *"The Gift of the Broken Teacup."*



In December 2025, the Rotary Club of New London continued its tradition of providing a free book to New London students during the holiday season. The transitional kindergarteners at Jennings School were chosen to receive the book "Oh the Things You Can Do That Are Good for You! All About Staying Healthy," by local author Tish Rabe. The books were provided to 43 students in time for the winter break. This nonfiction book is from The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library.

ROTARY HONORS NL POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Officer Anna Agnew was honored as the New London Police Officer of the Year at a luncheon hosted by the Rotary Club of New London.

"She's well loved in the police department and exemplifies quintessential service," Police Chief Brian Wright said in making the award. "She demonstrates an exceptional level of professionalism and her impact on the city is profound."

In a written statement announcing the choice of Agnew to receive the honor, Wright wrote: "Through keen investigative instincts and a tireless work ethic, Officer Agnew has achieved successful outcomes across a diverse range of critical cases, including a homicide investigation, multiple gun seizures, armed robberies, and vehicle theft cases. Her diligent work has directly removed dangerous weapons from our streets, helped solve violent crimes, and provided essential intelligence for ongoing investigations. These efforts have significantly enhanced public safety and quality of life throughout New London.

"Beyond proactive enforcement, Officer Agnew distinguishes herself through a deep commitment to community policing. By fostering genuine relationships with the citizens we serve, Officer Agnew embodies the vital balance between rigorous law enforcement and community-



oriented service. This approach honors the finest traditions of our profession while moving it forward into a future built on mutual trust, transparency, and partnership."

In accepting the award and citations from the department, the City of New London and the Rotary Club of New London, Agnew thanked those present, and said she was speechless about the accolades.

The ceremony was organized by Rotary Past President Mel Foti, who kicked off the program with a brief history of New London Rotary and some of its service projects. He said Agnew embodied exemplary and selfless service and the Rotary-hosted program was the club's opportunity to thank all the city's police officers.

New London Mayor Michael Passero noted that the Police Officer of the Year ceremony was long hosted by the local VFW. He said he is happy to see Rotary now picking up this important event.

"The police are unsung heroes," he said.

The luncheon was attended by numerous members of the police department, as well as Agnew's family, city officials and Rotarians.

Club Officers, 2025-2026

President Mary Lenzini
President-Elect Gail MacDonald
Vice President Chris Neilan
Secretary Kristin Magnussen
Treasurer Alan Lyon
Sergeant-at-Arms John Estelle
Immediate Past President Carmelo Foti

Board Of Directors

2026 Andrew Gilday, Tracee Reiser, Mark Spinnato
 2027 Gigi Gonzalez-Cottrell, Robert Duleau, Ed Cramer
 2028 Sirisota Belgium, Gary Decker, Valerie West

Club Committees

Youth Service
Valerie West, *Director*

Membership
Gail Macdonald, *Director*

Classification Kris Magnussen
Fellowship/RAH Valerie West
Recruitment Jerry Fischer
Orientation Ed Cramer/Andy Russell

Community Services
Gigi Gonzalez Cottrell, *Director*

Literacy Valerie West
Little Free Libraries Robert Duleau
Yale-Harvard Regatta Lee Cole Chu
Food Insecurity Anna Lathrop

International Service
Jerry Fischer, *Director*

Peace Building Tracee Reiser

Rotary Club Service
Lee Cole-Chu, *Director*

Finance Committee Carmelo Foti
Awards Leader Mary Lenzini
Nominating Ed Cramer
Anchor Brian Cole
Sunshine Brian Cole
Program Chris Neilan
Greeters/Song Leaders Gail MacDonald
Fundraising Gail MacDonald
Golf Alex Marku, Kate Lee
Brewfest Victoria Mueller, Keith Turner
By-Laws Lee Cole Chu
Picnic Valerie West
Anchor Ad Sales Andy Russell
Installation Victoria Mueller
Information/Communication/
Public Relations Kris Magnussen
Rotary International Foundation Ed Cramer

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