

# North Notes

## Spokane-North Rotary Club

February 10, 2025

- **Feb. 17:** No meeting – Presidents Day Holiday
- **Feb. 24:** Noon meeting. Speaker to be announced.

### Announcements:

- **Janine** asked on behalf of Laura that more members sign up for the Habitat for Humanity volunteer opportunity on March 1st.
- **Ron** shared that Holmes Elementary was thankful for the new die stamps funded by the club. He also asked about the usefulness of the new washer and dryer our club funded. He was told that they were particularly useful after a recent chocolate milk incident proved their value for helping deal with clothing emergencies.
- **Chuck** will be out for a few weeks with his broken leg; we are all sending our best wishes.

### Happy Bucks:

- **John** will be happy to turn 81 next Sunday.
- **Lenore** was happy to have celebrated **Bob**'s birthday on February 8<sup>th</sup>.
- **Ron** was happy for **Teresa** and **Dena**'s involvement with the Holmes Heros Assembly.
- **Dena** was happy to be filling out her Rotary Membership application and for the opportunity to attend Holmes Heros.
- **Teresa** was happy to have attended the Holmes Heros assembly.
- **Jessica** was happy to see her parents and to bring her dad home from the hospital.
- **Paulette** was happy for the sunshine.
- **Lenore** was happy everyone had a great time at the Spokesman Tour.
- **Sheila** was \$5 happy for our guests from the Fire District.
- **Bill** was happy for his hearing test and new hearing aids.

## Extreme Measures at our Borders

For approximately 9 months in 2023-2024, Spokane North Rotarian Paulette Burgess performed legal aid work assisting migrants who were arrested while seeking asylum in response to Texas Governor Greg Abbot's "Operation Lone Star." She was able to work remotely, meeting with clients via Zoom.

Operation Lone Star authorized a Texas state of emergency to respond to the border crisis and unlawful entry into the United States. This was the governor's



attempt to address and regulate immigration over and above the efforts being put forth by the U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE).

The state of emergency increased the category of crime under Texas law, making it illegal to trespass into the state across the Rio Grande River. As immigrants came ashore, they would be arrested. This would happen regardless of whether they came ashore on private property or public lands. Migrants included Mexicans, Latin Americans, South Americans, and even people from Europe and Asia.



*Paulette Burgess*

Under international law, migrants can lawfully enter a county to seek asylum if they are being persecuted by their government for their protected trait (i.e., race, sex, religion, speech, etc.). Asking for asylum from U.S. Border Patrol and ICE is not illegal.

Crossing the border can be extremely dangerous. Natural dangers include the weather, exposure, drowning, etc. Texas also added man-made dangers, such as buoys with saw blades preventing entrance by water. While Mexico protested these measures being implemented in international waters, Texas has persisted in maintaining them as a deterrent to unauthorized border crossings.

At times, incorrect and misguided information was shared among the migrants, and this increased the numbers of asylum seekers in Texas. Rumors included ideas such as free attorneys and legal help for everyone trying to enter the US. Among the more outlandish rumors, many were told that they arrived in September, they would be granted entrance.

Paulette would typically meet migrants over Zoom, many of which believed they were detained by the federal government/ICE. U.S. law allows for those fleeing their homelands to approach border agents and request asylum. While asylum is not always granted, those being denied entry would be simply turned away – and not charged with a crime. In the case of those arrested by Texas State Troopers, they were charged with a crime and jailed.

As their appointed attorney, Paulette had to inform these individuals that they were being charged with a crime and would have to post bail to be released to ICE for their asylum request.

Based on word-of-mouth advice within the immigrant community, all of Paulette's clients pled no contest to the trespassing charges and were assessed a fine and some jail time (often just "time served.") Once released, they did not want to return to Texas for a hearing/trial.

Paulette summed up her experience by expressing frustration at the bureaucracy that allows such situations to occur. The meeting ran long, so there was no time for follow-up questions and discussion.

*Bulletin editors: Alexia Johnston and Scott McKorkle. Photos by Janine McKorkle.*