



the CLARIFIER

CLAREMONT ROTARY NEWSLETTER

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Claremont Rotary Year 92 | Week 4 | July 24, 2020

Program: Stepping Stool Coaching—From Conflict to Connection

By Lark Gerry

Susie Ilsley introduced **Leah Zimmerman**, a proud native New Yorker, who moved to California in 2007 when her husband was offered a tenure track position at UC-Riverside. She has served as Director of Education for ten years at two synagogue schools, Temple Beth Israel of Pomona, and Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC) in Los Angeles, established in the 1970's. The name is Hebrew, translated means House of New Light. She comes from a big Jewish family, in which two people will yield three opinions. She is married to a scholar of Arabic language and literature. They have lived in Cairo and Beirut, so she has bridged many difficult conversations through serious long term disagreements.

In 2017 she shifted into coaching. Leah founded Stepping Stool coaching, and is a certified Executive Coach who specializes in communication and leadership development. She works with small and family business owners who want to grow their business and have an impact on the world by stepping up their leadership, presence, and communication skills. She believes that we all have the capacity to communi-



cate in a way that influences, inspires, and impacts others. Leah believes that when we do, we can effect more change in the world than we can ever imagine possible. The world needs and deserves to hear all of our voices. Leah has worked with people in schools, churches, family businesses and other areas where community conversations may become difficult, regarding, for example, political differences and relationships.

Having visited the Club many times, Leah said that she has an idea about how this group, a very civic minded group, may handle difficult community conversations and disagreements. Most of us want lots of connections. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could connect and have a relationship with the whole world? Yet, "connected" is generally not how it feels when you are in a room with someone who disagrees with you. Difficult conversations are different for different people. It could be driven by the topic, or maybe the relationship.

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Watch It!

[Here is the link to the meeting recording](#) for July 24th featuring "Difficult Conversations."

Password: 99T=r#Gx

Next Zoom Meeting

Zoom link to Friday
<https://kgi.zoom.us/j/5977425915>

Chaos and Ash, Ken Johnson is the program.

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Rotary, The Meeting

By Harry Sparrow

The meeting started with the usual banter. **Buff** then sent us off to our breakout sessions, suggesting as a question for discussion, “what does our club want to be known for?” When we came back there was an informal contest, started by **Ron Coleman**, regarding who had the best breakout session. It sounded like all of the sessions were rewarding and fun. There’s still work to be done on refining our image!



Announcements

Anita Hughes reported that she is still awaiting inputs from 20 members regarding committee interests. Once committee assignments are made, we will be able to publish the Directory. Members who don’t respond by Anita’s deadline will be given appropriate assignments.



Earlier in the week Rotary International announced that an upgrade of the [MyRotary](#) website will be launched before the end of July. This is a useful tool that most of us (about 60%) don’t take advantage of. While we may not all be anxious to routinely browse another website, this one has useful information including a record of your donations to Rotary International; valuable information at tax time. Importantly, it is also a source of inspiration in that it highlights examples of service from around the world.



At this month’s board meeting, the board approved several new honorary members. These included **Willis (Bill) McAllister**, **Ron Murphy** and Interact faculty advisors **David Sawhill** (CHS Interact) and **Heather Lyn** (El Roble Interact). Bill retired from the club just this month after being a member for 41 plus years; he is a Paul Harris fellow many times over. Ron was with our club at the beginning and end of his 31 years



Welcome Guests and Visiting Rotarians

Chris Naticchia is running for the school board in Claremont. He provided a brief overview of his background. He will be invited to a future meeting with the two other candidates for the Claremont school board where they will all have a chance to explain their priorities for the board and why they would be effective members of the board.



Inspiration for the Day by Pres. Buff

In the context of wondering what big project we might start given current restrictions, consider this story linked from the Clarifier last week. Felix Finkbeiner set a goal to plant 1 million trees in Germany when he was in the fourth grade. He started by planting a tree in front of his school, which he posted with a comment about his goal. This quickly went viral and gained international media attention. He was invited to speak to the European Parliament and attended a number of conferences. He reached his goal of 1 million trees in 2011 when he was 13. He is now 19 and through his organization, “Plant the Planet” and the UN’s Billion Tree campaign, he has planted over 14 billion trees in over 130 countries. His new goal is to plant 1 trillion trees. His organization has trained over 55 thousand ambassadors on how to become climate activists in their hometowns. Most of the trainees are between 9 and 12 years of age. Humbling!

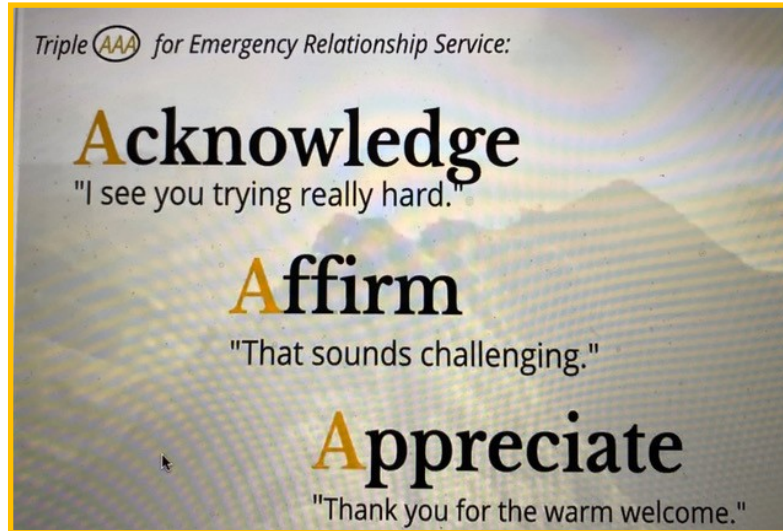


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Stepping Stool Coaching

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Leah explained steps that may help resolve issues. First among them is to establish a connection and an idea for moving ahead. Do you often feel like you are having a boxing match of words? Or like you are working really hard on something that won't go, like talking to a wall? The masks we put on and the way we protect ourselves when we brace for an argument can change a conversation. How many of us have the need to be right and are afraid of being wrong? We come to arguments with stories. Even when the conversation is topical, we are still coming with a story like: this person never listens; I am always the one who...; you never, etc.. People are often on different pages of different books in the same conversation with different stories, in short, they are having different conversations together! Leah learned, having lived in the Middle East, with the narrative of



multiple perspectives, to understand where each voice fits into so that there can be just one conversation. She related her experience of living in upper Manhattan, then moving in her twenties to Austin, Texas to teach school. She found herself in a sea of blonde kids in the school, where books were banned and being burned. The puzzle was also that theirs

were different stories. Once she understood their stories, things changed and they started to connect.

What might change if we approached each conversation with the opportunity to build a connection instead of conflict? What if we approach a conversation with the emphasis on relationship instead of emphasis of being right, or having made a really good argument. This is when it

starts to change, this is when we can connect. Something changes when we listen in order to understand instead of speaking to be heard. So here is the reality: what we like, what do we often feel at the end of an argument or in a conversation? We don't feel hurt. We don't feel vulnerable. We feel alone and don't feel we are connecting, which can hurt the rela-

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Rotary, The Meeting

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in Rotary; he is a Paul Harris Fellow plus eight, which means he has given at least \$8,000 to Rotary International. These four join 11 continuing honorary members--all are Paul Harris Fellows.

The board also approved allocation of a \$5,000 bequest from our friend Doug McGoon to the Foundation. Doug, a club member, died in May 2019.



The board still hasn't set a budget, but approved the use of the 2019 Taste of Claremont revenue in accord with Board policy, along with other club donations for Club projects and donations this year, pending discussions about ongoing spending priorities and reserves. To be continued.

Cameron Troxell announced that there is an upcoming work project to help Uncommon Good. The project involves planting small trees to replace old citrus trees that were removed from San Antonio High School grounds. The work also includes design and build of some simple shade structures to protect the trees. Anyone interested in planting trees or in the building of the shade structures should let Cameron know.



INTERACT: Bridget Healy reported on a recent Zoom meeting of the Interact officers that included Bret O'Conner. There will be no on campus Interact meetings in phase 1 of this fall's school session. Bridget remind-

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Sergeant Sparrow Reports for Duty

Harry had asked his fellow sergeants if they had any good inputs for him and they, of course, had many “fine” ideas.

He started by calling on **Lark Gerry**, because the day of the meeting was also the date of her 5th anniversary as a club member. Further, Sunday was **Barbara Troxell’s** 1st anniversary.



Mike DeWees was called out next. Harry said he didn’t know whether to fine him or reward him for finally getting a haircut. Someone asked Mike how he had managed get it cut when barber shops and salons are shut down again. He said the he found a place in the “wild west” (AKA Orange County).

Harry said that the word was out about some form of an eastern Sierra experience had by **Nick Quackenbos, Jerry Tambe and Lee Goldstein**. Per Jerry, Lee was the instigator of this combination camping and off-roading trip.

John Tulac was fined for his delayed impact joke of
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Meeting Chatter

Bernadette Kendall had a little fun with **Steve Schenk**. Steve’s virtual background showed two baby pictures. Bernadette wanted to know which was Steve’s new grandson, Harry. They both were, he just couldn’t pick one picture over the other.

Buff was reminded by **PP Bobby Hyde** that we are a singing club, inspiring **PP Ron Coleman**, our music chair, to look into how to better control/sync our singing. The zoom fix did-n’t help much, though **Chris Shaner** did a great job of trying to lead us in the Smile song.



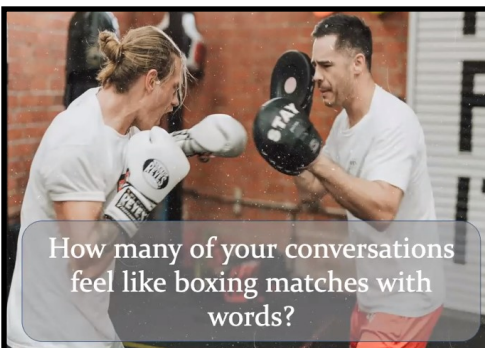
There is still a long way to go to figure out how to get everyone singing at once. **PP Ian Standley** suggested via chat that we consider the “follow the bouncing ball” as Ron has done in the past. Another suggestion

was that since Bobby was the one who brought this to Buff, he should sing a solo next time. (a lot of PPs in this paragraph!)

Stepping Stool Coaching

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tionship. Often we feel the need to protect ourselves when we get heated, if we let go of that energy we think we would feel powerless; We’re afraid to be wrong; we need to be right. It is really important to acknowledge that the reason we do the things we do, is because of all experiences we’ve had, all the influences thus far, and the ideology we grew up with. Leah said that in her early twenties, she argued about Israel prior to living there with her husband. She argued exactly the ideology she grew up



How many of your conversations feel like boxing matches with words?

with, however, as she was exposed to new experiences, travelling, reading books, and living abroad, things start to shift, her viewpoint

began to soften. The things you grew up with are never your fault (or the other person’s), but they are always your responsibility. We can’t change other people or our history, but we can always take responsibility for where we are right now and how we deal with the things that are coming our way. So, what you should focus on is how you take responsibility for your side in the conversation even if you can’t change the other person’s mind, you can’t control other people.

Coming from a family that argues about being right, and wherein intellectual strength is kind of a currency, and getting noticed, this was a really big learning curve for Leah. At some point she realized that she didn’t have to argue with her grandmother to be right. She could at some point just listen and acknowledge her conversation. How much more pleasant that was. She learned she did not have to continue arguing all the time. So, when she was at Temple Beth Israel as Education Director, she could do things that would upset some people there and toward the last year, she upset someone a lot which

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Stepping Stool Coaching

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resulted in negativity directed at her. It made it better that she understood where the person was coming from. She took responsibility for how she reacted in the conflict.

Leah shared five steps to move people from conflict to connection. These seemingly simple steps take practice to perfect. Sometimes connection can happen in midst of a conversation, but this tool supposes that one has time to prepare in advance of a difficult conversation. The steps require time and practice, so she urges us to be patient with ourselves. The five C steps include Calibrate what is going on; Connect with intention; Clarify – investigate, get curious about where people come from; Collaborate to come to an understanding; and Create.

Leah explained elements that help us move from Conflict to Connection. Important to Connection is the **power of Intention**. If you intend to connect, things are more likely to work out. She illustrated with her experience of living in Egypt and then in Lebanon. She didn't tell people up front that she was Jewish, but at a certain point, when people clearly assumed she was Christian in conversations, she told them with the intention to connect more deeply. She didn't argue for herself, but just made the connection, and with that as background, rather than put up their armor in sight of potential conflict, they began to see her and her story differently.

Next is to **breathe**. Taking a moment and not having to respond right away, giving yourself a moment to breathe can provide a reset. It's available to us at every moment at any time.

The third is **navigating your emotions**. We often try to control our emotions and we often get mixed up that we think we are our emotions. I am sad. I am angry, whereas "I feel sad" and "I feel angry" are really different things. In conflict and when we're up-

set, the importance of sorting out our emotions is evident. If we get caught up in the storm, the conversation becomes storm.

Most of us know that we should **actively listen and repeat** as opposed to listening for our turn to talk. Having someone really listen and understand where we're coming from makes it look and feel like they're

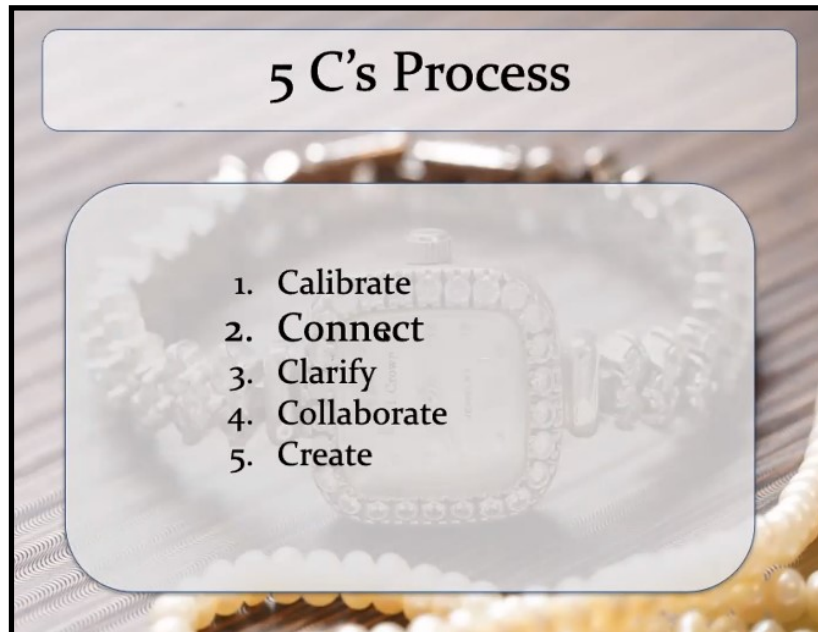
really listening to us. Think about how that shifts for you and realize that you always have the power to create that shift for somebody else. And then say back what you've heard. For example, when you can just say, I heard you say that you're really angry about the police, someone will feel heard and they might keep talking. And when another feels you are truly listening, you gain the ability through the connection

to have more impact in the conversation.

In her presentations, she uses a triple A system, like the triple A for emergency roadside service, Leah calls this emergency relationship service. The three A's are: Acknowledge (You showed up! You're trying really hard.); Affirm (That sounds challenging) and Appreciate (Thank you for the warm welcome!) She noted that we do this at every Rotary meeting.

You will see that relationships change when you do this with other people, you will naturally become more influential and more of a leader among them. This is the big change. Leah invited us to consider

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[Rotarians4NuclearBan](https://forms.gle/h21amFvpNkPvq3m26) invites you to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the US bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki. [Register for August 5 and August 10 sessions at: https://forms.gle/h21amFvpNkPvq3m26](https://forms.gle/h21amFvpNkPvq3m26)

Rotary, The Meeting

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ed us that Bernadette had talked about club members possibly attending Interact meetings. This means that for the foreseeable future anyone interested will have to attend via Zoom. The next Interact officer's meeting will be August 13 at 5 pm; Bridget will send a link for the meeting. At the recent meeting the Interactors also discussed potential service projects in the context of Covid 19. One of the projects they were thinking about is tree planting, but per the city, there will be none this year, which makes Cameron's San Antonio High tree planting project a good one for the Interact club. Bridget was told the City's tree project was cancelled due to the combination of Covid 19 and that tree planting is grant funded; they are near the end of available grant funding. Other Interact update info included how to conduct the rush program for new members in the Covid 19 environment and the possibility of having Interact members serve as link crew members; the latter is where upperclassmen are matched with incoming freshmen.

AND TREES: Buff mentioned that the city having to put tree planting on hold might be something for our club to think about, especially if we could join with the Interact members (at both schools) with all of the youthful energy and enthusiasm. Buff gave **Susie Ilsley's** grandmother a shout out because of the instrumental role she played in getting trees planted throughout Claremont.



Mark Carson spoke up saying that this form of effort is something he will want on his agenda as he plans for his year as president (2021-22) of the Club.

John Howland mentioned that

there had been plans to do some planting at the California Botanic Garden, placing plants known to attract bees on both sides of a path. He recommended that we also include this planting project in our plans, in consultation with **Lucinda McDade**.

Fine Time

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last week. After Lark told us about her bike trip to the Shake Shack at the coast, John said, "The San Andreas also has great shakes."

Pat Hauducoeur was called out for not having show a full appreciation of John Tulac's efforts last week. In a happy hour prior to our July 17 meeting Pat told a story that included reference to her "big as a tank" 55 Mercury. John signed into the meeting on the 17th with a 55 Mercury as part of his virtual background. Harry said that when Pat was talking about her Mercury she mentioned a Karmann Ghia and Harry's grandson wanted to know who she is? It turns out Pat's sister, who always wanted to borrow Pat's car, coveted owning a Karmann Ghia.

Mary Segawa was happy to pay a fine to talk about her daughter, re-



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Stepping Stool Coaching

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whether instead of trying to convince somebody of a position, we engage in conversation to move towards understanding

Leah ended by noting that when we really know how to speak and be heard and we know how to listen to other people in the world, and we make room for all our stories and all our perspectives, we become a group of voices that you're singing at the same time not on zoom. **"Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control over instead of craving control over what you don't."** - Steve Maraboli.

Leah received warm, appreciative applause. This was a profound and necessary conversation that should help each of us.

Ron Coleman asked a question about Dialectical Behavior Therapy, used particularly for people with Borderline Personality Disorders. He and Leah seemed to connect after some discussion! Introducing such disorders certainly creates a whole new layer of challenges in making connections, but a lot of the steps Leah discussed will help in any relationship.

Fine Time

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cently home from Qatar. Her daughter, a lieutenant in the Air Force, just returned two weeks ago from what was supposed to be a 6 month deployment with a return in April. The return got delayed because of Covid-19, but she is now back and just finished her quarantine period.



Tom Shelly was asked to talk about what he had discovered missing from the parks. Tom had noticed that there are no poop bags for our dogs in the local parks. He didn't know why, but had shared this piece

of information with others and was, accordingly, fined.

Ian Standley was quizzed on what is happening with all of the Mars launches (China, UAE and next week USA). Ian said that it is only once every two years that Mars is in the right position relative to Earth for missions to be launched; so, it is a now or wait two years thing. Ian then said that they are hoping that the mission he is involved with will be extended for another five years. In just a few months



will be the second anniversary of when their seismometers began working on Mars. He is also working on a project involving [Jupiter's moon Europa](#).

Francis Limbe (almost on camera) was asked to talk about his good works in

South Sudan. Francis said that in southern Sudan there is much chaos and extreme humanitarian issues. He and his group are focusing on clean water, agriculture and education.

In the next week they will be conducting a survey in various villages. He will update us soon on their findings.

Harry mentioned that a number of club members had recently gotten some press and airtime. [Ned and](#)



[Chrissie Paniagua](#), who weren't at the meeting, were in an article in the 7/16 Courier as was [Frank Bedoya](#).



Frank said he had been involved in a "marathon" 6 hour and 10 minute police commission meeting. This has to do with ongoing issues between the police department and the police commission. (is that a mug shot?)

[Nona Tirre](#) and her son were involved in an interview about the

upcoming fall school term, still in an online format. The subject was how they will manage as a family around work and school.



Nona said that since both she and her husband can work from home it is less difficult for them than those who can't do this. As a family they are going to emphasize the positives involved with the circumstances.

Harry said that he had planned to end on an upbeat note by asking **Bill Burrows** to reprise his Wolfman Jack imitation, but since Bill wasn't at the meeting Harry said he would end on a silly note. He fined Buff for placing the only two



people with bird names **Lark Gerry** and himself (**Sparrow**) in the same breakout room two weeks in a row. (and ascribes for the meeting!)

Nona and Ned photos by Courier staff.

