



Fun is fundamental

Rotary Club of Jefferson City Evening, Missouri

Chartered: 2002

Original membership: 24

Membership: 26

PIONEERING GRIT:

The plan for Missouri's capital was laid out by Daniel Morgan Boone, a son of the American frontiersman. The Rotary Club of Jefferson City Evening takes that trailblazing temperament to heart, combining it with a strong sense of service. A small roster is no obstacle to a club that has mustered an outsize influence in District 6080, where four members serve in leadership positions.

In 2011, Nick Rackers, a horticulture instructor, was tapped by the president of the college where he teaches to apply for a Group Study Exchange trip to Australia. His Rotarian hosts proved that merriment and business can mix. "They like to poke fun," Rackers says, recalling a "fines" collection in which he and other visitors were hardly immune from the gentle hazing. "I won't call it bullying — it was never mean-spirited, and they all loved each other. They picked on me like I was just one of the group. You just wanted to hang out there. You wanted to have fun with those people."

The experience convinced him that he, too, might enjoy being a Rotarian. He visited Jefferson City's clubs and settled on the evening club. "He picked it because he felt that passion. I did, too," says Joan Kramer, a past club president who, since joining Rotary in 1997, has also served as president of the Rotary Club of Jefferson City Breakfast. Kramer had to leave that club because of her work schedule. In addition to the evening club's amenable schedule, her new club offered other positives.

The new flexibility of RI rules around meetings and attendance has helped the club. "You don't have to pressure people to be there every week. Once they realize that there's a variety of ways they can be involved, then you have a better chance of keeping them," notes Kramer. And the club places a high value on family, encouraging members to bring their children to meetings and events.

CLUB INNOVATION:

Generating generosity and enthusiasm, orientation sessions expose newcomers to the breadth of Rotary's work. Casual, lighthearted meetings, members believe, have resulted in heightened engagement. Low dues and no fixed meal costs mean more money can be directed toward projects and donations to The Rotary Foundation: The club consistently ranks among the Show Me State's top givers to the Foundation.

Looking beyond the club itself has been a boon, too. "Ever since I joined, we always had members who would be a district chair of something," Rackers says. "You can bring that back to your club, and your club is more connected to the Rotary world." He notes that two members have served as co-administrative directors of their three-district Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and that he has been a RYLA counselor for four years.

Club members have also proven to be great supporters of The Rotary Foundation. The club was a 100% Paul Harris Fellow Club in 2010-11, and four members belong to the Paul Harris Society.

The club has limited dues to \$160 a year. An Uno tournament with 48 contestants in March brought in about \$1,000, and weekly 50-50 raffles help raise revenue. The lower cost structure is a plus, says Joseph Meystrik, club president-elect, but the good times keep things rolling. Members venture offsite for occasional meetings to such locales as an aviation center to check out a flight simulator, and the local military history museum.

—BRAD WEBBER



From top: Club members participate in a Habitat for Humanity project and dig into a tree-planting event.

Are you looking for more ideas on how your club can reinvent itself? Go to rotary.org/flexibility.

To share your ideas with us,
email club.innovations@rotary.org.