

Rotary Club of Kalamazoo: A Century of Service

Chartered 1915: The Kalamazoo Rotary Club is chartered and begins its first service project, Lake Farm for Boys, now Lakeside Academy.

Prosperity Week, 1915: Rotarians supported “Prosperity Week,” an exposition held in 1915 *to promote* Kalamazoo products.

World War I Era: In 1917 the Club sent money to starving Frenchmen, aided the Kalamazoo Cribside Association, helped the Big Brothers and started the Kalamazoo Red Cross. In 1919 the Club pledged the large sum of \$2,000 to Pretty Lake Camp and an equal amount to the Boy Scouts.

Camp Roto-Kiwan 1919: A joint meeting of Rotary and the two years old Kiwanis Club produced \$5,000 to start a Boy Scout camp at Bass Lake christened Camp Roto-Kiwan.

Douglass Community Center: The club was a strong moral and financial supporter of the Douglass Community Center founded in 1919 to meet the cultural and social needs of African American soldiers returning to a segregated Kalamazoo after World War I.

Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, 1920s: High culture received due attention, for the Club supported the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra.

Harold Upjohn School, 1940: Lake Farm and Camps Roto-Kiwan and Pretty Lake continued to receive strong support, as did the new Harold Upjohn School for Crippled Children.

Stage Door Canteen, 1944: Sixty-one members, or about one-half, were in some branch of the active services. On the home front the Club united with the USO to run the Stage Door Canteen for troops at Fort Custer.

Kalamazoo Exposition, 1950: Rotary sponsored the Greater Kalamazoo Exposition, a big trade-show style promotion for the entire community.

Bronco Football, 1954: The first year that Club members sold tickets to Western Michigan University’s home football opener, keeping a percentage of the money for the Club’s treasury. WMU had a sell-out for the first time and the Club netted from \$4,000 to \$8,000 annually.

Children’s Initiatives, 1958: The Club adopted a Vietnamese orphan and contributed to the Kalamazoo Association for Retarded Children.

50th Anniversary Celebration: In 1964 Kalamazoo Rotary celebrated with due ceremony at the County Center Building on November 13. The 1960’s saw a range of 50th anniversary projects.

Kalamazoo College, 1960s: The socially-conscious 60’s witnessed new directions in service for our Club. Kalamazoo College became a significant beneficiary of Rotary’s generosity.

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Camp Merry Wood, 1967: The Club committed to a five year, \$60,000 project for capital improvements at the Camp Merry Wood Girl Scout complex.

Kalamazoo Nature Center Earthmobile, 1960s: The Kalamazoo Nature Center received a significant boost for its outreach educational program when the Club presented it with the *Earthmobile*, a converted school bus.

Project Hope, 1971: Kalamazoo Rotary along with Portage Rotary and South Kalamazoo Rotary raise funds for *the* S.S. Hope Hospital Ship.

Downtown Community Support, 1975: The Club commits to holding meetings in the newly constructed Kalamazoo Center as part of downtown revitalization.

Community and World Service, 1980s: In 1981, gifts of life saving equipment to Borgess Medical Center and Bronson Methodist Hospital. The Club also makes gifts to Gryphon Place (counseling resources to emotionally desperate people).

Polio Eradication. Following the successful elimination of polio cases in 1987 by means of universal vaccination, Rotarians worldwide aided vaccinations through effective immunization campaigns. At that time there were over 300,000 cases annually; in 2018 there are 18 cases (14+4).

Belize and Casa Amparo, 1990s: In 1992 Rotarians from District 6360 deliver a caravan of ambulances, fire trucks and school buses to Belize, a journey of 2,984 miles. In 1994 Kalamazoo Rotarians travel to Reynosa, Mexico to build a playground at Casa Amparo.

Rotary Stage, 1997-2000: To mark the Millennium, the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo partners with foundations and donors to raise \$750,000 for a permanent stage at Bronson Park.

Community and World Service, 2000s: The Rotary Club of Kalamazoo establishes an endowment to support the teacher position at Casa Amparo, an orphanage for girls in Reynosa, Mexico – one girl brought here for cardiac surgery, all costs handled by Rotarians. The Kalamazoo Rotaract Club is formed in 2009 and continues the tradition of service through projects involving the Salvation Army, Loaves and Fishes, Casa Amparo and Habitat for Humanity. The Rotary Club of Kalamazoo is among groups providing water filters in Haiti and literacy projects at home.

The Rotary Club of Kalamazoo Centennial, 2015: More than 200 Rotarians and guests gathered at Western Michigan University's Fetzer Center to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo. Highlights of the evening included a visit by Rotary International President Ravi Ravindran who personally congratulated 35 Kalamazoo Rotarians on becoming Paul Harris Fellows during the club's centennial year.

Satellite Club, 2018: Sponsored by Rotary Club of Kalamazoo in October 2018.