

Harbor Country Rotary News

On February 17 the speaker was Tom Rosenbluth. He is a member of the District's DEI Committee and spoke about ways thinking about diversity can help our club, any Rotary club, become more responsive and, potentially have a greater impact.

He began by talking about the notion of the "null curriculum" meaning the topics or voices not present in a teaching curriculum. He emphasized that one narrative rarely does justice to a story or an issue and it is important to think about perspectives not heard. He gave several examples of how this relates to diversity and decision making. For example, if a community was contemplating building a hospital but only talked to senior citizens there would probably be a wonderful gerontology wing but less focus on a maternity ward or pediatrics. Similarly, creating an immigration policy without including the needs and views of those seeking sanctuary from unsafe regimes would leave out essential voices.

In a similar vein, Tom briefly discussed diversity categories such as: race, gender, socio-economic class, religion, ethnicity, age, experience, skills, politics, ability, sexual orientation, education and geography. In each category, he explained how it is essential to consider multiple perspectives.

The members of the club were then invited to discuss in small groups the following question: Is there a "null curriculum" for our Rotary Club? In other words, whose voices/perspectives are missing? And if we listened to them would it change our focus in our community service activities? A point of emphasis was that we are currently doing many wonderful projects. We are rightfully proud of that. But growing and evolving in a thoughtful and inclusive direction is also good and the more stories we hear, the more varied the perspectives, then additional ideas for areas of service will emerge.

Some of the suggestions were that we might need to invite and hear from more farmers, reach out to younger members of the community (satellite meetings and mentorship programs were mentioned), find more ways to include all spectrums of the socio-economic range

(although it was mentioned that we have the lowest annual dues in the region and we have a sliding scale for members with financial need), others spoke about political diversity and finally, one group asked for better information about all the projects we are doing now.

Diversity work is more than talking about race. If considered in a broader context, that the inclusion of many points of view is healthy and productive, then it is incumbent on all of us to enter the dialogue.