

ROUNDAABOUT

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

NEXT LUNCHEON



Our program next week will feature a presentation from Cook Group President/CEO Pete Yonkman, who joined Cook in 2001 as corporate counsel. After earning undergraduate degrees in psychology and philosophy at Indiana University in Bloomington, Yonkman earned a law degree from the Maurer School of Law. He has held numerous positions within the company, including vice president of Asian operations, chief legal officer, and president of Cook Urological.

The Celebration of Service will be held in the IMU's Georgian Room and through Zoom.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hoosier Hills Food Bank Project February 28

[Register Here](#)

Help pack boxes for the Food Bank as part of your service to the Bloomington community. There are still a few slots available for this project on February 28; see the SignupGenius page. Many thanks to Theresa Claire for leading this project!

Habitat for Humanity Build March 18 & March 25

[Register Here for March 18](#)

[Register Here for March 25](#)

Thanks to new club member Michelle Cohen, we recently confirmed our plans to participate in the upcoming Habitat for Humanity house build. With indoor tasks, we're invited to join the build on March 18 and/or March 25. Shift times are 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 to 4 p.m.

\$10 Tickets to Bernstein's Operetta *Candide*! April 14, 15, 21, 22

If you've read this far, you're in for a treat! Our IU Opera Theater friends are offering Bloomington Rotarians an opportunity to see the upcoming production of Leonard Bernstein's delightful, virtuosic operetta for just \$10. We'll be learning about the great American composer from Jacobs School's Constance Cook Glen later this month. To take advantage of this offer, simply use the code "ROTARY" when buying your tickets online or when you call the Musical Arts Center Box Office.

District 6580 Annual Conference 2023 Saturday, April 22

[Register Here](#)

Enjoy the annual gathering of clubs in the district, network with your amazing colleagues in the area, listen to inspiring keynote speakers, and participate in breakout sessions.

This annual event, which typically attracts 200, will give you a wonderful opportunity to

- Step beyond our club;
- Meet fellow Rotarians from clubs throughout Southern Indiana; and
- Share best practices

For those who would like to stay overnight, the District has reserved 40 rooms at the adjacent Hilton Garden Inn. Cost per night: \$159. To book, call 812-234-8900. Rooms are also available at the Candlewood Suites.

Cost: \$129 per person until March 31 (Spouses and guests welcome). \$149 after March 31

CLUB NEWS

Michael Shermis featured in February/March issue of *BLOOM*



Michael Shermis received a 2022 BLOOM Magazine Community Award for his "Support of Charities." BLOOM writes: "Michael Shermis is part of countless nonprofit boards and volunteers his time and services hands-on. Some of these include being a board member at the Bloomington Rotary Foundation, webmaster for the Breast Cancer Awareness Walk, an event chair for Hoosiers Outrun Cancer, a community member for the Lotus Endowment Task Force, and a CASA volunteer." Michael has been recognized with a National Distinguished Leadership Award, the Mary Alice Gray Memorial Award for exemplary volunteer service, the Keyway Award (pictured above) for the Bloomington Rotary Club, and the Melody Martin Awareness Saves Lives Award.

2016-17 Global Grant Scholar Kaz Fukuda to receive Ph.D. in May

Rotary Global Grant Scholar Kaz Fukuda successfully defended his dissertation and will receive his doctoral degree from the Maurer School of Law in May.

“I would like to thank Bloomington Rotary and District 6580 for your kind support throughout my seven years here,” Kaz says. “Receiving this scholarship has been the most wonderful experience for me ever.”



Kaz began work on his Ph.D. in 2016-17, one of only two Ph.D. candidates the law school accepted that year. Bloomington Rotary serves as his host club. District 2590 (Yokohama, Japan) is Kaz’s sponsoring district, and District 6580 is his host district.

FEBRUARY 14 PROGRAM



Past President **Sara Laughlin** introduced this week's speaker, Najia Sherzad Hoshmand, who told of her harrowing escape from Afghanistan.

August 15, 2021, is a day of infamy for Afghans. On that day the Taliban, after a major insurgent offensive, captured the capital city of Kabul. The takeover led to the overthrow of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan under President Ashraf Ghani. The Taliban then reinstated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

During the evacuation, Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport remained under NATO and U.S. military control. For the next two weeks, the U.S. and its coalition partners scrambled to evacuate more than 123,000 people from Afghanistan.

Evacuees included foreign diplomatic staff, military personnel, Afghan government officials, and vulnerable Afghans such as journalists and human rights activists. Because Najia worked with the U.S. Army and the United Nations Assistance Mission, she was personally at risk when the Taliban took power. Her husband, Aiman Hoshmand, who worked for a television station in Kabul, had colleagues killed by the Taliban and was also at risk. Even her children, who were attending an international school, were in danger.

That first day Najia spent getting everyone together and making sure they were all safe -- no small task because she, Aiman, and the children were all on different sides of the city. Traffic was at a standstill with everyone trying to flee to the city. After two tense days, Najia's brother, who worked for the U.S. Embassy, called to say that he had gotten the family on the list of Afghan refugees to fly to America on a military plane. However, everyone had to leave immediately. In all, including her sister and other extended family, the group numbered 19, people who watched their homeland collapse, slowly at first and then all at once. Their home was no longer safe.

In September of that year, the family finally arrived at Camp Atterbury, located in south central Indiana a few miles west of Edinburgh. The journey took them from Qatar to Saudi Arabia and back to Qatar before they were granted permission to fly to the United States. Atterbury was one of the eight main staging areas for Operation Allies Welcome, a coordinated effort to welcome refugees into the country and prepare them for life in the United States. More than 88,000 Afghan nationals came to the U.S. as part of the operation.



Najia's family stayed at the base for three months while moving through the resettlement process. During that time, she used her language skills (she speaks five languages, including English) and her nearly 20 years of work experience to translate for the military and the 7,200 Afghan refugees. She also represented a building of more than 128 refugees, speaking for the group among camp officials.

Najia and her family resettled in Indianapolis. They were able to navigate through social services and find jobs and get into school. Najia began working in Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett's office, in the treasury department.

For others with little to no English proficiency, this new life was a lot tougher. With this in mind, Najia began volunteering to help other Afghan families, assisting with activities like shopping, trips to the

pharmacy, learning the public transportation system, and schooling them on their rights and responsibilities. Many immigrant groups have advocates and organizations, she said. Afghans do not. Many struggle in silence with no place to turn.

Najia formed the Afghan American Community Center in November 2022. The incorporated nonprofit provides a place of community, connection, and education for Afghan refugees. Its mission is to make lives better for Afghans who are facing unimaginable trauma and multiple barriers as they start new lives in America.

The Center has been extremely active in the Indianapolis area. Najia has frequently spoken to churches, civic organizations, and other groups to ask for assistance. The group also participated in the INDY International Festival, the first time Afghanistan was represented. It has worked to distribute coats as well as traditional clothing and headscarves to women who have difficulties finding such items. It has worked with the Indianapolis Public Library and Ivy Tech Community College to enroll 15 Afghans in college programs and high-level English-as-second-language classes.

Back in Afghanistan, the Islamic fundamentalist-controlled state faces a collapsed economy, various humanitarian crises, and a return to power for the Taliban regime essentially unchanged from when it was in power from 1996 to 2001. In addition to economic collapse, malnutrition has soared, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost, and women have been banned from working. All improvements to the standards of living were virtually obliterated overnight with the Taliban takeover.

Making matters worse, the Taliban maintains close ties with al-Qaeda. Analysts are concerned that the group could provide al-Qaeda with a safe haven and allow it to launch international terrorist attacks from Afghan soil.

The Taliban has strictly restricted civil society, segregating women and girls from public life. For the most part, girls are now prohibited from attending secondary school and working. All women are banned from attending and teaching at universities. Amnesty International has reported a drastic increase in the number of women arrested for violating discriminatory policies, such as rules requiring women to appear in public only with a male chaperone and to completely cover their bodies. The rates of child marriage have also increased.

Numerous human rights violations have been documented, including public floggings and executions. The Taliban has restricted press freedoms and violently cracked down on demonstrations. Activists are being monitored, and many have been killed. The Taliban also reestablished their Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice to enforce prohibitions on behavior deemed un-Islamic.

“It isn’t home,” Najia said. “It just isn’t home anymore.”

CELEBRATION OF SERVICE

Rotary President **Alain Barker** opened Tuesday's Valentine's Day meeting by acknowledging the couples who are part of the club. He then read a poem written by the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT.

Patrick Smith delivered the reflection on the history of Black History Month. Founder Carter G. Woodson was a scholar whose dedication to celebrating the historic contributions of Black people led

to the establishment of Black History Month, marked every February since 1976. Woodson fervently believed that Black people should be proud of their heritage and that all Americans should understand the largely overlooked achievements of Black Americans, including researchers and physicians Percy Julian, Herbert Charles Smitherman Sr., and Charles Drew.

Black History Month honors all Black people from all periods of U.S. history -- from the enslaved people first brought over from Africa in the early 17th century to African Americans living in the United States today.

BIRTHDAYS

- Judy Witt, February 14
- Erica Kovacs, February 15
- Yolanda Treviño, February 15
- Kyla Cox-Deckard, February 18
- Jim Kryway, February 18

ANNIVERSARY: Judge Geoff Bradley celebrated 9 years as a Rotarian.

GUESTS

- Jim Shea introduced in-person guests:
- Anne Bright, guest of Jim Bright
- Renee Miller, guest of Sara Laughlin
- Hopi Hawk Stosberg, guest of Dave Meyer
- Scarlett Syse, guest of speaker Najia Sherzad Hoshmand
- Dr. Trudy Weddle, guest of Joyce Poling
- Doug Wissing, guest of Jim Bright

Michael Shermis introduced guests on Zoom:

- Carolyn Frey
- Mike Gentile
- Linda Stephenson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Greeter	Jim Shea
Introductions	Jim Shea
Zoom Host	Michael Shermis
Reflection	Patrick Smith
Reporter	Aaron Brewington
Zoom/Mic Operator	Traci Jovanovic
Zoom and Audio Producer	Tylar Martin-Nichols

