

## ROUNDAABOUT – Tuesday, April 13, 2021

### Next Luncheon



The topic turns to climate change next week when we hear from Wil Burns, PhD, discussing his *One Trillion Trees Initiative*. Dr. Burns is an adjunct associate professor within Northwestern University's Master of Science in Energy and Sustainability (MSES) program and has published more than 80 articles and chapters in law, science, and policy journals and books. His current areas of research focus are climate geoengineering, climate loss and damage, and the effectiveness of the European Union's Emissions Trading System.

### News of the Week

#### **Sleep out so others don't have to!**

Rotarian **Von Welch** is lending his support to the Solidarity Sleepout, an event to raise awareness and financial support for Beacon's *Friend's Place* overnight shelter. The sleepout will take place Friday, April 30. Visit Beacon's donation page <https://givebutter.com/sleepout2021> to support the cause. Beacon was the recipient of last quarter's Rotary speaker recognition contributions.

#### **District Grant Announcement**

The Community Service Committee has voted to support the Lotus Education & Arts Foundation's Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar with a 2021-2022 district grant. We look forward to sharing more details about this project and how Rotarians can participate once the project receives district approval.

#### **Last Call: District Conference is this Saturday**



It's not too late to register for this year's District 6580 annual conference, taking place in a virtual format this Saturday, April 17, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. With the weather report predicting cloudy skies and chilly

temperatures, the conference is a great way to spend part of your weekend. Check email for your personal invitation. The club with the highest percentage in attendance will receive \$1,000 for a Service Project Grant. More information can be found online at <http://rotary6580.org/district-conference-2021.php>

### **Bonus News: A short-cut to registering for Rotary Zoom meetings**

As a way to bypass the registration process when logging in to each week's Rotary Zoom meetings, **Kyla Cox** shares this tip: If you save the registration link in your bookmarks or email, and are logged into Zoom under the email address you use to register, it shouldn't prompt you to register again and should just take you straight into the meeting.

This week's program is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/1Ra9IFQpblA>

### **Our Program**



**Leslie Green** introduced friend and colleague Amy Hewitt, PhD, who has devoted her 30-year career to improving community inclusion and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities and their families. Dr. Hewitt, a native of Bloomington and daughter of parents who owned Hewitt Pharmacy on the Courthouse Square, directs the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. Her program, *Direct Support Professionals: An Unrecognized Essential Workforce*, provided insights on these often unsung workers.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are individuals who choose to help those with disabilities enjoy a high quality of life with all the rights and privileges of those without similar challenges. DSPs are a critical component in the larger infrastructure of long-term services and supports, an industry to which the U.S. government allocates more than \$82 billion annually.

Roughly 4.5 million individuals are employed as DSPs, which is more than the number employed in nursing, teaching, firefighting/EMT, and fast food services combined. They are highly skilled professionals, supporting their clients with services traditionally provided by teachers, nurses, psychologists, dieticians, and physical therapists.

Dr. Hewitt shared data demonstrating the tremendous challenges associated with the profession, including turnover rate (more than 50%), vacancy rate (15%), and low wages (\$12/hour). She reinforced the reality that we have chosen as a nation *not* to pay higher wages to both support and retain these

workers. Unless and until this changes, the demand for highly trained DSPs will continue to be a significant challenge.

To understand how DSPs have fared during the pandemic, Dr. Hewitt and her team at the University of Minnesota are conducting research that eventually will track a 12-month period of activity. A sampling of data collected from 9,000 DSPs both shortly after the pandemic's outbreak and six months later reflects the following:

- Gender: The field is heavily dominated by females: 83% nationally; 88% in Indiana
- Median age: 45 nationally; 43 in Indiana
- Education: 73% have some form of post-secondary education
- Only 17 states classify DSPs as essential workers
- Hourly wages lag behind other professionals: \$13.92 nationally; \$11.98 in Indiana
- Only 30% received any form of bonus pay for the additional responsibilities they've assumed
- DSPs had to work more hours, assume additional roles/responsibilities, and work varying shifts, which had a significant impact on their quality of life
- Only one-half received paid time off
- As many as 52% of respondents reported exposure to COVID-19 in their work setting

Dr. Hewitt believes the best and only way to change the value, visibility, and status of DSPs is to leverage what this workforce has gone through during the pandemic to change how it is perceived by society. "People like you have to see DSPs in the same way you see teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, social workers, and other professions," she said. This shift in thinking can help bring about the public policy changes needed to elevate this workforce.

The link to her research can be found at <https://ici.umn.edu/covid19-survey>.

### **Updates – Our April 6 Weekly Gathering**

President **Ashley Wesley** welcomed members and guests. She thanked producers **Natalie Blais, Michael Shermis, Sally Gaskill, and Earon Davis**.

**Tim Jessen** asked members to reflect on mourning and loss, which we all have endured throughout the past year. While these losses – cherished friends and family, familiar gathering places and events, and so many other elements of our daily lives – have been difficult, Tim reminds us that grief can and should be eventually good. Facing the reality of our losses is the first step.

This week we welcomed Randy Wheeler and three guests of **Leslie Green**, each colleagues at Stone Belt Arc: Dan Lodge-Rigal, Susan Hoard, and Bitta DeWees.

Happiest birthday wishes to **Meagan Niese**, April 13, and **Kay Leach**, April 15!

Membership anniversaries this week include **Marilyn Wood**, 6 years, and **Hal Turner**, 10 years. Thank you for your continued service to the Rotary family.

Happy Dollars celebrated reconnecting with family from Holland (**Henk Haitjema**); moving into a new home (**Liz Feitl**); birth of granddaughter Mia in Indianapolis (**Bill Perkins**); walking around the block! (**Charlotte Zietlow**); getting to hug his sister in Nashville, Tenn. (**Dave Meyer**); and Frederick North, the second Earl of Guilford, whose restraining act in 1775 led to the American Revolution (**Hal Turner**).

Reporter: **Susie Graham**