

# THE SPARKPLUG

September 25, 2006

Greetings Fellow Rotarians,

Our newsletter editor has had a few technical glitches this month, so our newsletter did not come out as planned. As many of you know, I have been gone since August 22<sup>nd</sup> with my daughter, Kristin, while she has undergone two successful brain surgeries for epilepsy at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. She is back home in Des Moines recovering, and I am back home in Decatur. Many thanks to all of you for your well wishes and words of encouragement throughout Kristin's hospitalization. Special thanks to Steve Furrow for presiding in my absence. Our family has been truly blessed with the great outcome of the surgeries and the return to good health for our daughter. Even though the month is almost over, I do want to send out a portion of the September newsletter to keep you up to date on activities and events.

September is designated by Rotary International as New Generations Month – a time to focus on Rotary activities that benefit young people. When looking at our club and what we do to support youth in our community, I am impressed by the number of members representing education and providing services and programs for children, teens and young adults in Decatur and Central Illinois. We are privileged to have as members the executive directors of Junior Achievement, Project Success, Partners in Education, the YMCA, the Children's Museum of Illinois, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the Macon County Farm Bureau, the Macon County Conservation District, the Decatur Park District, the Decatur Area Arts Council, and education leaders for Decatur Public Schools, Mt. Zion Public Schools, the Regional Office of Education and Richland Community College.

Many of our members sit on the boards of these and other worthy organizations, donating their time, expertise and dollars to ensure that quality education and programming reach our young people. We can be especially proud of the members who volunteer. We may never know the impact we have on a young person's life, but by sharing our time and experience and knowledge with young people, we are serving as positive role models and sending a message that they are important to us. It has been said that volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless. I look forward to seeing Monte Cherry stand up each spring with Happy Bucks in hand to report on the success of Engineer in the Classroom, a local program conceived and run by engineers. One of our weekly programs five years ago was about America Reads. After learning about the need for adults to help children with their reading, Steve Furrow volunteered. He has given up his lunch hour once a week for five years to help kids read better. Just last month, Phil Hazenfield told us how a stint as a Junior Achievement consultant motivated him to develop an additional lesson for his second grade class about what his company does. Phil didn't stop there. He knew that Decatur Public Schools needed members of the business and professional community to share their experiences with young people. He joined the District's Speaker's Bureau and has encouraged friends and associates to do likewise. I am quite sure that every Rotarian in our club gives of his or her time and talent to help others. Serving others is a common denominator for being a Rotarian.

One of the women I admire most is Marian Wright Edelman, the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. She has spent her life working and advocating for children. When she was growing up, she "was taught that the world had a lot of problems; that (she) could struggle and change them; that intellectual and material gifts brought the privilege and responsibility of sharing with others less fortunate; and that service is the rent each of us pays for living – the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time or after you have reached your personal goals." I don't know if Marion Wright Edelman is a Rotarian, but she should be.

Each year our club awards grants that support activities and programs that have a beneficial impact on our community and improve the quality of life with programs and activities that help youth and expose them to different cultures, customs, and languages. Last year we gave almost \$13,000 to organizations that work with young people. In addition to the grants, our monthly speakers' honorariums are given to local school libraries highlighting the importance that we, as Rotarians, place on literacy.

One of the goals that I (and past presidents) have is for our club to commit to service projects as a collective group of Rotarians. We have many, many great examples of dedicated individual Rotarians serving on boards, volunteering time and talent, and donating funds; however, because service is such an integral part of who we are as Rotarians, we need to make more of an effort to give of ourselves as a club. 70% of the children who attend Decatur Public Schools live in poverty. Their future and ours is defined by the quality of education these children receive, and we can play an active role in helping students achieve. When you become aware of specific needs that Rotarians can fill, please share the opportunities with all of us just as Phil Hazenfield did. I look forward to Rotarians giving Happy Bucks every week while extolling the accomplishments of young people that we have helped! Working together we can have a greater impact on our children and youth. We can teach them the joy of learning, working, giving and serving. Let it be said that, "Every Rotarian is an example for youth".

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### **¿Habla Español? Join Us for a Preliminary Meeting on Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> Following Our Program to Learn More about a Proposed Trip to the Merida, Mexico Orphanage in January**

For many years, Rotary Club of Decatur has donated funds to an orphanage in Merida, Mexico. Noel Myers, a club member and an engineer who has worked in Merida, first approached our club about helping in the early 1990s when our club applied for and received a Matching Grant from The Rotary Foundation (TRF) to purchase a van for the orphanage. Since that time, we have sent contributions for items such as window screens, desks, and books for the children who live there. The van is now in need of replacement, and the orphanage has once again asked for our help.

This past spring, the board voted to apply for a Matching Grant from The Rotary Foundation and has set aside \$4500. In order to receive the grant, Rotarians in Merida must agree to partner with us. The Matching Grant requires more than just a financial donation. At least six Rotarians, here and in Mexico, must play an active role in assisting the orphanage. The deadline for the grant is March 31 with consideration of our request at the August Meeting of The Rotary Foundation Matching Grant Committee.

As one who travels frequently, I truly believe that the best way to know and understand people and their culture is to see and experience life firsthand. I am asking Rotarians and their spouses to join me in January for a four-day trip to Merida, Mexico. Bill Owen, our own club travel agent, tells me that we need to book flights and lodging immediately if we wish to take advantage of group rates. If we have at least 10 people interested in traveling, we can hold space on planes and in hotels without having to pay in full. If fewer than 10 go to Merida, we will need to purchase tickets outright.

Merida is the capital of the State of Yucatan in the Yucatan Peninsula. The Spaniard Francisco de Montejo founded it in 1542 over the ruins of the Mayan city T'ho. Merida, known as the White City for its large number of limestone buildings, is one of the safest cities in Mexico. It has a mixture of architectural styles and cultural influences. There are many beautiful buildings, museums, shops, restaurants, churches, theatres, parks and monuments to see in Merida, so our trip will not be all work.

While January is a great time to leave Central Illinois winter weather behind, the trip is more importantly, an opportunity to partner with Merida Rotarians, see for ourselves the needs of the orphanage and meet the children we have been helping. Please plan to stay after the October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting to learn more about the proposed trip. If you are interested in traveling, but unable to attend the meeting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, please let me know and I will contact you after the meeting with information.

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### **Happy Birthday to Our September Babies**

9/2 Mark Kuhn

9/4 Bob Smith  
9/6 David Rayhill  
9/6 Melinda Shaw  
9/8 Marsha Thornhill  
9/8 Jane Hawkins  
9/9 Lucy Murphy  
9/13 Mike Wakeland  
9/22 Jean Brooks  
9/25 Monte Cherry  
9/27 Bob Disbrow  
9/27 Jim Fouse  
9/29 Dan Martini

Many thanks to Lora Dills for bringing ice cream from Macon Ice Cream on Prairie – a new enterprise for Macon Resources – for the birthday table. If you have a hankerin’ for something sweet after the Monday meeting, stop by and order a scoop for yourself!

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### **Board Manual and By-laws Added to Web site**

President Heather Stoa has developed a board manual specific to our club with job descriptions and responsibilities defined for the officers and committees. Her goal in putting the board manual together was to make the succession between officers easier and to ensure continuity and accountability from year to year. Although not all committees currently have job descriptions, the committee chairs are keeping notes, so that the responsibilities can be added at the end of the year. The board manual will help prospective officers and committee chairs understand what is required for each job and allow them to make informed decisions when they are asked to serve.

The By-laws have been adopted by Rotary International but are tailored to each individual Rotary club. The Constitution that all Rotary clubs follow is posted on the Rotary International Web site.

To read the board manual and by-laws, go to [decaturrerotary.org](http://decaturrerotary.org). Type in your e-mail address under the login box and your password. (If you do not remember your password, please contact Heather Stoa at: [hstoa@hotmail.com](mailto:hstoa@hotmail.com) or Steve Furrow at: [Steve.Furrow@admworld.com](mailto:Steve.Furrow@admworld.com).) The board manual and bylaws are in pdf format under the Club Members heading. Only club members have access to Meeting Minutes, Club Member contact information and to the Board Manual and By-laws. The board manual is a work in progress; so if you have any suggestions for additions or changes, please let Heather Stoa or one of the board members know.

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### **Applause All Around!**

Many thanks to our greeters for the month of August: Bert Gray, Oluwatoyin Ottun, and Monte Cherry; to our sergeants-at-arms: Miley Palmer, David Goebel, Stu Ellis, and Bert Gray; and to our invocators: Steve Furrow, Dave Brandon, Glen Dalluge, and Bill Owen. Our Program Committee has been hard at work and has done a great job of lining up speakers for us. Thumbs up to Glenda Williamson, Melinda Hawbaker, Diana Knaebe, Dave Brandon, Mike Wakeland, Mike DelSignore, Debbie Seitz, and Larry Foster for a job well done.

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As always, please contact me by e-mail, [hstoa@hotmail.com](mailto:hstoa@hotmail.com), or by phone, 875-3752, with questions or suggestions for making our club even better.

In service,  
Heather Stoa

