



## Waunakee Rotary Club

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Paul and Chris Gilbertson's homegrown effort to provide children's books to first responders has grown across the region, as the Waunakee couple's organization equips state troopers, police officers and EMTs with a means to comfort children in crises.

Paul Gilbertson updated the Waunakee Club about With Wings and a Halo, R.E.A.C.H. a Child at the Jan. 15 meeting.

Having authored children's books, Paul started With Wings and Halo in 2007. By Dec. 13 of that year, the non-profit distributed 350 backpacks to Dane County squad cars.

The books help children during times of trauma – domestic incidents, fires, accidents or other crises.

The program grew as the organization began distributing backpacks full of books to ambulances and other first responders.

This year, 5,500 backpacks have been provided to officers in all 72 counties of Wisconsin. Over 40,000 children's books have been donated, Paul said.

With Wings and Halo has a warehouse full of books, and the program is branching out to other states. An executive director has begun working in Illinois, and over 2,000 backpacks have been distributed there.

The state Attorney General in Michigan has just approved the program, and soon the program will expand to Minnesota, as well.

Paul said the program is outpacing his goal – to expand across the Midwest in two years and throughout the nation in five. But, he added, With Wings and A Halo's success requires volunteers from the community.

The organization has expenses – each backpack is \$1.15, and 7,500 will be needed for squad cars and EMS vehicles in Illinois, along with

5,000 in Michigan and another 2,500 in Minnesota.

Paul is trying to team up with organizations like Rotary to grow the program regionally and nationally.

"It would be great to see the local Rotary Club take the lead in endorsing the program," Paul said. Some of the efforts could include coordinating a book drive to restock the supply or fund-raising efforts.

Volunteers are also needed to sort books, stamp and label them.

One classroom in Bedford Hills, N.Y. learned about the organization and conducted its own book drive. Paul called the chief of police there and found he was interested in having backpacks in squad cars, so those same books went to that community. The children were happy their project could help others in their town, he said.

#### Other items:

- The club inducted Mike Ableindinger with the classification of real estate attorney.
- Phil Willems said several people brought re-gifts to the Christmas party Jan. 8 which were auctioned off. The board will determine where to donate the \$480 raised.
- Tickets are available for the Waunakee Neighborhood Connection's Super Bowl Sunday fund-raiser.
- Phil also said a Rotarian is needed to attend Waunafest meetings on behalf of Rotary. Phil has a conflict as he is a village trustee and the village board meets at the same time, the third Monday of the month at 7 p.m.
- The Rotary light displays were taken down, thanks to Phil and Bill Erickson, Tom Reis reported.
- Jim Tubbs said the Waunakee Community Foundation is planning a hypnotist show as a fund-raiser

### OFFICERS

DAN STATZ, PRESIDENT • TOM REIS, PRESIDENT ELECT  
PHIL WILLEMS, CLUB SECRETARY  
BOB PULVERMACHER, RECORDING SECRETARY • AL DASSOW, TREASURER

### DIRECTORS

DAN MUXFELD • BILL ERICKSON

### Calendar of Events:

- Jan. 31-Feb. 1, Winter Weekend for Youth Exchange
- Feb. 1, Waunakee Neighborhood Connection Super Bowl Sunday
- Feb. 21, Waunakee Community Foundation Hypnotist Show

Feb. 21 at the Performing Arts Center.

Guests: Brian Raemisch, guest of Connie Blau.

Birthdays: Jan. 22, Daniel Muxfeld; Jan. 26, Jim Meyer; Jan. 26, Mike Lawrence; Jan. 27, Pat Durden; Jan. 27, Lynne Spielman.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: Jan. 22, Leonard Allen; Jan. 29, Pat Durden.

Programs: Jan. 22, Joy McMerty and Bill Tygum, classification talks; Jan. 29, Randy Guttenberg, Waunakee School District Administrator; Feb. 5, Club Assembly.

Greeters: Jan. 22, Ray Statz and Sandy Taylor; Jan. 29, Don Tierney, Luke Tierney; Feb. 5, Jon Townley, Bob Tucker.

### Make up meetings online

It's easy to make up a meeting on the Internet. The site is [www.rotaryclubone.org](http://www.rotaryclubone.org). Print out the form and give it to Phil Willems, the club secretary.