



Waunakee Rotary Club

Aug. 27, 2009
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Though begun by two Rotary clubs, the Rotary Botanical Gardens, is actually its own non-profit organization operating on 20 acres owned by the City of Janesville.

Mark Dwyer, horticulturist at the gardens, explained how that botanical site operates. While the two Rotary clubs continue to provide volunteers and 2 percent of the gardens' annual \$700,000 budget, the organization raises its own funds through admission fees, weddings and other means.

Rotary Botanical Gardens is celebrating its 20th anniversary. It was founded by Dr. Robert Yahr on an old gravel pit in the late 1980s. The 20 acres was derelict, Mark said, basically used by the city for storage. The gardens lie in a greenbelt between the Kiwanis Pond and the Lions Beach in an area that is referred to as "service club alley."

Mark said there are Rotary gardens around the world. The Janesville Botanical Gardens includes 20 different garden spaces, each of them themed. The garden works with the Rock County Master Gardeners program and offers education for all grade levels and adult education. It is also a national display for the National Hosta Society.

Japanese, English Cottage and French formal gardens can be found, along with 100,000 annuals representing 800 varieties.

Ninety-five percent of the facility is wheelchair accessible, and Mark said there is work on a horticulture therapy program.

The gardens have been the victim of vandals from time to time,

and in 2006, they received \$20,000 in damage. A heavy duty fence has just been installed, along with video surveillance equipment for security.

Many, many volunteers offer their time to work on the gardens, and Mark's main job is simply coordinating them. About 400 volunteers put in 15,000 hours of volunteer time each year, he said. They include the Boys and Girls Club, high school groups, sororities and others.

Mark said fund raising for the gardens is more challenging in this economy, particularly as Janesville is still reeling from the GM plant closure and job losses.

Other items:

- Rotarians had a chance to meet Bird, the student from Thailand who will be staying in Waunakee on an exchange. He arrived Tuesday and came to the Aug. 20 meeting. Welcome, Bird.

- Craig Larson reminded the club that the golf outing is Sept. 10 with a 1:15 p.m. tee-off.

- Paul Gilbertson told the club that Jessica Doyle, Wisconsin's First Lady, will be in town Aug. 27 at noon to help stuff backpacks for With Wings and Halo, REACH a Child. That organization provides first-responders with books to distribute to children in times of crisis.

Guests: Dennis Leonard, guest of Jim Leonard; Alissa Kearney, guest of Kevin Kearney; Sean Wayne, guest of Bill Tygum; Travis Heiser, guest of Brent Ziegler; Mike Murphy and Nicole Jahnke, guests of Harriet Statz; Ben

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Calendar of Events:

- Sept. 3, meeting to be held at Village Park NOT at Rex's Innkeeper
- Sept. 10, Golf Outing
- Sept. 26-27, Wauktoberfest

Ballweg, guest of Ken Ballweg.

Visiting Rotarians: Art Drake, Normal, Ill.

Birthdays: None.

Anniversaries: Aug. 27, Dan and Joyce Muxfeld; Aug. 27, Danny and Lori Miller; Aug. 28, Connie and Marjorie Blau; Aug. 30, David and Mary Jean Kennedy.

Prayers: Aug. 27, Pat Durden; Sept. 3, Susan Vergeront; Sept. 10, Leonard Allen.

Programs: Aug. 27, Brent Aussprung, the Road to the 2010 Olympics; Sept. 3, meeting at Village Park; Sept. 10, classification talks for Susan Hedrick and Amy Fluke.

Greeters: Aug. 27, Danny Paul and Ted Pertzborn; Sept. 3, Phil Willems and Rich Wipperfurth; Sept. 10, Rob Wolfe and Brent Ziegler.

Make up meetings online

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