

Community Comment
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On giving back

Since this program provided by the Papstiens and their crew at KINS radio is called community comment, I want to talk about community service. People come to community service from many directions and many motivations. Individuals sometimes have a calling to give back. Some groups take on a community project once or infrequently over the years. Some organizations regularly participate in or sponsor a project often.

As a member of the Arcata Rotary Club, I have had the pleasure of participating in many community projects since I joined in 1984. Our club has a variety of projects over the course of any given year. Most years find us involved in a variety of different youth projects. Our main youth project is our youth study exchange program. We select a student from Arcata High School to sponsor as an Ambassador from our club, our district, our city, and our country. In return, we accept a student from another country also sponsored by a Rotary Club. The overall concept is to create world peace one student at a time. These kids get to live with up to three different families in one town and go to one high school for the academic year. Students get some credit towards graduation but mostly have the opportunity to learn a different language and culture and experience a new life and school environment. They learn and they teach. They make lifelong friends and often feel as though they have a second family abroad. They regularly tell us it's the best year of their life up to then.

Our club also sponsors up to five thousand dollars in academic scholarships to Arcata High Graduates for college expenses.

We support the Arcata High Interact Club. This club is intended to foster the idea of Rotary; service above self. We think community service projects connect us with our community. Starting at a young age leads to a lifetime of community involvement.

Over the years we have sponsored the Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, youth leadership activities, the college and career center at Arcata High, various high school and middle school sport and academic activities, the Science Projects from Elementary through high school and the statewide History Project. We have helped build neighborhood parks in the city and sponsored youth groups to the Crabs games.

We also do projects aimed at our senior population and especially enjoy our annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Senior Lunch Program. Some of us have transitioned into our senior years in Rotary; like me.

We also try to engage in an International project every year. This year, we have started an economic development project in the Highlands of Cost Rica. This will be a multi-year project with many partners.

Rotary International's major project since about 1985 is to eradicate polio from the face of the earth; and we are 2 to 4 countries away from actually doing just that. We take on clean water issues next.

With two clubs in Arcata, several in Eureka, Fortuna, Ferndale, and McKinleyville, Rotarians will be quite active in community service. Please join us anyway you can.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment