

The Weekly Westerner

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Grey Eagle Hotel, 3777 Grey Eagle Drive (Corner of 37 St SW and Glenmore Drive)
Mondays 12.10 pm - 1.30 pm

President: Gerry Meek **President-Elect:** Bill Fitzsimmons **Past President:** Tim Anderson
Secretary: Karl Herzog **Treasurer:** Judy Cochran
Directors: Marlene Doherty, Darren Grierson, Ken Montgomery, Alex McFadden

Together We Are People of Action - Building Community

May 25, 2020 Edition: 53.35 Reporter: Judy Cochran Editor: David Williams

President Gerry tried to greet everyone personally before the meeting had its official start which was 12:02 pm. Today, 49 participants attended our virtual meeting.

David Williams delivered the Inspirational Moment. He told of two separate, yet related, instances back in the UK. The first saw David stranded 100 miles from home, in the middle of nowhere with a dry and overheated radiator. This was in a summer evening in the early 70s. Two kind gentlemen stopped to help and had him on his way. Next, David tells of the Latin teacher, Mr Evans, in John Bright Grammar School, Llandudno, who gave up his free non-teaching time to help him learn a second language, classical Greek during the 62-63 academic year so that he could fulfill a necessary qualification to enter the University of Manchester. David was successful and was accepted at the university. From this point in time, David has tried to pay it forward to help others reach their destinations; achieve their goals. "This is what Rotary does", says David. He realizes you cannot help all the people, but you can help some.

Judy Cochran introduced our guest speaker, **Michael Chaisson**. He is a speaker, musician, television host and writer who has been inspiring people for over 20 years. He has been one of the top communicators for students across Canada and



the United States: he wants to make the greatest impact. He runs a registered charity, Access 52, and has a passion for helping others wherever he can. It is more than a career; it is his life's work.

Michael immediately noticed David's Inspirational Moment and paraphrased, "Do for one what you hope you could do for all." He sees Rotary as embodying this mantra with everything we do - not just youth programs like RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards). It is more than simply writing a cheque and sending delegates. He encourages us to get to know all our delegates, from the ones whose families are in a higher economic bracket to those whose day-to-day existence is a struggle. If we do not invest in the next generation, our world will fall apart.

Ask yourself and others, your children, or grandchildren, the RYLA delegates, two questions: "What breaks your heart?" and "What is the source of strength for you to do something about it?" There will be setbacks, which he illustrated with the sling shot analogy. As there are attempts to make things better and resulting failures the pull on the sling shot becomes tighter with each try. In the end, when the shot is finally released, it goes further and faster than ever imagined. It hits its destination; reaches its goal. You have made a difference for that one somebody. You can do it again for that next somebody. You want to believe the best each and every time. Encourage!

There will be resistance: that push and pull on the sling shot looking for authenticity. Change is both hard and complicated. Great things are seldom accomplished by just one. Sometimes we have to let whomever we love mess up and fall down, but you lift them back up with guidance. The greatest act of faith is to stay faithful enough to stay the course.

Michael has been a speaker at RYLA for seven years now. One year the theme for RYLA was "Light a Spark". When all the lights are off, and you are in darkness,



even a small amount of light will come through to clear some of the darkness. The more light that can shine, the brighter it becomes.

Another Michael analogy is that the thermometer reads the temperature, but the thermostat can change the temperature.

In one letter written to Michael, a 14 year old female writes, "I am not perfect. I am not happy. I do not like to go out as everyone ignores me."

Michael has amassed 4,000 letters written to him from Grade 9 to high school students. He showed a short video on "Things I Wish my Parents Knew..." Youth are struggling in a big way and some end their life early. A 15-year-old male writes "I want to be able to tell you stuff". Another writes, "The divorce wasn't just hard on you; it was hard on us too." A common theme is the need for attention and wanting their parents to know how much they love them.

Adults need to be part of the solution. Michael wanted this message to go across North America, and then the world. We want to make relationships better between children and parents. Maybe the parents can't express themselves to their children, so, instead, write them a letter. A parent's voice is the most important voice a child will hear. One needs to understand and share their experiences. The greatest gift is to give time, to take the time to really listen.

A parent needs to keep the vision alive, to keep reminding their children, to keep sharing experiences, and offer advice. If gratitude became the anthem of our generation; generosity will be seen in everything we do. Parents need to connect, support and guide. You can say, "No today, but it may not be no forever." Set the guardrails they need to protect them from themselves, but also from others. Parents have regrets: "I wish I could have..." or "I wish I did..."

How has Covid-19 impacted both Michael's ability to help the kids and the kids themselves? Just prior to Covid, Michael had staffed up hard. Now, all events



have had to be shut down until September at the earliest, so no revenues are coming in. He needed to decide, "Do we shut down now or is what we are doing needed now more than ever before?" Staff are willing to cut their salaries! They have set up a virtual graduate template for the graduating class of 2020, and 14 schools across Calgary have participated. See <http://accessmygrad.com>

There is always a way to get things done. The thermometer and the thermostat. Better and brighter, or salt and light. Salt makes everything taste better and light makes things brighter. The youth are missing relationships, connections, and friendships. They cannot do all the things they are used to doing.

We do not want another teenage suicide. We do what we do to prevent another tragedy like this. People are good at pretending everything is OK. We need to stop accepting the "pat" answer that everything is good, is fine. Your child looks forward to you asking how their day was, but they are also hoping that you will take the time to listen to their answer. If they are struggling, let them know they can come to you. Extending that a bit further, he suggests each of us in Calgary West should take the time to really know each other.

Michael has promised each Calgary West member a copy of his book, written by one of the authors of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, as a thank you for all that Rotary does, and in support of RYLA. The book compiles some of the many thousands of letters Michael has received from students. Look for it in the coming months.

President Gerry thanked Michael for his presentation and insights.

David Williams asked if speakers presenting virtually will be given a Boltman post-Covid. Yes is the answer!

- **Marlene Doherty** and **Gail Williams** attended a meeting this morning with a speaker from Pakistan, **Aziz Menom**. He is the National Chair of the Polio Plus Committee in Pakistan and incoming TRF (The Rotary Foundation)



Trustee. He spoke about the cases of Polio in Pakistan from 2005 to today, and the current situation with COVID. More to follow.

- **Vivian Jones** had a tearful Happy Buck to acknowledge her appreciation for Khor Top’s Rotary Peace Fellowship Application being endorsed by the club.
- **Alex McFadden** invited the membership to join in Local Community Service committee meetings. Contact **Bill Lawless** for the next meeting time. They would like to hear of any Covid issues that are not currently been addressed.

A week of everything Rotary is coming up!

- On Tuesday, May 26, **Ken Montgomery** will lead a forum on fund raising for the near future.
- On Thursday, May 28, **Sheila Taylor**, the CEO of the Calgary Parks Foundation will give a talk on the Rotary/Mattamay Greenway path system. Calgary West has pledged \$250,000 to this project.
- On Saturday, May 30, there will be a Trivia Fun Night hosted by Marlene Doherty and the Fun and Fellowship Committee.

As we soon will be starting a new Rotary year, President Gerry urged members to get involved by sitting in on some committee meetings that they may be interested in. Find your passion!

The next Meeting is June 1, featuring the Calgary National Music Center CEO, **Andrew Mosker** as our guest speaker.

President Gerry’s closing thought: “It is not what they take away from you; it is what you do with what you have left.”

Coming Events

June: Rotary Fellowship Month	
1	Zoom Meeting: Calgary's National Music Centre
8	Zoom Meeting: Mark Neufeld, Calgary Police Chief
15	Zoom Meeting: Can Learn Presentation

May 1 - 3, 2020: District Conference, Calgary
June 6 - 10, 2020: Rotary International Conference, Honolulu



22	Zoom Meeting: Gerry Meek Day. Programme
29	Zoom Meeting: Canada Day Special - Immigration and New Canadians: Peter Veress
	July Stampede and Okanagan Cherries Month
3	Parade Breakfast
6	Stampede Yahoo!??
13	TBA
20	TBA
27	TBA