

The Rotary Club of Woodside and Portola Valley: Heroes for Environment, Health, Education

Written by Kathy Barker Hayes

In remote areas such as Nepal, where there is absolute poverty, The Rotary Club of Woodside/Portola Valley has stepped up to make the change. *“If we don’t help, who will?”* says President Dan Giorso. *“This Rotary Club wants to do more than sustain these people. It wants them to thrive.”*

The answer? Education. It is the key to rising out of poverty. RotaryWPV wants to fill students with the knowledge to focus on a way out. The challenge? These villages have no power, internet, or computers.

With funding and support from RotaryWPV, *Looma Education*, invented solar-powered systems complete with a projection and audio casting capabilities, open-sourced educational content, a library of national curriculum, and specially designed teachers’ aids. *Looma* follows up with teacher and student training. RotaryWPV doesn’t stop there. They create primary and secondary school buildings, latrines, and libraries for the right environment to learn. Students will turn into leaders.



Local and International Projects

The RotaryWPV focuses on many different projects in countries such as Morocco, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Bali, Palestine, and Nepal. Locally they have done many projects in the US and our local neighborhoods. The list of projects is long.

Small but Mighty

This club is different from others because of its small group of 18. It has the ability to interview, evaluate, and



To prevent waterborn disease, in Africa and Latin America, RotaryWPV works with H2O Open Doors to provide innovative stand alone purifiers, utilizing the power of the wind and sun. They clean up to 20,000 liters of drinking water per day.

implement decisively. Because of this, they’ve often been called *“The Small But Mighty Club.”*

The Rotary Club of Woodside/Portola Valley can multiply their funds to make bigger things happen. It can band together with 46,000 other Rotary clubs and 1.4 million Rotarians worldwide to attain these goals that would otherwise be insurmountable. Rotary International and our local districts magnify funds for International projects to bring them to fruition.

Morning and Afternoon Weekly Meetings

Alternating their Wednesday meetings between 7:30 am and afternoons at 4:00 pm, you’ll find the men and women of the Rotary Club of Woodside/Portola Valley (RotaryWPV) at Woodside Town Hall. On the 7:30 am days, they gather with club friends to share a bit of happiness in their lives, watch presentations, and make decisions about what can make the biggest changes for people who need it most. Some members are seated at the boardroom tables with their own microphone along with a breakfast

Every year, Rotary Club of Woodside Portola Valley joins forces with Rebuilding Together Peninsula, to organize a hands-on team of people. The team spends just one day to repair and refresh a home or public building for others who are disabled or financially unable to make needed repairs. With these much needed improvements, they are able to stay their buildings.



bite and coffee, while others are on Zoom on the projected video screen. On the 4:00 pm Wednesday meeting days, they meet at Buck's of Woodside for happy hour, and accommodate members who can't make it to early meetings. The calendar on WPVRotary.org confirms meeting locations and times.

The club's commitment to operational transparency and accountability is evident in its regular reports on activities and finances, both to its members and Rotary International. Individual project assessments are conducted to evaluate their impact and sustainability as well.

Winner of 7 Rotary District 2023-24 awards, this club is clearly exceptional. They've won International and Community Service, Membership, Youth Service, Rotary Foundation, Club Service, as well as Public Image awards.



RotaryWPV fervently supports Ambassadors of Compassion, an emotional resiliency program for young adults and teens, many of which have suffered emotional traumas. After enlisting in the 4 phase program, students develop the critical skills needed to navigate and succeed through life's inevitable challenges. Independent scientific studies show an 87% improvement in emotional health and performance in school after completing the program, reducing negative or destructive behavior. Since Covid, the program has been in even greater demand.

Friends of Rotary

RotaryWPV also has "Friends of Rotary" members, who are not able to make it to the meetings. They can be counted on for hands-on projects for one day or many. All the club members and "Friends" are valued for their contribution, with whatever energy and ability they can offer.

You Can Get Involved

The club is always excited to have people interested in coming to sit in on a meeting. This time of year the club focuses on membership. If you want to "be the one" who wants to make change and make friends too, you can call or text Kathy Hayes at 415-215-8159. Visit WPVRotary.org.

Over one thousand guitars have been donated and gifted to elated youth whose families barely scrape by. The Rotary WPV has supported Free Guitars 4 Kids with funding and distribution to activity groups, local schools, and disaster relief victims, like those of the Lahaina fire. Music stimulates youth and keeps them engaged and positive.



Taste of Woodside Fundraiser

The RotaryWPV recently finished its 20th yearly fundraiser, "Taste of Woodside." It's an epicurean adventure with live music, wine tastings, appetizer samplings from local restaurants, a sit down dinner, as well as silent and live auctions. It takes place outside under the trees of the Woodside Village Church. This year, the club had its best year and raised over \$100,000.



If you'd like to make a direct donation, go to wpvrotary.org/donate/.