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Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club donates van to White Pony Express to expand food rescue capacity



Photo courtesy Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club

The Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club celebrating the arrival of the new delivery van for White Pony Express.

Submitted by
Steve Spraitzar

A heartbreaking 1 in 4 Americans are skipping meals or relying on food donations to survive. Balance this troubling statistic with the fact that we throw away 40% of our food supply – perfectly good food that could wipe out hunger in the U.S. if it was rescued and delivered to those in need. In Contra Costa County alone, 10% of the population, or more than 113,000 residents, are food insecure.

Food waste and food insecurity are the twin scourges tackled by White Pony Express' (WPE) unique food rescue approach. Founded in 2013 by Dr. Carol Weyland Conner, WPE is dedicated to alleviating the food insecurity experienced by many in our midst through a volunteer-powered service model.

The name White Pony Express is a mashup of two important ideas: the white horse, which is a symbol for unity in many faith streams, and the Pony Express, which revolutionized fast, reliable delivery. Their name is a perfect description of the benevolence and urgency of the mission.

WPE refrigerated vans pick up healthy, perishable food from local grocery stores and restaurants and bring it to their distribution center, where it is quality-controlled and sorted according to the needs of their 90 recipient partners by dedicated volunteer teams.

This perfectly good food would otherwise end up in the landfill to make space for new inventory or because it is nearing its "best by" date. Food waste claims the most space in America's landfills where it emits en-

vironmentally harmful greenhouse gasses. Thanks to WPE, this food is recovered and delivered to those that need it most.

All of this takes place within 24 hours, seven days a week, and it is delivered free of charge with warm smiles and the understanding that we are one human family.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary led the project to purchase a new refrigerated delivery van, raising over \$90,000 which funded the vehicle and installation of a refrigeration unit. While Lamorinda Sunrise spearheaded the campaign, substantial contributions were received from many generous individuals and organizations, including 15 local Rotary Clubs. They are the Rotary Clubs of Alamo, Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton Valley/Concord Sunrise, Concord, Concord-Diablo, Hercules, Lafayette, Lamorinda Sunrise, Martinez, Moraga, Orinda, Rossmoor, Walnut Creek, and Walnut Creek Sunrise. Additionally, grants were received from Rotary District 5160, Mechanics Bank, and the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church.

Informed of the success of the campaign, Eve Birge, WPE's executive director, commented, "This is incredible news - I am awed! With this transit, we can expand our reach and deliver more healthy food to those that need it most." Noted Dan Herbert, president of Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, "We are delighted to have partnered with White Pony Express, thereby enabling them to deliver fresh food to thousands of individuals in need."

For more information on the White Pony Express mission, to donate, or to volunteer, visit <https://www.whiteponyexpress.org/>.

Gold Award Project focuses on fostering socialization



Grace Gafni's Girl Scout Gold Award Project addressed the issue of socializing children after distance learning. Grace reflected on the negative effects

the pandemic had on children being able to interact with each other. She chose to support the Campolindo Cabana Club, her neighborhood pool and swim team, of which she has been a member since age 3. She noticed that the little ones had no place to sit and bond, since only adult-size tables were available at the pool. With the help of her project team, Grace built, sanded, and stained three kid-sized picnic tables for the pool. In addition, she created reusable conversation cards for the children to help foster socialization. Grace trained her fellow swim team staff on how to encourage the children to use the tables and cards to encourage conversation while hanging out at the pool. Her favorite thing to do now is watch little kids sit at the tables and tell each other jokes from the conversation cards. Grace is super thankful for everyone's support throughout her Gold Award journey! Submitted by G. Gafni

Kiwanis donates to Cal Shakes' youth program



Photo provided

Cherie Grant with Cal Shakes' Executive Director Clive Worsley

Submitted by **Barry Behr**

At a recent Kiwanis Club of Moraga

Valley meeting, Cherie Grant presented a donation from the club to the California Shakespeare Theater's Executive Director Clive Worsley for its youth program. The Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley want to thank those who have supported the club's fundraising events such as the Holiday Sees Candy Sales, Fourth of July celebration at the Commons along with the Pear and Wine Festival. Generous support of these events allows the Kiwanis Club to make donations back into the community. For

additional information about Kiwanis of Moraga Valley, visit <https://moragavalleykiwanis.org>

In Memory

Jan Ruzicka

November 20, 1943—July 17, 2023

Jan Ruzicka passed away on July 17, 2023, in the John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek after a long and very difficult illness. Ruzicka was married for 51 years to his wife, Bohuslava (Slavka) Ruzicka, and is also survived by his sisters, Eva Kaplan in Lexington, Kentucky and Miroslava Pickova in the Czech Republic, and his nephew, Jaroslav Picka.

Born in Czechoslovakia, Jan immigrated to Canada in 1968 and to the USA in 1974. He settled in Bay Area, first in Oakland and then in El Sobrante. A mechanical engineer by profession, Jan worked in the Oil Business. He received his undergraduate degree in Czechoslovakia and later obtained a bachelor's degree and a master's in business administration from Golden Gate University in San Francisco. Jan's profession took him to many countries, too numerous to mention.

A guitar player for 60 years, Jan joined WhatsUp big band in Hayward, Senior Serenadors in El Sobrante, and was a member of the East Bay Banjo Club in Concord at the time of his death. As a member of the Banjo Club, Jan played at various retirement homes and festivals.

Since 2011, Jan represented the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation during the Tabor historical festival in the Czech Republic. He will be missed on both sides of the Atlantic.

"The oil now cool.
The fire burns white.
Kindly and tall
they go with lights."

~From *Quince on the Table* by Vohuslav Reynek

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