



# The Spoke



February 22, 2022

## Last Week Meeting

President **Kae Moore** called the meeting to order. **Bob Lombardo** came forward to speak about **Steve Agius**, Rotarian, who passed away on February 4th. "Steve was responsible for many containers full of wheelchairs being delivered which gave lots of people hope and a new life. He was also involved in the Gift of Life. I am grateful to have been able to call him my friend."

Bob presented the Invocation; **Joe Murgalo** led the *Pledge of Allegiance*; and **Jim Fitzpatrick** recited the *Four Way Test* almost flawlessly.

**Mark Generales** reported that the Boat Show had netted \$60,000 to the Foundation over the last 7 years. Last year we had 4,500 attendees. This year, in spite of adverse weather, we had about the same number after we added in the on-line sales. Mark then led a shortened version of "*Happy Days are Here Again*".

Kae introduced **Louise Kowitch**, Education Coordinator, Friends of Lovers Key. She develops and manages environmental education programs at Lovers Key State Park.



Louise came to promote "*What You See on the Land, Lands In the Sea*" - a series of lectures and panel discussions sponsored by Friends of Lovers Key. Each event explores the connections between Florida's aquatic habitats and land use. Speakers will address the challenges facing our waterways, solutions, and the role citizens can play.

Louise discussed water quality issues in Estero Bay where 90% of the sea grass that manatees depend on is gone.

**Reverse Raffle.** Mike Poff announced that the Reverse Raffle will be April 23rd. Tickets will be \$150/couple and will include great meal, live entertainment, and, of course, a chance to win \$10,000 or several smaller prizes. Each Rotarian will be given 3 tickets to sell.

**Mark McCaw** explained that **Steve Agius'** family was asking that, instead of flowers, donations be made to the WheelChair Foundation. Checks may be made out to and given to the Club's Foundation which will forward them to WCF.

### **Joe Murgalo Time**

Joe said, "It's a gorgeous day in SWFL" before interrogating visitors. Then it was time celebrate the birthday of the newly crowned "King of Beer", **Gary Price**. Gary asked for a "Lethal Shout Out" and got it. Birthday boy **Jim Fitzpatrick** asked for a simple Shout Out. After all, it was only his 65th.

### **Happy/Sad\$\$**

**Jim Horein** reported on grandchildren having visited bringing their significant others. He was happy to give \$5 as "they all have real jobs now."

**John Spear** upped the Happy\$ ante to \$20, reporting that his brother had had apparently successful brain cancer surgery.

**Craig Stephens** said that **Stephanie Kissinger** is in hospital and asked that we keep her in our thoughts and prayers.

## Last Week Program



**Steve McIntosh** introduce our speaker **Jeff Estes**, Principal of Bonita Springs High School. Jeff is a native Bonitan, and graduate of Estero High School and FGCU. He has been principal of BSHS since its founding including the first year spent in the classroom trailers at EHS. Jeff says he has faced lots of challenges in opening a new school, including a hurricane that threatened to blow away the trailers and

covid and all that goes with that.

As the founding principal, Jeff had the chance to select the first staff, have some say over the programs to be adopted, a lot of say over the curriculum, and facilities an opportunity most people never get.

In May 2021, BSHS graduated its first class. 100% of the students who started in the portables behind EHS who didn't move out of town or switch to another high school, graduated. The school now has 1,600 students and has the longest waiting list of any Lee County high school.

Jeff is proud of the partnership with FGCU. He wanted to have a program to compete with the Cambridge program at EHS and the IB program at Ft Myers HS. The first class to do combined study at FGCU had 30 students, 23 finished the program. Jeff recently had 4 graduates Zoom into an information meeting for prospective freshmen. The attendees were impressed by the 4 kids Zooming in from different campuses.

They had earned 53 to 60 college credits. 100% of the credits were accepted so these kids were well into their third year of studies as freshmen.

### **Covid impact in the schools.**

“We get lost in the mask, no mask battles. We have fist fights out side the District Office. I can tell you that in the short period of time we were 100% remote learning there was an increased risk of suicide, increase in the number of Baker Acts, and the mental health of the kids suffered greatly. So politics aside, the kids need to be in school.

“We are trying to do the best we can to keep the kids of the district safe. While we can't agree on how to do it, I think we can agree that nobody can agree how to handle this. As a result that has made things very challenging in the school.

“During this time we have staffing shortages. We are basically trying to take care of 1,600 families with mental health problems that have never been worse. We are doing with 1 or 2 guidance counselors because we can't find anyone to fill the vacancies. So staffing has become our biggest crisis.

“Students will be coming to high school that have been 3 years without seeing how to properly speak. You know that's going to have an impact. Cheating in education has never been higher with the technology and remote working.

“This year has been 10 times more difficult than the previous year. We have had over 1,200 classes that have been covered by somebody that's not the student's teacher. Classes are covered by outside substitutes and by other teachers giving up their planning time.

“We have had 750 covid cases of students and faculty in the last 2 years. Only 3 cases required hospitalization and there were no deaths.

“There are some big things coming along that I really want you to pay attention to. Whether they are really

good or bad probably depends on what side of politics you really lean toward. Three bills coming to the voters of Lee County very soon can have a great impact on public education.”

1. Superintendent of Schools to be an elected position.

2. School Board member elections to be partisan.

3. Pay of School Board members, presently equal to teacher salary, to be about \$29,000/year, similar to State Reps.

“The three bills will have an impact in who is interested in the jobs, how long they stay, and how they are going to get there.

“My number one job is to advocate for those kids. Get the best people there to make sure that we're doing the right thing for those kids and just put the best product for them and really for the entire community because who we graduate and what they graduate with is going to have a great impact on everything moving forward.

“We've run anywhere between 17 to 25 employees, vacant positions that are not filled. There's just nobody in that job. So, when you add, the vacant positions to absences due to illness or covid, or protocols, plus there's normal reasons why people miss work that happened before the pandemic, so those things are still occurring.

“But on a day-to-day basis, I'm operating a high school of 1600 kids with a staff that's anywhere between 18 to 32%, not present every day. So we can get lost in the weeds of some of these big political issues, critical race theory, all the gender stuff this year, about the masks, the real crisis is, how do you run today?”

“We've got the Great Resignation going on. You have people who are not nice right now. We put up with this. Nice teachers are not getting their planning time, but the general public is not nice to our teachers and the students are challenging even more.

“So the parents are more challenging than ever. And the media. The whole thing is much more challenging and and the pay is much more appealing at Amazon.

“We don't need any additional programs right now. We need to make sure kids have a teacher in the room. And we need to make sure the schools are clean and we need to make sure the school is safe.

“So all of my efforts right now, are focused on keeping them safe, trying to get them educated, trying to get them fed, trying to get them home.”

# **Estero High School Interact Club**

## **Upcoming Programs**

Feb 23. EHS Leadership Academy

Mar 2. Dr. Michael Martin, President,  
Florida Gulf Coast University

Mar 3. First Thursday Social. Wonder  
Garden. 6 pm to 8 pm

## **Birthdays (Feb 13- Feb 19)**

**George M. Cohan III Feb 15**

The 50/50 is \$1,350±



Last Week  
Brian Olitsky drew the  
9 ♦ for \$5





## **Rotary International President**

Shekhar Mehta, Rotary Club of Calcutta-  
Mahanagar West Bengal, India

## **District 6960 Governor**

Andy Lyman, RC of Sarasota Bay

## **Area 2 Assistant Governor**

Chris Riesen, RC of Bonita Springs

## **2021-2022 Club Officers**

President	Kae Moore
President-Elect	Eileen Tasso
Secretary	Jim Burger
Treasurer	John Flammang
Sergeant-at-Arms	Joe Murgalo
Asst. Sgt-at-Arms	

## **Members of the Board**

Bob Lombardo, Kae Moore, Jim Burger,  
Eileen Tasso, John Flammang, Joe Murgalo

## **2019-2022**

Len Eckert, Scott Gerrish, Brad Piotrowski

## **2020-2023**

Rick Barber, Rob Cooper, Paul Messino

## **2021-2024**

Donna Flammang, Jim Fitzpatrick, Mike Poff

## **Trustees of The Foundation**

Nancy Ross, President; Ray Faubion, Secretary; Mark  
McCaw, Treasurer; Ron Anderson, Bob Lombardo,  
Steve McIntosh, Gary Price, Chris Riesen, Trustees

## **The Rotary Club of Bonita Springs**

Chartered November 3, 1978

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