



Swarthmore Rotary Cog Notes

P.O. Box 4, Swarthmore, PA 19081



March 25, 2021

Holger Knaack
RI President 2020-21
Kevin M. Katarynick
District 7450 Governor

Swarthmore Rotary
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Kathryn Jones
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Membership Chair
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Grants Committee Chair
Maria Michael Zissimos
iPast President
Heather Saunders
President-Nominee
Francy Cross
Assistant Governor

Service Quotation

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention. Oscar Wilde

Rotary Celebrations!

Birthdays

Brian H. Craig
March 28th
Anthony Coschignano
March 30th

Wedding Anniversaries

Dan Honig
March 28th

Years of Service

Meetings and Events

March

25th - [Club Meeting](#)
Speaker: Danette Reid, Founder of Reid Cares Foundation
Subject: Addressing the Hunger Crisis on Local College Campuses

April

1st - [Club Meeting](#)
Speaker: Brian Corson, Founer/Executive Director, MVP Recovery
Subject: Addiction, Incarceration, Recidivism and Reforms at George Hill Correctional Facility
8th - [Club Meeting](#)
Speaker: Kim Edwards, Executive Director of Japan-America Society
Subject: Promoting Arts, Business, Public Education and Cultural Exchange between Japan and Philadelphia.

Table Grace

By Frederick E. Christian

Eternal God, teach us to number our days that we may face our tasks and responsibilities in the spirit of adventure and hope. Make us impervious to those devastating moods of fear and worry. Lift our spirits as we recall here in Rotary our shared hopes for all humankind. Amen.

4 Way Test

Of the things we think, say or do

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Club News

George Whitfield was nominated for the Rotary District 7450 Board of Directors.

Bill Hale reported that the Swarthmore Rotary Board approved grants to:

- Delaware County Interfaith Food Assistance Network (DIFAN)
- Planned Parenthood Southeastern PA for online contraceptive services
- Swarthmore Senior Citizens Association for Pantry Staple Program at St. Katherine Drexel in Chester

Last Meeting Summary

Jeannine Osayande wants to tell the stories of the Historically Black Neighborhood of Swarthmore (HBNS) before it disappears. She returned to Swarthmore Rotary to show us two videos. Both celebrate the HBNS.

The first was "Making a Homeplace: Stories from the Historically Black Neighborhood of Swarthmore". Residents tell stories about growing up in the neighborhood. As one resident explained, millions of African-Americans migrated from the South to the North in the early 20th

Brian Casey
03-27-2009
12 Years

Happy Dollars

pledge \$2,921

2020-21 Happy Dollars
for Polio Plus Fund
(\$3 to fully protect one child)

2019-20 total: \$3355
2018-19 total: \$3,845
2017-18 total: \$4,515

Guests Last Meeting

Matt Ainslie, Sue
Edwards
Pastor Elaine Saunders,
Dave Finn
Susanne Smith, Rachel
Paston
Dan Snyder, Ann
Haslanger

Century. When they arrived, there were restrictions on where they could live. In Swarthmore, they were allowed to settle in the HBNS. As was explained in the video, the residents of the HBNS developed a distinct culture. They did not inform on each other. Families would take in children of other families in an emergency. Residents, even former residents who had moved away, would receive support during a crisis. Everyone was expected to follow unwritten rules about how to dress and what to eat. In the video, one resident lamented that the culture is disappearing as the neighborhood is shrinking. This video can be purchased at

<https://www.scribe.org/catalogue/making-homeplace-historically-black-neighborhood-swarthmore>.

The second video is called “Documenting Ourselves: A folklife how to”. The video documents the HBNS’s Juneteenth and BLM protest in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd. Jeannine also explained a bit of how she made the video. She narrates in the video that she wonders why some Swarthmoreans do not know about the HBNS. She believes they will know about it after the Juneteenth demonstration.

At the end, in response to a question about what we can all do now, Jeannine quoted Coretta Scott King: “Freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it every generation”.

Jeannine Osayande interview

Jeannine and I had a separate phone conversation. I found the conversation to be both uplifting and dispiriting. Here is a summary:

“There is no place in the world I would want to live other than Swarthmore”. Jeannine Osayande should know. She grew up in Swarthmore, lived elsewhere for years, and returned as an adult. To Jeannine, the biggest story is African-American families making a “home-place” in a neighborhood they can call their own.

Jeannine was born and grew up in the Historically Black Neighborhood of Swarthmore (HBNS). The district is made up of Union, Brighton, Kenyon, and Bowdoin Avenues. She is one of seven generations of her family to have lived in the neighborhood. Her great grandparents came to Swarthmore around 1910.

Jeannine knew everybody in her neighborhood when she was growing up. Not only was she able to speak to all of her neighbors as she walked down the street, she was expected to do so. She would get into trouble with her parents if she ignored a neighbor or showed a lack of respect. She remembers neighbors sharing food all the time. The families were particularly generous to newcomers and those in need. This tradition has continued down to this day although Jeannine said her Mother modified it somewhat when people became more diet conscious. Her Mother started a new tradition of giving flowers to families moving into the neighborhood. As a child, Jeannine remembers being confused that her white friends did not know all of their neighbors. She had 80-year-old friends. She would frequently sit and chat with her elders on their front steps. After living elsewhere, Jeannine returned to live in Swarthmore about three decades ago. At that

time, she was approached by members of the Swarthmore Home & School Association to teach African dance in the elementary school. Jeannine mentioned Sandy Sparrow and Mary Gay Scanlon as some of the individuals who encouraged her to do an artist in residence program. Jeannine said she feels her mission is to use art and culture to promote social change. Of course, a primary reason the residents of HBNS were such a tight-knit group was that they were a small island of African Americans in a lake of often hostile whites. According to one of the Swarthmore walking tour guides, the Swarthmore public schools were segregated until 1939. The buildings may have been desegregated then but not the classrooms. Jeannine said her aunt attended all black classes while in elementary school in the 40's and 50's.

Jeannine said that when the first African-Americans came here in the late 1800's, they could not legally buy a house. As discussed in a recent Cognotes, when the owner of some of the rental houses proposed selling the houses to the African-Americans residents in 1963, many townspeople protested. Although the sales appear to have gone through, a large number of African-Americans still rent their homes. These residents are now in danger of being displaced because of gentrification. Jeannine said in the past year four families have been forced to move because the house they rented had been sold. In addition to those four house, there are six more houses at risk of being sold. William Pastuzek bought a group of six rental houses on Kenyon Ave in the 60's. He has consistently rented to the occupants ever since. This group is now being considered for sale. Because of soaring housing prices in Swarthmore, the current residents may not be able to afford to buy the properties. Jeannine said young African American families cannot afford to move into the neighborhood. Jeannine believes the HBNS will disappear soon. She wants to collect and tell its stories before it is too late.

www.SwarthmoreRotary.org

www.Facebook.com/SwarthmoreRotary

www.SwarthmoreFair.org