

Rotary Club of Calgary | Downtown

COG



July 2, 2025
Volume 43 - Issue 1

"Together we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change - across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves!"

The Rotary Club of Calgary comprises professional and community leaders brought together in fellowship to make a better future.



Birthdays

John Hsu	June 21
Steve Allan	July 2
Helen Hu	July 5
Kurt Kowalchuk	July 8
Bawardi St. Laurent	July 10
Madeleine King	July 11
Gene Edworthy	July 15
Deb Hymers	July 16
Tim Heaton	July 16
Al McMillan	July 17
Michael Pierson	July 18
Michelle DeCecco	July 21

Anniversaries

Steve Stein 15 years

President Joe's Inspirational Quote

Wait for next Club President!

Large Rotary Attendance for Mental Health and Addiction Meeting

Doug McMillan

The special meeting of the Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown June 27, 2025 followed the Rotary International Convention in Calgary. Included among the estimated 180 in attendance were visiting Rotarians, Rotaractors and guests from Kenya, Sierra Leone, Switzerland and elsewhere. The focus of the meeting on mental health and addiction was of obvious interest to those present.

The meeting was called to order by President Joe Fras (for the last meeting during his tenure as Club President). Following O Canada lead by Michael Pierson on the piano, visitors and guests were welcomed. Michelle DeCecco devoted her invocation on mental health awareness encouraging open compassionate discussion without stigmatization.

Plaques of appreciation for the Rotary Club of Calgary's contributions were presented from Kenya and Guatemala Rotary Clubs as well as from the Fire Department in Guatemala who recently received "Ferdinand the fire truck" (Barb Young gave a short history for those present). Two banners were exchanged at the meeting and President Joe showed seven banners received earlier (with Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown banners to be sent in exchange).

After thanking the front of the house volunteers, President Joe noted the success of the recent “beef on a bun” barbeque for 250 attendees of the convention. Bucar’s RV World proved to be a great location (see related article elsewhere in this COG). Bill and Maggie Redmond were thanked for the venue as were the many volunteers who organized and contributed to this highly successful event- with special mention to the cleanup crew.

Hon. Rick Wilson Alberta Minister of Mental Health and Addiction was introduced by incoming Club President Bill Hamilton. Hon. Wilson presented the many aspects of the “Alberta Recovery Model” which has resulted in a 37% decrease in narcotic overdose deaths. Marshall Smith was introduced by DG Christina Hassan as the “architect” of the Alberta Recovery Model. Marshall spoke about his personal rise from addiction to contributing to treatment program development, first in BC and then in Alberta. The integration with other systems (first nations, justice) is one of the key elements which has made this program the best in North America. The audience contributed personal experiences and asked questions about the Compassionate Intervention Act. Both speakers were thanked. More detailed information relating the mental health and addiction programs in Alberta is included in a separate article by Laurene Wilson. Keep your eyes open for this in a future COG!

In closing the meeting, President Joe reminded members of the “Sneak a Peek” social event at the Stampede July 3, 2025 and the next club meeting July 15, 2025.



Rotary Convention and Club Home Hospitality BBQ

Madeleine King

June 21 - 25 2025 will stand out in our memories for many years to come - we hosted the world (guests from 140 countries) at the Rotary International Convention right here in our city!

PLEASE SEND US YOUR PERSONAL STORIES FROM CONVENTION TO BE INCLUDED IN FUTURE COGS.

Many of our club members attended the House of Friendship, main sessions Sunday through Wednesday, break-out sessions on many subjects, volunteered at numerous events and locations, enjoyed special events including the District wrap-up event - and our Host Hospitality events. The club's main host hospitality was a BBQ for 250 global guests at Bill Redmond's Bucars RV Dealership at Balzac, while other club members hosted global guests for dinner in their own homes. Many club members volunteered at the BBQ and the Stampede loaned us music, line dancing, Princesses and more. Doug Webb emceed, our BBQ team did fantastic and President Joe outshone himself! It was one of the best Rotary events ever!

The whole Convention was a truly amazing experience, and our warm hospitality was applauded by all. A special congratulations to our own member Mark Starratt for co-chairing the Host Organizing Committee (with Craig Stokke from the Stampede Club) and together securing this opportunity for us all from the start. Congratulations to our former member Farid Bedwany for his exceptional leadership of all the volunteers and to all the hard-working members of the Host Committee.

Do check out the pictures of the Convention and of our Host BBQ on Facebook; they are excellent. Here are a few.







At the BBQ we gave away copies of the children's story: *A Fire Truck Goes on a Rotary Journey* by Barb Young and me. Guests were invited to help us get the story to wider

audiences - and several are keen to do so, including from Ohio, Massachusetts, Nigeria and Cochrane!

Photos from the Convention from me and Bob:





Calgary Reads Big Book Sale Proceeds Exceed Expectation - Despite Tricky Access

Steady Pinney

At the barbecue hosted by Rotary on volunteer appreciation day at Calgary Reads Big Book Sale, it was business as usual: smiling Rotarians in their blue shirts and aprons grilling hot dogs, handing out plates and thanking volunteers as they passed. While spirits are always high on this day, known as Spread the Words, there were also lurking doubts about the 10 days ahead.

2025 Calgary Reads Big Book Sale numbers

- **250,000** books donated
- **15,000** book-lovers attended the sale
- **1,300** volunteers gave 16,000 volunteer hours

- **\$544,000** raised for early literacy initiatives that will help kids become stronger readers with books of their own

Just beyond the entrance to the Calgary Curling Club, road construction crews were at work and the riverside lane of Memorial Drive had been closed. In the nearby Lot 59, almost half the parking stalls were blocked to store construction materials. If getting in and out of the area was tricky in past years without road work, what kind of traffic and parking issues were ahead—and would people say forget it, and stay home?

Anticipating potential issues ahead and recognizing the need to ensure safe access, both for book-sale goers and nearby residents, book sale committee co-chairs Tami Tranquada and Gail Boehm, along with Steacy Pinney, met with Sunnyside residents and City of Calgary staff to come up with a plan. In addition to the expert Chinook Rotary Club running both parking lots, peace officers were brought in to help guide drivers in and out of 3 Street NW on the first weekend, and parking restrictions would be enforced.

Mother's Day—the day of the sale that's often the busiest as it's always been the first day to shop without an appointment—was switched to a shop-by-appointment day to help control numbers and cars. Spots for Day 3 quickly sold out. Free Day, May 19, was cancelled. A whole lot of communication went out to volunteers and sale-goers to share those updates and other parking options. In the meantime, every media outlet in Calgary was sharing stories about this beloved book sale.

How would everything play out once the doors opened on Day 1? After a record year in 2024 of \$570,000, would we even break \$500,000 to fund critical early literacy initiatives?

Day by day, shoppers came. They followed the parking alerts and walked from their cars with their trolleys, intent on filling every inch with books. Volunteers, yet again, did an outstanding job of helping people find the perfect book and keep the aisles looking organized.

Those who stood in line outside got to look at the special 'book bench' made as part of the launch of Kids Literacy Collective. The collective is made up of the Calgary Reads seed partners working in the space of helping children to get the books and reading help they need, and these partners have spent the past two years working toward the brand identity of Kids Literacy Collective. The collective will be the guiding organization the Early Childhood Literacy Committee (ECLC) will work with to determine funding decisions.

Through a partnership between Kids Literacy Collective and Global/Corus Entertainment, Day 1 of the sale was even more abuzz with live hits on the morning TV show with Leslie Horton and on the afternoon radio show Connections with Sarah Crosbie. Both programs made it

possible to highlight the critical connection between supporting the book sale and supporting early literacy in Calgary.

So, how much was raised? This year, as stewards of the sale, we get to distribute nearly \$544,000 in book sale proceeds!

“That is an amazing result, given the traffic and parking issues,” says Steve Allan, ECLC co-chair, commending the team for the changes that resulted in a much better experience for shoppers, volunteers and the neighbours.

“I continue to be amazed and impressed with the incredible work this team does, under the leadership of Tami and Gail. It is a smooth-running, well-oiled machine and it's an honour for all of us in Rotary to be involved,” he said, adding: “Most of all the funding is going to an enormously important cause. There are very few missions more important than helping to ensure that kids from 0 to 8 get a solid foundation in learning to read so they will have a lifetime of reading to learn.”

To our club members and members of other clubs—whether you joined us at a Stuff-a-Truck event, book sorting, the barbecue or somewhere else along the way, we are so thankful for your time.

Public Announcement of our Club's Legacy Grant to Flames Rotary Sport Zones

Madeleine King

June 20 2025: Public Announcement of four Flames Rotary Sport Zones in partnership with the Parks Foundation Calgary announcing one million dollar legacy gifts (over four years) from each of the Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown and the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park

Speakers:

- Calgary Flames Foundation Representative – Jeff McCaig
- Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park Representative - Jim Bladon
- Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown – Joe Fras
- Parks Foundation Representative – Sheila Taylor
- Pineridge Community Association Representative
- City of Calgary – Councillor Chabot
- Unveiling of Renderings and Community Confirmed for Selection





Thanks from Glenbow for Legacy Gift

Joe Fras

On behalf of the Board of Governors and staff at Glenbow, I'd like to extend our thanks to Joe, the new board of directors, the members of the Rotary Club of Calgary, and the Community Service Fund team. Your visionary support of the education program lunchroom is helping to create a vibrant space where learning, creativity, and connection can thrive—an enduring gift for future generations of artists, thinkers, and storytellers.

As you may know, the building's renovation is nearly complete. If any members of Rotary are interested in visiting the site, we'd be delighted to offer a private tour and give you a sneak preview of what's ahead. It will be a real honour to recognize the club's generosity and welcome you back when the renewed museum reopens.

Thank you again for championing bold, inclusive programs that amplify the many voices expressed through art. Your belief in Glenbow's mission means the world to us.
Have a great day!

Best regards, **Palash Bagchi**
Glenbow Major Gifts Officer

Thank You from Garth Toombs' Son

Madeleine King

Hi Madeleine... If you could please, at your next meeting perhaps, pass this on with my heartfelt thanks to all the Rotarians who came, watched, and sent a kind word about Garth.

Family was always very important to Garth, but after that, Rotary was absolutely the other most significant thing in Garth's life. The friends and contributions he made over 40 years were invaluable to him.

When he found out he had cancer, two things popped into his head. One, could he reach his 90th birthday, and the other, stay alive so he could attend the Rotary International Conference which he had been talking about for a couple of years. Unfortunately, he didn't make either of those milestones, but I know he was thinking of all of you and wishing it were otherwise.

There are people that are probably still not aware of his passing, and apologies for that. We just don't know who they are!

Thanks, to all of you again, his Rotary family, for helping shape his life. He was a great man and Rotary and all of you in Rotary were a huge part in that.

From **Mark Toombs**

For Mark's contact info please contact Madeleine – 403-400-4404

When is the COG published?

You can find past issues on our website under [Members > COG Bulletins](#)

If you'd like to have us publish an article or have an idea about what we should be publishing, please forward your ideas to Madeleine by the FRIDAY before the Tuesday publication date.

You are also welcome to contact either Madeleine, Doug or Diane to discuss any idea you may have.

The publication dates for the next Rotary Year: July 22 and alternate weeks following that unless otherwise noted. We attempt to publish a week following each Club Meeting.

If you enjoy reading the COG, [let us know](#) because your comments are the only way we know we are hitting the mark and this is our reward!

Proudly Presenting Our Corporate Members



Upcoming Events

[Frank n' Stein \(1st TUESDAY\)](#)

CHECK YOUR EMAIL

Jul. 01, 2025

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

[Sneak - A - Peek](#)

2200 Stampede Trail Southeast

Jul. 03, 2025 5:00 p.m. - Jul. 04, 2025 Mountain Daylight Time (UTC-06:00)

[Frank n' Stein \(3rd TUESDAY\)](#)

CHECK YOUR EMAIL

Jul. 15, 2025

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

[Frank n' Stein \(1st TUESDAY\)](#)

CHECK YOUR EMAIL

Aug. 05, 2025

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

[Frank n' Stein \(3rd TUESDAY\)](#)

CHECK YOUR EMAIL

Aug. 19, 2025

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

[View entire list](#)

COG Staff - July 1, 2024

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Rotary Club of Calgary - Chartered April 1914 as Club #949

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