

**Putnam County Rotary Club
Comments by Steve Parks ('00 – '01)**

First and foremost it's all about people, and forming solid friendships & business relationships. The names that immediately come to mind whenever I think of my time with PCRC are people like; David Williams, Bob Odell, Tom Bickerton, Bill Ellis, Gale Vest & Cathy Stark. These folks were tremendously strong leaders. Our Rotary Club would never have been the outstanding club it was and is today without these "leader of leaders". Each one of these Rotarians mentored me in meaningful ways before, during & after my serving as president. My presidency could not have been successful without the influence & valuable input of these people.

As anyone knows who has served in leadership roles and as president of Rotary, it takes a strong team of leaders and a strong board of directors to be successful. I want to give a robust "SHOUT-OUT" to the BOD's & several strong team members during my presidency; David Erickson, Kay Erickson, Nathan Mc Brayer, Don Broyles, Randy Lucas, Lana Newhouse-Taylor, Cheryl Rust, Gale Vest, Nancy Smith, and Roy Hamilton. There were dozens more folks throughout the valley, who supported and contributed to our club's goals & projects.

I would like to highlight our Rotary Club's project during 2000 – 2001, Habitat for Humanity. At the time the challenge seemed huge and daunting. We had to raise \$40k in monetary capital and hundreds of hours in human capital. It all first began when Shawn Means, HFH Executive Director, & I developed a relationship through a faith-based community – Walk to Emmaus. If I remember correctly, at the time Shawn Means & HFH were searching for an "entryway" into Putnam County. I on the other hand was searching for a worthy project for our club during my term as president. I can't say it any plainer I believe God brought Shawn & I together. Then all the right people were put in my path, not only Rotarians, but also the business community & the community of churches, extending from Huntington to Charleston. To me, it was miraculous! The home lot was out on Rocky Step Road near the Scott Depot community.

I had no idea where to begin raising financial capital or recruiting all the human capital required to complete the project. Then (you'll have to ask if he remembers) Roy Hamilton, with City Bank at the time, offered up one of the first financial contributions and a challenge to all Putnam County lending institutions. Roy, on behalf of City Bank presented a check of \$6,500 to our project. We also received \$2,500 from Barry Stollings with First Market Bank – they got everyone started. Then Shawn Means put together a meeting between Columbia Gas Transmission & us. After months of dialogue and negotiations, they contributed \$20,000 to our HFH project. We then started receiving contributions from all over the area from Huntington to Charleston, including \$3,000 from One Valley Bank & Rotarian Laura Ellis.

As the financial side was developing well, the Tri-County YMCA & Rotarian Cathy Stark began recruiting & scheduling volunteers for the construction of the home. Bill Ellis was a terrific "front-man" helping with promoting & advertising our project throughout the tri-county area. Then my wife Diane began calling on any and all restaurants throughout the tri-county area for breakfast & lunch schedules. When we started construction our Rotary Club raised \$40k in financial capital and created hundreds and hundreds of hours of human capital volunteers. Our project drew the attention of most all tri-county businesses, restaurants, churches, and other civic organizations. I am forever grateful to ALL (many unnamed people) who participated in this project. We even had the news crews & cameras from local TV stations making onsite reports. And several politicians & state leaders were acknowledging PCRC & HFH in Putnam County. It was thrilling & invigorating as it was a healthy challenge for me & PCRC!

Switching to more random thoughts but may be equally important...

I fondly remember Rotarians like Bobbie Hill & Rhonda Watkins who worked endlessly to make things happen every week. I wonder how many members realize that Rhonda's daughter Tara created the Putnam County Rotary Banner that our Club proudly displays today.

I'm reminded how the PCRC was well respected and sought out by most all politicians and state leaders. Several times within a year we could expect Governor Underwood to attend various meetings or events. Congressman Bob Wise would visit our club and share his thoughts with us several times a year. Jay Rockefeller even attended a couple of times. We had visits from Delegates Shelley Moore Capito and Lisa Smith. During election campaigns PCRC was a venue requested and desired by most people running for office.

In May 2001 PCRC hosted a G.S.E. Team of Rotarians from the Philippines for one week. Gayle & Ben Vest were a big part of this delegation and kicked it off with dinner in their home. Several members of the delegation stayed in the home of Nancy Smith who was so gracious throughout the week-long event. The Parks household also had several members stay with us. Our elementary age kids Brad & Emily were so impressed & enjoyed their company. The team turned our kitchen into a test-lab looking area while attempting to show us how they made flan in their country. What a blast for us & the kids. We were up until 2 or 3 in the morning talking & laughing with them. They had five days of touring Putnam County & surrounding areas. They visited the Winfield Lock, the Toyota Plant, the YMCA, Putnam Hospital, Museum in the Community, Blenko Glass, Marshall University, and Teays Physical Therapy.

I remember how the PCRC & the YMCA worked so closely together to reopen the campground. The whole Putnam County community came together for months until it was complete. I think with the help of Oshel Craigo and possibly some other strong community leaders & Rotarians we were able to get the road to the camp completely repaved and upgraded the small bridge.

I think one of the most meaningful events during my time was the "For This We Give Thanks" Luncheon every year. We filled the large room at Sleepy Hollow with friends from the county community. Everyone appreciated & loved our Putnam County community & expressed thanks.

It was nice to know we had Rotarian members we could count on to step up at the last minute when speakers could not show up. We almost always had members that we appreciated hearing from, and who had meaningful things to say & offer the club when needed. This is another great demonstration of strong leadership within the PCRC.

And of course, the Golf Tournament was as big a deal as ever and always a major success. The entire PCRC would participate and make it a huge success every year.

I one the things I truly enjoyed although it took a great deal of weekly preparation was Junior Achievement. I had been involved with JA since 1986 coaching the 7th & 8th Grades in Florida and in Putnam County. I always thought it was such a great tie-in to Rotary. PCRC was always a strong supporter & participant with JA.

*While facing all the challenges & rewards of the day while living & working in WV, and being a Rotarian, I didn't realize until I left, that it was the highlight of my professional & civic career. I miss all the friends & business associates that came along side of my journey. Several of my friends & colleagues who have lived the good life in WV always said; "**WV (the tri-county area) is the best kept secret.**" I'd like to relive it, and I often do in my memories. Thank you ALL!!*