

## **A Tribute to My Club and to a Rotarian:**

On March 10<sup>th</sup> I lost a friend. Larry and I met 21 years ago at a girls gymnastics meet. For more than a decade we sat together cheering on our daughters. Actually for the last six years he was more than just a friend he was a Rotarian, a member of my own club. As it turns out, Larry's last months of life are an amazing example of what is right about Rotary. If there is one aspect to Rotary that separates us from the competition it is the strong connection between our members. Like Norm from the TV show **Cheers**, I can walk into my club meeting and everyone knows my name! But, far beyond that the connection among the members of my club is something to be cherished. Our club is less than six years old, but in those few years we have grown to be something far greater than the sum of our parts.

When Brad lost his job, we rallied, circulating his resume, checking with our friends and business associates: Each of us put in a good word for Brad who was one of us and in need of help. When my father passed away the huge turnout at my father's memorial service by members from my club was a throwback to times gone by and tremendously uplifting.

When we gather for fundraising events such as our RibFest, the camaraderie is an absolute hoot! Stacey, a member of our club who grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota, once informed the membership that she had won a beauty contest as a teenager. It was during a pork grower's festival. She quickly became labeled the Pork Princess and now takes more grief than you can imagine; but, she dishes it right back to us in spades.

Larry had his own business selling coffee and worked from home. He was diagnosed with cancer just a few months ago. It was bad: He lost weight almost immediately. Despite the weight loss, he continued to come to our club meetings almost to the very end. One member in our club took charge. Jim kept tabs on Larry and updated us regularly. We used our website to set up a schedule so that we could regularly deliver meals to Larry and his family. We even helped give Larry's wife, Linda, time off from round the clock care. Hospital visits were part of our members' efforts and when extra help or support was needed the word went out through a blast e-mail to all of us. The care and support my fellow Rotarians showed was absolutely the best!

As Jim put it in his e-mail to our club "*The Eden Prairie Noon Rotary club was a very important part of Larry's life and he often said that joining was one of the best decisions he ever made.*"

We don't always know how best to market our organization. Fellowship is an archaic term and I search regularly for its contemporary equivalent. If we can just communicate to the next generation how strongly we get connected and engaged together in service we will continue to thrive for many years to come.

One of the challenges about being a director is missing so many of my own club meetings, where everyone knows my name. Cheers to Larry and the members of Eden Prairie Noon Rotary!