

Calendar of Events

Last Week: 08/03 Saratoga Plan: Maria Trabka

This Week: 08/10 Black Lives Matter: Trent Griffin-Braaf

Next Week: 08/17 Nursing Home Card Project –
Rachel Bennett

Coming Up: 08/27 Community BBQ Dinner (Thursday)
08/29 Golf Tournament (Saturday)

Note: Regular meetings are held Monday evenings on Zoom at 6:00 pm. The meeting ID and Password and the phone number are distributed the afternoon of the meeting by email.

Please give suggestions for future programs to Dan Stec

Find us at bhblrotary.org and on Facebook

“Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves”.

President Greg opened the virtual meeting by reciting Rotary's theme for this Rotary year, “Rotary Opens Opportunities.” He welcomed participants and guest speaker Trent Griffin-Braaf, the owner and founder of the Tech Valley Shuttle.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMUNITY BBQ DINNER: Greg reported that plans are being finalized and help will be needed at the BHBL High School on the day of the dinner. In addition to takeaway meals, we will have a bottle/can recycling collection, and a coin drop for charity. Non-perishable food will be collected for distribution by food pantries. Greg noted that we do not have to be concerned about leftover food because Spartan Catering has a food pantry that will accept the leftovers. Members are urged to get the message out to friends and families,

GOLF TOURNAMENT: Less help will be needed than prior tournaments because this year's location has all the facilities (chairs & tables) that we need. We will procure box lunches from Hannaford rather than provide a buffet. The tournament date is August 29th backed up by the rain date of September 12th.

HAPPY DOLLARS: Sergeant-at-Arms Mike collected Happy Dollars in his usual cheerful manner.

A BLACK LIFE LIVED WELL

Trent Griffin-Braaf

Trent and mother moved from the Bronx to Schenectady when he was eight to be closer to her family. She had issues with addiction. His absent father suffered with HIV/AIDS. He fitted in with his community and the Schenectady Public Schools where he enjoyed playing basketball, going on to state championships. He fell in with bad companions after high school, sold narcotics, was tried, convicted and sentenced to four years in state prison. The experience had good effects. He received stern discipline, avoided the bad influences which could have hardened him into criminality, took the classes offered by Marist College to the prisoners and developed the motivation needed for success following early release after three years served.

The lesson learned, Trent avoided the easy-money temptations of the street, taking the entry-level job of houseman with a Marriott hotel. With a cheerful personality and mentoring from a fellow employee he learned the front-desk job and worked his way up the management ladder, eventually to general manager. He moved from the Marriott to a Mallozzi hotel in Schenectady, sharpening his business skills, developing contacts and networking along the way.

Trent saw a need for transportation for poor people in the area. Bus service is limited in routes and schedules making it difficult to get to work, education and health care. He founded the Tech Valley Shuttle to fill the need. After he entered the transportation business, the ride-sharing services Lyft and Uber came along tending to take his clients. In response he changed his focus from individual to work transportation. He takes family members to prison visits, has transported food during Covid-19 and has helped ex-offenders get to work. He recently founded a new business to deliver orders from the Amazon.com Colonie warehouse.

Many questions were raised and answered covering topics like male mentoring and role-modelling, the high-school to prison pipeline, the BLM movement, prison-system improvements, etc. Trent was urged to join a Rotary Club. . . preferably BHBL.

Reported by Fred Baily

Serve with us. The world is waiting.