

Reporting Hybrid Meeting of 10 April 2023

Calendar of Events

Last Week: 4/3 Club Assembly, Hybrid Town Hall and Zoom Catered Dinner!

This Week: 4/10 Jimmy Thomas about Doggie Paddle

Next Week: 4/17 No meeting
4/19 Drive Through Dinner (High School)

Coming Up: 4/20 Interclub Dinner @ Turf Tavern

Note: Regular Meetings are held Mondays at 6:00 pm, with catered dinner at 6:15. Check your e-mail inbox the day of the meeting for the computer Zoom link and password, as well as the phone number you can use to phone in if using your cell phone to participate.

Please give suggestions for future programs to Darlene Bower & Peter Sawyer.

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

Doggie Paddle- Service Dogs for Vets – Jimmy Thomas

Our speaker this week was fellow Rotarian Jimmy Thomas. Jimmy is a new Rotarian and a member of the Glenville Rotary Club. He spoke to us about his non-profit organization Doggie Paddle. This organization raises awareness and funds for service dogs for veterans. It all started as a single event of long-distance kayaking that has since grown into a fund-raising organization.

Jimmy is an Army Veteran who suffered from unexplained seizures. After many different diagnoses providing no help, he was given a specially-trained service dog who could preemptively detect seizures. This prediction of seizures was crucial for Jimmy to remain cleared for his construction/project career. Beyond the special training of his service dog, a young golden retriever name Boots, Jimmy had a complete turnaround in his life, and his seizures became a thing of the past. His companionship with Boots was so strong and lifechanging that he wanted to help ensure that other veterans were able to receive the help needed by a service dog.

Jimmy shared some eye-opening statistics that only about 3% of Veterans who need service dogs receive them. The dogs must go through a very long and expensive training program. Depending on the

specialty program the cost could be upwards of \$30K to \$50K. There is also the cost of care for a dog that the veteran must be able to take on personally, or have further programs to help pay them.

Jimmy first wanted to bring awareness of this Veteran Service Dog need, but knew he wanted to do more. He actively searched out organizations that could assist with his program and found a home with the Glenville Rotary Club.

Jimmy recently completed an extraordinary accomplishment for Doggie Paddle by kayaking from New York to Key West, (which is a feat within itself) and then bicycling back from Florida to New York. Rotary and its network of likeminded individuals helped make this possible providing places to stay and food throughout the trip. Jimmy joked with a story that news spread that he was a fan of meatloaf and what ensued was a meatloaf dinner 90% of the time. It was needed sustenance for the number of calories he burned per day during his expedition. Along the way, numerous news and media picked up and reported on the trip and brought further awareness and funds to the Doggie Paddle organization.

Jimmy completed the 4,000 plus mile trip this past year and has raised over \$250K in funds, and also through the value of service dogs who will be donated to the organization for placement with veterans.

Jimmy is not done and is already planning on his next expedition which will be to kayak down the Mississippi River. He is pushing for others to join with him. He has a goal for 100 people to complete the expedition with him. Each must raise at least \$2,500 to bring in at least another \$250,000 for Doggie Paddle.

Announcements

- To have dinner at in-person meetings at the Town Hall, please email Sue Stec on the Thursday prior to the Monday meeting. Dinners are \$15 and prepared by Marcella's, as in the past. Be sure to read Darlene's weekly message with the meeting plan or check the website for confirmation of dinner.
- Drive-Thru Dinner April 19th at the BHBL High School. No meeting on Monday April 17th.
- Upcoming Community Service Dates: April 22nd Charlton Road Cleanup 9am-12pm; meet at Charlton Town Garage. April 29th Camp Stomping Ground workday; lunch will be provided. Clean up days upcoming TBD in May and July for Anchor Diamond Park. May 15th Town in Bloom planting night.
- Golf Tournament is scheduled for Saturday June 24th at Holland Meadows.

Reported by Jon Costolo