

A new spin on Rotary Clubs: Metro East Community Rotary looking for more members, projects

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Current Metro East Community Rotary Club President Trent West said his organization is a more modern take on traditional Rotary Clubs.

The Metro East Community Rotary Club differs from such traditions in several ways, designed to make it both more open and more appealing to people who would like to dedicate their time to serving their communities, as well as the global community at large. One of the first breaks from the traditional Rotary format is the meeting schedule.

West said Rotary Clubs were once required to meet four times a month. The Metro East Community Rotary Club meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month at Edison's, located at 2477 S State Rd in Edwardsville.

"Rotary used to require four meetings a month, but our busy members could not do it, so when that changed to two meetings a month, it became a lot easier," West said.

Another benefit of meeting at Edison's is the fact participants are not required to eat. Many Rotary Clubs meet during lunch hours four times a month, which requires dining. West said he did not want to force people who are more than willing to participate to purchase meals several times a month.

"People also don't have to necessarily be at all the meetings," West said. "They can correspond via email, Facebook or Skype. As long as they show up to our service projects, it is fine. We're focused more on getting stuff done instead of sitting in meetings."

Membership dues are still required, but the amount required is \$20 a month, and some of that money is sent to Rotary International for global service projects. Current membership stands at 18, which is much smaller than similar rotary clubs in both the Alton-Godfrey area as well as around Edwardsville. West said his group is working with several other clubs, adding they are much younger.

"Our club was formed from members from the Land of Goshen Rotary Club," West said. "We were formed in January 2015, making us a baby in rotary years. The Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club is almost 100 years old for comparison."

This youth may bring many new ideas and more streamlined ways of doing things, but it comes at a cost. West said the Metro East Community Rotary Club has much less capital for service projects than other clubs in the area. He said they are working to remedy that, however, with several fundraisers partnered with several service-oriented projects. The main goal of all rotary clubs is to increase literacy, and the Metro East Community Rotary Club is no different in that aspect.

"We just finished selling raffle tickets for Cardinals tickets," West said. "We raised a little over \$2,000 with that. That money will go to various service projects, and we're donating dictionaries to students in Alton this Friday."

Those dictionaries will go to third grade students in the Alton School District, West said. Friday, he said the club will donate some dictionaries to the Motivational Achievement Center as well as West Elementary School. He said he invited members of the Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club to take part in the giving as well.

The group was also able to donate more than \$2,000 worth of textbooks to an impoverished school in Haiti through the Hands Helping Haiti Organization, which has several members of Rotary Clubs from Illinois in its directorship. West said they were able to help facilitate the gift, which was a product of a \$2,000 grant from Rotary International as well as \$500-\$600 from its own funds and "a lot of work," West said.

Once they arrive in Haiti, the books are distributed to the poorest students, who are then able to pass the books to other students, creating a sort of library system at the school.

Last year, the Metro East Community Rotary Club was able to provide small free lending libraries for children a bit closer to home. West said children in both Granite City and Belleville were able to benefit from that donation.

As far as fundraising is concerned, the Metro East Community Rotary Club may be small and young, but West said they are constantly searching for ways to help as well as raise funds for their service projects. A large rummage sale, which will be hosted in Downtown Edwardsville on May 6, 2017, will hopefully raise a bit of money, a portion of which will go towards the Campbell family, who are now raising seven orphaned children after the violent deaths of their mother and father last month.



MULTI-FAMILY YARD SALE

May 6th 8am –12pm

**Eden Church parking lot
903 N. 2nd Street, Edwardsville, IL**

Fundraiser for the Metro East Community Rotary Club to help support projects for literacy, veterans, crisis shelters, international causes, and the fight against hunger

***A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Campbell family**

**To Donate Items: email metroeastcommunity.rotary@gmail.com or
Send a message through the Metro East Community Rotary Club's Facebook page**

"We've been wanting to do something, and we've heard they have warehouses full of stuff and their bank account is doing well," West said. "They're going to need stuff in the future, and the grandparents can't take care of all seven kids on that forever."

On May 13, 2017, the club will also assist with the annual half marathon hosted by the Maryville YMCA. West said his club has helped with that for three years, and mostly helps distribute water bottles during the run.

In the future, West said the organization will host a music trivia night this coming September for "Paint the Town Gold," a group dedicated to raising awareness and funding for the prevention and curing of childhood cancers. West also said they are working toward making this year's Empty Bowls event, which is scheduled for November, larger than last year's.

West said the 2016 event raised as much as \$1,500 for the Glen-Ed Food Pantry. He said his goals are to be as large as the Collinsville event, held at the city's convention center every year. He said their event is phenomenal, and he would like to attempt to make such an impact on the community.

Membership to the Metro East Community Rotary Club is extremely open. West said anyone can join via [Facebook](#), or by simply attending one of the Tuesday evening meetings at Edison's, which begin at 6:30 p.m. He said the requirements are \$20 a month membership dues and a willingness to serve.