



OPTI-TOPICS

Bulletin of the Optimist Club of Huntsville

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Pres. Bob called on Sidney for today's prayer and to lead our pledging of allegiance to old glory. We had a good turnout (26) this time. Duane's guests were former county commissioner, Prince Preyer and his friend Tariq Madyun. Jim Roe's guest was a US Air Force retiree. Then we had Al's chauffeur, Marlene; and Alberto's son, Fabiani. Bob announced that the club picnic was a "go" for Saturday, July 24 at the Sandridge Farm. Furthermore, he reported on attending a recent fishing rodeo directed by former member Tammy Waddle. He added that, as in the past, he hopes that once again we'll be a sponsor next year as part of our community service work.



Duane introduced our speaker, Kathy McCowan, who addressed the issue of autism. Webster defines this as a state of absorption in fantasy as escape from reality. Kathy gave us a more detailed and shocking account from personal experience. Whereas, just 12 years ago one in ten thousand children were identified as being at risk for autism, today this has become one in one hundred. A show of hands revealed that many of those present knew someone struggling with this problem. Huntsville ranks 3rd on the list, behind Silicon Valley in California and New

Jersey, for the number of children with this ailment. Kathy said that the intelligence of parents doesn't seem to be a significant factor.

Typically, autism becomes apparent during the third year of life. A once normally developing child suddenly becomes lethargic, unable to concentrate or communicate, loses interest in everything, become severely frustrated, leading to unreasonable tantrums accompanied with uncontrolled crying and laughing. They have great energy, don't understand danger, don't sleep well, require constant care, and they detest clothing or anything touching them. At about the seventh year they are likely to experience seizures, causing permanent paralysis. Parent's dreams are dashed and financial preparations to provide world-class education becomes spent on trying to just communicate with their child in some meaningful way. Patience, courage, love and kindness become the key elements in dealing with their situation, sapping their once high hopes. It was a sad tale that Kathy related.

Bill Clarke won the attendance prize. Alberto is program chairman for July. He has arranged for the President and CEO of the Volunteer Center to be our next speaker.

CALENDAR

07/01	Thurs.11:45	DHI	Sheila McFerran Volunteer Center
07/06	Tues. 4:00pm	1 st Comm. Bank	Board Meeting
07/08	Thurs.11:45	DHI	TBA
07/15	Thurs.11:45	ORC	Business Meeting
07/24	Sat.	Sandridge Farm	Club Picnic