

The Optimist Monthly

Friend of Youth

June 30, 2022



June

6/01: Craig Syphax. Craig talked about the story of the Syphax family, whose name traces back to African royalty, is one of anything but defeat. Despite the oppression of slavery and racism, theirs is a legacy of great prestige, accomplishment, and perseverance. They have played extremely significant roles in the religious, social, educational, and civil advancement of African American communities in Arlington County. In fact, the impact of this family is still felt in Arlington today. (Photos by Parker Rist). Thank you, Frank O'Leary, for inviting him.



6/15: Exploration of Mars. Dr. Harold A. Geller is Associate Professor Emeritus, Physics and Astronomy, George Mason University gave us a personal history about forty years of exploration of the surface of Mars. He repeatedly stated that



all the evidence we have from the many sites the landers have tested, indicates that there has never been any life (as we understand it) on Mars. Thank you, Brian

Kellenberger, for inviting him. Also at the luncheon, Brian inducted

Eric Turner! Brian was quite relaxed with his introduction, in large part because Eric is his neighbor! Please take an opportunity to welcome Eric and find out more about our newest member. (Photos by Mark Whitenton).



Optimist Scholarships: Importantly, the June 15 luncheon was an opportunity to recognize our Club's high school scholarship winners from the four Arlington high schools who are going to four-year colleges, but also a revival of the Harrow Fund scholarships to graduating senior who are going to trade schools.

Annual Scholarships: by Mark Whitenton. As indicated in the June newsletter, due to a tremendous success of last fall's tree lot (again, thank you Sandy Bushue and the Tree Lot committee), we were able to grant five \$5,000 scholarships again this year. Unfortunately, the winner from W-L (Thomas Ackelson, going to UVA) was unable to join us due to a scheduled AP exam, nor could the winner from Bishop O'Connell (Mary Ann Montgomery, going to Oberlin College) join us due to an out-of-town camp. In addition to the other three 2022 Scholarship winners -- Mark McNulty (from Wakefield going to Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute); Laila El Machtani Idrissi (from Wakefield going to Virginia Tech); and Rick Escudero (from Yorktown going to UVA) -- we were joined by Mekyah Dunbar (from Wakefield attending Old Dominion University), who was a 2021 Scholarship recipient. Mekyah had postponed entering Old Dominion by a semester, so is receiving her award this August. See photo, below.



From l. to r.: Mark Whitenton, Mark McNulty (from Wakefield going to Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute); Mekyah Dunbar (from Wakefield attending Old Dominion University); Laila El Machtani Idrissi (from Wakefield going to Virginia Tech); and Rick Escudero (from Yorktown going to UVA). (Photo by Debbie Whitenton).

Harrow Fund Scholarships: by Erica Burson and Sandy Bushue. Also, the luncheon was an opportunity to celebrate the first two students chosen to receive two Optimist Club's Harrow Fund \$1,900 Scholarships. These Scholarships were reinvigorated by the efforts of Sandy Bushue and Erica Burson. One recipient is Christian Mox-Benitez, who has begun an Electrician apprenticeship program. The Harrow fund provided him with a \$1500 Home Depot gift card for tools and supplies, plus a check to use for electrician's boots and other supplies not easily available at Home Depot.

The second Harrow Fund scholarship has been awarded to Nawal Abdulkader, who is enrolled in a dental hygienist program at Northern Virginia Community College. The Harrow Fund paid for a new computer, (as she had to turn in upon

graduation the computer provided by Arlington County Public Schools) and when she completes her coursework, will pay for one of her licensing exams.

The Harrow Fund was created to serve students with financial need who pursue careers in the trades or in professions that do not require a four-year college degree. The fund was started by Leon V. Harrow, a longtime Arlingtonian and a very proud Optimist. He worked at the torpedo factory in Alexandria and then managed a lumber yard in Arlington called Murphy and Ames Lumber Company. He was an active member and leader in many building associations and was a 32-degree Mason and a member of Kena Temple.



From l. to r., Madeleine LaSalle of the Arlington Career Center; Erica Burson; Nawal Abdulkader; her father; and Christian Mox-Benitez. (Photo by Mark Whinton).

In the past, we have encountered difficulty finding successful students who fit the Harrow Fund's criteria. This year, we partnered with the Arlington Career Center, which is a vocational high school program within the Arlington Public School

system. Career Center staff identified Mr. Mox-Benitez and Ms. Abdulkader as deserving recipients.

6/29: Meet & Greet: The June M&G was held once again at Texas Jacks. A good time was had by all.

July

7/06: Scott Miller- Pathforward. Thank you, Sandy Bushue, for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

7/20: A Cordial Meeting at the WGCC: Please note the time change! This “luncheon” has been transmogrified by shifting to a cocktail event format. The event will be held on the WGCC veranda from 5:30 to 7:00 PM.

August

8/03: TBA.

President's Message by Brian Kellenberger

Hello Fellow Optimists!

June has been a great month for our club! At the June 15th Lunch we awarded 5 students with College Scholarships. All worthy candidates and great kids. A big thank you to Mark Whitenton for spearheading the Scholarship program again this year.



For the first time in a long time, we awarded two student's scholarships from the Harrow Fund. One is heading to Dental Hygiene school and the other will train as electrician. The Harrow Fund was established for students attending alternative education or trade. Thank you to Erica Burson and Sandy for their efforts to get this program started and finding two great kids.

Also at lunch, we inducted Eric Turner as a new member. This was a very busy lunch.

We will be having a Happy Hour 5:30-7:30 instead of a lunch on July 20th at Washington Golf. Please let me know if you can attend. This will be a good recruiting event. Please invite a guest to join us.

Update on the tree lot:

Thanks to Erica and Mark Zetlin, our “eviction” by Wells Fargo has captured the attention of Jay Korff, a reporter from ABC7. Jay would like to produce a story about this issue as well as highlight our decades of good work in the Arlington Community. He would also like to know more about our founders who were all WWII veterans. Jay set up for interviews on Tuesday at Metro 29 Diner. Frank provided an early history of the club and its veterans. Dick Rhoades, past president of the club also provided an early history of the Club and his disappointment with the Wells Fargo decision. JB, Andreas and I provided an overview of the lot. We also had JP, President of Arlington Babe Ruth speak about our long-term relationship and all the money we provide to them. Frank DeMarco Executive Director of Arlington Soccer also came by to share his story. It was a great day. Thanks to all that attended and participated.

Jay Korff with ABC 7 said the piece will air the last week of July.

We are still gathering photos for Jay. If you have any photos, please send to Clayton Depue (cm.depue@verizon.net) by July 17th.

Brian

Happy 4th of July



mw: 137
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