

# Service Above Self

## The Northport Rotary's Impact is Felt Far and Wide

By Debbie Mercer



NORTHPORT ROTARY

**Rotary book drive volunteers**

For the past few summers, the Northport Rotary has taken to the harbor - along with hundreds of yellow rubber ducks - to host its annual duck race fundraiser. The event has been a big hit, and a lot of fun for local residents. But take a closer look. There's a whole lot more going on at the Rotary throughout the year. Their motto is "Service Above Self" and it shows. From providing high school scholarships to deserving seniors to organizing huge drives to benefit those in need, the Rotary's impact is felt well beyond Northport.

"Our Rotary gets no benefit from doing this other than the giving of our time," says co-president Latonia Kelly. "We pay for our weekly meetings. Our dues cover our lunches. We pay for our own travel."



NORTHPORT ROTARY

**The oyster reseeded project**

Some of the Rotary's projects are on a local level, like hosting movie/pizza nights at the VA hospital and providing clothes and food to the Family Services League in Huntington. Other Rotary projects are on a much larger scale. Take the oyster reef project which is led by the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Oyster larvae attached to shells - known as spat on shell - are grown in nursery docks, nurtured by volunteers who clean, care, and measure them. Divers then plant them in local waters in hopes of creating a reef

and re-establishing the oyster population, as well as cleaning the water. "They're an important part of the ecosystem," says Kelly. "One oyster can clean up to 50 gallons of water a day." It's an ambitious project which will hopefully have a positive impact on the quality of the water and marine life in the area over time. More data on the success of the project will be known in late spring when divers return to check the status of the oysters.

Soles4Souls is another project organized by the Rotary. Throughout the month of March, the group collects shoes which are then refurbished and donated around the world wherever they're needed.




NORTHPORT ROTARY

**Soles4Souls shoe drive**

Soles4Souls credits the Northport Rotary with more than 120,000 pairs of donated shoes since 2017. The Rotary also organizes a book drive in April. Collected books are shipped overseas to Hindi's Libraries, which partners with more than 750 organizations worldwide to distribute new and gently used books. In 2019 - the first year of the drive - the Rotary collected 6000 books, raising it to 10,000+ books every year thereafter. The Rotary covers the cost of shipping.

That's a lot of good work for an organization with roughly 30 active members. "We're a small group," Kelly says. "We have a lot of retirees who choose to spend their time this way. Everybody does whatever they feel they can do. And it's welcome."

As for that duck race, Kelly confirmed the ducks will once again battle it out in the harbor on Sunday, June 9th. If you'd like to learn more about this or any of the Rotary's many other projects, please email [andygiffin@gmail.com](mailto:andygiffin@gmail.com) for more information.



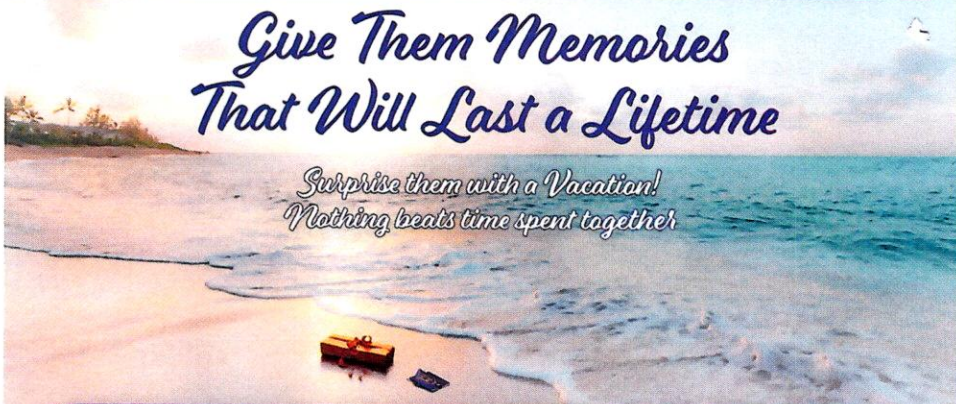
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