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The Kiwanis Club of
Meriden meets:
Thursdays at 12:15 PM
at Il Monticello
577 South Broad Street
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NOTES FROM THE WEEKLY MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 19, 2015

President Brian Cofrancesco called the meeting to order at 12:15 PM. We sang "My Country Tis of Thee", recited the Pledge of Allegiance, and prayed along with Lorraine Gamble.

GUESTS: Ron Lanicki from the Kiwanis Club of Wilmington, Delaware, who grew up in Meriden, and his friend Maria D'Ambrose from the Middletown Kiwanis Club. Christelle Aube announced the B.A.B.E.S: Maureen Bilger, Mary Mia, Elaine Murphy, Dee Hanson, June Vandal, Roger Vandal and Lorraine Gamble. Also attending were Jailene Civiclanes and Merina Sabatucci from the Maloney Key Club.

TODAY'S PROGRAM: While the group ate, Maureen Bilger had given a brief introduction to the B.A.B.E.S. program. B.A.B.E.S. stands for Beginning Awareness Basic Education Services, a program geared toward first graders. The program lasts for five mornings or five afternoons in a row. Maureen is very proud to be a part of this program and has been involved for fourteen years.

The lessons taught are very basic. B.A.B.E.S. is there to give children the confidence to make good decisions on their own; because they've been told it's okay to make a good decision, or to say "no" to drugs". Not all of them will remember or use the lessons taught, but the hope is that they will reach some.

Maureen said that Kiwanians and the B.A.B.E.S. think alike: one child at a time, and you never know how many we reach or how many we touch or how many we save. She thanked the group.

50/50: \$10 was won by Sandi Gollnick!

BIRTHDAYS: We sang "Happy Birthday" to Bob Meister (Feb. 25th).

ANNIVERSARIES: We recognized the wedding anniversary of David and Denise Lowell (Feb. 20th).

ANNOUNCEMENTS: February 26th – service night meeting to make dog toys at CT Baptist Homes.

March 5th – Kiwanis Club of West Hartford Wine and Chocolate Night, 6:30-8:30 PM, Atria at Hamilton Heights, \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door

- March 4th – Board Meeting at Hunter's, 6:30 PM light refreshments, 7:00 PM meeting

- March 5th– LTG Marc Romanow's official visit

HAPPY DOLLARS: Maureen - a happy dollar for her good friends, June and Roger Vandal, who let her win at "Scrabble" today.

Sandy Gollnick - a happy dollar for winning the 50/50, which tops off a bad week - she and Bob had a burst water pipe which caused a lot of damage and loss, but she is glad the pets are okay. Also, her fish died too.

Florence Thibodeau - two happy dollars: one because she is not with her family in Maine right now and a second wishing for the spring.

June Vandal - two happy dollars: one for recognizing Ron Lanicki, who lived around the corner from her and Maureen Bilger about twenty years ago and was their paperboy; a second happy dollar for joining B.A.B.E.S. 11 years ago through Maureen.

Ron Lanicki - two happy dollars for being amongst Kiwanians who are all very special to him. Anywhere you go, it is always well worth going to visit a Kiwanian group.

HAPPY DOLLARS: Elaine Murphy - a happy dollar to welcome all the B.A.B.E.S. here. She has been in B.A.B.E.S. for fourteen years. It's been a great fourteen years and she has a great time doing it.

Lorraine Gamble - five happy dollars: one to welcome all of her fellow B.A.B.E.S., a second happy dollar for the Community Projects team and the Board of Directors for funding \$1,600 to the B.A.B.E.S. program so that they can buy a new full-sized costume. A third, for an upcoming vacation to Florida (Jim is healthy enough to go). A fourth happy dollar for one of our members, Jack Mierzejewski, whose daughter-in-law makes lip balm that will be in the "goodie bag" given out to the 'stars' at the Oscars. The fifth happy dollar is to let Bob and Cindy Gollnick know that she is thinking of them and knows that they had a very difficult week.

Eileen Bongiovanni - a happy dollar to say "hello" to all her B.A.B.E.S. friends, it's so good to have them here. Eileen is a substitute B.A.B.E. It is a wonderful program and what the volunteers do is amazing. Also, her kids have moved out and she has a space for Sandy & Bob Gollnick.

Julie Kane - happy dollar also for having the B.A.B.E.S. here (even Maureen...ha, ha, ha) and she wishes she was here to hear that!

Roger Vandal - a happy dollar to do with this weather we've been having. He wrote a poem: "Lord, let me feel warm sun again before I die, and Lord, let me drive my car again before July."

Brian Cofrancesco - Two happy dollars: the first is for all the guests today, including Ron, Maria, the key clubbers and all the B.A.B.E.S.; and a second because after five months, he finally has his official gavel. (Thank you, Lauren for letting him use yours).

A total of 21 Happy Dollars today!

Brian then asked Ron Lanicki to tell the group a little bit about what he is doing in the Wilmington Kiwanis Club. Ron said that he loves fundraising. He saw his first Meriden Kiwanis Kapers at the age of 10 at Maloney High School. He thought it was great and has always wanted to join our club. The last time he was with the group, Maureen Bilger was president. He really appreciates being here today.

TODAY'S PROGRAM: Brian then welcomed Christelle Aube to the podium. Christelle brought the B.A.B.E.S. up with her. She told the group that previously, the Meriden/Wallingford Substance Abuse Council served the Meriden/Wallingford community. Now they serve nine communities, and have changed their name to South Central Substance Abuse Council. The SCSAC is a non-profit agency that promotes personal wellness and a healthy community. She wanted to join an organization involved with younger children and B.A.B.E.S. is one of the few programs that serves children under the age of 10 years. She doesn't know of any other organization in the State of Connecticut that does this kind of program. Christelle has been with the SCSAC for 19 years. She said that the volunteers are very dedicated and without them there wouldn't be a B.A.B.E.S. program.

B.A.B.E.S. is a primary prevention program and its goals are to teach young children make responsible decisions and good choices. The lessons taught include positive life skills, self-image, peer pressure, as well as alcohol and drug information. B.A.B.E.S. can reach as many as 240 kids in a single day. Since the program's inception in 2000, over 9,000 young children have been through this program.

The program lasts five weeks and each week the volunteers read a story and have the children use the hand puppets so they are included in the lesson. The stories are embellished with lessons meant to teach the kids about the importance of such things like knowing your address, when to call 9-1-1, bullying, and safety, among others.

The children get to know the volunteers and a trust is formed between them. The students relate well to the puppets and they encourage self-esteem, kindness towards others and talking to a friend or an adult when times get tough. The program gives the children confidence to meet the daily challenges they face in their lives using good decision-making skills. Teachers continue to use these lessons throughout the school year.

Christelle had Elaine Murphy come to the podium to read a thank you letter the B.A.B.E.S. received from a first grade teacher at John Barry. The letter showed the tremendous response the program receives.

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Kiwanis Club of Meriden Bulletin:

Corinne Balcher,
Editor

David Wyskiel
Photographer

Elaine then introduce all the B.A.B.E.S. and had each of them talk about their puppets.

Mary Mia: Bows the kitten;

Dee Hanson: Bows' little brother, Buttons;

Lorraine Gamble: Early Bird, the puppet that represents a child's conscience;

Christelle Aube: Donovan Dignity, the wise owl that always gives good information and advice;

June Vandal: Myth Mary, a squirrel that repeats everything she hears, even if it's not true; and

Elaine Murphy: Recovering Reggie, a dog that represents a recovering alcoholic/drug addict;

They proceeded to do a part of one of the program about self-esteem. Elaine narrated the story and each of the B.A.B.E.S. played their parts. The program teaches children the skills to understand and deal with their feelings. Part of the lesson included a song "I am Special" and Elaine taught it to the group. She also taught the group another song called "There is no one Quite Like Me."

At the end of the five-week lesson period, the puppets come alive and the volunteers put on the full-size costume of each puppet. The kids go wild and just love it. Elaine thanked the Kiwanis Club of Meriden for the generous donation, the cost to purchase a new full-sized puppet costume.

Program Chair, Carol Reiss-Miller, presented Christelle Aube with a Kiwanis Bell in appreciation for coming to the luncheon and providing the group with such a wonderful program.

President Brian asked the group to give the B.A.B.E.S. a round of applause and adjourned the meeting at 1:15 PM.



The B.A.B.E.S. (from left to right): June Vandal, Dee Hanson, Christelle Aube, Lorraine Gamble, Maria Mia, and Elaine Murphy. In the Early Bird costume: Maureen Bilger.

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Secretary

Doreen Roddy,
Recording Secretary

Julia Kane,
Treasurer

Lauren Rizzuto,
Immediate Past President

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY 26th: Night service project meeting. 6:30 PM, Connecticut Baptist Homes, 292 Thorpe Avenue, Meriden. We will be making dog toys from old T-shirts for the Meriden Humane Society. Please bring one or two old T-shirts and a pair of scissors. Pizza will be served, so if you plan on attending, please RSVP to Corinne Balcher at (203) 213-2182 or cbb68@rocketmail.com.

MARCH 4th: Board Meeting at Hunters, 474 West Main Street, Meriden. 6:30 PM snack; 7:00 PM meeting.

MARCH 5th: Lunch Meeting, Il Monticello, 12:15 PM. Official visit from Division 22 Lieutenant Governor, Marc Romanow.

MARCH 12th: Evening Meeting & Social. Time and place TBD. Details will be forthcoming.

MARCH 16th: Community Projects meeting, 6:30 PM at Four Points Sheraton, 275 Research Parkway, Meriden.

MARCH 19th: Lunch Meeting, Il Monticello, 12:15 PM.

MARCH 20th - 22nd: New England & Bermuda District Midwinter Conference. (Details above)

MARCH 26th: Night service project meeting. 6:30 PM, Connecticut Baptist Homes, 292 Thorpe Avenue, Meriden.

MARCH 30th: Kiwanis Spelling Bee - 6:30 PM at Roger Sherman Elementary School, 64 North Pearl Street, Meriden. *This is the first year our club is sponsoring this spelling competition. Please come out to show your support for this rewarding event.*

**Kiwanis Club of Meriden
Bulletin:**

Corinne Balcher,
Editor

David Wyskiel
Photographer