



ROTARY CLUB OF MARQUETTE, 1916 - PRESENT

The Rotary Club of Marquette has been in existence for over a century having been established on March 1, 1916 – the first Rotary Club in the Upper Peninsula. Following its motto “Service before Self” over the years the Club has played a major role in assisting with community projects. For years funds were raised with its famous Super Bowl Pancake Breakfast which continued for over 30 years. More recently its fund-raising efforts have shifted to the annual Golf Outing in late May – early June.

Betty Hill became the first woman to join Marquette Rotary on November 9, 1987. Two years later Rotary International’s leadership voted to formally admit women in 1989. Since that time women have played a major role in the Club and a number have served as presidents.

In the 1920s the Club was involved with the construction of the present Landmark Inn which opened in 1930. Its scholarship program began in 1921 and since that time has raised money primarily through funds generated from the sale of the Landmark Inn in the 1960s, “Happy Dollars” generated at meetings and through donations, offering hundreds of grants and scholarships to Marquette high school seniors attending academic and career programs.

Members have aided Salvation Army Bell Ringing around Marquette since 1970 and have raised over \$410,000 under chair Sam Elder. The Club has worked closely with Rotary International to raise funds to “End Polio Now” since 1988. As of this writing cases of wild poliovirus have been reduced by 99.9% world-wide, but work continues to eliminate cases in

Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since 2025 the Club has been actively engaged in the Feeding America Program, supplying food to hundreds of area families who are in need.

Continuing to work with local students it has a successful “Rotary Youth Exchange” that allows local students to study abroad and foreign students to spend a year in Marquette. It has proven to be a success giving students a view of the world and impacting their future careers. Focusing on building global peace, late Rotarian Dr. Pryce Duerfeldt in 1978 established the Sister City Program with Higashiomi (formerly Yokaichi), Shiga, Japan. Now the Marquette Area Sister City Partnership manages these international exchanges. A youth scholarship with Northern Michigan University is part of this program.

Rotary was instrumental in bringing the YMCA to the area. It works with Bay Cliff Heath Camp, conducts highway cleaning projects, serves local youth programs like the Scouts and school projects on various levels and well projects in Guatemala.

The history of the Club has been developed in a narrative authored by Dr. Richard O’Dell, titled: *Reaching Out: A History of the Rotary Club of Marquette, Michigan, 1916-1981*. The early club papers are housed at the Longyear Library of the Marquette Regional History Center while the more recent documents and oral histories of presidents are deposited at the Central Upper Peninsula and University Archives at Northern Michigan University. Both archives are open to the public.

Rotary’s five avenues of service are: club, vocational, community, international, and new generation youth. The Rotary Club of Marquette actively seeks new members to serve the community – “Service Above Self.” The Club has luncheon meetings with a speaker on Monday

at noon at the Holiday Inn and prospective members are welcome to join a luncheon meeting and become acquainted with the Rotary Club of Marquette.