



Waunakee Rotary Club

March 1, 2007
Vol. 40 No. 33

Little people, or those with dwarfism, have a lot to teach larger people, Waunakee Rotarians learned at their Feb. 22 meeting.

Sara Koppes and April Brazier spoke about how dwarfism has affected their lives.

Sara is a teacher at Waunakee Middle School. She and her husband found out their daughter, Madeline, may have dwarfism about three weeks before Madeline was born, and that diagnosis was later confirmed.

Madeline is 2 1/2 years old now and is 28 inches tall, the average size of a 1-year-old. She is all spunk. Sara said she and her husband don't know how tall she'll be, but they don't care.

The public knows very little about Little People, or dwarfism, she said.

She shared what she has learned with the club.

- The definition of dwarfism is a medical or genetic condition where the person does not grow more than 4 feet, 10 inches tall. It is often caused by a bone disorder, and there are 200 different kinds of dwarfism.

- Some types of dwarfism result in proportionate bodies. Sometimes, the limbs are smaller.

- Many of those affected have average size parents and siblings. It can be a genetic mutation. And many have average size children themselves.

- Most babies born with dwarfism are average size.

- The term "midget" is offensive. The terms "dwarf" or "little people" are more acceptable.

- Little people can do things that average height people do, they just do them differently. Complications can include orthopedic issues.

- Little people tend to stand out unlike average-sized people, who are unremarkable and can go through life anonymously.

- Sara has found her daughter to be the most perfect person she knows. "She's given me an education I would never have received and introduced me

to a world I would never have known," she said.

April Brazier, director of the regional chapter of Little People of America, talked about her experiences. A native of Sun Prairie, April is a network technician with Wick Builders. She noted that she does not have the anonymity most of us do; everyone knows her.

A graduate of Sun Prairie High School, April attended UW-Whitewater and joined a sorority. At that time, she was the only person with a disability in a sorority. By the time she graduated, every sorority had had at least two members with disabilities.

She began to speaking publicly about her condition when she worked in a school computer lab in Fort Atkinson, and children would ask for a bathroom pass just so they could come to see her.

"A lot of people hadn't seen a different kind of person," she said.

So she began visiting classrooms and talking about her experiences as a little person.

Although smaller than most, April leads an average life. She works, lives alone, has a house and Beagle, and loves to shop and hang out with friends.

She got involved with the group Little People of America at the age of 24. When she was a child, her mother urged her to be comfortable with average people, so when she grew older, she sought out others with the same disability.

Now families who have children diagnosed with dwarfism, like the Koppes, can talk to April about her experiences.

April revealed that Little People of America was begun by the performers in "The Wizard of Oz" who played the Munchkins. After the film was produced, they held reunions and started the organization.

Other items:

- Kim Lengfeld has tickets to the Super Raffle that she would like help

OFFICERS

DREW LAWRENCE, PRESIDENT • LYNNE SPIELMAN, PRESIDENT-ELECT
PHIL WILLEMS, CLUB SECRETARY

BOB PULVERMACHER, RECORDING SECRETARY • KIM LENGFELD, TREASURER

DIRECTORS

TOM REIS • LORI DERAUF

BILL ERICKSON

Calendar of Events:

Feb. 27, Whitetails Unlimited

March 4, Bowling outing

March 21, Super Raffle

April 12-28, Russian visitors

May 4-6, District Conference

June 17-20, RI, Salt Lake City

June 28, Steak Fry

selling. The profits will benefit the Waunakee Foundation and the Neighborhood Connection. See Kim for the tickets. A sign up sheet also went around for donations to be used as raffle prizes. You can get those to Kim or drop them off at M&I Bank.

- Harriet Statz said she has the names and descriptions of the delegates visiting from Russia.

Guests: Al Ripp, guest of Kathy Cefalu; Margaret Meyer, guest of Jim Meyer.

Visiting Rotarians: Bill Skalitzky, Sun Prairie.

Birthdays: March 1, Rex Endres and Duwayne Statz.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: March 1, Leonard Allen; March 8, Kim Wilde; March 15, Pat Durden; March 22, Msgr. Kramer.

Programs: March 1, Club Assembly; March 8, Bill Erickson and Phil Willems on their trip to Haiti.

Greeters: March 1, Dave Kruchten, Neil Kruschek; March 8, Margaret Landphier, Craig Larson; March 15, Tom Laufenberg, Drew Lawrence; March 22, Michael Lawrence, Kim Lengfeld; March 29, Robert Lenz, Jim Leonard.