

# The Roundtable

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## **Dancing on pointe**

**S**tevie McGary, Artistic Director and CEO of the Robinson Ballet did not dance *on pointe* at this morning's meeting. She did give a comprehensive view of the history, programs and opportunities for young and, well, older people to learn and participate in dance.

*"You live as long as you dance."* Rudolf Nureyev



The company has a school that accepts students ages 3 through adult. The Robinson's highest visibility is, perhaps, its annual production of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker." Rehearsals for that begin in September. Other repertoire includes "Giselle" and "Alice."

In addition to being the Artistic Director of the non-profit organization, Ms. McGary is also a faculty member at the School of Robinson Ballet. She is a teaching artist for the ACHIEVE (Arts Can Help Inspire EVERYone) Program, an in-school/after school dance program aimed at fostering self-esteem and confidence in third and fourth grade students. Arts 'N' Kids is an after school musical theatre program engaging children ages 7-11 in activities. They learn musical theatre skills that increase self-confidence and self-esteem, focus and concentration, cooperation, and positive risk-taking. This program is open to all students and there is no audition for the program. The program is held in three different schools.

**"Never give a sword to a man who cannot dance."** Confucius

Many girls want to be dancers. How about the boys? "It's more difficult to convince them to participate," Ms. McGary said. "They imagine that they will be walking around in tutus. But once they start, they have a lot of fun." Of the 150-175 students currently in programs, just ten are boys. Robinson offers scholarships for students who would otherwise not be able to participate because of financial constraints.

The company has been teaching in some schools for over twenty years; Keith Robinson has taught for over thirty years. The company designs instruction according to

the level interest of the participants. Ms. McGary teaches on average 3-5 classes a day in addition to her administrative duties. Saturday rehearsals run 9 am to 6 pm. The new season begins in September. However, a summer camp will accept groups aged 7-12, 12-18 and adults.

“I began dancing when I was five years old,” said Ms. McGary. “I was not an athlete in competitive sports. I could excel in dancing. I can’t imagine life without it.”

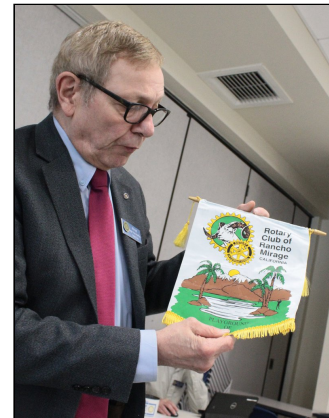
**“Real men don't lift weights, they lift women.”**

— Every male ballet dancer

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### **We left our tutus at home**

The business meeting proceeded anyway. **Paul Miragliuolo** figured he had better fine **Ned Jennings** for his birthday because Ned was here today. The Breakfast Rotary Chorale of Everyone sang to Ned. Dr. Gaston To'olo, DMD, brought a banner from his former Rotary club in Rancho Mirage, California. **Ken Huhn** displayed the banner in connection with gathering ideas about the redesign of our banner. The palm trees on the Rancho Mirage banner are lovely, but including them on the new Bangor Rotary Breakfast banner may be misleading.



**Greg Urban** gave a Happy and a Sad dollar. The two annual surveys for Maine Veterans Homes were successful. And, unfortunately, dogs don’t live long enough. He had to euthanize his 15-year-old pooch last week. **David Zelz**, who introduced Stevie McGary to the meeting, reported no new news about Mick Jagger (Paul Miragliuolo did, though), but said he attended a Joe Jackman concert in Portland.



I never learned to dance, but this is how I learned to swim.

### **Polio Report**

We are close to conquering polio, if it were not for humans standing in the way. This recent report was published last week by The Washington Post’s Editorial Board:

A SIMPLE fact: The main obstacle to a world free of polio is not science, biology or virology. Rather, it is guns, fear and fake news. The world’s long and ambitious quest to

conquer polio has come tantalizingly close to success, only to slip away because of unforgivable behavior by thugs and exponents of ignorance. To defeat the polio virus, the world must also defeat human behavior of the worst sort.

The most recent and glaring example of this came in shootings and panic that rocked the polio vaccination campaign in Pakistan, one of only three countries where polio is endemic. The others are Afghanistan and Nigeria. Pakistan has made serious strides in vaccinating against poliovirus, which is highly contagious, largely strikes children under age 5 and can cause permanent paralysis. In a vaccination drive that ended April 27, Pakistani workers were [able to reach more than 37 million children](#), nearing the target of 39 million. Pakistan has wisely enlisted Muslim religious scholars to endorse the vaccination campaigns. But there are still pockets of hard-line Islamist forces that spread irrational beliefs that vaccines are either contaminated or are part of a Western plot to sterilize Muslims, and they promote violence.

A mob [set fire](#) to a government health facility in Peshawar on April 22 after rumors spread that expired vaccination drops were being administered to children. Officials said the vaccine was neither expired nor dangerous, but still, thousands of parents swamped local hospitals and demanded their children be examined. One day after the health facility was burned, a [police officer guarding health workers was killed](#). The next day, another police officer was killed. At least 700,000 families have refused polio vaccination in the province that includes Peshawar because of rumors and panic.

On April 25, two gunmen on a motorcycle [shot and killed](#) a polio vaccinator in the southwestern Pakistani city of Chaman. All the incidents have a knock-on effect, causing delays and suspensions in the vaccination campaign, which in turn leads to swathes of population not being inoculated, making them vulnerable to infection.

The trouble is not only gunmen. Social media easily spreads alarmist and false rumors about vaccinations. Pakistani officials noticed [a wave of vaccination refusals](#) recently — up to 10,000 a day in Islamabad, compared with 200 to 300 in the previous campaign. [Babar Atta](#), a Pakistani official leading the effort, [said](#) that anti-vax propaganda on Facebook was becoming a major obstacle to eradication of poliovirus, and called on the platform to take down offending posts.

In the age before vaccines, millions of people were afflicted by disease and there wasn't much they could do about it. Nowadays, vaccinations are a critical firewall against illness caused by polio, measles and Ebola. But vaccines only work if people are inoculated — and they won't be if frightened by false information on social media or gunmen on a motorcycle.

*Les Myers- May 16, 2019*

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