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REGULAR MEETING No. 2970

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

TRUE Story

In 1982, a man named Larry Walters, a truck driver from Los Angeles, decided to turn a lifelong dream into reality — with a lawn chair, helium balloons, and pure nerve. He tied 45 weather balloons to his patio chair, packed a BB gun and a sandwich, and cut the tether, expecting to gently float about 30 to 100 feet above the ground.

What happened next stunned the world. Instead of drifting slightly upward, Walters shot skyward at an alarming speed, reaching nearly 16,000 feet. In the thin, freezing air, he struggled to breathe as he unknowingly drifted into Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) airspace. One astonished commercial airline pilot radioed air traffic control with the now-famous line: “I have just passed a guy in a lawn chair with a gun.”

Miraculously, Walters survived. Using his BB gun, he carefully shot several balloons to descend safely back to Earth. His flight remains one of the most unbelievable true stories ever recorded — a mix of curiosity, courage, miscalculation, and sheer luck. Sometimes Reality is stranger than fiction.

He was fined \$1,500 by the Federal Aviation Administration for operating a non-airworthy aircraft. The chair is now part of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection.

When asked why he did it, he famously told reporters, "A man can't just sit around".



THE CLUB SECRETARY SPEAKS:

OH! MY HEART!

My six-year-old son was sent to the principal's office today. Not for fighting. Not for bad language. But because he refused to erase his dog from his “Family Tree” assignment. His teacher told him, “Animals are property. They aren't family.”

When I picked him up, the car felt unbearably quiet. Leo is a gentle child, the kind who stops to move worms off the sidewalk so they won't get hurt. He climbed into the backseat, holding a wrinkled piece of construction paper, tears rolling down his cheeks.

“She gave me a zero, Dad,” he whispered.
I pulled over & asked to see the paper.

It was a simple first-grade project: Draw Your Family Tree. At the bottom were me & my wife. Above us, his grandparents.

And right in the centre, drawn with thick, loving crayon strokes, was a big brown shape, one ear standing up, the other flopped down. Under it, in uneven block letters, was one word:

BARNABY!

Across the page, written in red ink, was a note from his teacher, Mrs. Gable: "Incorrect. Biology only. Please redo."

I looked at Leo. "What happened, buddy?"

"I told her Barnaby is my brother," he cried. "She said family means people who share DNA. She said dogs are just pets, & that under the law they're property, like a bicycle."

He sniffed hard. "But Dad... a bicycle doesn't lick your tears when you're sad."

Then he said something that stopped me cold.

"Dad," he asked quietly, "you & Mom don't share DNA, right?"

"No, we don't!"

"But you're family. You chose each other. So why can't I choose Barnaby?"

He was right!

Barnaby isn't special by pedigree. We rescued him from a high-kill shelter four years ago. He's a Boxer – Lab mix with a crooked tail, a grey muzzle, & a past that made him afraid of loud noises. But since the day we brought him home, he has slept at the foot of Leo's bed every single night. When Leo had the flu last winter, Barnaby refused to leave his room, resting his heavy head on Leo's chest for hours.

I couldn't let this go.

The next afternoon, I requested a meeting with Mrs. Gable. I didn't go alone. I brought Leo, & I brought Barnaby.

We waited outside her classroom until dismissal ended. Mrs. Gable was organizing her desk when she noticed the dog. She stiffened immediately.

"Mr. Miller," she said, adjusting her glasses, "animals aren't allowed on school grounds without permission."

"He's on a leash, & we're outside your door," I replied calmly. "We need to talk about Leo's grade."

She sighed. "I explained this already. The lesson is about biological lineage. It's a science standard. If I allow a dog, another child will add a goldfish, then another toy. There has to be a boundary."

"A toy doesn't have a heartbeat," Leo said softly.

"This is about rules," she replied. "Definitions matter."

I was ready to argue. Ready to explain that family is built on love, not blood.

But Barnaby moved first.

Normally, he hides behind me when voices rise. This time, he stepped forward. He gently tugged the leash & walked toward her.

"Please keep him back," she said, retreating slightly. "I'm not comfortable with dogs."

Barnaby ignored her tension. When he senses distress, he does something we call lean. He presses his full body weight against you, slow, steady, grounding.

He sat beside her & leaned his warm, eighty-pound body against her legs. Then he looked up, blinking softly, & let out a slow, peaceful breath.

Mrs. Gable froze.

Seconds passed.

"He knows," Leo whispered. "He knows you're sad."

Her expression changed. The strict mask slipped. Her shoulders relaxed. Slowly, she reached down & rested her hand on Barnaby's head.

Barnaby closed his eyes & leaned harder into her touch.

"My husband passed away two years ago," she said quietly. "We had a German Shepherd. His name was King. He used to sit just like this."

The room softened.

No arguments. No rules. Just understanding.

“He’s not a bicycle,” Leo said gently.

She looked at him, eyes shining. “No,” she said. “He isn’t!”

She took the drawing from Leo’s hands. Without erasing the red mark, she pulled a gold star sticker from her desk—the kind usually saved for perfect work & placed it right on Barnaby’s drawing.

“Scientific classification: *Canis lupus familiaris*,” she said softly.

“Family classification: essential.”

Then she looked at me. “I’ll change the grade. But please... take him home before anyone else sees.”

We walked back to the car together. Leo was smiling from ear to ear. Barnaby’s tail wagged like he’d just completed an important mission.

On the drive home, I kept thinking about what happened.

We spend so much time teaching children to follow rules, memorize definitions, & stay inside neat boxes.

We teach them that intelligence is knowing the right answer.

But that day, my son & his dog reminded me that real intelligence is emotional.

You can know every definition in the book, but if you can’t feel the warmth of a living soul leaning against you, you’ve missed something essential.

Family isn’t defined by blood. It’s defined by presence, by loyalty, by who waits for you when you come home, & who leans on you when you’re struggling.

Sometimes, the most human member of the family is the one wagging his tail!

SECRETARIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- Today the 10th of April is the Birthday of Rtn Zeena Augustine
- Today is also the Birthday of Rtn Debashish Hazra
- 18th April is the Birthday of IPP Rtn Kamalesh Bose
- 21st April is the Birthday of Mrs. Baisakhi Roychowdhury

PROJECTS COMPLETED IN THE LAST 2 WEEKS

- 28th March Awareness Programme on Cervical Cancer & the need for the HPV Vaccine, Anaemia and Thalassemia was conducted at St. Xavier’s College, Raghampur. About 120 students attended. The key speaker was Dr. Sushmita Mitra Banerjee. Dr. Arup Kr. Mitra and Father Dominic too addressed the gathering. President Ruma Mitra, Zeena Augustine and Prosenjit Sarker also travelled to Raghampur. This programme was followed by Haemoglobin testing and Thalassemia screening tests.
- 31st March distributed 25 bottles of Coca Cola to all the 23 little homeless boys at Amader Padakhep. This was sponsored by our Hony Member Chandan Roychowdhury.
- 7th March conducted Awareness Programme on Thalassemia, Anemia & Health and Hygiene at Sahapur Sabitri Balika Vidyalay in New Alipur on the occasion of World Health Day. 120 girls and their parents attended the programme. Each of the students were given a light tiffin.
- Students at the Light House for the Blind are really enjoying their Baking Classes. In the past 2 weeks they baked a Chocolate chip cake and a Tutti Frutti Cake.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

- Thalassemia screening test, Haemoglobin test and the 1st dose of HPV Cervical Cancer Vaccine to be administered to the girls of Rasapunja Vidyalaya.
- Health Camp at Mary Cooper Home
- Health check up drive at Amader Padakhep.

SPECIAL PLATINUM JUBILEE EDITION OF ‘WHISTLE’

- Goodwill notes have begun to come from the PDGs and other District Officials.
- Rtn Somdutta Mitra, who is the Editor of this special Bulletin, has requested members to send their thoughts and write-ups by 15th April.

- The date for RCCSW's Platinum Jubilee celebration has been fixed for Friday, 15th May 2026.

Club Secretary Rtn Samir Sur attended a meeting with BOGS President Dr.MMS Zoha, to review the joint achievements and progress on Public Health Projects on 1st April.

DISTRICT UPDATES

- PDG Siddhartha S Bose attended the DistrictTeam Learning Seminar on Sunday, 5th April.
- Rtn Dr.Sushmita Mitra Banerjee will be attending SELS (Secretary Elect Learning Seminar) on 26th April. PDG SS Bose will be her trainer.
- Subho Nobo borehole celebration "Baisakhi Sandhyay" is on 24th April 2026 at Urbana Club House from 6:00 P.M onwards. Registration Fee is Rs.500/-

RCCSW IN ACTION

Giftng Water Purifier & Art & Drawing Stationery at Amader Padakhep



At Rasapunja Vidyalay



At St.Xavier's College Raghampur





Gifted Coca Cola to the boys of Amader Padakhep



Club Secretary Samir Sur & Dr.Sushmita Mitra at the meeting with BOGS



At Sahapur Sabitri Balika Bidyalay. Awareness Programme followed by gifting hampers to the students & mothers.



Visited The Light House for the Blind on 7th April to watch the Baking class in progress & also to encourage the students. Aparna Ma'am, their teacher is doing a wonderful job. We tasted the fruit cake prepared by the boys. It was delicious. We also visited the music room to watch some boys playing tabla, synthesizer & the octopad and also singing.

