

**Celebration of local microbrews to raise funds for Rotary Club**

*Rotary P.R. rep: 'Events like the Brewers Bazaar help us fund a little bit of everything'*

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STILLWATER — With the popularity of microbrews on the rise, the Stillwater Sunrise Rotary Club several years ago recognized the perfect opportunity to host a fundraising event that would bring added exposure to the club and its service projects.

The club will host its fifth annual Brewers Bazaar, a beer-tasting festival, aboard the Avalon Riverboat in downtown Stillwater Saturday, May 21. The event attracted 200 to 300 the first year and now averages about 650 people from the Twin Cities and beyond, raising some \$12,000 per year.

"It's an intimate event," said Ken McGinley, the club's public relations chairman. "The attendees can walk right up to the booth and be served beer by the brewmaster and have a conversation."

Twelve brewers are scheduled to participate: August Schell, Brau Brothers, Finnegans Irish Amber, Flat Earth, Lake Superior, Lift Bridge, Olvalde Farm, Rush River, St. Croix, St. Croix Valley Homebrewers Association, Summit and Surly. Live music will be provided by The Thundermen, Bass Lake Cheese will offer samples and Bread Art will have soft pretzels available. The event coincides with Stillwater's Rivertown Art Festival which takes place in Lowell Park.

"We wanted to find a fundraising event that doesn't rely entirely on our own club members, that brought in non-Rotarians to draw some exposure to Rotary, and to find something that was unique," McGinley said.

Several of the brewing companies have big followings, McGinley said, noting that Summit Brewery Founder Mark Stutrud helped bring in the rest of the brewers several from the start and "made it easy for us. All the brewers get along and support each other — it's a great industry."

Tickets for the event are \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door and may be purchased at [www.stillwatersunriserotary.org](http://www.stillwatersunriserotary.org). Those who are designated drivers or not sampling beer will not need a ticket to enter. Soda, water and food will be available to purchase separately. Proceeds help fund the club's many service projects.



The Stillwater Rotary Club will host its fifth annual Brewers Bazaar, a beer-tasting festival, aboard the Avalon Riverboat in downtown Stillwater Saturday, May 21. - Photo illustration by Paul Dols

## About Sunrise Rotary

The Brewers Bazaar is one of two major fundraisers held annually by Stillwater Sunrise Rotary. The majority of funds raised are directed toward the club's STRIVE Mentoring program (Students Taking Renewed Interest in the Value of Education) which connects high school students in the lower part of their class with Rotarians and non-Rotarians. The program helps the students prepare for post-graduation opportunities while working to improve their grade point average during their senior year. Further incentives are offered through scholarships toward furthering their education.

"They work with them all year round," McGinley explained. "These are kids who have maybe struggled the first couple of years of their high school career, and they're looking to change that."

The other major annual fundraiser is a golf event called "What's Best for Kids" after former member MaryJo Weingarten, who for many years was assistant superintendent of Stillwater Schools. Proceeds go toward an endowment within the St. Croix Valley Foundation that supports the Stillwater Schools' Partnership Plan, and toward other youth projects, youth exchange, essay contests and other activities. McGinley said in the last three years, the club has raised more than \$70,000 that went specifically toward youth projects.

The club also participates in a handful of other philanthropic projects locally and internationally; the projects are somewhat dependent on members' interests and often take place in conjunction with other Rotary clubs. For instance, the group is building a water pipeline in Turkey and has funded water projects in India.

"Certain club members have an international concern and some are more focused on staying local," he explained. "Events like the Brewers Bazaar help us fund a little bit of everything".

Essentially a "global network of community volunteers," Rotary International was founded in 1905 and is the world's first service club organization, with more than 1.2 million members worldwide. Its motto "Service Above Self" is one of the reasons McGinley, a national sales manager for TST Media in Minneapolis, got involved. Originally from Stillwater, he and his wife Liz had moved back to town when charter club member Rich Cummings invited McGinley to a meeting.

"I fell in love with it from the first meeting," he said. "It's great fellowship, good people. It's a fun club, it fills that void in people's lives that we need to do service in some way. Personally, I think it's important for teaching my kids about service".

He and his wife have three children: Ellie, a seventh grader; Matthew, almost 11; and Betsy, who just turned 7.

"The ethics — truth, what's best for everybody, and the four-way test — are something that becomes part of your life in regular work," McGinley said of Rotary principals. "It's meeting like-minded people. You go to a Rotary meeting here or anywhere in the world and there's that common bond that everybody has — it's good people."

Stillwater Sunrise Rotary meets Tuesdays at 7 am at Joseph's Family Restaurant. The group was founded primarily through the efforts of Chris Aamodt. It still has three of its original members: Rich Cummings, Roger Ruetten and John Lennes. More information: [www.stillwatersunriserotary.org](http://www.stillwatersunriserotary.org).

Stillwater has another Rotary Club that meets Thursdays at 11:45 a.m. at the Lowell Inn (contact info: [www.StillwaterRotary.org](http://www.StillwaterRotary.org)).

Guests are welcome at either meeting.