



Spokes and Cogs is the weekly newsletter of the Rotary Club of Las Cruces.

2011-03-30, Danise Coon, NMSU Chile Pepper Institute

At 12:10 PM, the melodious sound of the bell signaled the start of the fifth meeting in March. Ivan Stubbs gave the invocation and President Richelle Ponder led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Feeling the sunny days, Paul Comeau lead us "Oh What a Beautiful Morning". The usual meet and greet followed. It was later announced that Jay Jordan was the Mystery Greeter.

After a three week drought, we actually had a visiting Rotarian, Diane Maddox from the Rio Grande Club. Members then introduced their guests. Andrew Taylor not only introduced his guest, Steffie Koch, but did a dance demonstration with her to promote an upcoming dance program at NMSU. Although it's a little hard to dance with combat boots on, Andrew looked to be in top form.



Being the last meeting of the month, our Student Rotarians were asked to give their talks. Students from Las Cruces, Mayfield, San Andres, and Mesilla Valley Christian High Schools talked about their current activities and hopes for the future. Chris Ericson from Las Cruces High hopes to own his own business; Leland Sharp from Mayfield plans to become a mechanical engineer; Azalea Salazar from San Andreas is hoping for a career with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Rodrigo Borunda from Mesilla Valley Christian will first attend NMSU and then go



on to law school. Future Rotarians all!



The Program

Acting March Program Chair, John Pickett, introduced our guest speaker Danise Coon, Program Coordinator for New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute (CPI). Danise began by noting that the CPI is a non-profit organization located in Gerald Thomas Hall. She then went on to give a brief history of chile. In its original state, it was more like a small red berry and is very



much a Western Hemisphere crop. Christopher Columbus took some of it back to Europe and from there it made its way to Asia. In 1888, Fabian Garcia, a horticulturalist with the then New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts began experiments to breed more standardized chile pepper varieties. The U. S. chile industry was revolutionized with the release of his "New Mexico 9" variety. Ms. Coon then continued by explaining the purpose of the Chile Pepper Institute. She stated that its mission is to educate, research, and archive information related to Capsicum. Capsicum provides the "heat" in the chile pepper and is found in the veins of the pods. Chile is a relative of the potato, tomato, and eggplant.

The CPI has developed the world's hottest chile pepper, the Bhut Jolokia. As part of its mission, the CPI also preserves various varieties of chile, publishes a newsletter, hosts an annual chile conference, and maintains a demonstration garden. They are also trying to raise \$1,000,000 to establish an endowed chair for a professor in chile research. Such a chair would guarantee the future of chile research at NMSU. In the Q&A session that followed, it was pointed out that the Mesilla Valley grows all the Cayenne Pepper for Louisiana Hot Sauce. It is turned into mash and fermented in large stainless steel tanks seen in the area before it is trucked to Louisiana for conversion into sauce.



After the Program

President Richelle announced that Jon Daniels was in the hospital and not doing too well. Also the Club received a very nice handmade card from the President of the United by Friendship program, Margie van Lent, for our donation towards Jim Maxon's trip to Guatemala to help provide education, clean water, and medical care. Our Student Rotarian from San Andreas High School won the drawing and Lya Jordan announced that the can had raised \$33. The meeting ended with a recitation of the Four Way Test. Members then rushed over to our guest speaker to purchase a bottle of Holy Jolokia sauce.