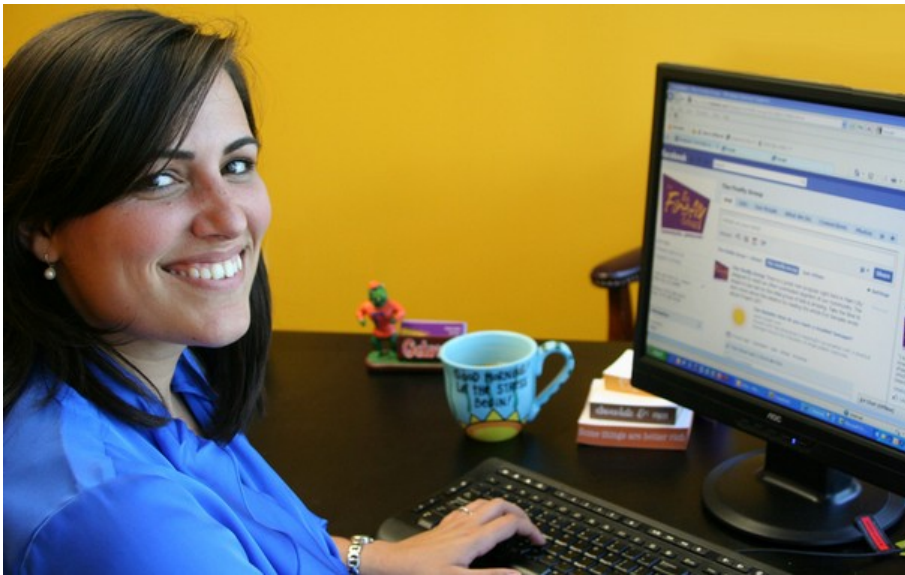


## Sunrise Rotary Club of Stuart learns now is the perfect time to join the social media bandwagon

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Jessica Layne of The Firefly Group recently explained to a group of Rotarians that the timing has never been better to “follow,” “friend,” “link up with” and join a variety of social media sites.

STUART — Millions of people across the globe are busy every minute, sharing information on Facebook, communicating via Twitter or blogging for their company or personal use. More so now than just one year ago, users are acutely aware of the capabilities of these sites and how to navigate them to their maximum benefit.

Social media is a term that has become commonplace among small business and nonprofits, and while some may see it as a current trend or passing fad, Jessica Layne of The Firefly Group recently explained to a group of Rotarians that the timing has never been better to “follow,” “friend,” “link up with” and join a variety of social media sites.

At a monthly meeting of the Stuart Sunrise Rotary Club, Layne discussed the benefits associated with the use of strategic messaging through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. For nonprofits, the advantages of having a presence on these sites are seemingly endless.

Looking at an international organization such as the Rotary Clubs, with over 1.2 million members, connecting them all in one place would be nearly impossible, but with the capabilities of Facebook and Twitter they can all communicate and spread one uniform message. With the network of users growing each day, nonprofits across the globe are communicating in ways like never before.

The Stuart Sunrise Rotary Club just started their own Facebook Group and Jamie Chapogas, their newly-elected president, is their first member. Chapogas understands that as social media begins to define itself in new ways and continues to grow a vast network with global reach, it is important that the organization participate in and take advantage of this new way of communicating that even skeptics agree is more than just a passing fad.

“Our members make up a diverse cross-section of the community that comes together for a common goal,” Chapogas said. “My role as president is to ensure that message is communicated effectively and strategically. Taking advantage of social media opens the door to a very cost effective and global way of making that happen.”

Creating a Facebook page may have been the first step for the Rotary Club in the direction of utilizing today’s user-generated media capabilities, but teaching the members of the Club what to do from there is another thing entirely. With a demographic that spans many generations, some of the clubs members were all too familiar with Facebook and Twitter, while others had never been to either site. Layne demonstrated not only the benefits of platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but how to develop a meaningful presence on these sites.

“It’s relatively easy for anyone to create a Facebook page or open a Twitter account. These sites want you to be a part of their networks and have an abundance of resources to get you started,” says Layne. “But creating relationships and finding valuable information to share with your followers requires a commitment of time.”

The thing that holds most users back is the idea that social media is either a fad, or that it’s too hard to monitor or control, according to Layne. She admits that while there is no guarantee that it will be specifically Facebook or Twitter that will be the most popular social media sites in the future, she is confident that social media as a communication and relationship-building tool is here to stay.

“We have been given the green light to become our own agent, editor and publisher. Why would we let that opportunity fizzle out?”

#### About The Firefly Group

The Firefly Group is a public relations and marketing firm servicing businesses, landowners, non-profit organizations and government agencies. With a focus on providing comprehensive, strategic and sustainable solutions, Firefly works with clients to identify ways in which to successfully meet their organizational and project goals and objectives through effective communications. Industry areas include: agriculture, energy, environment, government, marine/water, non-profits, science/education, small businesses and sustainable community development. For more information call 772-287-5272, visit <http://www.fireflyforyou.com>, follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/FireflyGroupPR](http://www.twitter.com/FireflyGroupPR) or find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TheFireflyGroup>.

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