



## Coronavirus disrupts club meetings, postpones Wheel of Honor project

Like everybody and everything else, The Wilmington Rotary Club has been radically disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. On March 13, the Board of Directors voted to suspend weekly meetings.

This was in response to what Past President Eric McKeithan called “strong federal and state guidance to avoid large group meetings and a national strategy of social distancing in order to avoid a rapid spike in the outbreak of the virus that might overwhelm healthcare facilities and personnel.”

Because this reduced our costs for room rent and meals, club dues have been reduced until further notice. SEE box at lower right.

The following week, the board decided to cancel group events in connection with our Wheel of Honor fund-raiser, scheduled to begin in mid-May. Ultimately, the entire Wheel of Honor project has been postponed indefinitely. For more on Wheel of Honor, SEE page 2.

When it became clear that the pandemic would remain a serious public health threat for at least several months, the board decided to resume meetings through online video chat. President-Elect Cleve Callison took the lead on organizing the virtual meetings.

After a brief first attempt to prove that we could operate this way, on April 28, the club has been successfully meeting online. Typically around 60 Rotarians participate.

For members who have not yet joined, this is what it takes to participate using the Zoom platform.

- A computer, tablet or smartphone with an internet connection.



Past President Eric McKeithan presides, remotely, over the club's first 'virtual' meeting on April 28. Some of the Zoom tools are visible below Eric's video feed.

- An email address on file with the club to receive the weekly invitation, including a log-in code.
- The Zoom application, which can be downloaded free from [zoom.us](https://zoom.us).
- Versions for tablets or smartphones can be downloaded from the App Store on an iPad or iPhone, or through Google Play on an Android phone.

To join the meeting: click on the link in your invitation email. If prompted to do so, enter the log-in code from the same email.

Ideally, you should be in a place where background noises won't be heard. It's best to have a light source in front of you rather than behind, so others can see your face.

## Collins, new board inducted via Zoom

Instead of our annual installation banquet, the club inducted President **Robby Collins** and other leaders in a virtual meeting on June 23. Robby takes the gavel from Eric McKeithan and will preside through June 2021. Also inducted were President-Elect **Cleve Callison**, who will serve in the 2021-22 Rotary year, and President-Nominee **Dale Smith**, whose term will be 2022-23.



President Robby Collins speaks to the club during virtual induction ceremony on June 23.

Also taking office were new members of our Board of Directors, who will serve three years, until mid-2023: **Lynne Boney, Nancy Bullock, Charlotte Davis, Bo Dean and Todd Turner**, as well as Past President **Mike Beaudoin**, who will serve a one-year term.

## Dues reduced for the duration

Because we are no longer meeting in person, the portion of the club's member dues that paid for our meeting space and meals has been temporarily suspended.

Dues to District 7730 and to Rotary International total \$137.83 a year. Those remain in effect, included in your club dues.

For the quarter from April through June 2020, the Board of Directors reduced dues for active members from \$220 to \$75. Dues for R85 members, who previously paid only for those lunches they ate, remain at \$65.



# New Rotarians join, introduce themselves via video



Lynne Hershey

During our last in-person meetings, the club inducted several new members, who then gave their new-member talks via video after meetings resumed in virtual form.

**Lynne Hershey** joined the club on Feb. 18. She is a retired elementary school teacher and was sponsored for membership by Donna Shiro. She gave her new-member talk by video April 28.



Althea Johnson

Inducted Feb. 25 was **Althea Johnson**, CEO of MedNorth Health Center in Wilmington. Althea was sponsored by Albert Corbett and introduced herself to the club on May 26.



Clayton Hamerski

**Clayton Hamerski** joined the club on March 10. He is a residential real estate broker and a candidate for New Hanover County register of deeds. His sponsor was Steve Coggins.

Also inducted on March 10 was **Chance Lambeth**, who is district director for U.S. Rep. David Rouzer. Albert Corbett sponsored him. Chance addressed the club via Zoom on May 26.



Chance Lambeth

A Rotarian inducted earlier gave her new-member talk on April 28. **Bunny Donahue**, retired from the clinical research business, joined the club on June 25, 2019, sponsored by Donna Shiro.

## A gallery of new-member talks at virtual meetings

These images are screen-grabs from recent meetings during which new members, on video at home, introduced themselves to the club.



Hershey, April 28



Donahue, April 28



Johnson, May 26



Lambeth, May 26

Have a candidate in mind for membership? Download the prospective member checklist and application form from the "Documents" section of the club website: [WilmingtonRotaryClub.org](http://WilmingtonRotaryClub.org).



Posing Feb. 19 in the Williston Middle School auditorium are Rotarians and Williston students honored for living their lives by the Four-Way Test.

# Williston students feted in February; further student of the month awards canceled as schools closed

The closing of New Hanover County schools in March also halted our Student of the Month award program at Williston Middle School. The last awards ceremony for the 2019-20 school year was Feb. 19.

Students are nominated for this award by teachers and school staff. Those who demonstrate that they live their lives in keeping with Rotary's Four-Way-Test are given a certificate, gift card, T-shirt and a medallion.

In other Williston business, the Legacy Committee presented the school with the money raised from our Dollars for Desserts fundraiser in December. On March 3, Rotarians **Todd Turner** and Steve Yates presented Williston Principal **Askia Kirby** and the school's music teachers, **Derrick Foskey**, **Erin Cuelar** and **Austin Hinson** with our check for \$7,230 this morning. This goes to the band, orchestra and chorus.



One of February's students of the month displays her certificate. Rotarians Steve Yates and Todd Turner presided over the ceremony, the last for this school year.

# Pandemic forces postponement of Wheel of Honor; fund-raising goes on

In response to the growing severity of the Covid-19 pandemic, the club's board decided in March to cancel the shrimp-eroo party at Greenfield Park that had been planned for May 19.

Then, when it became clear that the coronavirus outbreak would remain a serious health threat for much of the year, the board indefinitely postponed the display of flags in the Rotary Wheel Garden. That had been intended to run from an opening ceremony on May 16 through the July 4 holiday weekend.

When that decision was made, the club had raised enough money from flag sponsorships to buy nearly half of the planned 500 flags. Another \$6,200 from

the original 2019-2020 budget, allocated for projects and activities budget, will be used to acquire the rest of the flags.

Club members have also generously contributed slightly more than \$35,000 in sponsorships. That \$35,000 will be dedicated entirely to 2020-2021 projects and activities like those mentioned at the March 10 club meeting.

We plan to continue our fundraising efforts to cover even more flag donations and sponsorships as we strive to reach \$50,000 with the help of all club members in order to fund a full slate of projects and activities in 2020-2021.

Sponsorships directly benefit the club's tax-exempt charitable foundation.



Fundraising Committee chair Larry Sackett offers a status report on March 10, our last in-person meeting.

# Hard times show need for Foundation

Our club's Rotary Foundation chair, Past District Governor R.B. Richey, has offered this appeal for continued contributions. "It is time to assess the impact this virus has had on our lives and the institutions on which we depend." Among the ways Rotarians can demonstrate "Service Above Self," R.B. said in a May 24 message, "is to to recognize what The Rotary Foundation has done to make the world a better place to live."

Among Rotary International's areas of focus that the Foundation supports are these that are especially relevant to this year's troubles: peace and conflict prevention and resolution; disease prevention and cure; water supply and sanitation; and economic and community development.

On March 10, before the coronavirus forced suspension of the club's regular meetings, R.B. presented Past President Cathy Barlow with a pin that recognized her as a Paul Harris Fellow "plus 2" for total contributions of \$3,000 to The Rotary Foundation.



R.B. Richey presents Cathy Barlow with her 'plus 2' pin.





Joe Owen shows off one of the monster pencils that were part of the Rookie Teacher of the Year awards. These were presented at the Feb. 18 meeting.

## First-year teachers get cash, big pencils

Five first-year teachers from New Hanover County Schools were recognized in our Rookie Teacher of the Year awards on Feb. 18. Each of the five finalists gave a short presentation about how she became a teacher and what teaching meant to her. The program was introduced by Rotarian **Joe Owen**, with remarks by Assistant Su-

perintendent **LaChawn Smith**.

The honorees were:

**Elizabeth Batchelor**, who teaches sports marketing at SEA-Tech High School.

**Erica Biggs**, a sixth-grade science teacher at Trask Middle School.

**Allison Maready**, a second-grade teacher at Blair Elementary.

**Sydney Peterson**, who teaches kindergarten at Forest Hills Global Elementary.

**Bethany Taw**, who teaches English as a second language at Laney High School.

Each finalist got a \$500 cash prize. The winner, Sydney Peterson, received \$1,000.



Beth Batchelor, SEA-Tech High School



Erica Biggs, Trask Middle School



Allison Maready, Blair Elementary School



Sydney Peterson, Forest Hills Elementary School.



Bethany Taw, Laney High School

## Rotarian Bob King, retired automobile dealer, dies at 78

Robert S. King, a 29-year Rotarian and prominent Wilmington businessman, died March 4. He was 78.

Bob joined the club on Feb. 2, 1991, sponsored by the late Chris McKeithan. Among his higher-profile roles was conducting the weekly raffle for many years. He was a Paul Harris Fellow "plus three."

Best known as an automobile dealer, he was retired from active management of Bob

King Buick GMC Mercedes-Benz. That dealership, dating to 1972, has been prominent enough that the City of Wilmington named a street for Bob!

He was a supporter of the Community Boys & Girls Home, Boy Scouts of America, UNCW and the UNCW Alumni Association.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Martha Small King, two children, five grandchildren and his father, Benjamin R. King Sr.



# Club honors police, public servants with Service Above Self awards



Mark Lobel, Pender County Sheriff's Office



Adam Lewis, Wilmington Police Department



Jess Boersma, UNCW



Holt Trotman, assistant district attorney

Our annual recognition of law enforcement and other public safety personnel, the Service Above Self Awards, took place on March 3. Rotarian **Ben David**, district attorney for New Hanover and Pender Counties, presided.

The honorees and the chiefs of their departments were the club's guests for lunch. Afterward, the guests were treated to a round of golf by Cape Fear Country Club.

Pender County Sheriff's Deputy **Mark Lobel** was honored for solving a fatal assault and battery case that resulted in a first-degree murder conviction. Detective Lobel was able to obtain damning statements and video recordings that clinched the conviction.

Three Wilmington Police Department officers were honored for their successful efforts to stop a potential suicide, a woman attempting to jump from a downtown parking deck. **Adam Lewis**, **Henry Fields** and **Nate Perry** were able to physically stop her from falling and safely got her to the hospital for treatment.

Two UNC-Wilmington deans were honored for their work in partnership with police and the DA's office. **Mike Walker**, dean of students, administers the student conduct code and on-campus discipline system. **Jess Boersma**, associate dean for student success,

has sent student interns to the DA's office and begun a class that will help officers from many agencies obtain needed certifications.

Former Assistant DA **Holt Trotman**, who retired at the end of 2019, was honored for his 39 years as a prosecutor, during which his focus on felonies helped reduce both crime rates and incarceration.

Two non-governmental employees, **Amy Feath** and **Julie Ozier** of the Carousel Center, were honored for their work on behalf of children who have been abused. Their assistance to these children and cooperation with the DA's office has helped convict numerous sex offenders.

Detective **Brandon Smith** of Carolina Beach Police Department was honored for his work with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, a team of detectives from several agencies who have tracked down and arrested sexual predators of children.

Sgt. **Evan Luther** and Lt. **Paul Jelley** of the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office were recognized for catching at a drivers-license checkpoint and identifying an interstate fugitive, wanted for sex offenses against children.

The presentations concluded

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Henry Fields, Wilmington Police Department



Nate Perry, Wilmington Police Department



Mike Walker, UNCW



Julie Ozier, Carousel Center



Amy Feath, Carousel Center



Evan Luther, New Hanover County Sheriff's Office



Paul Jelley, New Hanover County Sheriff's Office





Ernie Olds solicits grant applications during online virtual club meeting on May 19.

## Grants committee evaluating requests for project funding

The deadline for grant applications has been extended. Requests for grants to be made during the 2020-21 Rotary year will be accepted until July 14.

Grants Committee Chair Ernie Olds reported, "Our committee will meet, review and select a number (three to six) of applications most worthy and forward them to the Board for approval."

Those approved will be submitted to District 7730 by Aug. 3, to compete for potential matching funds. The district will advise us of its selections by Sept. 4. To qualify for District Grant funding, a project must have at least 50 percent local funding, be sustainable, and include hands-on Rotarian involvement.

The local match for District Grants comes from our local non-profit foundation, which is supported by contributions from Rotarians and by our annual fund-raising campaign. For more on the Wheel of Honor, this year's fund-raiser, SEE *page 2*.

*Club photographer:*  
**Robby Collins**

*Other images taken from screen grabs during virtual club meetings via Zoom software.*

## Service dog finishes training, gets client

Last year, after the club gave \$2,500 to Paws 4 People, that service-dog organization named one of its pups "Harris," in honor of Rotary's founder Paul Harris. Harris, a golden retriever, has now graduated from all her training courses and has been assigned to a client, a veteran named Seth.

He reports, "Harris has impacted my life in ways I didn't think were possible. I always have her at my side. . . Covid has forced me to get creative with training. Instead of going out, we stay home more often than not. Only going out when necessary. I set up training scenarios at home, or we work on things at the park. A year ago I was a different person from who I am now. I'm much more open, and having a golden retriever at my side seems to make me more approachable. People are constantly coming up to me to tell me what a beautiful dog I have."



Seth and his service dog Harris.



Retired Wilmington Police Chief Ralph Evangelous with his Paul Harris Fellow medallion, which was presented by Rotarians Sterling Cheatham and Dale Smith March 3.

## Service Above Self awards, continued

*Continued from previous page*

when retiring Wilmington Police Chief **Ralph Evangelous** was made a Paul Harris Fellow. Rotarian **Sterling Cheatham**, Wilmington's city manager, presented the medallion to the chief. He was credited with improving the Police Department's technology, reducing the city's crime rate to record lows, and leaving what Ben called a "human legacy."

Also at the award ceremony, Ben introduced the man Evangelous had trained as his replacement, **Donny Williams**. Since then, in the aftermath of nightly protests, the revelation of recent misconduct by some of his former officers, and his decision to fire those officers, Interim Chief Williams was appointed to the permanent job.



Donny Williams, Evangelous's successor as police chief.

# Pandemic halts in-person club meetings; programs resume via videoconferencing



Smith: rookie teachers



Regan: environment



David: public service award



Le Zotte: votes for women

Before the coronavirus pandemic shut down in-person club meetings, we conducted two annual awards programs and heard from two guest speakers. Then, after a month-long hiatus, weekly meetings resumed in cyberspace, thanks to the Zoom videoconferencing software.

On Feb. 18, New Hanover County Schools Deputy Superintendent **LaChawn Smith** introduced our Rookie Teacher of the Year finalists. For more on that, SEE *page 4*.

**Michael Regan**, North Carolina secretary of environmental quality, presented the program on Feb. 25.

Presiding over the March 3 program, our annual Service Above Self Awards, was Rotarian **Ben David**. For more, SEE *page 5*.

At our last regular meeting, on March 10, our speaker was UNCW history professor Dr. **Jennifer Le Zotte**, who spoke about how American women gained the right to vote.

Meetings were then suspended until April 28, when the club held its first online meeting using Zoom teleconferencing software. That brief "proof of concept" experiment included no formal program.

The first virtual program came May 5, when **Mike Werner** spoke about the differing ways people find the truth, a program sponsored by the club's Four-Way Test Committee.

On May 12, Rotarian **John Meyer** presented a review of this club's history, starting in 1915, based on our 2015 centennial history book.

How the pandemic and stay-at-home orders were affecting local business was the topic on May 19, when former Rotarian **Natalie English** of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce was our speaker.

The May 26 meeting was devoted to new-member talks. For details, SEE *page 2*.

The impact of Covid-19 on downtown business and employment was the topic for **Ed Wolverton**, the executive director of Wilmington Downtown, Inc., on June 2.

**Kim Hufham** of the Lower Cape Fear Convention and Visitors Bureau spoke June 9 about the pandemic's impact on the region's tourism economy.

How non-profits have been affected by, and are responding to, the pandemic was the topic on June 16.

**Tommy Taylor** of Cape Fear Area United Way spoke about charitable organizations; former Rotarian **Rhonda Bellamy** of the Arts Council of Wilmington/New Hanover County discussed how arts groups are faring.

On June 23, in lieu of our normal installation banquet, President Robby Collins and new Board members took office. For more on this, SEE *page 1*.



Club history was topic for May 12 online program.



Meyer: Rotary club history



English: local economy



Wolverton: downtown



Werner: seeking the truth



Hufham: tourism shutdown



Taylor: United Way



Bellamy: arts & pandemic



## Upcoming programs & events

TUESDAY, JULY 7

The case against selling New Hanover Regional Medical Center. With **Gene Merritt** of Save Our Hospital.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

The case for a hospital sale or partnership. With **Spence Broadhurst, Barb Biehner** and **Hannah Dawson Gage** of the Partnership Advisory Group.

MONDAY, JULY 20

Board of Directors meeting, 5:30 p.m. Address below.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

Theater in the age of Covid-19. With **Tony Rivenbark** of Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts.

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Expansion of the Wilmington port, with **Brian Clark** and **Paul Cozza** of N.C. State Ports Authority.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

"Braver Angels," uniting a house divided, with Area Governor **Allen Quigley** of District 7730, Area 3.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

Judaic law in Anglo-American jurisprudence, with Justice **Mark Davis** of the N.C. Supreme Court.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17

Board of Directors meeting, 5:30 p.m. Address below.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

Update on improvements to Rotary Wheel Garden at Greenfield Lake, with Rotarian **Terry Smith**.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

Client management, with **Richard Walsh** of UNCW's Swain Center for Executive Education.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Eliminating racism, empowering women, with **Velva Jenkins**, executive director, YWCA Lower Cape Fear.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

Local movie and TV production, with **Barbara D'Alessandro**, film producer.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Program to be announced.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

An international response to disasters, supported by Rotary, with **Bill Tobin** of Shelterbox USA.

## Rotary news briefs

**Members reminded: club is non-political.** In a June 10 email, then-President Eric McKeithan gave Rotarians a "friendly reminder" that Rotary's charter says the club is to be "non-political." That means the club's meetings are not a forum for recommending for or against candidates for office, or for appeals, speeches, or other plans for the solution of problems of a political nature.

"If something does not comport with our Constitution, objects of Rotary, and all four elements of the Four-Way Test, it has no place in Rotary," Eric wrote.

"We live in a stressful time with a pandemic, economic instability, global and national tensions, and a prolonged political environment with unprecedented negative discourse on many fronts."

**Salvation Army work day.** Rotarian volunteers helped prepare and serve meals at the Salvation Army Shelter on Feb. 26.

**Miracle Field assistance.** Rotarians helped disabled athletes with their movements around the basepath at the Miracle Field during a game on March 7.

**Rotary Wheel Garden work day.** On March 14, just as the community was beginning to button up against Covid-19, the club's Community Service Committee got in one last work day, weeding flower beds at the Rotary Wheel Garden at Greenfield Park. This was to prepare the beds for an application of mulch.

**Rotary Day at the N.C. Boys and Girls Homes,** scheduled for March 28, fell victim to virus closures, but our club still made its promised \$1,000 donation to support the home's Rotary Cottage.

**Dental funds redirected against hunger.** A planned dental screening project was canceled because of the virus. On April 20, the Board of Directors voted to use \$425 of the original \$500 budgeted for this project to buy 1,000 pounds of rice from Rise Against Hunger to be delivered to Good Shepherd Center in Wilmington. Other Wilmington-area clubs have agreed to buy another 1,000 pounds. The rice is being used by Good Shepherd and other feeding operations.

Rise Against Hunger is the group to which our club gave money and volunteer labor last fall to package meals for victims of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas. In the spring of 2020 it was forced to deplete its food stocks because it was unable to assemble the large groups of volunteers needed to package meals.

**Committee updates needed for handbook.** Chairs of committees are asked to email Vicki Scott at [johnvickiscott@gmail.com](mailto:johnvickiscott@gmail.com) and President Robby Collins at [robbycollins@aol.com](mailto:robbycollins@aol.com), with a list of the members of their committees for 2020-2021. We need up-to-date info for the club handbook, which will go to press soon.

### Board of Directors Meeting

5:30 pm, 3rd Monday of each Month  
LS3P Architects conference room  
101 N. Third Street, Fifth Floor  
Wilmington, NC 28401

### Get In Touch

**President Robby Collins** 470-5500  
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### Submit News Items

Send photos or other information for the newsletter to [john@capefearpublishers.com](mailto:john@capefearpublishers.com). Please include all pertinent names, dates, etc.

### Website

[www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org](http://www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org)