



March 14, 2005

Little Rock Metro Rotary Club

Steve Maxwell - President

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CLUB HISTORY

Little Rock Metro Rotary Club was initially formed on June 10, 1988 in Little Rock, AR under the direction and valued assistance of our mentor club, West Little Rock Rotary. We were the fourth club formed within the city of Little Rock and it would be a breakfast club, meeting at 7AM on Fridays. There were 25 charter members for Club # 26000 when it was finally chartered on 10/27/88. The "territory" as was used in those days, was described as "That portion of Pulaski County, Arkansas, south of the Arkansas River". Our Special Representative during this formative time was Mr. Carl Rosenbaum of Club 99 and the District Governor was Mr. Robert Fortney.

In the formation of the club, it was decided to meet at Baptist Health Center on I630 in their Doctor's Lounge, adjacent to the cafeteria. The first President, Mr. Gary Bien was a Vice President at Baptist Hospital and the Secretary was Chris Elkins, a Baptist Minister from the First Baptist Church. The next five Presidents would come from our charter members. The fourth, Al Prewitt would also go on to serve as Governor for District 6150 during the year of 1995-1996.

The club went through a relatively unstable period during the first year and a half adding 24 members and losing 16. Leadership strengthened though and we continued with slow, steady growth through 1996, when the club reached a size of 44 members. The next few years saw a decline in membership for various reasons cited including the morning meeting time, business and family conflicts, etc. until it settled out at about 17 members a couple years ago. We no longer have a charter member left in our club with several having rejoined the West Little Rock Club. Little Rock Metro has now turned the corner though and begun an active campaign to revitalize the club. We are back up to 22 members with a positive growth of 5 during this Centennial Year. Our goal is to get back to 30+ members by the time of Rotary Convention 2005 in Chicago. We started a dynamic website in 2004 which is at: www.littlerockmetrorotary.org.

We are proud to have produced 16 Paul Harris Fellows thus far from our club with more in the works. Thirteen of those have been for members and three have been for friends or relatives. We have one Benefactor and several more planned in our efforts to support the Rotary Foundation.

Our club has always had good weekly programs at our meetings and great fellowship among its members, one of the true benefits of a smaller club. We have worked to add more social events such as outings to a baseball or basketball game, picnics at the lake, and our Christmas party which includes spouses and children as well. We are pleased to have achieved the Presidential Citation for the last 6-8 years and we received Most Improved Club of District 6150 in 2003. Here is a highlight of some of our club's projects.

INTERACT CLUBS:

Involvement with the Interact Club program has been one of the strongest identities that Little Rock Metro has established over the years. Our goal has been to introduce Rotary to our younger citizens and hopefully "Service Above Self" will become second nature as they prepare for their later years.

In 1995, we formed our first club at Pulaski Academy, a private school in west Little Rock. This Interact Club has now grown to over 100 members and is extremely active promoting community service – from Boo at the Zoo, to Rice Depot, to Salvation Army support, to a new Literacy Program of reading to at-risk elementary aged children - which was conceived and planned by one of the Interactors.

In 2003, we formed our second club at The Cathedral School (High School which is now known as The Episcopal Collegiate School). This club is still in its early years, but has already made great strides with its volunteer work. Examples include Camp Aldersgate, Heifer Project, Rice Depot, and “Puppy Love”, where puppies from the Arkansas Humane Society are taken to local nursing homes to brighten the day for the residents.

PROJECTS:

One of our very first projects was to sponsor the Holley Grove Club in the Adopt-a Club project. Metro worked to provide half of their programs for meetings and coordinate with the district for the other half.

In the last several years, our club has worked with our two Interact Clubs on most of their projects, such as workdays at the Rice Depot and Camp Aldersgate. We have also participated in numerous other community projects including the city-wide Paint Your Heart Out, working in December with Salvation Army’s Angel Tree and Bell Ringing, and local support for the Race For the Cure event. More recent work has included the Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl-For-Kid’s-Sake, our 2004 Donation of 100+ Fans to the needy, and a new Literacy Project to deliver dictionaries to 110 third grade students at two local public elementary schools. We also support RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Award) in the District each year to sponsor two candidates in their attendance to this fun leadership training event for teenagers.

Each Metro member will tell you though that one of the most cherished is our adoption of a family at Arkansas Children’s Hospital before Christmas. Normally one of the children is there for cancer treatment or other trauma. The hospital screens the families and provides the name of one in real need. Our members then proceed to shop for both parents and all the children to be sure they have gifts, toys, and a food basket for Christmas. This would be a Christmas like none other. The families are always amazed at the generosity of our club and to know someone cares about them during this troubled time.

For our Centennial Project, Little Rock Metro decided to help the Family Home at UA Medical Sciences Hospital located here in Little Rock. We provided a 31” Color Television and Video player/recorder for their use in the den. This system would be used for both recreational use and to watch informational videos that might be needed by a family member staying there.

INTERNATIONAL WORK:

The current 2004-2005 Centennial Year has produced several new international opportunities for Little Rock Metro Rotary. It is our first year to host a long term, Youth Exchange Student. Sara Repetto is from Camogli, Italy and we are sharing this honor with West Little Rock Rotary Club.

We are also proud to have our first Group Study Exchange (GSE) Team member chosen for this summer’s Norway trip from the nominations by our club. We will be sponsoring Mr. Ed Linck, Jr. for this GSE trip and one of the standby Alternates chosen was also from our submitted nominees.

Little Rock Metro also participated in January, 2005 in the Tsunami Relief efforts in Indonesia with the Shelter Box USA project. We purchased Shelter Box # 924 of these 49 Gallon boxes of supplies that will be sent as aid for up to ten people for 6 – 10 months.