Meeting Notes – Mar. 29, 2022 –

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, Mar. 29, 2022. Our club president, Dr. Abby Adams, had invited Joe Davis to speak to us about a special offering his church is promoting to help with alleviating medical debt. Joe is on staff at Auburn United Methodist Church. His church, along with several others in the area, are raising money to offer medical debt forgiveness to individuals through Lee, Chambers and surrounding counties that are served by East Alabama Medical Center. To be eligible for this program, the individual must have no insurance coverage (and not be eligible for Medicare or Medicaid), reside at the poverty level, and have a credit score of less than 400. AUMC has set a goal of raising $50,000.00 during this Lent season to help 350 of the 2600 families who meet the criteria. There is currently $18 million in debt owed to EAMC. For every $0.02 raised and donated, $100.00 in debt will be forgiven.

Chris Busby, fellow Rotarian and deputy director of the Chambers County Development Authority, was responsible for our program today and presented a program on the Rural Recovery Initiative. Last summer a colleague reached out to Chris and offered Chambers County the opportunity to apply to become part of this initiative offered by the Center of Rural Innovation. To be eligible to apply, the community must have a population of less than 50,000, must have fiber network in their downtown area, must be located near to post-secondary education and must have organizational leadership. A core group was established and the application was submitted. The purpose of the initiative is to create a digital technology entrepreneurial opportunity. Only four communities nationwide are selected to receive this and Chambers County was one of them. This initiative will provide support to individual entrepreneurs, primarily in LaFayette and Lanett, who need technological support in launching their own business.

Chambers County is fully funded at $30,000.00. There are two training cohorts and our cohort will start training in early May. In Phase I, the Center of Rural Innovation (CORI) comes in and assesses our digital economy. Phase 2 will involve designing strategy to capitalize on the community's strengths. Phase 3 will focus on acquiring federal grants.

Diane Sherriff