



"Rotary is an organization of business and professional persons united worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace in the world."

Belmont Rotary Club preparing for 100th anniversary in 2025

In the fall of 1925, interest in forming a Rotary club was building in the Belmont business community. It had been 20 years since Chicago attorney Paul Harris invited three friends to his office for what became the first Rotary meeting. The Rotary name came from their practice of rotating meetings among member locations.

A Rotary club already had been formed in Gastonia, and three Belmont representatives, Arch Lineberger, Henry Jordan and Harley B. Gaston, Sr., attended a meeting, which inspired them to begin working to establish a Belmont club. The president of Rotary International appointed Harley B. Gaston, Sr. chairman of the organizing committee on October 8, and an organizational meeting was held on November 25.

Sponsored by the Gastonia Club, the Rotary Club of Belmont was elected to membership in Rotary International on December 14, 1925, and was designated as club number 2182. Harley B. Gaston, Sr. was elected as the first president. The club had 27 charter members.

Today, Rotary is one of the world's largest service organizations, with 1.4 million members and over 46,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and territories. "Service Above Self" is the Rotary motto.

From the start, Belmont Rotary Club has been committed to community service. Through member volunteer hours, member donations and a wide variety of creative fund-raising events, the club has supported countless organizations, projects and worthy causes. Just a few examples include:

- Belmont Community Organization
- Holy Angels
- Gaston Literacy Council
- Catherine's House
- Girls on the Run
- Sponsorship of Little League baseball
- Providing scholarships to deserving students

- Sponsoring students and adults in group study exchanges
- Assisting in community clean-up campaigns
- Helping with school landscaping and other projects
- Packaging medical supplies for those in need

In the recent past, a wildly successful “Taste of Belmont” gala raised tens of thousands for local causes, including \$30,000 to help build restrooms in Stowe Park, \$20,000 to the Belmont Historical Society, and more than \$15,000 to other local charities.

Rotary was an all-male organization until the late 1980s, and Freida Jo Singleton became the Belmont club’s first woman member in 1989 and the first woman president in 1993.

Women now make up about 27 percent of the Belmont Rotary Club membership, and the first woman became president of Rotary International on July 1, 2022.

Like all nonprofit and service organizations, the Belmont Rotary Club is rebounding from the impacts of a global pandemic that struck in early 2020 making it impossible for long periods to hold in-person meetings and events and still is preventing many from participating.

The work of Rotary continued through the crisis using virtual meetings and later outdoor and socially distanced indoor meetings.

Seth Sherrin served as president of Belmont Rotary Club for two years during the pandemic. Whitney Norton became president on July 1, 2022, with Thomas Hunter, III, son of a current member and great-grandson of a charter member, as president-elect.

President Whitney’s goals for this Rotary year are to serve senior citizens in need, help educate students about the dangers of drug use, provide support for the Rotary Club of Pignon, Haiti, and improve visibility and increase membership in Belmont Rotary Club.