**History Of Charlotte Providence Rotary Club**

(Formerly Charlotte East Rotary Club)

The Charlotte East Rotary Club was organized as a service project by the Rotary Club of Charlotte in 1969. Tebee Hawkins, a partner in the architectural firm of Marsh and Hawkins, chaired the organizing committee and recruited many of the charter members. The first meeting was held on September 8, 1969 in Barclay’s Cafeteria in the Amity Gardens Shopping Center on East Independence Boulevard with approximately 25 prospects in attendance. Of those, one member (Julian Culton) is still an active member of the club. The late Jim Wilson was elected as the first president. The club grew rapidly in the early years but has since maintained approximately 37 members.

The club has been active in public service projects and has contributed considerable time and money to local, national and international charities and humanitarian programs including one in Arequipa, Peru. One of the club’s most interesting fund raising efforts occurred in the mid 1980's when it sponsored a return of Polo to Charlotte. Under the leadership of Charles Carson the club organized a local team, arranged for a venue, cleared the field, sold tickets, handled parking and scheduled matches with out-of-town clubs. Charles Carson played on the local team.

Charlotte East began sponsoring the East Mecklenburg High School Interact Club and later Hickory Grove Christian High School Interact club. Beginning in 1996 the club has continually provided a four-year college scholarship for at least one of the Interact members each year. In some years that equated to four scholarships

in one year.

In the spring of 2000, Charlotte East led a group of local Rotary Clubs in building a Habitat for Humanity Home. This effort was so successful that it has been repeated many years since with additional clubs joining the effort and completing the tenth home in 2010. In recent years, Jim Calder and Doug Bradley have been the leaders in this effort. The 2008 Rotary Habitat for Humanity Home was dedicated to the late Charles Dixon.

In the fall of 2001, under the direction of Fran Fesmire, assisted by the late Carter Lofton and Jim Davis, the Club sponsored a highly successful oyster roast/barbecue that continues as an annual fund raising effort. A silent auction is sometimes held in conjunction with this event.

In November of 2002, as part of the Open World Program funded by the Library of Congress, Charlotte East hosted four Russian leaders to introduce them to economic development in the U. S. The club hosted a second delegation in 2004 focused on health care.

Red Rocks Café & Bakery, in the Strawberry Hill development at the intersection of Providence and Sardis Roads became the current location for our meetings in 2004.

Two former members of Charlotte East have served as District Governor of Rotary- the late Charles Dixon (District 7680) in 2002-03 who was an active member in our club, and in 1985-1986, Mark Markanda, a former member. Mark served as Regional Rotary International Foundation Coordinator in 1995-97. Under Mark’s leadership, the club led the District in per capita giving to the Foundation in 1995-96, 1997-98 and 1998-99, and was second in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2005-06.

The club sponsored a third Open World program in 2006 focused on law and justice. Russian attorneys spent a week touring law schools, law offices and the Courthouse. Club members under the leadership of Mary Ellen Shuntich and Fitz Lee, arranged the programs, transported the visitors and often hosted them in their homes. The club has also hosted a number of Rotary Ambassadorial students attending English as a Second Language study program.

The late Carter Lofton, moved Charlotte East into a leadership role for “Stop Hunger Now” in 2006, a program that packages meals to be shipped to relief agencies in poverty stricken nations. That program is still active today throughout this region and other national regions as well.

In 2008-2009 the club won the District 7680 Gold Award for outstanding achievement in a group of areas established as priorities by the District Governor. In April of 2009, the club under the leadership of Becky Keenan and Chad Scott started a new fund raising activity called Bands Together. In 2011 over 20,000 meals were packaged for Stop Hunger Now. The Club was honored to receive the 2010-2011 District 7680 Gold Award.

Under the direction of Mike Walker, the club’s Rotary Foundation Chairman for 2010, the club entered into an International Matching Grant with the Rotary Club of Monrovia, Liberia. This two-year program funded teachers and supplies to the Hope School for the Deaf in Monrovia.

For 2011-2012 the club focus was on hunger, homeless, and education.  The club also wanted more social interaction so we instigated happy hours. We completed our Liberia grant project that year, founding the first international school for the deaf in that country. We also sponsored an outbound student to the Philippines. The club was awarded a Gold Service Presidential Award that year.

An effort to change the club name to Charlotte Providence Rotary Club began in late 2012. Also, we received the "Presidential Citation" from Rotary International as well as being named a "Gold" level "Club of Excellence" by Rotary District 7680

The Rotary Club of Charlotte East changed its name to the Charlotte Providence Rotary Club in 2013-2014.  We joined with Charlotte End of the Week Rotary Club at our Oyster Roast and Fall Festival while packaging 30,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now partnering with companies such as Electrolux, Foodbuy and Andrew Roby Construction.  We collaborated with two other Charlotte clubs (Charlotte North and South), as well as Virginia clubs and Friends of Barnabas Foundation in our "Little Hearts" Global Grant International Project to create and sustain the first ever Pediatric Cardiac Surgical Unit at Ruth Paz Hospital in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. As a partner of District 7680 and Trees Charlotte we planted 425 trees at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. We achieved 100% "Every Rotarian Every Year" participation with The Rotary Foundation and we received the Presidential Citation.

The year 2014-2015 brought many service projects such as serving lunch at Crisis Assistance Ministries, packing hand bags for Alexander Youth Network and packaging supplies for a local school with a high poverty rate.  We again planted 425 trees with Trees Charlotte at a local school. By the end of mid-2015 we have planted six trees in honor of members Julian Culton, and Ben Smith, and also the late Jim Cochran, Jim Wilson, Coy Plott and Raleigh Delaney, wife of member Ben Delaney. In 2015-2026 we also planted trees in honor of

Gray Hudson’s mother.

Under the leadership of president Mike Walker, our club excelled in many areas during the Rotary year 2015-2016. Most notably, Charlotte Providence Rotary Club was awarded the District Governor’s “Best of the Best” Award out of 58 other clubs in our district, a first for the club in its 48-year history to be awarded this prestigious honor.

Of equal significance is the growth of our membership this year. With the generous financial incentives offered to new and existing members by Bill Keenan, the club recruited 10 new members, a record for us in a single year bringing total membership to 39.

A sustainable fundraising project was undertaken by the club with the launch of a farmer’s market in the Cotswold area of Charlotte. The Cotswold Farmers’ Market (CFM) with Carolina Healthcare Systems as our first lead sponsor, opened to a bustling crowd and rave reviews on May 7, 2016, with 24 vendors and 19 sponsors, and will operate annually every Saturday morning during the summer months. The CFM vendors’ wares must be cultivated within a 100-mile radius of the market. The CFM includes cooking demonstrations, fun activities, and entertainment.

After a two year hiatus, the annual Oyster Roast, BBQ, and Silent Auction, resurged in March 2016 and netted the club approximately $10,000.

Funds provided by our club along with those of other clubs via a Foundation Grant enabled the grand opening of the Little Hearts Pediatric Cardiac Surgical Ward and ICU in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Our own Erin Caldwell and Gray Hudson traveled to Honduras in September for the opening and were fortunate to also visit and exchange banners with several clubs in that country.

Thanks to the work of Jim Peck, the club launched a new web site with imbedded links, a more user-friendlier format, and an attractive redesign.

Erin Caldwell was instrumental in resurrecting our club’s relationship with the formerly chartered East Mecklenburg Interact Club, and the club also formally chartered the Interact Club at Hickory Grove Christian High School.

The club held its annual Pancake Breakfast fundraiser at Red Rocks restaurant thanks to the generosity of owner John Love, prolific ticket sales by club members, and the time and dedication of a handful of volunteers including the Interact Club of Hickory Grove Christian High school.

Our club sponsored an outgoing Rotary Youth Exchange student, Liz Rangel, with a scholarship of approximately $3,500. Liz chose the Philippines for her year abroad. The club participated in 23 projects of various types in 2015-2016, and one of the major firsts in District 7680 was the planting of two pollinator gardens at area schools in September.

The club’s main focus for projects in 2015-2016 was to ensure diversity in activity so that every member could participate regardless of age or physical condition.

It should be noted that two of our members, Marcia Scheideman and Mindy Leonard, graduated from the Rotary Leadership Institute during the year.

At the outset of the 2015-2016 rotary year Mark Daniels, our Rotary Foundation Chairperson, set an audacious goal of $12,500 in giving for our club. Thanks to the generosity of our membership, the goal was exceeded by $1500! Additionally, five new Paul Harris Fellows, eight repeat Paul Harris fellows, and three Paul Harris Society members were pinned during the year.

And last, but certainly not least, the club was fortunate to again receive the 2015-2016 Presidential Citation, one of only nine clubs in the district to be awarded this highly regarded award.