

Augusta Rotary Minutes
March 31, 2025

President Surendra Gupta rang the bell and called the meeting to order.

James T. Richards gave the pledge and invocation.

Gould Hagler gave the Sunshine Report.

Kerry Bridges introduced the guests.

New Members

No new members this week.

Paul Harris Fellows

None in attendance this week.

Guest Speaker/Program

President Surendra called on **Dr. Paul Dainer** to introduce guest speaker **Baris Olten, M.D.**, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Medical College of Georgia, who discussed “Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder.” Here is a summary and key takeaways:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a common (1 in 36 children) and lifelong neurodevelopmental difference/disorder.
- Core features: Autistic individuals share difficulties with social communication and exhibit repetitive behaviors or intense interests, yet each person is unique in their abilities and needs
- Causes & misconceptions: Autism arises largely from brain development and genetics (it’s nobody’s fault). Myths like vaccines or cold parenting causing autism have been debunked
- Support and acceptance: With early intervention, education and acceptance, autistic people can learn, grow and achieve. Many live independent, fulfilling lives as part of our community. Society is moving toward greater inclusion – think “different, not less.”
- Our role: As friends, family, employers and community members, we can foster understanding – be patient with communication differences, accommodate sensory needs and appreciate the unique perspectives autistic individuals offer. In doing so, we help create a world where everyone can thrive.

GRSP Update

No update this week.

CART: **Neal Dickert** was the inside challenger this week and **Dickert Mediation** was the outside challenger. Please continue to contribute to the blue buckets on the table or online at mycartfund.org using the same login credentials you use with DACDB. Also, please complete our club’s Google form to sign up to be a Cart Challenger.

Announcements

In recognition of Women’s History Month, **President Surendra** noted that **Laverne Lewis Gaskins**, a Rotarian since 2008 and a member of the Rotary Club of Augusta, is also a member of the American Bar Association’s Representatives and Observers to the United Nations. She recently attended the international United Nations 69th Session of the Commission on the Status

of Women (“CSW”) as an American Bar Association representative to the UN on March 10-20, 2025, in New York, and countries from across the globe. The event’s primary focus was to review the Platform for Action adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing. The Platform for Action is a global comprehensive agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Thanks to all Rotarians who pledged or donated to the Rotarian Foundation on behalf of Rotary Club of Augusta for the Global Project for 2024-25 term, GG2569565 - “MBot robots for primary schools.”

Thanks to the generosity of the Davis-Hilburn Foundation, the Dublin Rotary Club is offering a \$2,000 scholarship to a graduating senior in our District. Any senior in Rotary District 6920 is eligible to apply. The scholarship is not limited to one nominee per school or club. Details were emailed this week to members.

Rotarians from District 6900 and 6910 visited Camp Tanglewood March 11-13 to remove debris. Thank you if you participated. The 6910 District Governor expressed thanks for us providing lunch for the volunteers on March 12.

District Conference will be held April 24-27 in Jekyll Island again this year. Please make hotel reservations as soon as you can.

Rotary International Conference will take place in Ontario, Canada, June 21-25. If interested in attending, please reach out to President Surrendra.

Upcoming Meetings

April 7 & 14, 2025 – No meetings due to Masters Week.

April 21, 2025 – David Jakobsen, President and CEO of Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Augusta, will speak about RMHC.

President Surendra led us in reciting the four-way test and then adjourned the meeting.