

ROUNDTABLE – Tuesday, April 6, 2021

Next Luncheon



Amy Hewitt, PhD, has worked in various roles over the past 30+ years to improve community inclusion and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities and their families. She directs the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. Join us next week for her insightful presentation, *Direct Support Professionals: An Unrecognized Essential Workforce*.

News of the Week

Trent Newest Paul Harris Fellow



Mike Baker honored **Trent Deckard** as the club's newest Paul Harris Fellow and celebrated his significant contributions to the Rotary Foundation and our community. Trent smiled proudly as daughter Maddie Deckard assumed "pinning" honors. Congratulations, and thank you, Trent, for your support of Rotary!

Rotarian in the News

President-elect nominee **Alain Barker** was part of an IU Emeriti House presentation titled "The Music-Business-Peace Initiative." Alain presented along with Timothy Fort, professor of business law and ethics at the Kelley School of Business, and Constance Cook Glen, director of music in general studies at the Jacobs School of Music.

Welcome Baby Snyder



Members applauded the birth of Lawson James Snyder, son of past president **Loren Snyder** and his wife, Morgan Snyder. Lawson was born Saturday, April 3. Big brother Coleman is looking forward to having a new playmate!

Feel free to share your own best wishes with the Snyders:
Loren and Morgan Snyder
1630 N. Delaware St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202

District Conference: Great Presenters, Fun, and Free!

We hope to see you April 17 for this year's District 6580 annual conference. The virtual event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Check email for your personal invitation. Remember, the club with the highest percentage in attendance will receive \$1,000 for a Service Project Grant. More information can be found online at <http://rotary6580.org/district-conference-2021.php>

This week's program is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Bk06Q3nGrA0>

Our Program



Michael Shermis introduced Colonel Steven Lacy, U.S. War College Fellow at the Robert F. Byrnes Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University. Col. Lacy is a strategic intelligence officer with the United States Army and a Russian military subject matter expert with extensive experience in

Eastern Europe and Eurasia. His presentation, “Russian Strategic Interests,” shed light on historic and current influences that shape Russia’s role in the world today.

Multiple factors have formed the strategic posturing and contemporary worldview Russia embraces. Its road to cultural and intellectual development differed from its Western neighbors, rendering it “late to the Enlightenment,” according to Col. Lacy. Centuries of invasions by other world powers and the constant threat posed by having no natural border defenses have created a Russian mindset that distrusts and avoids external influences.

Geopolitical changes in the 20th and 21st centuries—including Russia retaining satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe following World War II, the fall of the USSR, and NATO expansion—have further defined the country’s sense of sovereignty and self-determination. Recognizing its inability to compete with Western power alliances, the country in 2008 embarked on what Col. Lacy termed “asymmetric balancing”: investing heavily in military modernization, using large-scale cyber-attacks to destabilize former satellite states, and invading smaller neighboring countries to demonstrate its relevance.

To assert itself on the world stage today, Russia’s “grand strategy” includes three main objectives:

- Be recognized as a great power and, by implication, have a distinct sphere of influence;
- Maintain predominance within its sphere of influence (currently the former Soviet Union and proprietary states, Western Balkan nations, Black Sea, and Eastern Mediterranean countries); and
- Act on its desire to scale back U.S. influence.

According to Col. Lacy, Russia views the U.S. and NATO as synonymous. Therefore, diminishing the strength of the United States’ Western alliances makes Russia stronger.

To implement this strategy, Russia is devoting significant human and financial resources to:

- Divide NATO/EU and U.S. cohesion and create havoc through disinformation campaigns;
- Undermine Western credibility to strengthen support for Russia;
- Politically and financially dominate smaller nations (state capture); and
- Create territorial issues or “frozen conflicts” in such places as Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, to deter the pursuit of NATO membership.

Russia has at its disposal limited but effective means to achieve its goals. Among these are its energy influence (predominantly oil and gas but with a declining infrastructure); disinformation/propaganda capacity (more than \$1 billion external budget); cultural diplomacy; military activity in countries like Syria or partner nations to cause tension throughout Western alliances; technical assistance to autocrats; and a strategic nuclear arsenal that is both vast and capable. That arsenal is the reason we treat Russia as a peer, Lacy said.

While committed to its grand strategy, the country simultaneously faces numerous weaknesses and fissures within its political and economic structure. There is evidence that Russian elites view domestic problems with greater concern than they do the power competition with the West, which could be problematic for the Kremlin. Russia’s domestic economy is also weak, lagging behind peers, including China. Finally, Russia has not achieved its goals in Ukraine. In fact, Ukrainian unity is rising, which is both unexpected and unwelcome from a Russian strategic viewpoint.

Col. Lacy concluded his remarks with his own personal views on ways to counter Russian interests. He advocates for:

- Exposing propaganda and disinformation efforts both in the U.S. and with its allies;
- Strengthening trans-Atlantic partnerships and alliances to help protect us from false narratives;
- Encouraging energy diversification in Europe so Russian energy isn't the sole source for its neighboring countries; and
- Observing Russian-Chinese relations

Prior to a lengthy follow-up Q&A with Colonel Lacy, President Ashley drew Monroe County United Ministry's name from the hat as our fourth-quarter speaker recognition recipient. Today's contribution in honor of Col. Lacy will support MCUM's good work within our community.

Updates – Our April 6 Weekly Gathering

President **Ashley Wesley** welcomed members and guests. She thanked producers **Natalie Blais, Michael Shermis, Sally Gaskill, and Earon Davis.**

Martha Wailes reflected on the name associated with residents of the state of Indiana: not *Indianans*, as many outside the state might assume, but *Hoosiers*. In fact, in January 2017 the moniker became official through federal legislation sponsored by then Senators Joe Donnelly and Dan Coates. Senator Todd Young, who succeeded Coates, commented on the achievement: "If we can get the federal bureaucracy to agree, there's nothing we can't do."

This week we welcomed to our celebration of service Kirk White, guest of **Jim Bright**, and Chris Snell, guest of **Natalie Blais.**

Best birthday wishes to **Martha Wailes**, April 8, **Gus Shakalis** and **Meghan Gearhart**, April 9, and **Martha Foster**, April 11.

Membership anniversaries this week include: **Ron Barnes**, 29 years, and **Matt Stitsinger**, 5 years. Thank you for being part of the Rotary family!

Happy Dollars celebrated the sixth anniversary of George Shively Day (**Sally Gaskill**); Buskirk Chumley Theatre qualifying for second PPP loan (**Sara Laughlin**); Martha Foster's birthday (**Earon Davis**); seeing her family in person after a year's wait (**Martha Foster**); the memory of Patrick O'Meara (**Charlotte Zietlow** and **Alain Barker**); IU women's basketball successes (**Raj Haddawi**); United Way of Monroe County exceeding its IU campaign goal and Kirk White's leadership behind the scenes (**Trent Deckard**); counting down to the 17-year emergence of cicadas (**Owen Johnson**); and the wonderful service provided by Natalie Blais to Rotary (**Earon Davis**).

Reporter: **Susie Graham**