



Rotary
Club of Jackson,
Mississippi



Rotagram

May 5, 2025

The Rotary Club of Jackson welcomed **Walter Michel, Mississippi State Senator.**

His presentation was **“From Tax Reform to Budget Deadlock: A Look Back at the 2025 Mississippi Legislative Session.”**



L to R: Richard Wilbourn – Rotary President Elect; Attorney, Richard Wilbourn and Associates, PLLC; Walter Michel, Mississippi State Senator; President Phillip Carpenter – Rotary President; Owner, Carpenter Properties; Wilfred Beal, Owner, WL Beal & Assoc, Inc.

President Phillip Carpenter welcomed Rotarians and guests.

He also led the Club in the Four Way Test.

David Raddin delivered the Invocation.

Bill Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Past District Governor Mark Fields introduced our visitors:

Visiting Guests:

- Becky Redd's guest - Sharon Berry Clark, Procurement Supervisor, Department of Medicaid
- Past President Tom Johnson's guest – Davis Frye. Butler Snow
- Past President Selena Swartzfager's guest – Katie Elliott, Operations Manager, Embark
- Seth Dickinson's guest – Donovan Beitel, Executive Director, MS Industries for the Blind
- Seth Dickinson's guest – Brad Tisdale, CEO, BT Advisors
- Neddie Winters' guest – Grace Greene, City Council Candidate

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Rotary Social - May 12 at TopGolf from 4:00 – 6:00.

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES:

Willie Crossley	04/27/2015	10 years
Richard Wilbourn	04/30/2002	23 years

ROTARY'S EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION APPRECIATION DAY:

Past President Selena Swartzfager introduced the JPS Principals being recognized this quarter.

LaRoy Merrick, Principal of Walton Elementary in Jackson Public Schools, has been named Network I's Principal of the Quarter for outstanding leadership. Under his direction, Walton has built strong community partnerships, such as with Operation Shoestring, to expand student support and after-school opportunities.

His focus on data-driven instruction has helped close academic gaps, while targeted efforts to improve attendance have led to state recognition for maintaining low chronic absenteeism. Mr. Merrick's commitment to academic growth, student engagement, and community collaboration exemplifies excellence in school leadership.



Kathleen Grigsby, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent | Elementary Network 1,
LaRoy Merrick, Principal of Walton Elementary, and
Past Rotary President Selena Swartzfager

Dr. Jamaka Holman, Principal of Green Elementary

Congratulations to Dr. Jamaka Holman, Principal of the Quarter for Network II!

As the new Principal of Green Elementary, Dr. Holman has fully embraced the school's identity as an arts school. She has honored the school's legacy and culture from day one, bringing fresh energy and vision. Whether coaching teachers, providing timely feedback, or working with students to support their learning, she has built unmatched positive relationships with staff, parents, and the community. Dr. Holman leads with purpose. Her commitment to integrating the arts throughout the school community is evident in every hallway and classroom.



Dionne Jones Woody, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Network II Schools,
Dr. Jamaka Holman, Principal of Green Elementary, and
Past Rotary President Selena Swartzfager

Kevin Culver, Principal of Northwest Middle

We proudly recognize Mr. Kevin Culver as Principal of the Quarter for the middle school network for his outstanding embodiment of the JPS core values of Excellence and Relationships. Mr. Culver leads with an unwavering commitment to high standards, consistently driving instructional improvement and student achievement. Equally powerful is his ability to build authentic, trusting relationships with students, staff, and families, creating a school culture rooted in respect, collaboration, and care. His leadership reflects what it truly means to serve purposefully in Jackson Public Schools.



Alvanette Thomas Buchanan, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent | Middle Schools, Mr. Kevin Culver, Principal of Northwest Middle, and Past Rotary President Selena Swartzfager

Torrey Hampton, Principal of Forest Hill High School

Selected in recognition of his exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication to student achievement and staff development. As a Principal Coach within the High School Network, he consistently goes above and beyond to support fellow leaders, offering valuable guidance rooted in experience and excellence.

Under his steady leadership, Forest Hill has seen continuous academic improvement year after year. His commitment to instructional quality is evident in how he spends his time—engaging daily in classroom observations, facilitating planning meetings with teachers, and mentoring his assistant principals to help them grow as instructional leaders.

A safe and orderly school environment allows students and staff to thrive. His tireless efforts, strategic mindset, and deep investment in school culture make him a model of effective leadership and a well-deserved recipient of this honor.



Laketia Marshall Thomas, Assistant Superintendent of High School Network,
Torrey Hampton, Principal of Forest Hill High School, and
Past Rotary President Selena Swartzfager

Thea Faulkner, Director, Partners in Education, Community, Parent and Family Engagement, Jackson Public Schools, presented the Rotary Club of Jackson with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of our club's unwavering dedication and support to JPS Scholars and Educators.



L to R: President Phillip Carpenter – Rotary President; Past Rotary President Selena Swartzfager, Thea Faulkner, and Walter Michel, Mississippi State Senator

Richard Wilbourn introduced Walter Michel, Mississippi State Senator.

Our Club was honored to have Walter Michel as its speaker. Walter was born in Jackson, graduated from Jackson Prep High School, and, in 1983, graduated from Ole Miss with a Bachelor of Arts in Real Estate.

Walter was born into a real estate family. His grandfather moved from New Orleans to Jackson in 1927 and founded the J Walter Michel Real Estate Agency. At the young age of 27, Walter earned the prestigious CCIM commercial real estate designation. Walter now leads that agency, with five commercial brokers and 56 commercial listings in Hinds, Rankin, and Madison counties.

Walter is a third-generation member of our Rotary Club. He joined in 1984 and has been a member for 41 years, a former board member, and a Paul Harris Fellow, plus 6. In 1991, Walter was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives. In 1999, he was elected to the 52-member Mississippi Senate, representing northeast Jackson, Ridgeland, Madison, and Gluckstadt. Over the decades, Walter has served as the Municipalities Committee, Public Property Committee, and Economic Development Committee Chairman. He serves as chairman of the insurance committee and as a regular member of seven other Senate committees.

The National Federation of Independent Business has recognized Walter for his pro-business record. BIPEC has also designated him a “Business Champion” every year he has served in the Mississippi Senate.

Walter’s wife is Beth Michel. His talk is From Tax Reform to Budget Deadlock: A Look Back at the 2025 Mississippi Legislative Session. Please join me in welcoming Senator Walter Michel.

MORE PHOTOS



Davis Frye, Past President; Heber Simmons, and Past President Tom Johnson



Grace Greene and Past President Neddie Winters



Donald Allen and Sharon Berry Clark



Keith Ferguson, Neddie Winters, and Mark Fields