



Rotary



The Rotary Club of Macon

 **THROBS**

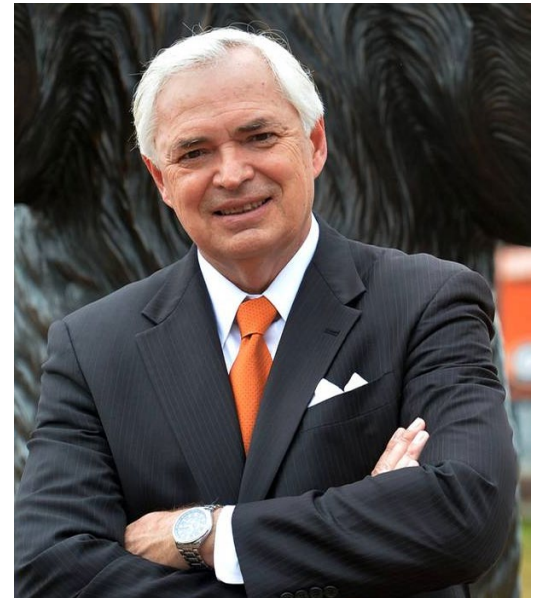
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February 10, 2025

Mercer Updates – President Bill Underwood

Founded in 1833, Mercer University is a cornerstone of Macon, contributing significantly to the city's cultural, economic, and educational landscape. Its various colleges, including law, medicine, business, and engineering, help foster a highly skilled workforce that benefits local businesses and industries. The university also plays a vital role in research, healthcare, and innovation, partnering with local organizations to address regional challenges and promote economic growth. Beyond academics, Mercer is a driving force in Macon's cultural and social scene.

William D. Underwood, better known as Bill, has been the eighteenth President of Mercer University since 2006. What's happening now at Mercer? Learn more when President Bill Underwood addresses our club February 10.



Link for Zoom Recording

Click here to view the recording of our February 3 meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/2d3uluyq>

FUTURE MONDAY PROGRAMS AND CLUB EVENTS:

February, 2025

- 17 No Meeting – Presidents' Day
- 18 Board Meeting
- 24 50 Years of GNTV

Rev. David Wood

March, 2025

3	No Meeting	
10	Goodwill	Jim Stiff (President, Goodwill Middle GA and Central Savannah River)
17	USDA	Nikki Thomas, Acting State Director
18	Board Meeting	
24	Unified Defense/Prince Service & Mfg.	Eric Williams, CEO
31	No Meeting	

April, 2025

7	Chancellor Perdue	Sonny Perdue
14	Georgia Supreme Court	Justice Verda Colvin
14	Board Meeting	
21	Cherokee Brick	Kate Sams Peavy, President
28	No Meeting	

New Member Approvals

The Board has approved the membership applications of Krunal Patel, who would hold the classification of Mechanical Engineer; Mike Ford (returning member), Retired; and Bruce Riggins, Moving and Storage.

Members have 10 days to make comments in writing to President Danny Gibson.

MEETING February 3, 2025

Attendance: 56.6% - 60 in person, 13 Zoom, plus 15 guests

CART \$40, Raffle \$85

Club Membership: 146 (including those inducted today)

President Danny Gibson rang the bell to start the meeting and said we have an exciting program and a lot to do today. He called on Katy Carr to lead the singing and pledge, and she chose *America the Beautiful*. Katy remarked that her voice was scratchy from helping to manage the Civic Club show over the weekend, but her voice sounded strong as ever. Jeff Wilhelm was supposed to offer the prayer, but said he had no voice, and asked Dan Sims to do the honors. Dan said he prays all the time, so is always ready, but he did read the prayer that Jeff had prepared, adding some touches of his own. It offered thanks for the opportunity to serve in an organization that helps not only our local community but the entire world.

At this point, President Danny normally thanks Jackie Riley for her piano playing, but he noted that during the morning's meeting with Past District Governor Felix Smith, Felix said the piano prelude is one of his favorite things about attending a meeting here. The members gave Jackie a standing ovation.

Danny also thanked our receptionist Merrily Burns. One of the many things she does is to make sure the guest list is legible for Danny to read. Once again, there were many guests, 15 in all. This included several pending members, Past DG Smith, Area Governor Steve Bell, our GRSP student, and four guests of Keisha Callins.

We have just one member celebrating a birthday between February 1 and 9; John Patterson's is on the 6th. Eight members have club anniversaries, including Garrett Williams with 16 years, Carey Pickard

with 29, Jonathan Alderman with 33, Bill Epps with 38, and Bob Hatcher with an amazing 51 years of service. In all, that totals 181 years of Rotary service!

It was then time for CART brags, and we had a lot of members contribute to the blue buckets that go towards Alzheimer's research. It was too many to fit in the picture, so this is just a sampling:



Several members noted the vibrant theater and arts scene in Macon, including the Civic Club show, Theatre Macon and their Youth Artists Guild, and Macon Little Theatre. Keisha Callins introduced her guests, Dr. Tom Hope and some soon-to-graduate medical students.



It was then time to induct our newest members, and there were three. President Danny introduced them, then they took to the stage to be inducted by Past District Governor Felix Smith.

Danny began by introducing Jim Smith. James Payton Smith was born and reared in Dawson, Georgia. He attained an Associate in Art from Oxford College of Emory in 1976, and his BBA in finance from the University of Georgia in 1978. He then got his MBA. and JD *cum laude* from UGA in 1981. That same year Jim began practice with Kaplan and Thomason. The firm merged with Arnold Golden Gregory in 1985, and Jim became a partner in 1989.

In 2005 Jim joined and became a partner with the Macon firm of Stone and Baxter, where he practiced until 2010 when he was appointed as Bankruptcy Judge for the Middle District of Georgia. Jim served as Chief Bankruptcy Judge from 2016 to 2023, and retired from the bench on March 31, 2024. He is married with two children and two grandchildren.

Alex Morrison came forward to introduce Aubrey Newby. Aubrey is coming to us as the Executive Director of the Hay House, a position that he assumed in May of 2024. Alex noted that Aubrey was the first person he met as an employed Maconite in 2010, when Aubrey rented him an apartment on Cherry Street at Third Street. Alex quickly observed that Aubrey was more just someone who leased apartments and managed an event space, and had a deep connection to the community that he served.

Aubrey was one of the first to help start Main Street Macon, and was an initial board member there, which he then parlayed into being on the Main Street Gray board as part of the Jones County Historic Preservation Board. He also served on the boards of Theatre Macon and Historic Macon, including being Chair of that organization. Alex said Aubrey is somebody that you can always count on to bring his resources and his intellect and his passion to any board that he serves on. He is father to three children and lives in a renovated 1890 farmhouse in Jones County.

Susannah Maddux introduced Frannie Fickling, someone she greatly respects. Originally from Augusta, she graduated Valedictorian and STAR student from the Academy of Richmond County. After attending Wake Forest, she worked in investment banking at Wells Fargo in Charlotte for two years, covering the Consumer and Retail industry. She moved to New York City to work on Coach's Consumer Insights and Strategy team. After three years of monitoring the growth of the handbag market and researching the shopping patterns and attitudes of high-end handbag shoppers, she joined Warby Parker's Consumer Insights team.

Frannie, who incidentally is married to fellow member Billy Fickling, is currently the Director of Consumer Insights & Research at Warby Parker, the eyeglass company.

The formal induction of Jim, Aubrey, and Frannie was performed by Felix Smith.



District Governor Todd Freeseemann was scheduled to visit our club today, but had a sudden conflict that required him to stay in the Savannah area. He plans to visit at a later date. Filling in for the DG was our Past District Governor, Felix Smith.

Felix was introduced by Area Governor Steve Bell. Steve noted that if you got a dogwood tree from Danny Gibson recently, you can thank Felix for that. Felix holds a BS in animal science and a doctorate in veterinary science from the University of Georgia. "He's a damn good dog as a vet." He owned and operated his clinic for 40 years in Perry, until he retired in 2021. He's been dedicated to his own club in Perry for over 20 years.

Steve asked if we've ever heard the question of who's on the membership committee in your club. The answer is that everybody's on the membership committee. So Felix recently started a Rotaract club in Perry and Warner Robins, and it has a hundred members. Felix has been awarded Rotarian of the Year. He's a multiple Paul Harris Foundation member, Major Donor, belongs to the Paul Harris Society, the Polio Plus Society and CARTS Fund Roger Ackerman Circle. He received the CART Fund Changemaker award in 2023. He served in district leadership as an Area Governor, as well as District Governor in 2023-24, and has been a host to GRSP students.

You will probably see Felix in town a lot playing pickleball. He's traveled all over the world participating in races, swimming, running triathlons, and competitive endurance events. "And, like I said, for relaxation, he plays pickleball. He played a 28-year-old yesterday that he whooped. But he says he's a little sore."

After performing the induction ceremony for the three new members, Felix said it was also his pleasure to announce some new Paul Harris Fellows.

"Paul Harris recognitions were first established in 1957 as a way to show appreciation from the Foundation for major contributions of a thousand dollars or more. The Foundation raises every year over \$70 million dollars, and 80% of that money comes from Paul Harris Fellows like these two ladies on the stage with me. There are over 1.5 million Paul Harris fellows in the world, and some notable ones are our former president, Jimmy Carter, former president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, one of our US. Astronauts, James Lovell, as well as Jonas Salk, the developer of the polio vaccine. Their donations serve as the primary reason. Rotarians are able to carry out our humanitarian efforts throughout the planet today"

Felix then awarded Paul Harris Plus 2 to President-Elect Rebecca Grist and Paul Harris Plus 3 to Kathy McCollum.

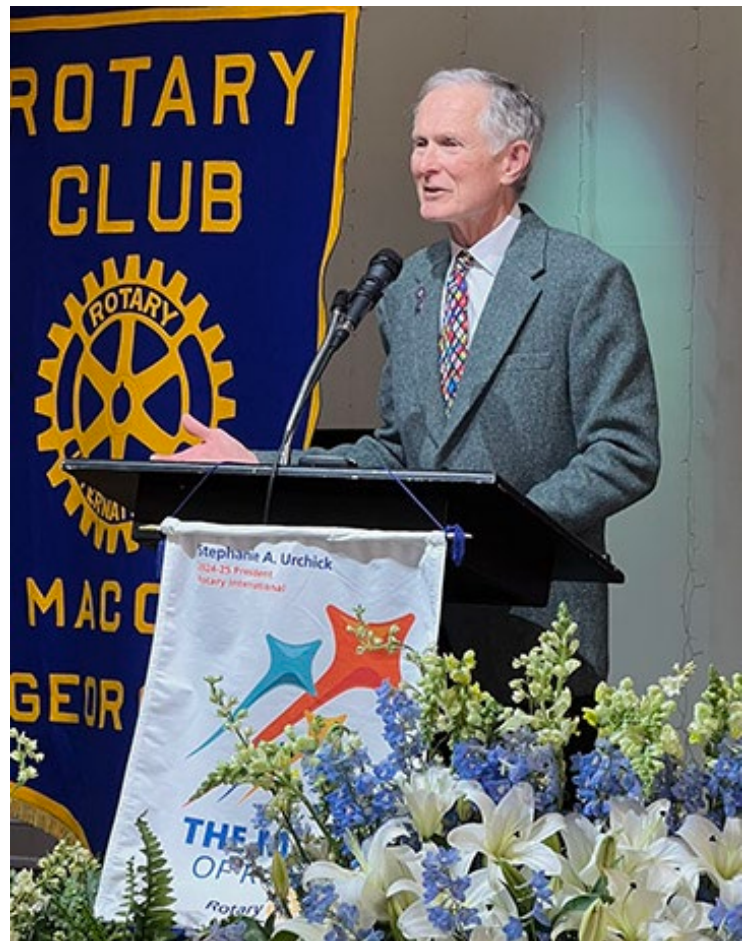


Past District Governor Felix Smith then delivered an inspiring and insightful address to the Macon Rotary Club. He began by saying why Governor Todd could not be here today. He works for the Chatham County sheriff's department, and they elected a new sheriff in November for Chatham County. "He was told there was a mandatory meeting today, so Todd called me on Friday and asked if

I could pitch it. I said, Yeah, you don't know what you're missing.”

Felix opened by expressing his admiration for the club’s hospitality, strong membership, and continued commitment to service in Middle Georgia.

He highlighted the global impact of Rotary, emphasizing its role as the premier humanitarian service organization in the world. He discussed Rotary’s extensive efforts in promoting peace, maternal and child health, clean water initiatives, and, most notably, disease prevention. He provided an update on Rotary’s decades-long commitment to eradicating polio, noting that while polio was once prevalent in over 200 countries, cases are now limited to just Pakistan and Afghanistan. He acknowledged the challenges in those regions but expressed optimism that a polio-free world is within reach in the next few years. He also introduced Rotary’s latest major health initiative—a new malaria vaccine program in four African countries, aiming to reduce childhood mortality rates with the help of a matching grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



Locally, Governor Smith commended the Macon Rotary Club for its remarkable generosity, highlighting the \$940,000 the club has contributed to the Rotary Foundation and the \$61,124 raised for the CART (Coins for Alzheimer’s Research Trust) fund over the past six years. He encouraged members to take advantage of CART’s "Lunch a la CART" virtual sessions, where leading researchers share breakthroughs in Alzheimer’s research.

Another key focus of Governor Smith’s speech was literacy, which he described as his personal passion. He praised the club’s work with Burdell-Hunt Elementary School and emphasized the need for greater volunteer support in literacy programs. He highlighted the Read United initiative, which pairs volunteers with children for weekly reading sessions, helping students reach grade-level proficiency. He noted the alarming link between third-grade reading levels and future incarceration rates, reinforcing the importance of early intervention.

In closing, Governor Smith urged Rotarians to remain active in their service, reminding them that building a better community requires participation and commitment. He concluded with Rotary’s vision statement: *Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change—across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.*

The CART raffle was up to \$1,319, with only 15 cards remaining in the deck. Billy Fickling had the winning ticket, but couldn’t draw the Queen of Clubs, so the pot will roll over to next week.

As always, we concluded the meeting by reciting the Four Way Test.

Donate to Rotary Foundation and CART

Club members can make donations to The Rotary Foundation or the CART Fund online line using credit cards or EFT. These can be made in memory of, honor of, or personal donations. They can be setup as recurring or one-time. These online donations qualify as a tax deduction (but ask your accountant). Follow these easy steps:

The Rotary Foundation: Go to <https://rotary.org/> If you have never signed in you will need to register so it credits your Paul Harris Fellow account and our club. You may need our District number 6920 and club number 4202. Once registered you can SIGN IN to MY ROTARY then click DONATE button in upper right. Check the area ANNUAL FUND, DISASTER RELIEF FUND, or POLIO PLUS to donate, then just follow easy steps to make payment.

CART FUND: <https://mycartfund.org/Login.cfm> follow the online instructions. You will need our **Club number 4202** and **District number 6920**. (This link requires logging in to DACdb. If you have trouble with that, use <https://mycartfund.org/NewUser.cfm> instead.) All donations to CART go to support cutting-edge research on Alzheimer's.

Approved Makeups-Family of Rotary Events:

**Reminder - Makeups can only be used two weeks before or after a missed meeting
(There are no meetings in December)**

Anytime Rotary Project or Rotary Committee meeting
Anytime Volunteer at Macon Volunteer Clinic
Anytime Viewing of Monday meeting recorded on Zoom - See current or past *Throbs* link.

HOW TO MAKE UP MISSED MEETINGS

Please make up missed meetings to help our club's attendance percentage rank with District 6920 and Rotary International. **Members are encouraged to maintain an attendance average of 60%.**

Missed meetings must be made up **14 days before or after the meeting you miss.**

See list above of approved makeups. You can make up from the comfort of your home or office online at <http://rotaryclubone.org/> They will email a notice of the makeup to the Club Administrator and you will be credited. Also, attendance at another Rotary Club is a great option when you are traveling!

When you make up using the **Zoom link** of our meetings listed in meeting summary above or makeup in person at another club please send an email immediately afterwards to the Club Administrator, steve@eggmedia.com so your makeup can be recorded. Do not expect the club you visit to report to our club.

Excused Absences

Members have the opportunity to receive a board approved Excused Absence during a long-term family, health, or business crisis. When a member realizes they have a situation that will keep them from attending Monday meetings for an extended period they can contact the Club Administrator or President with the reason. This contact needs to be immediate and not after the crisis. The board can approve a beginning and ending date and attendance is excused on club and district level. Short term absences are best made up online.

Club Membership Applications

Our club continues to grow! To sponsor a prospective candidate to join our membership, contact Membership Chair Gene Dunwody gdunwodyjr@dunwodybeeland.com or any member of the Board of Directors to ensure a vocational classification is available for your candidate. Once the Classification Committee approves the classification, invite your new member candidate to a weekly meeting. If the candidate expresses interest in joining our club, then ask the Membership Chair to send the candidate an invitation to apply online. Applications are reviewed by the Board and then announced in Throbs, after which any member can express an objection.

Rotary Club of Macon
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