



The Rotary Club of Macon



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May 20, 2024
Macon Film Festival

The Macon Film Festival is heading into its 19th year with a four-day festival planned for August 15th - 18th. What began as a small event now screens independent films from around the world in historic theaters downtown as well as fulldome immersive content at the Museum of Arts & Sciences.

The festival features daily film screenings, celebrity guests, special screenings, and workshops throughout the festival weekend. Learn more from our own Justin Andrews this Monday!



Link for Zoom Recording

Click here to view the recording of our May 13 meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/yo6ty5vp>

FUTURE MONDAY PROGRAMS AND CLUB EVENTS:

May, 2024

20	Macon Film Festival	Justin Andrews
21	Board Meeting, Fountain of Juice	
27	No Meeting	

June, 2024

3	Fall Line Brewing Co.: Growing a business in a pandemic	Kaitlyn Kressin
10	Macon Black Pages and the Rising Tide	Alex Habersham

MEETING May 13, 2024

Attendance: 57.1% - 57 in person, 19 Zoom, plus 8 guests

CART \$37.58, Raffle \$30

CART Total to Date: \$2,950.02 (\$5,000 needed by June 30)

Club Membership: 145 including today's induction

President Stephanie Folsom rang the bell to start the meeting. As always, she reminded all of our club's 110 years of service in the community and thanked Jackie Riley for the piano music we enjoy before each meeting.

Past President George Lee led the song and pledge, and after asking how many members had seen the aurora borealis, selected *America the Beautiful*. President-Elect Danny Gibson offered a prayer that gave thanks for our club, family and nation.

Stephanie then welcomed our eight guests, including Mayor Lester Miller. There was just one member with a birthday this week; Bill Epps' was May 2. Three members have club anniversaries: Gary Wheat with seven years, Mack Minton with 41, and Ed Olson with 44 years of service.

It was then time for CART brags, which is both an opportunity to speak out and to raise money for a worthy cause. Among the many good ones was Josh Roger's account of the ceremony in Birmingham where Macon received the Great American Main Street award. He said there was an audible gasp in the room when it was announced that downtown Macon had gone from 70% abandoned to 85% full in 20 years. The members gave a standing ovation in recognition of the accomplishment.



Matt Shoemaker then welcomed Bernard Young, Principal of Southwest High School, whom Matt said he got to know in Leadership Macon. He said Bernard's wife is the juvenile court judge. Bernard then came up to introduce his STAR student, A'laila Hampton, who is the class Salutatorian for 2024. She said she's in uniform (scrubs) because she's taking her clinical rotation to get her certification. She plans to attend Savannah State in Biology this fall, with the goal of becoming an obstetrician.



Stephanie then thanked all the members who joined us for our annual spring picnic. We had a great turnout with approximately 95 members and guests, and the amphitheater was a wonderful venue for this event.

The weather was a bit warm but with a nice breeze. Vendela's parents joined us, and the Jackson Griffith band was enjoyed by all. She offered thanks again Chris Blake for arranging this.

At the picnic, we had the unveiling and dedication of the Peace Pole which our club gifted the amphitheater. It states "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in four languages. The artists were all able to join us for the dedication. The club thanks Andrew Eck for making and installing the Peace Pole, and Julie Wilkerson for chairing this project and making sure that the Rotary Peace Pole was not just a basic pole but a beautiful piece of art. Stephanie also thanked all members who donated to the project.

Stephanie reiterated the urgent need for CART donations. Our club won the Golden Bucket Award last year, for having the most donations of any club in the district. She hopes our next president, Danny Gibson will also be able to take this award home, but we are behind with just a month and a half to go to meet the generous match of \$5,000 given by one of our members. So far, we have just over half what we need. More details are in the article below.

It was then time to induct our newest member, Patrick Harris. He was introduced by Robbo Hatcher. Patrick is Georgia Power's regional external affairs executive and oversees a team that does all the external and community activities for a 25-county area around Middle Georgia. He's been very active in all the communities he has served, and has been on the Chamber of Commerce boards in Carroll, Haralson, and Polk Counties and now in Bibb. Patrick is President of the Citizens of Georgia Power organization and has had leadership roles with various charities. He holds



Electrical Engineering degrees from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with his Masters from the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, which his daughter now attends. We welcome Patrick to the club!

Gary Wheat then came up to introduce our speaker, John Roberts, who is General Manager of Rhythm & Rally, the new pickleball facility. John Roberts, known as JR, brings a wealth of operational experience to his role. He most recently served as Historic Macon's Director of Finance and Operations, following 15 years as a Senior Associate Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer of ASUN, the Atlantic Sun Conference. While at the ASUN, Roberts organized and executed operations for 21 of the League's championship sports, as well as managing the conference awards, broadcast and officiating programs. Additionally, Roberts managed the organizational budget and human resources, including payroll operations and benefits management for the staff of 19 people.

He is a pickleball enthusiast. He has planned and organized pickleball tournaments throughout the Southeastern United States since 2019, and initiated the "Pinkest Pickleball Party on the Planet". He has served as tournament director for Southern Pickleball Association events since its inception, as well as helming the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association, State pickleball tournament since 2021, an event that drew more than 500 players in 2023.

JR holds an undergraduate degree in religion from the University of Georgia and a master's degree in public administration from Georgia College and State University.

John then came up and said he's spoken publicly many times and has performed wedding ceremonies for dear friends but this is the first time he's been invited to speak to such an "august body." He thanked others in the room for being part of Macon's revitalization, redeveloping of the Macon Mall and the entire Eisenhower Business Improvement District.

Rhythm & Rally is the world's largest indoor pickleball facility, and that's not just a tagline. There is no other indoor facility in the world that has either the number of courts we have or occupies our square footage. We have 32 indoor courts on 166,000 square feet in what was once a Belk department store in the Macon Mall. When the Urban Development Authority and the City of Macon acquired that space back in 2021, they realized that doing things the way they had been done in that space wasn't going to

Rhythm & Rally Highlights

- Hosted six full scale tournaments since opening.
- Served as a backup venue for five other area tournaments affected by inclement weather.
- The 11 tournaments have drawn more than 3,300 players to Rhythm & Rally.
- Players have come from 28 different states plus Canada.



bring it back. It wasn't going to work to put another anchor department store in there. They needed to think outside the box and think creatively for a for a solution. And they recognized Macon's vibrant and enthusiastic pickleball community that already existed. The Macon Pickleball Association boasts over 600 members to date and back then it was already at 400.

“We've won a number of awards already since opening. There was the Georgia Travel Blazer award from the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, which was awarded to us almost immediately after we opened. We recently hosted the community playmaker summit bringing visitor and tourism professionals from all over the state to show off the space and talk about the success we've had. And during that summit we were awarded the Community Impact Award. We've been featured on All Things Considered on National Public Radio and have been consistently featured in the National Pickleball publications, Pickleball Magazine and the Dink, which is an e-newsletter that goes out to hundreds of thousands of pickleball players in the country.”

John then highlighted the many upcoming tournaments that are planned and will bring thousands of players to Macon. This includes the World Pickleball Tour's premier event, the Amateur Invitational Championship, to be held January 16-20 of 2025.

Gary Wheat, our member who is head of the Macon-Bibb County Convention and Visitors Bureau, then came back up to talk more about the economic impact of this facility and other sporting events in Middle Georgia. The six tournaments that JR mentioned brought right at \$2.7 million that benefitted hotels, restaurants, and the general economy. We have now trademarked “Center of the Pickleverse.”

Gary said that sports tourism is recession proof, because people are always going to travel with their sons and daughters to watch them play. They'll do away with a work trip. They'll do away with a vacation, but they'll watch their kids play sports. When Gary first arrived here seven years ago, Macon was already a tennis destination. This has continued to grow, and the sports that Visit Macon is involved with now have a \$15 million annual impact. That doesn't even include high school and college sports.

One of the first questions Gary was asked when he first came to Macon was whether we could regain the high school state basketball tournaments which we used to have. With help from fellow Rotarian David Aiello, we have basketball back and have also added wrestling, baseball, cheer, and dancing competitions. Tourism contributes over \$30 million in taxes, saving citizens \$600 per year.

Many other accomplishments were highlighted, and you can see the entire presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/yo6ty5vp>.



President Stephanie once again thanked the visitors for coming and welcomed new member Patrick. She then gave an important announcement about next Monday's meeting. Due to construction, the usual First Street entrance will be blocked and we will need to enter through the alley that runs along the side. See more details below.

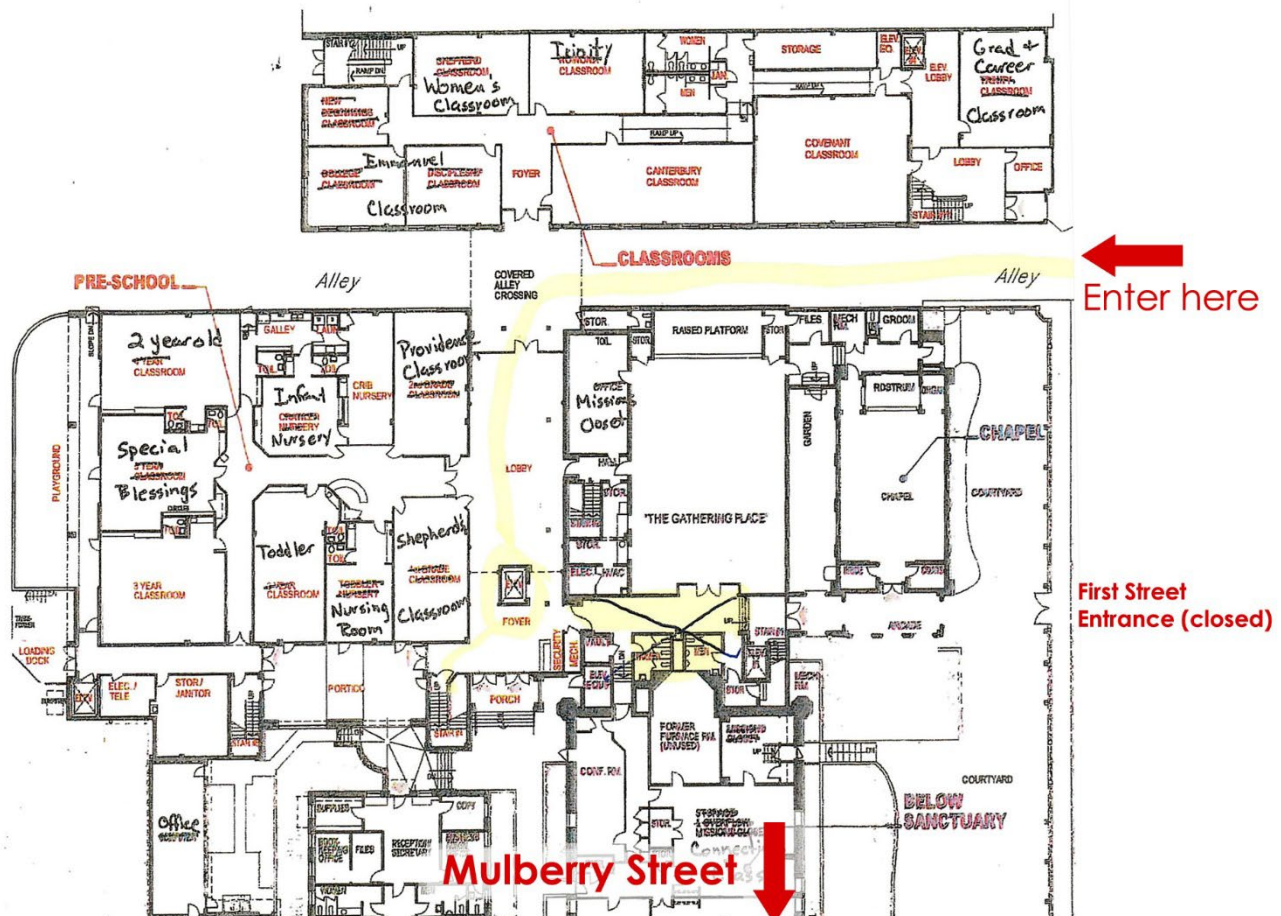
Our lottery pot was up to \$342, but the Queen of Hearts is still hiding in the deck so the jackpot will be bigger next meeting. Remember, buying a ticket also supports CART, since half of the winnings go to that organization.

We concluded with the traditional recitation of the Four Way Test.

Important Construction Notice



For our next meeting on May 20, the usual entrance on First Street will be blocked due to construction on the bathrooms. Members will need to enter from the alley off First Street. Walk down, then turn left and enter the doors there. There are stairs and an elevator to take you to the next floor.





CART Appeal

Our club has a \$5,000 challenge match each year and we've always been able to meet that challenge. However, with less than two months to go in the fiscal year, we are only about half way to that goal. We collect money in the blue buckets at each meeting, but also rely on donations by check or online.

Founded in 1995 by Roger Ackerman, a Rotarian in Sumter, SC, The CART Fund (Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust) is a non-profit grassroots organization that provides "seed" money for cutting edge, high impact research grants to help find a treatment or cure for Alzheimer's Disease. 100% of donations goes directly to that research.

There are three ways to donate, and the most visible is by putting cash in the blue bucket on each table. You may also write a check payable to the Rotary Club of Macon and put "CART Fund" on the check. Thirdly, you can donate online at <https://mycartfund.org/login.cfm>. For online donations you will need to enter our Club number 4202 and District number 6920. This requires logging in to DACdb, if you have trouble please contact Steve Allen or use this [alternate link](#). Online donations qualify as tax-deductible (but ask your accountant!)



Do you have a recent accomplishment? Have your or your organization won an award or otherwise been recognized? We want to know, and to recognize your achievement at a meeting. We also need members to share a short vocational talk at a meeting. Please email Gary Wheat, our Vocational Service Chair, at gwheat@visitmacon.org

-- Donate to Rotary Foundation --

Club members can make donations to The Rotary Foundation online line using credit cards or EFT. These can be made in memory of, honor of, or personal donations. They can be set up as recurring or one-time. Follow these easy steps:

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, POLIO PLUS FUND, WORLD FUND, or DISASTER RESPONSE FUND, then just follow easy steps to make payment. Checks payable to Rotary Foundation can also be given to the club and we will forward the payment.

Approved Makeups-Family of Rotary Events:
Reminder - Makeups can only be used two weeks before or after a missed meeting

Anytime Rotary Project or Rotary Committee meeting
Anytime Volunteer at Macon Volunteer Clinic
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. Our attendance is reported each month to the district and is required to be reported before the 15th of the following month. **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

We are purpose-driven leaders of influence and action. To sponsor a prospective candidate to join our membership, contact Membership Chair Charles Olson EOlson200@msn.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 Membership Chair Charles to send the candidate an invitation to apply online. Once the new member candidate completes the application, Board members review the application. Then, new member candidates are presented for formal approval at the monthly Board meeting. Once approved by the Board, new member candidates are announced in *Throbs*. Unless there is objection by any existing member, the new member is scheduled for orientation and formal induction. All members of our club need to think about who would make good Rotarians!*