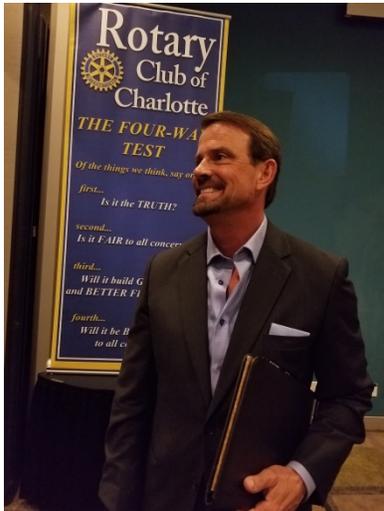




June 5, 2018

## CLARKE ALLEN

Event Planner, Designer, Serial Entrepreneur, Author



Clarke Allen, an event designer, entrepreneur and author, is founder and owner of the Clarke Allen Group in Charlotte. His entrepreneurial spirit and restless creativity propelled him to open several businesses, becoming one of the most respected event design and production companies on the east coast but in 2009 he faced a challenge that changed his life. He told Charlotte Rotarians about it on Tuesday.

In August 2009 he found himself on the brink of bankruptcy. After laying off his staff, he found himself sitting in his 30,000 square foot building. "No staff. No pending projects. A failed marriage and not a lot of hope," he recounted. "I had a decision to make. I could continue to blame the economy. I could blame my industry. I could blame the city I do business in. Or I could go back to my

favorite go-to blame and that was my ex-wife."

Instead, he took "a long, deep hard look" at himself. "I . . . to take responsibility for what I had done and what had gone so terribly wrong. . . I sat in that building and asked God had I done the wrong things or had I done them for the wrong reasons. I like to believe the answer I heard was for the wrong reasons. That silence was deafening. But in that silence, I understood why things had gone so wrong."

Allen said he'd made "all the successes and all the accomplishments" about him. "My staff and I created amazing events [but] I didn't take time . . . to share the glory."

In many small and medium sized businesses, he said, activity inherently revolves around the owner. "I didn't do anything to discourage it. . . I couldn't allow anyone else on my staff to be the best." It was about all his ambition and his goals.

"If you worked for me more than a month," he said, "you knew there was no job in my company I couldn't do. I made you aware of it. . . You had to do things perfectly or I was quick to correct or do it myself." His goal was to make more money and power. He said he enjoyed the power and control to support his self-esteem. He lost touch with his employees' needs and desires. And what they want and what they need.

He said he found the definition of three words interesting.

- Management: the process of dealing with or controlling people. "That doesn't sound very inspiring, does it?"
- Leadership: The act of leading a group of people or an organization.

- Enlightened leadership: working from the inside out considering the welfare of our employees and customers first through looking after their wellbeing and helping develop a sense of purpose and meaning in their work.

Allen said he prayed in the stillness of his building for another opportunity. As he rebuilt his organization, he began to concentrate on his staff's dreams. "We have to understand the importance of their dreams." They want "badly to be inspired, to be a part of something. To work for a purpose as much as a paycheck."

"[Employees] have to believe in the character of their leader. They have to believe we have a clear vision of our competencies. What are our strengths? What is our knowledge? And, yes, what are our weaknesses? I never realized that I didn't have to be perfect. In fact, I had to find the courage to be imperfect. I had to stop leading from my ego. I had to lead from my heart.

"An enlightened leader knows that the human dimension is the foundation for everything else. He or she is someone who values the people they lead. How they communicate and interact with them is so critical. When someone is around an enlightened leader they walk around feeling better about themselves" even when the leader must point out mistakes and performance failings.

Allen said "Enlightened leaders don't diminish the dignity and self-esteem of those they lead. They are tough-minded and tender hearted. Yes, I now believe that a tender heart is an acceptable characteristic in business. Enlightened leaders know how to connect with, inspire and bring out the best in others. They draw it out. They delight in it."

During that low point, Allen went on a mission trip with Manny Ohonme, the founder of Samaritan's Feet. When they reached the village of their destination, Allen said he could not go into the house. Finally, Allen said, Ohonme came out and said, "This is why we're here." Inside he found a young boy who earlier in the year had fallen off a bridge and was a paraplegic.

"As I sat and held his hand and talked with him and shared hope, it changed my life," Allen said. "I realized in that moment that the little acts of kindness and service are what define significance. And my significance was going to be defined through service.

"Enlightened leaders understand that service is taking your gift and giving it away. It's about shining the light on the path for other coming behind you. They are not the norm. They are the exception. But we know when we are around them because of the way they make us feel about ourselves. They inspire people to do things that they wouldn't normally or ordinarily do."

The Charlotte native said that he now considers his employees as "divine capital. They are the purpose of my work and together we are building the legacy I so desire. They are the next generation that will take our firm to another great level of excellence. I changed everything about the relationship with this group of employees.

"We call ourselves family. We break bread. We laugh together. We share each other's successes. We have each other's back. The dynamic on which I operate my firm today is nothing like it was before. The joy I get is nothing like it ever was before. It is my challenge as a leader to take my decisions, my ideas and make sure I share them with my employees to make sure they own them and embrace them. That wasn't something that I did before. "

*Speaker Write-Up:* Henry Bostic; *Head Table:* Neal Triompo, Katie Tyler, Wes Jones, Catherine Bracey; *Invocation:* Jim Rogers; *Visitors & Guest:* Harriman Jett ; *Photos:* Bert Voswinkel; *Piano:* Em Syrewicze

## CLUB NEWS

Name badges are color coded to indicate new members (red), member over 25 years (blue), member 50 years or more (gold) and everyone in between (clear). **Bill Loftin** and **Frank Martin** received their blue membership badge for reaching 25 years in the club. NOTE: if you have 25 years and do not have a blue badge, let Sandy know (**Bruce Darden & David Anderson** – you will have yours next week).

**Nancy Roberson** is celebrating 15 years as executive director of Mecklenburg County Bar and Bar Foundation on June 16, 2018.

Great article on **Chad Lloyd** in the Communities in Schools newsletter for his work with the Interact Club at Harding University High School.

Did you know **Phil Van Hoy** was a charter member and third President of the Interact Club at Myers Park High School!

The Mecklenburg County Council of The Boy Scouts of America recently recognized **Hank Donaghy** as one of the oldest Eagle Scouts in Mecklenburg County. Hank earned his Eagle Scout rank in 1947 and received the Outstanding Eagle Scout Award last year for his service as an adult volunteer.

Mirsad Hadzikadic, who is a former club member and professor at UNC Charlotte, left the University in mid-May to spend his summer campaigning to lead the nation of 3.5 million people sandwiched between Croatia and Serbia in eastern Europe. Mirsad is running for president of Bosnia and Herzegovina!

Community Event: Strides for Shelter 5K Run/Walk to be held June 23, 2018, 8:30AM, McAlpine Creek Park...the only race dedicated to funding housing needs in the Charlotte area. <https://stridesforshelter.racesonline.com/>

## MEMBERSHIP

07/01/2017 309

06/05/2018 289

Net Increase: -20

New Members:

Resignations:

Visitors 14

Club Members 127

Total 141 (51.2%)

Visitors & Guests: Elizabeth Mydosh, Jordan Watkins, Marjorie Wrenn, Suzy Plott, Ella Hoyle, Patti Whittaker, Allison Kellar, Melanie Keel, Jason Boschon, Stacey Reed, Fred Bond, David Hare, Emily Mydosh

### **UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (06/13/18 – 06/20/18)**

06/13 Chris Thomas  
06/14 Jay Westmoreland, Jennifer Nichols  
06/15 Tom Gibson  
06/17 Terence Gordon, Jeff Atkinson  
06/19 Irwin Carmichael

### **UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (06/13/18 – 06/20/18)**

06/13 Deborah & Steve Meckler  
06/15 Debra & Bob Webb, Beth & Stuart Hair  
06/16 Mary & Brian Gibson, Peggy & Bob Culbertson  
06/18 Gayle & Luther Fincher  
06/19 Gloria & Vernon Anderson, Laura & Charlie Greer  
06/20 Dot & Tony Marciano, Pamela & Wes Clark

### **ROTARY ANNIVERSARIES (06/13/18 – 06/20/18)**

01 year – JT Simpson  
03 years – Mary Ellen Player  
09 years – Mark Turner  
17 years – Lee Tabor  
18 years – Mike Crum, Suzanne Bledsoe, Kip Kiser  
19 years – John Scharer

### **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

06/12 *Caroline Dudley*, Accenture, Report on How Company Culture is Key to Unlocking Gender Equality and Narrowing Pay Gap  
06/19 *Phil Kirk*, The Ten Governors I Have Known  
06/26 *Jessica Brown* and *Varian Shrum*, Camp North End

### **ROTARY 101**

Rotary was founded on principles that remain at the heart of the organization today. We channel our commitment to service through five Avenues of Service.

**Club Service** focuses on making clubs strong. A thriving club is anchored by strong relationships and an active membership development plan.

**Vocational Service** calls on all Rotarians to work with integrity and contribute their expertise to the problems and needs of society.

**Community Service** encourages every Rotarian to find ways to improve the quality of life of people in their communities and to serve the public interest.

**International Service** exemplifies our global reach in promoting peace and understanding. We support this avenue by sponsoring or volunteering on international projects, using local member expertise to build long-term partnerships for sustainable projects, seeking service partners abroad, and more.

**Youth Service** recognizes the importance of empowering youth and young professionals through leadership development programs such as Rotaract, Interact, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and Rotary Youth Exchange.



The Rotaract Turns 50 Conference was an overwhelming success and **President Katie** recognized and thanked **John Luebke**, who served as District Chair. There were two tree plantings – Thursday afternoon at the Mint Museum and Friday morning at UNC Charlotte Center City. Both were attended by Barry Rassin, RI President 2018-19, RI Directors Ron Ferrill & David Stovall, Governor Scott Van Der Linden, and Governor-Elect David Hare. Over 90 Rotaract members from across the world attended the 2 day event that covered everything from a scavenger hunt to a service project to paint a forest of trees for kids in Atrium Health’s Levine Children’s Hospital, breakout sessions, and key note addresses from Barry Rassin and Toussaint Romain. Well done by a team of very dedicated Rotarians/Rotaractors. Representing Charlotte Rotary: **John Luebke, Jerry Coughter, Luther Moore, Mark Markanda, Graham Wilson, Phil Volponi, Mike Hawley, Sandy Osborne, and Christy Majors.**