



Charlotte Reporter The Rotary Club of Charlotte August 7, 2012

Charter Date December 1, 1916 Club 6006 District 7680
www.charlotterotary.org

Molly Grantham - WBTV By: Henry Bostic

New mom and WBTV Anchor Molly Grantham shared her experiences as a reporter and anchor with Charlotte Rotarians at Tuesday's meeting. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill graduate got her start in broadcast journalism at WTVD in Raleigh-Durham as a weekend reporter. She parlayed that stint into her first fulltime job in Lexington, KY. She sent out VHS tapes, which she admits were not very good, to 78 stations across the country. WLEX-TV in the Bluegrass state capital gave her a chance. After packing her car at home in Pinehurst, she recalls asking her dad, "Where is Lexington?" He said take I-40 to Asheville, and you can find it from there. She did with the aid of a map and the rest is a history she's still writing.



When she decided she wanted to come to Charlotte, a place she'd always wanted to work, she sent tapes to all the stations. "I'm not sure you knew that, Nick" Grantham said with a smile, speaking directly to her big boss WBTV General Manager Nick Simonette, who introduced her. "Luckily WBTV hired me. I'm very happy at WBTV," she said.

Since coming to the Queen City, Grantham said she's worked every shift – probably the only one in the newsroom to do so. The Emmy-winning investigative reporter, who was named TV News Reporter of the Year for the Carolinas in 2011, currently co-anchors WBTV News at 5:30 and 11:00 and anchors WBTV News at 10:00 pm on WMYT (MyTV 12). Although her work day at the station begins about 2:30 p.m., every day at home begins at 7 a.m. with 16-month-old baby daughter Parker. The hectic day ends after midnight.

Well established after nine years, Grantham is able to apply her reportorial skills to both hard and soft topics. On the soft side, she's particularly keen on stories about kids with cancer; on the hard side she's able to concentrate on stories such as gangs in Charlotte, a focus of her work about which she's most proud. "It's nice to be able to do both," she said.

Her work as a reporter new to the city tended to concentrate around police, crime and the military; although, she said, "I wasn't on the police beat." As a result of exposure to city police, more of them began to have confidence in her ability and started giving her story tips. That's when she began to hear about Hispanic gangs from California moving into the city. At the time, she said, no one was talking about that. "You never heard it," she said.

After a while, she had gathered enough information to ask News Director Dennis Milligan if she should pursue the story. Although she and Milligan knew the story may not be popular with city leaders, he said "look into it." And that she did. It led to numerous investigative stories that shined a light on a growing and dangerous development in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. It's one of her proudest accomplishments. It also caused some embarrassment in the city. In one instance she had a city police officer to say on tape that there were gangs in every middle and high school in the county. She asked for a response from the school system. The spokesman said more than once for the record, "There are no gangs in CMS schools." Said Grantham, "The spokesperson looked ridiculous and the school system looked dumb, as it should have."

Grantham left plenty of time for questions...

- Yes, there is a conflict sometimes between TV ratings and journalistic standards. "I don't have complete control," she said, "but as long as you can hold on to what you believe in you're OK. If it's a good story, we'll do it."

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

2012-2013

Program Chair: Ed Driggs

1Qtr Edwin Peacock

2Qtr Colleen Brannan

3Qtr Bob Freeman

4Qtr Bill Constangy

AUGUST 2012

14th **Fernando Aguirre**
CEO, Chiquita Banana
And Thomas Federl

21st **David Chadwick**
Forest Hill Church
Book – Dean Smith and the
Twelve Leadership Principles

28th **Youth Exchange**
Rebound Students

12:30 Tuesday
Crowne Plaza – 201 S. McDowell Street

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/42974089870/>

- Yes, local news stations will be covering the Democratic National Convention, and, yes, they've been guaranteed the same access as the national reporters and yes, they will cover protesters in Charlotte for the convention in proportion to their magnitude.
- Yes, covering protesters does give them a voice and may make the protests larger, but protests is news and covering is the job of news organizations. "Our job is to cover it if it happens, but not to make it up."
- Social media has (and continues) to change the news business and her role in particular. Grantham admits she's a latecomer though. Not too long ago, "they told me I had to do a Facebook page. Now I love it. It's instant, one-on-one communications." It's now a part of her 10 o'clock show with "Trending at 10." "It's a way to talk live without an open line and it has changed the business for better and worse. You still need to double check the facts. You can get burned just going with something someone has texted you."
- Although she's quite happen in Charlotte and with her role at WBTV, her goal at the start of her career was to become a reporter on 60 Minutes. She still considers reporters of the 60 Minutes generation the best role models. Don't expect her to emulate "fluffy, morning-show women."
- Most embarrassing moment in TV. It happened on her very first live broadcast as weekend reporter at WTVD. That station had just changed its tagout, the line on which the reporter ends a story. Instead of "Live in Raleigh, I'm Molly Grantham," it came out "Live in Molly, I'm Raleigh Grantham," which so broke up the anchors they had to go to a commercial break.

In introducing Grantham, Simonette called her "special. She's a star, a strong positive influence in the community and inside our building." If the response she received from Charlotte Rotarians is any measure, Simonette was right on both counts.

At the end of the meeting, Grantham introduced Mary Louise Ramsey, mother of Zach Ramsey, who died of cancer in 2003 with cancer. The Zach Ramsey Children's Cancer Fund is one of Grantham's special interests. Near the end of his life, Zach started the fund with money from his savings account and asked his parents to honor his life by continuing to raise funds for families experiencing financial difficulty, the kinds of families he saw every day as a patient at the Presbyterian Blume Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Clinic. The 5th Annual Give Back with Zach Tailgate Fundraiser will be held Sunday, September 9, at our own Bob and Robert Freeman's SMS Catering location at 1764 Norland Rd. Those attending can watch the Carolina Panthers open their 2012 season when they take on Tampa in Tampa. Doors open at 1 p.m. with barbecue, hot dogs, hamburgers, wings, salad bar, nachos, and popcorn as well as Old Mecklenburg beer on tap, wine, soft drinks, lemonade and water. There will also be a corn hole tournament. The 2011 tailgate fundraiser raised more than \$50,000.

Head Table: Roger Sarow, John Phillips, Marilynn Bowler, Nick Simonette, Ed Driggs, Jeff Searcy; Invocation: Lisa Mask; Photos: Bert Voswinkel
Visitors & Guests: Steve Eanes; Health, Happiness & History: David Erdman; AV: Jessica Dupree and Nikki Keith

CLUB NEWS

→ **Jill Santuccio** is delighted to bring her good friend, **Jessica Brasington**, back into the club's membership. Jessica is the business development manager for Digital Intelligence Systems and can be reached at jessica.brasington@disys.com.

→ Roster updates to be noted: **Emmy Lou Burchette** office: 704-367-9580; **Meg McElwain** home: 3110 Ferncliff Rd (28211); EXCELLENT JOB **David Erdman** on the Shell plant update!

→ **Wes Jones** thanked everyone for offering up such nice auction/goody bag items for the golf tournament. There's everything from **Bill Stegelemeyer's** dinner for 2 at Emeril's to a stainless steel grilling set from **Mark Norman/Johnson & Wales**. Wes would like a few more weekend getaways and bigger ticket items for the silent auction. Contact Wes at wjones@aidginc.com.

→ **Baby Mitchell** was home with Meg, Frank and Little Frank for three hours Sunday. Monday started the next phase of 10-12 weeks of chemo/bone marrow testing/spinal taps; **Bill Meanor** is in the health unit at Sharon Towers; several have asked for an update on **Tyson Bennett**. Tyson was working at a medical facility in the mountains for several months and dropped out of Rotary last January. I have since learned he's been at Duke and has Leukemia. If anyone has an update, I will be glad to pass it along to the group.

→ **SCHOOL SUPPLIES** may be dropped off at the check-in desk each week during the month of August.

Attendance	<u>08/07/2012</u>	<u>08/09/2011</u>	Membership	New Members: Jessica Brasington
Visitors & Guests	27	club	07/01/2012 316	
Club Members	167	social	08/01/2012 316	
Total Attendance	194		Net Increase	Resignation:
Percentage	59.9%			
Birthdays August 14-20			Anniversaries August 14-20	
17 Paul Schmidt	18 Gregg Walker		14 Mary and Dave Zimmer	14 Amy and Scott Nolan
20 Lori Gougeon	20 Carol Hardison		15 Joanne and Ed Ruff	16 Frannie and Frank Martin
			18 Norva and Ed Pickett	20 Meghan and Pat Gray