



Charlotte Reporter

The Rotary Club of Charlotte

June 4, 2013

Charter Date December 1, 1916 Club 6006 District 7680
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Howard Levine

Chairman of the Board, CEO and Lawn boy of Family Dollar Store
By: Sheila Bacon

Those who know Howard personally say he is an everyday, hard-working, competitive and generous man. He is known as a philanthropic giant in our community. Just this past week, he donated \$20,000 to CPCC to assist former military personnel so they can study and prepare themselves for new jobs. Charlotte Rotarians and guests certainly saw that side of him even though he focused only on his life as a retail professional who came up through the ranks with the family business.



Howard's father, Leon Levine first became interested in a retail department store after his mother-in-law told him he needed to find something to do now that he had a child. Howard was born in 1958. Leon began hearing about Dollar General, a franchise operation out of Kentucky.

After visiting the owner in Kentucky, Mr. Levine began exploring the business model and determined he didn't need to buy a franchise but should open up his own store. Leon believed he could offer quality merchandise for under \$2. Because Leon had grown up in his family's retail business, he understood the need for customer satisfaction and the value of quality goods and services. Leon Levine started the business with \$3,000 and a partner. He later bought out the partner with another \$3,000. That is about all that was invested in the store since its inception. They've grown and reinvested profits into the company. They are listed in the Fortune 500 today and were ranked #1 in the S&P 500 in 2008.

The first Family Dollar Store was opened in Charlotte in 1959 when Leon Levine was 21. It wasn't long before the store became a retail legend. He knew early on how he wanted the stores to operate. It is a philosophy that his son has carried through to present day. "The customers are the boss, and you need to keep them happy."

Howard explained that he grew up in the business and from the early age of 7, he traveled with his father and other managers while they conducted business. While at his early age, Howard didn't realize what he was learning but he absorbed a lot of knowledge during those early days. At the age of 14, he began to take care of the lawn of the new store in Matthews. That's when he began to ask his father to pay him for his work!

As he approached his high school years, he did everything from stocking, unloading trucks and cashier work. He has worked in every job within the company with the exception of IT work. When he graduated in 1981, he started out as a buyer trainee and worked his way up from there. He moved back in with his father after graduation and graduated from the "Leon Levine School of Retail" by attending general business meetings at home every evening from 8pm until mid-night.

In 1998, Howard developed his own clothing line and was President of Best Price Clothing Store in New Jersey. His business grew to 25 stores. His father was very competitive and often threatened to open a Family Dollar Store next to his stores so they would fail and he would come back to the family business. Howard did just that when he returned to the family business in 1996 in the role of VP of Apparel. The rest is history.

Howard believes the reason Family Dollar has been so successful is because they have continued to re-invent themselves over time. They continue to maintain relevancy to their customers. They closely manage their inventory, run a tight ship and

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

2012-2013

Program Chair: Ed Driggs

1Qtr Edwin Peacock

2Qtr Colleen Brannan

3Qtr Bob Freeman

4Qtr Bill Constangy

JUNE 2013

14th **June 11th meeting is cancelled.**

RSVP required to Attend Governor's Installation on June 14 – 6:00 PM SMS Catering

18th **Tony Almeida, Sr.**
Sr. Advisor to the Governor on jobs and the economy

25th **Thom Tillis**
Speaker, NC House of Representatives

12:30 Tuesday

Crowne Plaza – 201 S. McDowell Street

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

stay competitive with the giants like Walmart. But most of all, they haven't strayed from his father's original vision to keep customers happy.

Today, Family Dollar serves their customers in 7,600 locations from Maine to California. They have begun to branch out as a global company and will continue to grow in that area. They plan to add 500 new stores across the country this year and another 500 next year. Their stores are primarily ground up stores and have a similar layout in every store.

Howard Levine stays very busy these days with their plan for growth. He still had a lot of energy when he spoke to us but we've been told he goes to bed every evening at 9:30pm because he has to be up by 2am so he can check out all the lawns of the stores! He may be Chairman of the Board and CEO, but he is still the best lawn boy in the business.

Head Table: Natalia Russo, Alan Simonini, Marilyn Bowler, Eric Levinson, Michael Elder, Ken Harris; Invocation: Carol Hardison
 Visitors & Guests: Don Carmichael; BBB Moment: Tom Bartholomy; Song: Bill Griffin; AV: Jessica Dupree & Nikki Keith; Photos: Bert Voswinkel

CLUB NEWS

→ A warm welcome was extended to the two newest Rotarians: **John Scharer** introduced **Mason Alexander**, who is the regional managing partner with Fisher & Phillips (Law). Contact Mason at malexander@laborlawyers.com. **Martin Waters** introduced long time Rotarian, **Mark Markanda**. Mark is a financial advisor with Wells Fargo Advisors and carries quite the Rotary story with him, including Past District Governor and thirty-six years perfect attendance. Welcome Mark at mark.markanda@wfadvisors.com.

→ Named to the board of Better Business Bureau: **Julie Haack** (Secretary/Treasurer), **Marilynn Bowler**, **Brad Cansler**, **Robert Freeman**, and **Nick Simonette**; **Bruce Darden** was named Physician of the Year at Novant Health Charlotte Orthopedic Hospital.

→ Member updates: **Mike Rash** is in hopes of getting home this Thursday. He is continuing slow, steady progress and loves cards received by his Rotary family. Baby Mitchell (**Meg McElwain**) will receive chemo this week at the Blume Clinic. Overall, he is doing well and Meg posts adorable pictures of him pushing his IV pole down the halls! Remember, he is just over a year old, walking everywhere and getting into everything. Mitchell has another year of treatments ahead of him and Meg and Frank have their hands full. Continue to keep this family in your prayers. **Karen Simon** has been dealing with the broken arm/elbow for the last three months and is probably looking forward to returning to work next week. Best to all of you!

DISTRICT GOVERNOR INSTALLATION JUNE 14, 2013

Luther Moore will be installed as Rotary 7680 District Governor on Friday, June 14, 2013. The event will take place at SMS Catering, 1764 Norland Avenue, 6:00 PM. Please contact Sandy at the Rotary Office by June 4 if you would like to attend – remember to include the name of your spouse/family/guests that may be attending with you.



**MATT JOYNER
 AVENUES OF SERVICE AWARD**

Matt, thanks for your leadership as chair of the Youth Exchange Committee. Job well done!

Attendance	<u>06/04/2013</u>	<u>06/05/2012</u>	Membership	New Members: Mason Alexander, Mark Markanda
Visitors & Guests	33	32	07/01/2012 316	
Club Members	176	164	06/04/2013 319	
Total Attendance	209	196	Net Increase +3	Resignations: Elsie Garner, Ed Ruff (both effective 6/30/13)
Percentage	60.3%			
Birthdays June 11-17		Anniversaries June 11-17		
11 Tom Bartholomy	11 Lee Morris	12 Karen & Herb Harriss	12 Ashley & Mark Duncan	
12 Suzanne Bledsoe	13 Chris Thomas	13 Deborah & Steve Meckler	15 Debra & Bob Webb	
14 Jay Westmoreland	14 Tom Hodges	16 Mary & Brian Gibson	16 Peggy & Bob Culbertson	
14 Tiffani Tedder		17 Mary & Bruce Rinehart	17 Tiffani & Jonathan Tedder	
		17 Ruth & Carroll Thomas		