



March 1, 2016

## HOW I GOT WHERE I'M AT

**Greg Sizemore, Em Syrewicze, Travis Vance**



Chris Kemper introduced our three speakers today, who shared with us tidbits of their life stories as well as their connection to Rotary. He also educated us a little about the origins of this program, one of our most popular Rotary traditions. As recounted by Powell Majors in his Recollections on our website, John Pender (1945-46 President) is credited with originating the program, albeit with one slight

difference. Back then, he would call on a random member of the club—new, old, young or more mature-- to speak extemporaneously about himself (there were only men back then!) and what brought him to Rotary. We all breathed a sigh of relief that the tradition was modified to include prior notice!

First up today was Greg Sizemore, an avid biker, judging by his bike-buying habits. Greg served in the U. S. Army from 1986-1990 and during that time, came to understand the true meaning of service above self. For two years during that time, he was stationed in Germany, which happened to be during the demise of the Berlin Wall. That experience taught him about the importance of communication (he was not conversant in the German language at that time) and working with others to achieve a common goal. When he left the Army, he returned to the States, earned a degree in International business from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and an MBA from Wake Forest University. He is the Director of the North Carolina U. S. Export Assistance Center. Greg has two children and is involved in the community as a Boy Scout volunteer for his son's troop and his active involvement with Rotary.

Emilee (Em) Syrewicze has had an interest in Rotary since her stint at a Rotary Life Leadership Conference in Michigan at the age of 15. She was so impressed by the organization and its mission that she decided then that she wanted to be a Rotarian when she was an adult. Em was born in Luther, Michigan, a small town near Traverse City. She graduated Alma College (a tradition dating back to many generations in her family) and Vermont Law School. She was interested in environmental law and Vermont Law School was the leading educator in that field. She returned home to Michigan after graduation and took a position with the Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing agency in Traverse City. She learned very quickly that the organization was on its last legs financially and successfully worked to return it to financial viability. During that

time, she achieved her goal of Rotary membership and was active in the Traverse City Rotary. As an interesting aside, she shared with us a unique fact about that Rotary Club: it has an endowment of about \$50M and is a tremendous source of financial support for the areas it serves. Em was recruited to Charlotte to serve as the Executive Director of the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation and, shortly after her move to Charlotte, began searching for an opportunity to become involved again in Charlotte. She met Catherine Browning and, as they say, the rest was history!

Had we not known better, we would have thought Travis was a comedian, rather than an attorney as he began to share his story. Not only does he have a good repertoire of lawyer jokes, he also told a few Clemson, Alabama, and Bristol, Tennessee native stories. Travis has a deep history with Rotary, having served as President at his former club and currently serving as District Membership Chair. He is an attorney, practicing employment law at Fisher & Phillips. A graduate of Sewanee and USC School of Law, Travis is an avid Alabama fan. His involvement with Rotary is driven by his belief that the work of Rotarians everywhere absolutely makes a difference in people's lives. He told the story of a young boy, growing up in poverty, who when given a pair of new shoes by the local civic club, saw the truth in the fact that making a difference is done one person, one community at a time. His story is living proof of that and service to Rotary, for him, is his way of living that truth.

Another great program and confirmation that our membership is rich with interesting stories!

Speaker Write Up: Suzanne Bledsoe; Head Table: Vanessa Stolen, Harry Workman, Tom Bartholomy, Chris Kemper, Travis Vance, Em Syrewicze, Greg Sizemore; Invocation: Mac McCarley; Visitors & Guests: Denise Hallett; Song: Chris Kemper; Health, Happiness & History: Bill Barte; AV: Nikki Keith & Jessica Dupree

## CLUB NEWS

Club members extend sympathy to **Mike** and **Diane Restaino**. Diane's father, Patrick J. Rega, passed away on Monday. Update on **Charlie Williams**...Sandra and **Luther Moore** visited Charlie at Summit Place of SouthPark (Room 223, 2101 Runnymede Lane, Charlotte 28209) over the weekend. He can have visitors and would appreciate a card from his fellow Rotarians. Email update for **Bill Gill**: [whgill3@outlook.com](mailto:whgill3@outlook.com).

Thanks again to The Charlotte Observer for printing the full page article outlining Charlotte Rotary's accomplishments in Sunday's paper. DecisionPathHR (**Tom Gibson**), a custom staffing and recruiting agency with four Charlotte area offices, won Inavero's Best of Staffing Client Award for the second year. **Pat Millen** and E2D (Eliminate the Digital Divide) won the Blue Diamond Award for Non-Profit Technology Excellence.

Global Vision Leaders Group will host its fifth Global Competitiveness Summit at CPCC's Harris Conference Center on March 23, 7:30a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Visit [www.cpcc.edu/global](http://www.cpcc.edu/global) for additional information.

Thanks to District Foundation Chair, Joe Morris, for recognizing members of the Paul Harris Society. All it takes to make this happen is your commitment to make a \$1000 donation to The Rotary Foundation each year for 3 years. Contact Jerry Coughter ([jcoughter@unc.edu](mailto:jcoughter@unc.edu)) or Sandy ([sandy@charlotterotary.org](mailto:sandy@charlotterotary.org)) to sign up. Society members: **Charlie Bones, Davan Cloninger, Tom Cottingham, Jerry Coughter, Mark Erwin, Herb Harriss, Larry Hyatt, Jenn Jackson, Mark Markanda, Mac McCarley, Luther**

**Moore, Sandy Osborne, Nancy Roberson, Paul Schmidt, Katie Tyler, David Zimmerman, John zumBrunnen**

APPROVE FOR MEMBERSHIP (comments to the Rotary Office by 3/8/16)

**Elizabeth Teagarden**

The Teagarden Group (Consultant, Organizational Development)

Sponsor: Hank Donaghy

Endorsed: Phil Van Hoy, Bryan Adams

## **100 SERVICE PROJECTS**

Everyone's help is needed to (1) volunteer and (2) recommend a project. REMEMBER to report your volunteer hours to the Rotary office.

- **Sam Rybrun** and **Cheryl Banks** have signed up for the reading partners program. Allenbrook Elementary School (on-going): North Star Reading Partners with a commitment to read to a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student one hour a week. Eric Davis: [eric.davis@wellsfargo.com](mailto:eric.davis@wellsfargo.com).

- Platelet Donation (on-going): Register at the American Red Cross or Community Blood Center of the Carolinas to donate platelets.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!- March 12:** District 7680 will partner with TreesCharlotte to plant 350 trees at Cochrane Middle School, 6200 Starhaven Drive, between 9AM and Noon (rain or shine). Tools, water & LUNCH will be provided. Volunteers should bring gloves and extra shoes (pretty muddy out there); wear long sleeve shirts, long pants and closed-toed shoes. 200 volunteers are needed...Rotarians, Rotaract, Interact, family, friends, and children! **Phil Volponi** will be coordinating volunteers for Charlotte Rotary or you can sign up here: <http://treescharlotte.org/event/devonshire-elementary-and-cochrane-academy-treeday-event/>

**20 HAVE SIGNED UP AND A FEW MORE ARE NEEDED TO COVER ANY CANCELATIONS - April 15:** Green Teacher Network – Native Plant Pollinator Garden planting day: 2 volunteers per school (10 schools) for approximately 2 hours – contact Carolyn Carlburg, [c.carlburg@gmail.com](mailto:c.carlburg@gmail.com) for sign-up.

- **April 21:** Lakewood Preschool Cooperative luncheon 11:30 – 1:00, Wood Hall at First Presbyterian Church. Bill Loftin is serving as a table host. Anyone serving as a table host will count toward the 100 service project totals. [bill@loftinco.com](mailto:bill@loftinco.com).

## **COMING UP**

- **May 13-15:** District Conference at the Renaissance Hotel in Asheville. Registration opens at 3PM; opening reception at 6PM. Adjourn by lunch time Sunday AM. Conference registration available on database (Sandy can get you registered) before April 1 - \$100 per person (after April 1 - \$150 per person); Renaissance Hotel reservations \$159 per night; 1-800-468-3571. All are invited to attend.

## **UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (03/02/16 – 03/08/16)**

03/05 Ken Samuelson

03/06 Edwin Peacock, Luke Maybry

03/08 Mary Vickers-Koch

## UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (03/02/16 – 03/08/16)

03/03 Carla & Harry Workman, Caroline & Ed Driggs

03/07 Carol and David Jordan

Visitors & Guests	9
Club Members	158
Total	167
Percentage	58.7%

## MEMBERSHIP

06/30/2015 319

03/01/2016 311

Net Increase: -8

*New Members:*

*Resignations:*

Visitors: Joe Morris, Donna Rasile, Durning Moore, Michael Fouts, Brian Miller, Elizabeth Teagarden, Peter Mengele, Tracy Hewett, Larry Sagehorn

## UPCOMING LUNCHEONS

([www.charlotterotary.org](http://www.charlotterotary.org) and click on the events tab)

03/08 – Shimon Gibson, Adjunct Professor, UNCC – Mount Zion Dig

Photos from our luncheons and other events can be found on **Flickr** [Click here](#)



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