



October 10, 2017

Fred Whitfield – Charlotte Hornets All About The Fans



Fred Whitfield, the President, Chief Operating Officer, Alternative Governor, and Minority Owner of the *Charlotte Hornets* was introduced by Mike Crum of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. He noted that Fred's experience as a player, coach, practicing lawyer, player agent, sports marketer, and basketball operations administrator make him uniquely qualified to handle his present leadership role, which could be identified by the acronym "PCOOAGMO." While not expected at the time he took the job with the then Bobcats, he adds to those titles his roles as a Political Activist and a Community Leader. He acquired these titles while working last year with other business leaders and the State legislature to modify the infamous HB2 legislation, ending the boycotts and allowing the return of numerous events, including the NBA All-Star game, ACC Basketball Tournament, and the NCAA Basketball Tournament.

Mike continued by pointing out that it takes an extraordinary amount of skill and courage to manage a professional sports franchise, where a bad day for your boss can result in a career change for you. It is even more challenging to manage your way through a transition from one boss to another and keep your position. During his four years as president of the *Bobcats* and seven years as president of the *Hornets*, Fred has overseen an increase in the value of the franchise from \$360 million to \$780 million. While performing all of these duties, Fred has not lost sight of the needs of the Community, founding Hoop Tee Charities to fund scholarships for disadvantaged youth at camps and educational programs across the country; and founding and running the Achievements Unlimited Basketball School in Greensboro and Charlotte, serving more than 10,000 youth, many on need-based scholarships. In his spare time, he serves on the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Board, the Board of Directors of the Charlotte Sports Foundation, the Campbell University Board of Trustees and the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council.

After a brief *Hornets'* promotional video, Fred took the podium and began by expressing his gratitude for the incredible opportunities he has had to do the things he loves every day, in sports, in business, and in the community. He pointed out some of his connections in the room, including to those involved in the original *Hornets* organization, and credited that organization for laying the groundwork for the success of the current one. He said that his boss demands excellence in everything, and that he has great respect for Michael Jordan, noting his recent gift of \$7 million to Novant Health for the construction of two clinics to be located in underserved areas of the City. That gift is representative of Michael's commitment to the community where the organization is based.

He spoke about the improvement in attendance, which averaged 17,000 per game last season, a vast improvement from 2006, when it took three games attendance combined

to get near that number. They have had at least ten sellouts in each of the last three years; and they now have 11,000 full-season ticket holders, beating the NBA's "gold standard" of 10,000. Premium seats are effectively sold out, and they set a record for attendance with over 19,600 fans for the Golden State game, where they honored Dell Curry before the fans got to watch Seth Curry score 45 points! Importantly, increased attendance leads to better performance by the team, which increases attendance—a virtuous circle.

He talked about the seven different uniforms that the team wears, and the fact that this year, the *Hornets* get to pick the uniform style for each home game, and the visiting team has to pick a contrasting one. This allows the home fans to see all of the various styles, and coincidentally allows the team to sell a lot of those uniforms in the brand-new Fan Shop, and also on the new *Hornets* mobile app.

The City owns the Arena, but the *Hornets* operate and manage the facility. He praised the City and the CRVA for being great partners in managing the facility, and also in helping the *Hornets* book as many sports and entertainment events as possible, making it the "epicenter of entertainment," which ensures the long-term success of the venue. Of course, none of this would have been possible had it not been for the modifications to HB2, and he praised the Governor and legislative leaders for listening to the business community and working out a bipartisan solution to the issue. The goal is not only to support the facility, but also the City, by raising awareness around the world of Charlotte and what it has to offer.

They are also able to grow the fan base because of the arrangement with Fox Sports to televise the games throughout the Carolinas, making the games far more accessible than under the previous arrangement that limited access to cable subscribers. Their success has enabled the team to expand its presence in the community, partnering with Novant in the healthcare space, with CMS in the education space, and with Bank of America in the military/veteran space. Fred believes that it is all about the fans, and being involved in the fans' community.

He discussed the team, and the acquisitions it had made since last season, adding to the talent base, as well as the growth of the players remaining from last year's team. He sees 31-year-old Dwight Howard as a key addition, describing him as a "rim protector" who also shares the values of contributing to his community; who on his first day here donated \$100,000 to the Boy's and Girl's Clubs, and who remains active teaching basketball to the kids. He talked about the rest of the roster, and closed by saying that there was a lot to be excited about this year, that they are all about their fans, and that their goal is to become part of the fabric of the Charlotte community.

In response to questions, he talked about the *Swarm*, their developmental team located in Greensboro. The team serves not only to develop player's talents, but also the skills of the management team, developing future executive talent. The *Swarm* will play 36 home games in their Gatorade-sponsored league, delivering a quality experience that also serves to develop the regional fan base and interest more young people in the game. He explained the title of Alternate Governor, and how the NBA was run by the Governors (Owners) of each team. Each team has two alternate Governors who can act in the place of the Governor if the Governor is not available to attend any of the thrice-yearly League meetings.

Our thanks to Fred Whitfield, Michael Jordan, and the Charlotte Hornets for all that they do. There is no question that they are already an important part of the fabric of Charlotte.

Speaker Write-Up: *Rick Handford*; Head Table; *Bill Nichols, Katie Tyler, Mike Rash, Sandra James*; Invocation: *Mac McCarley*; Visitors & Guests: *John Luebke*; AV: *Jessica Dupree, Daryl Lerner, Steve Eanes*; Photos: *Bert Voswinkel*; Greeters: *Randall Mountcastle, Warren Henderson*

CLUB NEWS

Resignations are coming in at an alarming rate. Nine new members have been introduced, two applicants will be voted on at the October 24th board meeting, and seventeen resignations have been turned in. One member passed away, four have moved out of town, and the others are a result of busy job/travel schedule/personal commitments. Everyone is tasked with bringing in new members. Inviting someone to attend as a guest is the perfect way to showcase Rotary and all that is done in this club. Contact the Rotary office for a copy of our membership application.

Karen Calder was invited to wave the green flag to start last weekend's Bank of America 500 NASCAR race. Dale Earnhardt, Jr.'s Foundation is a supporter of Classroom Central and asked Karen to crawl up the tower and start the race.

Jerry Bryson and **Mike Restaino** say the streets will be OPEN from 1pm to 5pm on Sunday October 15, 2017 for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's fourth Open Streets 704 powered by BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina. The event is a 5.5 mile route within walking and biking distance of the Madison Park, Selwyn Park, Montford Park, Freedom Park, Myers Park, Ashbrook, LoSo, and Colonial Village neighborhoods. Additional info at openstreets704.com.

Please consider attending the Foundation Banquet on Friday, November 17, 2017 at the Ballantyne Hotel. Reception at 6PM; dinner at 7PM; keynote speaker is Richard King, Past RI President; cost is \$65/person or \$110/per couple (\$55 for 3rd person/guest). Sign up is required through DACDB (Sandy can help with this part). If you are not currently supporting The Rotary Foundation, please consider doing so...ask Sandy to add it to your quarterly invoice or make a pledge on the Rotary website here <https://www.rotary.org/en/donate>.

The Environmental committee needs a few more members. If you can join this group, please contact **Em Syrewicze**, Emilee@catawbariverkeeper.org.

Chuck Cocke chairs the committee that manages the International Exchange Student process. This year's exchange student is sixteen year old Henrik, who is from Germany and is attending South Mecklenburg High School. Chuck has a few requests: consider joining this committee, consider inviting Henrik to attend a ballgame/lunch/movie/boat ride/hike, etc. to help round out his American experience, AND consider hosting Henrik in your home between March and June. Maybe you can't host him, but you may have a friend/neighbor that can. Chuck can be reached at chuck.cocke@cbarolinas.com.

Tony Marciano has free tickets to a premier screening of the movie, Same Kind of Different as Me on Wednesday, October 18 at 7pm, Regal Phillips Place Theater. Parts of the movie were filmed at a Rescue Mission. Email Tony by **noon** on **Friday, October 13** and let him know how many tickets you need. It's ok to invite your friends. Email Tony at tony.marciano@charlotterescuemission.org or cell, 704-806-4693.

October 17th Rotary Scholarship Golf Classic at Ballantyne Golf Club
→09/26/17 Raffle -\$895; 10/03/17 Raffle - \$730; 10/10/17 Raffle - \$395
→Tickets will be sold through 10/24/17 and winners announced on the 24th
→88 Golfers are registered
→Golf registration available at 10:30 – Box lunch provided – Shotgun start at Noon

→Come out for the BBQ after the tournament – around 5pm

Chase Saunders thanked all involved in keeping the soccer project moving forward. Registration at Merry Oaks and Starmount Elementary Schools has climbed to 185 kids and things are coming together.

100 SERVICE PROJECTS (98 completed)

- **Alzheimer's Walk, October 28, Romare Bearden Park.** Registration at 9am, ceremony at 10am, walk at 10:30am. Rhonda York has a team and there are probably others.

http://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2017/NC-WesternCarolina?pg=entry&fr_id=10574

- **Platelet Donation:** Register at the American Red Cross or Community Blood Center of the Carolinas to donate platelets. UPDATE - 76 donations to date. Donations have fallen off in the last 3 months and not meeting the goal of 100 donations will jeopardize this effort. Contact: **John zumBrunnen:** jzumbrunnen@zumbrunnen.com.

MEMBERSHIP

07/01/2017 309

10/10/2017 302

Net Increase: -7

New Members:

Resignations: John Laub, Bob Fuzy, Rob Hayden, Amy Burkett

Visitors & Guests 27

Club Members 148

Total 175 (56.3%)

Guests: Frank Turner, David Truesdale, Lynn Lee, Mark Spears, Charlotte Gaskins, Susie Masotti, Helen Veerkamp, Michelle Wellman, Chris Hailey, Rohan Paul, Mike Walker, Chuck McElroy, Joyce Tompkins, Couley Hicks, Howard Hoyle, III, Novellyn Heard, Ron Smith, Tom Minneman, Leigh Bullard, Tim Rush, Meg Langley, Elisa Bailey, Anthony Testa, Parker Browne, Dale Gillmore

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS (10/19/17 – 10/25/17)

10/20 Mitzi Ellis, Warren Henderson

10/21 Leland Park

10/22 Vanessa Stolen, Louis Watts

10/23 John zumBrunnen

10/24 Jerry Walters, Charlie Greer

10/25 Jim Kelley

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES (10/19/17 – 10/25/17)

10/19 Cheryl & Will Hadley, Diana & Mark Turner

10/20 Shelley & Chris Kemper

10/23 Sandy & Jim Osborne

10/25 Meredith & Jonathan Schulz

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

10/17 Golf Tournament – NOT MEETING FOR LUNCH

10/24 Ted Williams, Founder/Publisher, Charlotte Agenda

10/31 Suzie Ford, Owner, Noda Brewing

11/07 Rotary District Governor Scott Van Der Linden

11/14 Kandi Deitemeyer, CPCC

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





Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



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