



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

December 9, 2025

## 2025-2026 Board Members

President Patrick Baker  
Pres Elect Bill Bartee  
Past Pres Kim Brattain  
Secretary Bill Gill  
Treasurer Craig Field  
Exec Dir Christine Cipriano

### Directors 2024-2026

Benton Bragg  
John Cantrell  
Tish Atkins Charles  
Dena Diorio  
Jesse Hite  
Virginia Owen

### Directors 2025-2027

Byrd Bergeron  
Karen Calder  
J Hill  
Ayo Johnson  
Lori Keeton  
Michael Orzech  
Elizabeth Teagarden  
Mike Wollinger

### Membership Co-Chairs:

Linwood Bolles &  
Shelley Dean

### Programs

Elizabeth Teagarden



**Marinn Esch**  
President, Good Friends



**Velva Woollen**  
Charlotte Rotarian  
Trustee, Good Friends



**Peter A. Pappas**  
Chairman, Good Fellows



**Jubal A. Early**  
Vice Chair, Sponsorship, Good Fellows



**Nancy McNelis, Moderator**  
Director, Good Friends

## *Good Friends vs. Good Fellows: A Charlotte Tradition, A Friendly Competition*

by Paul Bartholomy

This week we enjoyed the spirited leaders of two of Charlotte's most iconic charitable institutions – Good Friends and Good Fellows – moderated by a familiar face at Rotary, Nancy McNelis. With touching videos and plenty of friendly banter, the panel highlighted how both organizations provide rapid and practical help to neighbors who “fall between the cracks” of traditional support systems.

Panelists Marinn Esch and **Velva Woollen** shared the inspiring story of Good Friends, founded in 1987 after being told women “couldn't raise money like the men.” They proved that notion spectacularly wrong, raising \$32,000 at their very first luncheon. Good Friends raised \$850,000 at their most recent luncheon and is quickly approaching a major milestone of nearly \$10 million in lifetime impact. Panelists Peter Pappas and Jubal Early reflected on how Good Fellows has maintained its simple but powerful tradition for 109 years to help working families facing difficult times. Good Fellows celebrates a record year at about \$2.4 million raised, providing emergency support to over 2,000 families. Both groups take pride in the same principle – 100% of donor dollars going directly to those who need it most.

What truly moved the room were the stories of lives changed: families facing sudden loss, job transitions, medical crises, and unexpected bills – where a timely “hand up” made the difference between stability and a downward spiral. In each case, Good Friends or Good Fellows stepped in within days, offering not only financial assistance but dignity and hope. The groups explained how the work is “immediate, impactful, and insightful”—built on long-standing partnerships with social workers and nonprofits who help identify urgent needs that fall outside traditional funding sources. The panel celebrated how both organizations collaborate regularly, proving that while the “competition” may be friendly, the mission is deeply shared.

The panel closed with an encouraging look ahead. Both groups see tremendous opportunity, along with tremendous need. With Charlotte growing by 150 people per day, housing costs rising, and more teachers, nurses, bus drivers, and first responders seeking assistance, the demand continues to grow. Both groups are looking to grow the next generation of supporters, expand individual giving, and continue the collaborative spirit that makes Charlotte such a generous city to be a part of.

Here are the recordings:

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1145475441?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1145476470?fl=pl&fe=sh>

The speaker's introduction starts at about 26 minutes and 35 seconds.