



ROTARY REPORTER

January 20, 2026

Speaker schedule and upcoming events can also be found on Charlotte Rotary's website under "Events / News"



Action Items - Don't forget!

January is Warm Up Charlotte Month. Bring coats, sweaters, sweatshirts, and other warm items to donate at our Tuesday meetings.

Sat., Jan. 24 - District Meeting has moved to Zoom! A great opportunity for all to participate. See details below. Mid-Year Assembly, 9 a.m. - noon

Tues., Jan. 27 - Weekly Meeting: Craig Scharton, Founding Director, Connect Labs Charlotte, Wexford Science + Technology

This Week's Meeting



Blair Stanford and The Business of Connecting and The Business of Connecting by Marilynn Bowler

Recognized for her role as a leader in planning, strategizing, collaborating, connecting and facilitating, *Blair Stanford* is a key advocate for Charlotte and is instrumental in making great things happen which have long-term benefits not only for our city but also regionally and beyond. Her official title is Executive Director of the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council (CELC). That Council is a vital arm of the Foundation For The Carolinas and focuses on ~ but is not limited to ~ developing and bettering Charlotte in the areas of Education, Workforce Development, Healthy Communities, and Community Engagement. The magic word, we heard from Blair today, is "connecting" ... connecting

leaders in business, education, healthcare and politics to find solutions to improve Charlotte's vitality and quality of life for everyone.

Using what she experienced as COO of the (now) Charlotte Regional Business Alliance (formerly Charlotte Chamber of Commerce), it was a surefire fit when she joined CELC five+ years ago. She brought with her all of those excellent connections combined with her public relations savvy and her management talent, and that impressive combination has positioned her to successfully lead such incredible challenges as ~ in the words of **Karen Calder** who took the MIC at Rotary to introduce Blair ~ "the Chamber-Regional Partnership merger, the Democratic National Convention, the 2006 CEO search and several long-term economic planning efforts." **Click here for more.**

Due to technical difficulties, this program was not recorded.



Club News

A Christmas Day Gift: Welcome, Allie Anne!

Christmas Day became even more joyful with the birth of Allison Anne "Allie Anne" Mortarotti Clark. Her arrival on such a special day makes her a true holiday blessing.

Allie Anne is the first grandchild of our Immediate Past President, **Kim Brattain**, and her husband, Allison Clark, a milestone moment filled with pride and happiness. She is also the first child of Sarah Kathryn Clark and Dominick Mortarotti, who are undoubtedly embracing parenthood with great joy.

Please join us in congratulating the Brattain, Clark, and Mortarotti family on the arrival of this beautiful Christmas gift and wishing Allie Anne a lifetime filled with love and happiness.

For our immediate Past President, *Service Above Self* may have to wait a bit... snuggles come first!



Scam Alert: Fake NC DMV Text Messages Circulating

From Paul Bartholomy, President/CEO, BBB of Southern Piedmont and Western NC Rotarians, we want to make you aware of a scam that is currently circulating widely. Individuals are receiving fraudulent text messages claiming to be from the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NC DMV). The message typically states that a recent traffic ticket was not paid and warns that the recipient's driver's license will be suspended, significant fines will be imposed, or insurance coverage may be affected unless immediate action is taken via text, phone, or a provided link. What makes this scam especially convincing is that the message often appears to come from a legitimate-looking sender name or email address that mimics the NC DMV (for example @ncdepartmentofmotorvehicles.gov). Scammers frequently use display-name spoofing and official-sounding language to create urgency, which can fool even cautious recipients.

While many people recognize these messages as fraudulent, others have fallen victim — which is why we are sharing this alert.

Please remember:

- The NC DMV does **not** send unsolicited text messages demanding immediate payment.
- Government agencies do not threaten license suspension or fines via unsolicited texts or emails.
- Never click links, reply, or call phone numbers included in unexpected messages.
- When in doubt, go directly to the official DMV website or contact the agency using a verified phone number.

Sharing this information is especially important for senior citizens and young drivers, who may be more vulnerable to these tactics. If you receive a message like this, delete it and report it through one or more of the channels listed below.

- **BBB Scam Tracker**
- Report at bbb.org/scamtracker to help warn others and support enforcement efforts.
- **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**
- Report fraud and identity threats at reportfraud.ftc.gov.
- **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**
- Report unwanted and fraudulent text messages at consumercomplaints.fcc.gov.
- **North Carolina Attorney General's Office**
- File a consumer complaint through the NC DOJ's Consumer Protection Division.
- **Mobile Carrier (Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, etc.)**
- Most carriers allow users to forward scam texts to **7726 (SPAM)** for investigation and blocking.

Staying informed helps protect not only ourselves, but our families, friends, and fellow Rotarians.

Editor's Note: A Mother-Son Outing, a Hard Fall, and a Grateful Heart

For many years now, I've made it a tradition to carve out special Mother-Son outings with my guys, Ben and Matthew, during the holidays and summers since my guys are away at college. This year's outing included ice skating, something that felt familiar and nostalgic to me.

What many don't know is that I was a competitive figure skater as a child, starting in first grade and skating through my teenage years. In fact, I once entered five events in a single weekend competition at Ober-Gatlinburg and earned five gold medals!... An experience that even landed me in the local newspaper. With that background, I (perhaps a bit too confidently!) thought I could still handle the ice.

There are two things I didn't fully appreciate at that moment: #1 - figure skates and hockey skates have very different blades, and hockey skates were all the rink had available that day, and #2 - in full transparency, this accident happened on the very last lap (seriously) of the night. My oldest son, Ben, was tired and had already decided to call it quits. My youngest son, Matthew, and I looked at each other and said, "Let's do one more lap." That one more lap changed everything, and it has been a powerful reminder to listen to our bodies and pay attention when we are getting tired.

I fell and hit my head - Surprising us all. The injuries were a frightening moment for my family and a sudden, unplanned pause for me.

What followed, however, was an extraordinary outpouring of love, prayers, concern, and support, both personally and professionally. While I focused on my recovery, our Rotary Club did what Rotary does best: it stepped up.

I am deeply grateful to President [Patrick Baker](#) for his understanding and steady leadership, and to [Elizabeth Teagarden](#), [Mark Norman](#), [Catherine Bracey](#), [Bill Gill](#), [Bill Bartee](#), [Craig Field](#), and so many others who quietly and efficiently jumped in to make sure meetings ran smoothly, communications continued, finances were handled, and the club kept moving forward.

This experience was a powerful reminder of the strength of our club, the generosity of its members, and the true meaning of Rotary fellowship. I am still learning about all the ways people helped behind the scenes, and if I haven't mentioned you by name yet, please know that does not diminish my gratitude.

I'm happy to share that my soft re-entry back to work this week has gone well, and I am planning to be back in full within the next couple of weeks. As I continue to heal, I truly appreciate everyone's patience, understanding, and kindness during this recovery period.

With heartfelt thanks,
[Christine Cipriano](#)



**On the ice at NCNB Plaza,
Dec. 19, 1979**



**5 Gold
Medals at
Ober
Gatlinburg!**



**Synchronized Skating NCNB
Plaza, Dec. 19, 1979**



**Competition at Ice Chalet in
Knoxville, TN**



Insider Tips

Board Minutes and Documents:

Ever wonder what the Board of Directors talk about or what the club's finances look like? Transparency is important to us! All Board of Directors documents are stored in DACdb under "Files," and any club member can access them anytime.

How to find them:

1. Log in to DACdb
2. Click on the "My Club" tab.
3. Click on the "Files" tab
4. Open the Board of Directors folder
5. Browse agendas, reports, and financial documents at your convenience

Contact Executive Director, Christine Cipriano, if you have questions.

Beyond the Club



Click above for the January District Newsletter!

Mid-Year Assembly has move to Virtual!

Due to the inclement weather forecast, the Rotary District 7680 Mid-Year Assembly on Saturday, January 24, 2026 will be held virtually via Zoom instead of in person.

Key Details

- Time: 9:00–11:45 AM
 - Virtual Social Time begins at 8:30 AM — wear your Rotary gear!
- Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89089902415>
- Meeting ID: 890 8990 2415
- Passcode: 873141

Please log in early, keep microphones muted unless recognized, and use your full name and club as your Zoom display name.

Pre-PETS with DGE Jerry Coughter will begin at 12:00 Noon, immediately following the Assembly, using the same Zoom link.

Thank you for your flexibility and continued commitment to Rotary. We look forward to seeing you online!



Extraordinary Gift to The Rotary Foundation

Longtime Rotary member Ravishankar Dakoju and his wife, Paola, have pledged an extraordinary \$50 million gift to The Rotary Foundation—one of the largest individual contributions in Rotary's history. Inspired by a lifelong commitment to service and giving back, their generosity reflects a deep belief in Rotary's ability to create lasting global change.

This remarkable gift will significantly expand the reach and impact of Rotary's humanitarian projects for years to come.

Read the full story: <https://lnkd.in/gDEX4KEA>

Membership Update

07/01/2025 224
12/31/2025 206
01/20/2026 206

Meeting Attendance - Jan. 20, 2026: 83

This week's Guests: Kristina Cruise ([Fred Wagner](#)), Jessica Helms ([Michael Orzech](#)), William Herndon ([Peirce Ward](#)), Elena Ji, Anna London ([Tchernavia Montgomery](#)), Bob Morgan ([Fred Wagner](#)), Libby Simonini ([Alan Simonini](#)), Julie Stockman ([Greg Reagan](#)), Beth Zeiss ([Tony Zeiss](#))

Milestones (January 1 - 31)

Rotary Anniversaries

36 years: Jim Woodward
34 years: David Anderson
22 years: Will Barnhardt
19 years (50 total): Doug Bean
18 years: Rick Handford
9 years (25 total): Mike Wollinger
8 years: Catherine Bracey
4 years: Jim Mannix
3 years (8 total): Tod Thorne
2 years: Lori Ann Gougeon
1 year: Leslie Fisher
1 year: Bob Wilhelm

Wedding Anniversary

5 – Carole & Kip Kiser
17 – Ella & Howard Hoyle
23 – Rachael & Brian Moor

Birthdays

4 – Doug Bean
5 – Angela Broome Powley
6 – Tracy Reading
8 – Parker Cains
8 – Bob Finley
10 – Shelley Dean
12 – Tish Atkins Charles
13 – Richard Walker
14 – Joe Morris
16 – Joel Ford
18 – Chuck Howard
19 – Greg Reagan
20 – Tony Zeiss
24 – Benton Bragg
24 – Mike Orzech
24 – Dan Rajkowski
24 – Chase Saunders
25 – Elizabeth Caspers
26 – Velva Woollen
31 – Elizabeth Levanti

2025 - 2026 Board Members

- President Patrick Baker

- **President-Elect Bill Bartee**
- **Immediate Past President Kim Brattain**
- **Secretary Bill Gill**
- **Treasurer Craig Field**

Current Directors: Benton S. Bragg, Byrd Bergeron, John F. Cantrell, Karen N. Calder, Tish Atkins Charles, Dena R. Diorio, J Hill, Jesse G. Hite, Ayo M. Johnson, Lori Keeton, Michael B. Orzech, Robert Shaw, Elizabeth Teagarden, Virginia Owen, Michael Wollinger

Contact Us

For more information about how to get involved, volunteer opportunities and meeting topics, contact **Christine Cipriano**, Executive Director, at christine@charlotterotary.org



Photos from our luncheons, historical photos, and other events and projects can be found on the club's Flickr site. Click here [charlotterotary6006](#) to view pictures from recent meetings.



Recordings of weekly club luncheons can be found on the club's Vimeo site. Click here <https://vimeo.com/user24733153> to watch recent videos.



Guest Check-In If you have a guest who would like to preregister for the weekly meeting, a QR code is provided for easy scanning, or the link can be found here: **Visitor Pre-Register ([jotform.com](#))**

Rotary Club of Charlotte | 1850 E 3rd St, Ste 220 | Charlotte, NC 28204 US

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