

# ROTARY REPORTER

## April 28, 2026

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



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Charlotte, North Carolina  
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**May Community Partner:**

Throughout May, Charlotte Rotary is hosting a diaper drive to support the NC Diaper Bank - support our neighbors in need by providing essential hygiene items. Details below.

**Tues., May 5 - Weekly Meeting:** Henry Batten, President & CEO of Concrete Supply Co.

***This Tuesday!* Tues., May 5 - Volunteer Event:** American Red Cross Blood Drive, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Fairfield Inn & Suites. **Click here to reserve your space** or call 1-800-redcross to make your appointment. Use sponsor code "Charlotterotary".

**Tues., May 19 - Board of Directors Meeting** immediately following our weekly meeting.

***Important!* Tues., May 26 - R85 Member Meeting:** Important Membership Update immediately following the regular meeting. All current Rule of 85 members are encouraged to stay for a brief, important discussion regarding potential membership structure updates and future planning for our club. Please plan to attend.

***Hotel rate deadline = May 6!* Fri., May 29 - Sun., May 31 - District Conference: District Conference 2026**, Renaissance Asheville Downtown Hotel, 31 Woodfin St. Asheville, NC. **Click here for more information.**

**Sat., June 6 - Volunteer Event: Nourish Up**, 9 - 11 a.m., 901 Carrier Drive. Details to follow. Space is limited so **sign up early**. Contact [Catherine Bracey](#).

**Sat., June 27 - District Governor Installation:** Join us to honor our own, [Jerry Coughter](#), at District Governor Installation Celebration on Saturday, June 27 | Noon–2:00 p.m. at the Mount Holly Municipal Complex, 400 E. Central Avenue, Mount Holly, NC. **Click here to register for the event!**

**Tues., June 30 - Weekly Meeting:** Special America 250 Event during our weekly meeting. Details below.

**July 16-19 - District Event: Rotary's Seminar for Tomorrow's Leaders (SFTL)** is a leadership camp for incoming high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors, held July 16–19, 2026 at Gardner-Webb University. See details below.

# This Week's Meeting



## *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Estella Patterson*

by **Susie Masotti**

Charlotte Rotary Club was pleased to welcome Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief of Police, Estella Patterson as this week's guest speaker. **Dena Diorio**, retired Mecklenburg County Manager, introduced Estella to the guests gathered. Dena commented that Charlotte-Mecklenburg welcomed Estella as our new Chief of Police on December 1, 2025. In accepting the position, Estella returned to Charlotte after serving 25 years with CMPD and 3 ½ years with Raleigh. She brings passion and commitment to public service and focuses on reducing violent crime and disorder, enhancing community

engagement, and improving employee morale in CMPD. Estella began her career in 1996 as a member of the 123<sup>rd</sup> recruit class of CMPD. She served in a variety of roles, including trainer, patrol sergeant, division commander, and internal affairs commander. She was promoted to deputy chief in 2019. In August of 2021, she was selected as chief of the Raleigh Police Department until moving back home to Charlotte. Estella has served our country as a member of the US Army Reserve, completing combat tours in Kosovo and Iraq, and was the recipient of the Army Commendation Medal. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in political science from UNC-Charlotte and her Master of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Oklahoma. She is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and attended the Senior Management Institute of Police.

After thanking Dena for a wonderful introduction, Estella thanked the gathered Rotarians and guests for having her speak at a Rotary meeting. **Click here for more.**

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1187752005?fl=pl&fe=sh>

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1187752392?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Chief Patterson's introduction begins at approximately 26 minutes.

## Club News



### *In Memory of Chris Thomas*

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our fellow Charlotte Rotarian, Chris Thomas, on Wednesday, April 29, following a brief battle with cancer.

A member of the Rotary Club of Charlotte since 2003, Chris exemplified Service Above Self in all areas of his life. He was a trusted and steady presence in our club and was preparing to serve on the Board of Directors while continuing his role managing the weekly Head Table, responsibilities he carried out with humility and care.

Chris was widely respected in his profession, his church, and the broader community, leaving a lasting impact on all who knew him.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Jane, and their family. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

A service to celebrate Chris's life will be held on:

Wednesday, May 13. 11:00 a.m. (Visitation at 10:00 a.m.)

at Carmel Baptist Church, 1145 Pineville-Matthews Road, Matthews

A complete obituary will appear **here** next week.

We are grateful for the thoughtful coverage by *Ashley Fahey* with **The Charlotte Ledger**, and for Business North Carolina, Daily Digest for including that article.

*Chris will be deeply missed and fondly remembered.*



— Velva Whitescarver Woollen C'61 —  
— Lifetime Achievement Award —

## ***Velva Woollen Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award***

Salem College proudly recognized Charlotte Rotarian **Velva Whitescarver Woollen '61** with its Lifetime Achievement Award during Reunion Weekend.

A steadfast leader and devoted advocate, Velva has dedicated decades of service and philanthropy to strengthening the College. Her enduring commitment has helped build a foundation that continues to support and inspire generations of students.

*Congratulations, Velva! We are proud of you!*



**Congratulations** to Charlotte Rotarian **Hallie Rojeski**, Head of School, The John Crosland School, on the successful ribbon cutting of the new Exploratorium. The Exploratorium will benefit students with a focus on zones of creativity and purpose... jobs, and the important of project-based learning. The celebration featured a special moment with Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles and the ceremony lead by a student. We look forward to what's next for Crosland!



## ***Celebrating Generosity: CART Fund Fundraiser Success***

Throughout the month of April, our club came together in support of the **CART Fund**, continuing Rotary's commitment to funding critical Alzheimer's disease research. While we look forward to sharing the full results of this year's fundraiser later this month,

we want to take a moment to recognize an outstanding act of generosity.

A special thank you to **John Clarkson**, who graciously donated his winnings back to the CART Fund. His gesture is a wonderful example of the spirit of service and giving that defines our club.

Thank you to everyone who participated and supported this important effort—your impact truly makes a difference. Stay tuned for the final totals!



## ***America 250 Event on Tuesday, June 30th***

Make history with us by attending our 250th celebration meeting on June 30th. Invite your spouse and those you would like to recruit to Rotary to attend with you.

Through the powerful words of the Mecklenburg Declaration, the Halifax Resolves, and the U.S. Declaration of Independence, this program will trace the growing call for freedom in early America. As these historic voices unfold, their words and witness will remind us that

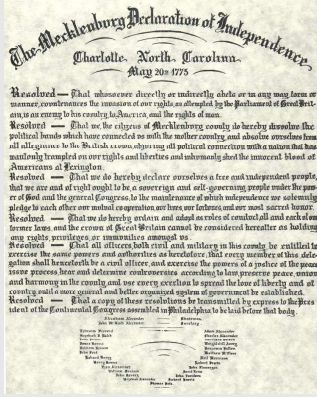
the fight for liberty was carried by a rising generation of people who embraced liberty.

**Preregister your guests here.**

## ***Do You Have a Mecklenburg Declaration Connection?***

At our May 19 Rotary meeting, we have a special opportunity to celebrate a unique piece of Charlotte's history—the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (Meck Dec).

As part of our Health, Happiness, and History segment, **Dr. Tony Zeiss** is hoping to spotlight members who may have a personal connection to this historic moment. Specifically, we are hoping to identify anyone in our club who is a descendant of a signer of the Meck Dec.



If you believe you may have a family connection we would love to hear from you! Those identified will be acknowledged in this special and meaningful portion of the program.

Please reach out to Dr. Zeiss at [zeiss.tony@gmail.com](mailto:zeiss.tony@gmail.com) or Executive Director, **Christine Cipriano**, at [christine@charlotterotary.org](mailto:christine@charlotterotary.org) if you'd like to be included or to learn more.

Let's uncover and celebrate the living history within our own Rotary family!



**Spring Into Saving Lives with Charlotte Rotary!**  
Give a gift. Get a gift. Save a life.

Fairfield Marriott Uptown  
Tuesday, May 5, 2026  
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

When you donate blood, you're not just rolling up your sleeve; you're showing up for someone in our own community who needs you.

Let's turn an ordinary Tuesday into something extraordinary!

**Make Your Appointment Today:**

- Visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and use sponsor code Charlotterotary
- Call 1-800-REDCROSS

Let's show Charlotte what Service Above Self looks like. See you on May 5!



**Charlotte Rotary Diaper Drive – Supporting NC Diaper Bank**

Throughout the month of May, Charlotte Rotary is proud to host a Diaper Drive in support of the NC Diaper Bank—an organization dedicated to ensuring that families in our community have access to essential hygiene products.

We invite you to join us in making a meaningful difference by donating needed items:

- Baby diapers
- Period products
- Adult incontinence supplies
- Formula\*
- Baby wipes\*

(\*Please note: formula and baby wipes must be unopened and not expired.)

High-need baby items include:

- UnderJams (S/M)
- Size 5 diapers
- 3T–4T pull-ups

Other high-need items:

- Tampons
- New black leggings (all sizes, M–XXL)
- Disposable adult pull-ups/underwear

Every donation—big or small—helps provide dignity, comfort, and care to individuals and families who need it most. Thank you for your generosity and for supporting this important effort in our community.

**R85 Members: Your Input Matters**

Following our regular meeting on **Tuesday, May 26**, we invite all current Rule of 85 members to stay for an important conversation about upcoming membership changes.

As part of the Club's ongoing efforts to strengthen long-term sustainability, the Board has recently approved new membership categories that will take effect July 1.

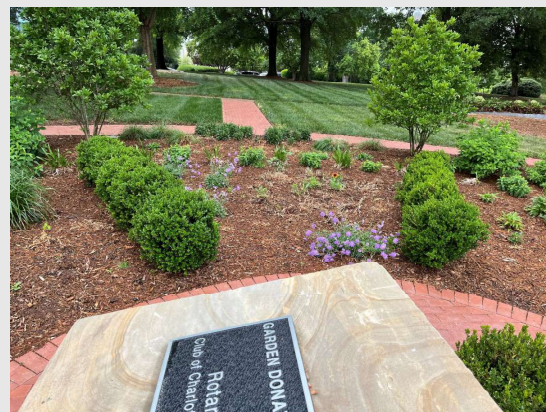


Your perspective, experience, and continued engagement are incredibly important to the future of Charlotte Rotary. We hope you will join us for this discussion.

## Charlotte Rotary's Projects

### *Charlotte Rotary Garden*

The Charlotte Rotary Garden is in its first full spring, bringing new color, growth, and life to the space. Located in Thompson Park near St. Mary's Chapel (very close to the Fairfield where we meet) the garden is flourishing, as seen in recent photos from [PDG Joe Morris](#). We're grateful to everyone who helped bring this project to life and look forward to watching it continue to grow.



## Insider Tip

*Did you know...* that Rotary's very first service project, led by Paul Harris in 1907, was installing public restrooms in Chicago?

What started as a simple (and surprisingly controversial) effort to improve sanitation became the moment Rotary shifted from networking to meaningful service proving that even the most practical ideas can spark lasting impact.

Read more about [Rotary's history here](#).

# Beyond the Club



**District Conference 2026**  
**May 29-31**  
Renaissance Center | Asheville, NC  
Creativity and Community | Innovating for Impact



**Keynote Speaker:**  
**Dr. Isabel Scarinci**  
Polio survivor and  
global health leader

**Be Part of Something Special**  
*What You'll Experience*

- Hands-on service project supporting Helene Recovery
- Steps from downtown Asheville shops, galleries, & dining
- Celebrate your club's impact
- Share ideas and projects with fellow clubs

**Reserve Your Spot**



<https://tinyurl.com/DistrictConf2026>

**Rotary**   
District 7680

## ***Join Us for the 2026 District Conference in Asheville!***

Make plans to attend the Rotary District 7680 Conference May 29–31, 2026, at the Renaissance in Asheville, NC.

Connect with Rotarians from across the district for inspiring speakers, club success stories, breakout sessions, fellowship, and hands-on service opportunities. Together, we will also support ongoing Hurricane Helene economic recovery efforts across Western North Carolina — a powerful reminder that Rotary's service never stops.

Optional service projects begin Friday during the day, with the official conference running Friday evening through Sunday morning.

### **A Little Friendly Competition...**

A special thank you to those already registered! Current attendance leaders include:

- Charlotte – 10 members
- Gastonia – 7 members
- Taylorsville – 6 members

So... who's going to come out on top? There's still time to rally a few more from Charlotte and take the lead!

Come ready to reconnect, recharge, and represent Charlotte well in Asheville.

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Rotary  
District 7680



SEMINAR FOR  
TOMORROW'S  
LEADERS



## SUMMER LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Unlock your potential this summer  
with the ROTARY 7680  
leadership program!

### OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:

- ✓ For Rising Juniors and Seniors in High School
- ✓ July 16-19, 2026
- ✓ Gardner Webb University



APPLY  
HERE



### MORE INFORMATION & REGISTRATION

<https://rotary7680.org/sft/>



## Membership Update

07/01/2025 224  
02/28/2026 204  
04/28/2026 203

### **Consideration for membership:**

**John "Jack" Helmers**, 49 Financial, Associate  
Sponsor: Bill Gill

### **The Salvation Army Nonprofit:**

**Area Commander Andrew Wiley, Brent Rinehart, Captain Mike McGee, Lt. Isaiah Rector**  
Sponsor: Mark Norman  
Endorsers: David Zimmerman and Herb Harriss

Meeting Attendance - April 28, 2026: 100

This week's Guests: Melissa Alatsis, Craig Austin ([Elizabeth Caspers](#)), Tosin Ayedebinu, Joe Cartafalsa ([Jim Mannix](#)), Retired Lieutenant Keith Caviness (Guest of the Speaker), Jack Helmers ([Bill Gill](#)), Jessica Helms ([Michael Orzech](#)), Mackenzie Hoisington ([Mark Turner](#)), Beth Loughery, Sandra Moore ([Luther Moore](#)), Hal Murry ([Carla DuPuy](#)), Jennifer Roberts ([Edwin Peacock](#)), Charles Ross, Roger Young ([Linwood Bolles](#))

# Milestones

## (May 5 - 11)

### Birthdays

6 – Trina Fullard  
9 – Fernando Ycaza  
11 – Paul Bartholomy

### Wedding Anniversaries

7 – Patty McKernan & Tod Thorne  
8 – Katheryn & Kyle Woodruff  
11 – Randi & George Edmiston

### Rotary Anniversaries

27 years: John Tabor  
17 years: Bill Bartee  
2 years: Austin Backus  
2 years: Jacob Cantrell  
2 years (27 total): Carolyn Carlburg  
2 years: Jonathan Justice  
2 years: Adrienne-Elaine Lamptey  
2 years: Phillip Miller  
2 years: Alicia Morris Rudd  
2 years: Ivan Mothershead  
2 years: Amy Peacock  
2 years: Patricia Van Pelt  
2 years (12 total): Rory Wall

## 2025 - 2026 Board Members

- **President Patrick Baker**
- **President-Elect Bill Bartee**
- **President-Nominee Mark Norman**
- **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, Joel Ford, J Hill, Jesse G. Hite, Lori Keeton, Michael B. Orzech, Robert Shaw, Elizabeth Teagarden, 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](mailto: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)**



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