

NEW MEMBER PROPOSALS

The following individuals have been proposed for membership in Rotary:

Lawrence “Larry” Spell
Classification: Education, Music
Transylvania University
Sponsor: Shawn Lyons

Cole Maier
Classification: Service Industry, Arborist
Bartlett Tree Experts
Sponsor: Markus Cross

Objections should be made in writing within seven (7) days to The Board of Directors, Rotary Club of Lexington, 401 W. Main Street, Suite 305, Lexington, KY 40507. Objections are kept in strict confidence.

ROTARY WOMEN BUILD SKILLS AND CAPACITY FOR SERVICE

The women of Rotary Club of Lexington came together in true #GirlPower fashion for a hands-on Women Build experience at Lowe’s, participating in painting and patching workshops designed to empower them with home improvement skills. These workshops not only prepared them to tackle projects in their own homes but also equipped them to contribute to Phase 3 of Women Build and support critical home repairs for those in need. Their efforts reflect the spirit of Lexington Habitat for Humanity’s Women Build initiative—a movement of women strengthening their community through affordable housing projects.

In addition to Women Build, Rotary Club of Lexington is actively giving back through its February/March community service project, which includes a **latex paint collection drive** to support Habitat’s ReStore program. This initiative helps divert thousands of gallons of paint from landfills while funding critical home repairs. By coming together—whether with a paintbrush, a hammer, or through sustainability efforts—these inspiring women and men are making a lasting impact, proving once again that when community minded individuals support each other, incredible things happen!

Please reach out to Alisha D Chaffin, 917-420-0572 or alisha.rotary@gmail.com for more information or to schedule paint pick up.

– Alisha Chaffin



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UPCOMING PROGRAMS		UPCOMING EVENTS/ VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	
Mar 6	Laura Gregory, Watershed Program Director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance	Feb 28	Early Morning Mixer, 46Solutions, Lexington Green, 8-9:30am
Mar 13	Dr. Maj-Linda Selenica, Associate Director of Outreach & Partnerships, Sanders Brown Center on Aging	Mar 6	Studio Players, <i>Witness for the Prosecution</i> , Carriage House Theatre, \$25, 7:30pm
Mar 20	Doing Rotary Differently, No Lunch Meeting	Mar 15	St. Patrick’s Day Parade, Join us to walk as a group, Midland Ave. 12:45pm
Mar 27	Dr. Rufus Friday, Executive Director, Center for Integrity in News Reporting	Mar 20	Backpack Pack-Up, God’s Pantry Food Bank, Winchester Road, 1:00pm
Apr 3	TBA	Mar 28	Early Morning Mixer, 46Solutions, Lexington Green, 8-9:30am
Apr 10	DeVone Holt, Muhammad Ali Center	Apr 16	Membership Social/Recruitment, Miracle League Field, Shillito Park, 5:00pm

The ROTARY Club of Lexington

WHEEL HORSE

February 27, 2025
— TODAY’S PROGRAM —

Presiding: President Bret Anderson
Inspiration, Pledge, & 4 Way Test: Phil Gray
Introduction of Guests: Michael Morrill
Introduction of Speaker: Chis Peck

Speaker: Amon Couch, Executive Director, Partners for Rural Impact
Program: The Power of Place: Partner for Rural Impact’s Mission of Improving Outcomes for Rural Students
Location: The Mane on Main

FEBRUARY LUNCH SPONSOR

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DR. AMON COUCH

There is much talk these days about the “urban-rural” divide in America. The term generally refers to the social, economic, and political disparities between urban and rural areas. Joining us today is Dr. Amon Couch who, in a presentation entitled “The Power of Place: Partner for Rural Impact’s Mission of Improving Outcomes for Rural Students”, will discuss the efforts of his organization, Partners for Rural Impact, to address some of these disparities.

Dr. Couch is a first-generation college graduate and a life-long resident of eastern Kentucky. He spent nearly three decades in public education as a teacher and administrator, most recently as principal and superintendent. After retiring from public education, he went to work for Partners for Rural Impact

MEET OUR SPEAKER

(PRI) where he currently serves as Executive Director, Associate Vice-President of National Place-Based Programming. He also serves as co-Interim Vice President of PRI’s National Place-Based Programming, providing leadership and support to a diverse group of grant programs in Kentucky, Texas, and Missouri, all with the goal of increasing educational outcomes for rural students.

PRI is a national non-profit, headquartered in Berea, Kentucky, whose mission it is to ensure that all rural youth ages 0-24 are on a path to upward mobility. Using a cradle-to-career and place-based approach, they, as a national intermediary, operate at the local, state, and national levels to accelerate outcomes for the fourteen million children and youth living in rural America. Its work is based on three pillars of activity:

- Increasing access to high-quality programs and supports
- Strengthening civic infrastructure so that residents and local organizations can come together to improve outcomes
- Driving resources in rural communities to shape a shared narrative and

advocating for policy changes at the state and local levels.

PRI was in the news in January of this year as Dreama Gentry, its CEO, announced that the organization she founded is receiving a \$1.5 million grant from BlackRock Foundation. The grant is a two-year commitment. With respect to the grant, Ms. Gentry noted “PRI can better support . . . rural leaders and practitioners, connecting them with resources and opportunities as they work to ensure all young people within their communities ha a pathway to success.”

Please give a warm Rotary welcome to Dr. Amon Couch!

BRING A FRIEND TO ROTARY!

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Editorial Standards: *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed.

GET YOUR NAME OUT THERE AND HELP YOUR CLUB: THAT’S A WIN-WIN!

Did you know that the Rotary Club of Lexington lunch meetings cost the Club between \$700-1,000 in addition to the \$21 meal cost we each pay? To help offset this cost, we are offering monthly lunch sponsorships at a cost of \$1,000 each.

Sponsors can promote their business or profession at the month’s lunch meetings for the selected month. In addition to recognition from the podium and in the Wheel Horse, sponsors may utilize a logo display and promotional literature to help get their name out there. And your lunch sponsorship includes six guest lunches! To date, Cohesions Sales & Marketing Solutions (Bret Anderson) and America Trust Company (Chris Anderson) have taken advantage of this opportunity.

This is an effective way to help out the Club and to introduce you and promote what you do to the membership. As we said, it is a win-win!

See Peggy Trafton, Bret Anderson, or Chris Anderson for more information.

ST. PATRICK’S DAY PARADE!
SATURDAY, MARCH 15th!
We’re walking in the parade as a group!
12:45pm meet at Thoroughbred Park on Midland Ave.
JOIN US!

We have a BIG Rotary banner to carry!
And goodies to pass out along the route!
Families, neighbors, and guests invited to join us!
It was a lot of fun last year! Let’s have a bigger group this year!



Rotary in Review

FCPS MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY

Dr. Demetrus Liggins, Superintendent of the Fayette County Public School System (FCPS), was the Rotary Club’s speaker on February 13. He discussed the current state of the public county school system, the second largest employer in the area, behind only the University of Kentucky. Over half of students receive free or reduced lunch from the largest “restaurant” in the area, with 39,416 students served daily. With an annual budget of \$671 million, FCPS in turn has a \$291 million economic impact on central Kentucky. Of that budget, \$58.5 million goes to instruction and 85 percent of the budget is for salary and benefits, which is consistent with both pre-collegiate and collegiate operating budgets.

Liggins focused on the “Return on Investment” FCPS provides through student opportunities at almost seventy schools and special programs. These include specialized programs such as the Carter G. Woodson Academy, Rise STEM Academy for Girls, Locust Trace Agricultural Sciences Center, and The Stables. These provide specialized instruction in such areas as pre-engineering, health sciences, foreign languages, and visual and performing arts.

He then discussed several new schools and programs that are in the works. Through the largest federal grant awarded in this area, three existing schools, Breckenridge and Harrison Elementary Schools and Crawford Middle School, will be converted to magnet schools. Of particular note is that Crawford’s Leadership Academy for Leadership, Literacies, and Civic Engagement will be the first in the country to offer the civic engagement component. Mary E. Britton Middle School, across from Baptist Health’s Hamburg campus, will be the largest middle school in the state with about 1,200 students. Finally, The Hill will provide state-of-the-art technical education to students in central Kentucky through 24 hour-a-day learning opportunities. The Hill is partnering with the Community and Technical College System to provide GED and certification programs. Dr. Liggins said that these—and future—programs would not be possible without the civic engagement of the Lexington community.

Liggins turned next to what he called “learning lost” as a result of the pandemic. Citing a national study conducted by Auburn and Stanford Universities, he noted that students in the United States lost, on average, half a grade level in math and one-third of a grade in reading. He proudly noted that Fayette County schools have been able to exceed national averages in closing these gaps in both math and reading.

Dr. Liggins then reviewed the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) data, the state’s “report card” on how well public schools perform. Possible ratings range from very low to very high. He proudly reported that no Fayette County Public Schools are on the list needing comprehensive improvement. (Louisville’s public school system—Jefferson County—has nineteen on the CSI list.) Since 2018, no area schools have been flagged for low achievement of African American, Hispanic or economically disadvantaged students.

The CSI report also reflects on college readiness. Kentucky is one of a few states which provide the ACT to all 11th graders if they are interested. While FCPS is responsible for only 6.5% of Kentucky students, it produced 32% of the highest achievers on the ACT. Part of the reason for this success is the Advanced Placement Program (AP) and dual credit program with higher education institutions. In 2022, nearly 3,500 students took AP and/or dual credit courses. By 2024, that number had grown to almost 4,200 students. Career readiness is also emphasized. Three years ago, 524 students received 549 certificates. Last year those numbers had tripled with more than 1,700 students earning nearly 3,100 certificates. These special opportunities result in a savings of \$19 million in college costs to families.

Dr. Liggins concluded his remarks by briefly reviewing the 5-cent property tax for safety, which resulted in \$107 million for facility upgrades, safety support and mental health support services. He said this has helped schools to be a safe place to belong. Fayette County Public Schools are indeed making a positive impact on our students and our community.

– Paul B. Chewning

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