

LISTENING, LEARNING, AND LEADING: WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU

In late May, the Rotary Club of Lexington took an important step forward — not by launching a new project, but by pausing to listen.

More than ninety members responded to our comprehensive club survey, and over seventy Rotarians gathered on May 21 for a Town Hall meeting focused on where we are and where we’re headed. The message was clear: we’re proud of Rotary’s legacy, but we’re hungry for relevance, clarity, and renewed impact.

From both the survey and the discussion, four key themes emerged:

- 1. **Membership:** We need to grow — not just in numbers, but in connection and quality. Members want to attract strong professionals and deepen engagement through mentorship and clearer outreach. A “Five-Star” recruitment effort and mentor/protégé program are in development.
- 2. **Service:** There’s a strong desire to align behind bigger, more visible causes. We’ll begin grouping our many service efforts under broader themes — and are exploring the launch of a major local initiative with real impact.
- 3. **Speakers & Meetings:** Members want variety, quality, and energy. There’s enthusiasm for more diverse speakers,

creative formats, and a consistent meeting schedule. Several members have proposed forming a group to support speaker recruitment and elevating the overall experience.

- 4. **Budget & Financial Health:** Financial stability depends on smart growth, not just cuts. Members want transparency, realistic projections, and proactive planning. That includes expanded fundraising, steady membership growth, and tracking charitable giving as part of our annual budget.

Your feedback is already shaping our strategy for the year ahead. Budgets are being reviewed, outreach efforts are underway, and the full survey results will be shared with members soon.

As we prepare for a leadership transition — with four past presidents stepping up to guide the year ahead — we remain committed to progress, transparency, and momentum. Most of all, we remain committed to you.

Thank you for sharing your voice. We heard you loud and clear.

– Bret Anderson, President



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UPCOMING PROGRAMS		UPCOMING EVENTS/VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES	
Jun 12	Steve Gardner, Update on Coal in Kentucky	Jun 11	Around the World Dinner, The Signature Club, Club Fundraiser, 6-8:00pm
Jun 19	Doing Rotary Differently, No Lunch Meeting	Jun 14	Celebrating our Rotary Foundation Event, The Cellar at The Signature Club, 6-8:30
Jun 26	President’s Day, Bret Anderson	Jun 21	Coffee and Donuts at Pollinator Garden, Kenawood Park, 9 – Noon
Jul 3	No Meeting, 4th of July Holiday	Jun 27	Early Morning Mixer, 46Solutions, Lexington Green, 8-9:30am
Jul 10	Installation of Officers and Endowment Day	Jul 3	Patriot Concert, Gratz Park, Free, Evening

PRIDE MONTH, ROTARY, AND BEING FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED

In much of the world, June is celebrated as Pride Month. Did you know that the LGBT+ Rotary Fellowship is a group in the family of Rotary dedicated to promoting global friendship, service and education? The fellowship aims to create an inclusive, understanding, and welcoming community, fostering goodwill and peace, and realizing a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for LGBT + people. For more information, go to rotarylgbt.org.



The ROTARY Club of Lexington

WHEEL HORSE

June 5, 2025
— TODAY’S PROGRAM —

Presiding: President Bret Anderson
Inspiration, Pledge, & 4 Way Test: Phil Gray
Introduction of Guests: Mike Baker

Speaker: Scott Neal
Program: Scholarship Program
Location: The Mane on Main

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MEET OUR SPEAKER



SCOTT NEAL

Standing at the podium this week you will see Rotarian Scott Neal. However, even Scott will agree that this program is not about him, but about three very deserving students who are learning of the good that Rotary does in our community. After an absence of a year, Scott is reprising his role as Chair of the Scholarship Committee.

While all three of this year’s award recipients excelled in multiple ways, the Committee focused heavily on applicants’ essay answers to two questions: why does the candidate deserve the award and why will this award help them afford their continuing education. We think you will agree the Committee chose well.



Cerise Archer is a recent graduate of Lafayette High School in the Pre Engineering Program and a SCAPA Theatre Perfor-

mance major. She was a member of the National Honor Society, Science National Honors Society, International Thespians Honor Society, and Tri-M Music Honor Society. Cerise attended the Governor’s School for the Arts in 2024 in the drama discipline, and has spent her high school years volunteering at Lexington Children’s Theatre where she loves to perform and stage manage. Cerise will attend Butler University in the honors program majoring in theatre, psychology, and criminology, with an emphasis in musical theatre and stage management. She hopes to eventually find a career to combine her interests, such as victims’ advocacy, drama therapy, or behavioral analysis. She loves spending time with her puppy Primrose and baking with her friends.



Nakari Ellington is a graduate of Henry Clay High School. During her time at Henry Clay, she was a member of the Wind En-

semble, Jazz Band, Marching Band, Black Student Union, Varsity Volleyball Team, and several other clubs. She plans to attend UK and major in Medical Laboratory Sciences with a minor in Communications. She also plans to earn the Clinical Healthcare Management undergraduate certificate. Healthcare has always been an interest.



Rashaad Faulkner is a senior graduating from Opportunity Middle College in the dual credit program affiliated with BCTC.

He will attend Union Commonwealth University this fall majoring in Computer Science with a focus in Cyber Security. He will also play basketball for Union. He enjoys giving back to the less fortunate on the weekends, work-

SPEAKER, 2

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FROM PAGE 1

SPEAKER

ing with grandparents and serving meals with their food ministry. He loves giving back and seeing the happiness and joy on the faces of those served and knows he has made their days better. Another hobby of his is music, both as a listener and a creator. A basketball fanatic, he has been playing basketball since he was five years old. Congratulations, Scott and Team! Congratulations Cerise, Nakari, and Rasheed!

ROTARY LARGE CLUB CONFERENCE IN LEXINGTON

The Rotary Club of Lexington was honored as a 2025 Hometown Host for bringing the Rotary Large Club Conference to Lexington in the fall of 2026.

“Hometown Hosts helped attract many meetings that otherwise might not have been located in Lexington,” VisitLEX President Mary Quinn Ramer said. “They serve a significant role -- not only in tourism and conventions but also in exposing so many visitors to the tremendous attractions that Lexington has to offer.”

Past President Gerry van der Meer, head of hospitality and hotel logistics for the Rotary Large Club Conference 2026, accepted the award at the Lexington Hospitality Awards event. More about the Rotary Club of Lexington hosting the conference coming soon!

06.11.25
6-8PM

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Rotary in Review

THE KENTUCKY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Presenting to Rotarians at our last meeting, dressed in full Revolutionary War regalia, was Patrick Wesolosky, President of The Kentucky Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (KSAR). KSAR is a non-profit, patriotic organization dedicated to preserving the legacy of the American Revolution and honoring the contributions of the patriots who fought for our nation's independence. Founded in 1890 as part of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, KSAR promotes historical awareness, civic responsibility, and genealogical research throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Membership is open to male descendants of individuals who supported the cause of American independence, whether through military, civil, or patriotic service during the Revolutionary War. KSAR engages in a variety of educational and community activities, including sponsoring youth contests, awarding ROTC and JROTC medals, participating in local parades and patriotic ceremonies, and preserving Revolutionary War sites and graves.

With multiple local chapters across Kentucky, KSAR fosters fellowship among members and encourages a deeper understanding of the founding principles of the United States. KSAR also works in partnership with schools and historical organizations to inspire future generations with the ideals of liberty and sacrifice. Through these efforts, the KSAR upholds its mission to perpetuate the memory of the brave men and women who secured American freedom.

During his presentation Wesolosky demonstrated a slide show of parades, honor flights, patriot grave marking services, youth education and contests. While dressed in a revolutionary war uniform he spent considerable time highlighting the Wreaths Across America project, including explaining how and why a penny was placed on top of every headstone. He quoted Ernest Hemingway saying, “Every man has two deaths, when he is buried in the ground and the last time someone

says his name.” Remembering our heroes in some ways makes them immortal. Wesolosky mentioned that his biggest surprise has been where they find patriot's graves. Often, they are unkempt and covered with brush and weeds. He stated that it has not been uncommon to find many broken headstones that they painstakingly repair and restore to demonstrate the respect these patriots deserve.

Rotarians were left with an invitation to join the Lafayette Chapter of KSAR at the next Wreaths Across America wreath-laying ceremony to be held at noon on December 13, 2025 at Lexington National Cemetery.

— Jim Richardson



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The 5th Page

NEW MEMBER DEEP DIVE: SAM OVERBEE



SAM OVERBEE WITH FIANCE ANNE-TYLER MORGAN

Growing up in Nicholasville with a younger brother, Sam Overbee was always busy with outdoor activities and sports – riding dirt bikes, shooting paintballs, and especially playing soccer. By his senior year in high school, Sam was so accomplished at soccer that he was playing on one of the top teams in the US and had a scholarship offer from Coastal Carolina University. Plans changed abruptly when Sam tore an ACL. He decided to attend Bellarmine University instead and during his sophomore year he tore the other ACL! Sam then decided that this was a message to him that he might want to concentrate less on athletics and more on academics for his future.

Initially studying psychology, he eventually transitioned to business classes. In addition to a bachelor's degree in business administration, Sam earned an M.B.A. and a Certificate in Accounting. He began working for Republic Bank in Louisville and was able to advance to the role of Commercial Credit Analyst before moving to Fifth Third Bank in 2019. Splitting time between the bank's Lexington and Louisville offices, Sam was able to move into sales as well. He was charged with setting up and running Fifth Third's Payroll Protection Program during the pandemic. A mentor suggested to Sam that he investigate an opportunity with Old National Bank shortly thereafter. Tragically, the group that he interviewed with was involved in the fatal Louisville shooting that occurred in April of 2023. Sam was hired and helped rebuild that team before moving to Old National's Lexington branch.

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Sam has exciting plans for this fall. On August 16th, he will marry Lexington attorney Anne-Tyler Morgan and then honeymoon in Italy, visiting the Amalfi Coast, Tuscany, and Rome. He is currently converting to Catholicism, and they hope to be able to receive a papal blessing from the Holy Father at the Vatican.

Sam is looking forward to networking with fellow Rotarians. He has been active on various boards such as The Food Literacy Project, Kentucky Society of CPAs, and Central Kentucky Riding for Hope. Despite the torn ACLs, Sam still plays soccer. Besides biking, he enjoys motorcycle rides. Sounds like a candidate for a road trip with John Wharton and Joe Bark!

– John Meyers

A ROTARY FIFTH THURSDAY PLUS BASEBALL EQUALS A WINNER!

Rotarians love a party. Less than a week after getting their art on at the Headley Whitney Museum, approximately sixty Rotarians, family, and friends enjoyed a great night at Legends Field, home of the Lexington Legends! Susan Adams reports they were treated to a 9 to 6 win over the Long Island Ducks, but not before seeing the home plate umpire get knocked out! The group caught up with former Rotarian and the man who led the effort to bring the Legends team to Lexington, Alan Stein, and enjoyed fellowship with each other. A big thank you to Rotarians Tim Mueller and Roger Baird who, collectively, made three suites available at no cost! There are rumors of indiscriminate suite hopping as the evening progressed. A great time was had by all and the Social Committee hopes to make this an annual event.



ROTARY NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Unlike the movie *Night at the Museum*, the Rotary Club of Lexington's recent visit to the Headley Whitney Museum of Art did not involve dinosaurs and other inanimate objects coming to life. That said, the atmosphere was alive as Rotarians enjoyed a mid-century American cocktail party surrounded by the works of American modernist Charley Harper. You might not know the name but his bold colors and graphic shapes of wildlife are immediately recognizable. Do you have an idea for a Rotary social outing, be it large or small? If so, reach out to Susan Adams and her social committee.



Garland and Donna Barr, John Meyers and Janie Fergus, Margaret and John Wharton, Patty and David Breeze. Not pictured: Susan Adams, Markus Cross, DG Linton-Gridley and Michael Stutman



Michael Stutland posing with another mid-century classic!

LIVING LEGENDS: A CONVERSATION WITH MERL HACKBART



MERL HACKBART

This month's Living Legends feature shines the spotlight on Dr. Merlin Hackbart, an esteemed economist, dedicated public servant, and longtime Rotarian, whose journey has spanned decades of leadership, education, and civic engagement. With over fifty years in Lexington, Dr. Hackbart has left an indelible mark on both the University of Kentucky and the broader community, embodying Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self."

Born in Watertown, South Dakota, Hackbart's early years were shaped by rural life, discipline, and an ingrained sense of responsibility. "I went to a one-room schoolhouse for eight years," he recalled. "There were only two of us in my class, and we had one teacher the entire time. It was a unique experience, but I enjoyed it."

After earning his undergraduate and graduate degrees in South Dakota, Hackbart's path led him into military service as a captain in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during the Vietnam War. "It was a great experience," he said. "It exposed me to a diverse range of people and situations, which was incredibly educational."

His academic career began at the University of Wyoming before he moved back to South Dakota to work for the state government. However, in 1973, he was recruited to the University of Kentucky, where he has remained an influential figure in the field of public finance and economic policy. "I've seen Lexington grow and change dramatically over the years," he reflected. "It's been an incredible journey."

One of the most fascinating aspects of Hackbart's Rotary experience is his international perspective. "I remember attending a Rotary meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union," he shared. "The room had fifteen people, most of whom were from different European countries, but the connection was instant. That's what I love about Rotary—you can walk into a meeting anywhere in the world and be welcomed like family."

His service and leadership extend beyond the UK and Rotary. As a former Kentucky state budget director, Hackbart played a critical role in shaping state policies and fiscal strategies. He also serves as the Director of

the Henry Clay Center, a program focused on fostering civil discourse among young leaders from all fifty states. "We take students to Washington, D.C., where they meet with Supreme Court staff, embassies, and policymakers. It's about exposing them to the mechanisms of leadership and governance," he explained. When asked about the qualities of great leadership, Hackbart emphasized one key trait: character. "Leadership isn't about titles. It's about earning the respect of the people you serve. Unfortunately, we don't always see that at the national level, but in organizations like Rotary, you find individuals who truly embody integrity and service."

Hackbart's hope for Rotary's future is to see its presence and impact grow in Lexington. "I'd love to see Rotary take on a higher profile in the community. We do great things, and we need to communicate that more effectively. Whether it's through scholarship programs, economic initiatives, or service projects, we make a difference."

As for his legacy, Hackbart remains deeply committed to fostering dialogue, mentoring young leaders, and engaging with his fellow Rotarians. "You never stop learning, and you never stop serving," he said. "That's what keeps life meaningful."

Through his career, service, and global perspective, Dr. Merl Hackbart exemplifies what it means to be a Living Legend of the Rotary Club of Lexington.

— Christie Pierce



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