President’s Message

I can’t believe the 2022-2023 Rotary Year is coming to an end! I have enjoyed every single minute of my term. We had so much membership growth and I credit it partially to having a more normal post-pandemic year with in-person meetings. We are now comfortably above the 200-member mark.

The International Student Cultural Exchange and Mentoring Program grew by including students from the University of Evansville in addition to the University of Southern Indiana. We established more collaboration with other clubs in the Evansville area by participating in the annual Rotary Ronald McDonald House Chili cook-off on February 23rd – The Rotaractors went home with the prize. Despite icy weather, many Rotarians and Rotaractors came out to the Ford Center on Feb. 1st to watch the men’s University of Evansville vs Terre Haute basketball game.

We have had amazing and diverse programming this half of the year, thanks to the speaker committee. Mayor Lloyd Winnecke presented his 12th State of the City address, we learned so much from Josh Calhoun’s presentation on the history of Redlining in Evansville, plus presentations on women in architecture and about the Evansville Police Department’s hiring campaign, to name just a few!

We supported so many projects, such as Vanderburgh County CASA, our book recipient; $60,000+ in Chromebooks for our sister city in Tizimin, Mexico; over $32,000 granted to EVSC and Parochial/Private school teachers; $33,000 total to the top 3 Santa Run Recipients: Ronald McDonald House Care Mobile; University of Evansville Mental Health Clinic Lab; and It Takes a Village Capital Project. Thanks to all our committees for their coordination. And how about last year’s Santa Run Recipient – WNIN Kids Fest! The 6-minute WNIN video, “Apple Dumpling Gang”, can be downloaded for free to teach kids about the 4-way test!

As Rotary International issued a DEI statement, our club started a new DEI committee and Ryan Bixler-Riggs hit the ground running. See the DEI article for more information.

My year as President may be over, but I will still be involved as I move through the G-Line to District Governor for 2025-2026. I will be the first DG from the Evansville Club since 1995 and will continue to assist the Rotary Club of Evansville in as many ways as I can.

DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2024

SAVE THE DATE for the District 6580 Conference to be held right here in Evansville at the Old National Events Plaza on Saturday, April 20, 2024. Enjoy a day filled with nationally known speakers, intriguing break-out sessions, networking at the house of friendship, delicious meals, and an interactive service project with youth. The youth summit will be held in tangent for all Interact and Rotaract members. There will be a casual social on Friday night at a local downtown restaurant. So come on out and meet other Rotarians in the District!
Linda E. White Honored as the 2022 Rotary Civic Award Winner

Rick Moore, Chair and Past-President

On June 13, 2023, the time had come to honor a long-time member and essential part of the community – Linda E. White was cited as the 2022 Rotary Civic Award winner!

Ms. White’s primary service has been in healthcare, starting as a Deaconess nurse over 40 years ago. Linda rose through the hospital’s ranks and served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Evansville-based Deaconess Health System during 15 years of unprecedented growth. Linda currently serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of Deaconess Henderson Hospital.

Over the years, many initiatives were conceived under Linda’s vision and leadership, with the most recent being The Linda E. White Hospice House which opened on the Deaconess Midtown Campus. This endeavor provides a beautiful and serene setting for end-of-life care for hospice patients and their families. Linda taught the public that hospice is about living life as fully as possible. She’s helped us learn that hospice care shifts the focus of aggressive curative treatments to medical comfort measures. It lessens fears among patients and loved ones by offering peace, comfort, and dignity.

Linda also made time to be extremely active in civic work throughout the community. This includes chairing roles of the Indiana Hospital Association Board of Directors, the University of Evansville Board of Trustees, the Boys and Girls Club of Evansville, and the Evansville Sports Corporation. She is a member of the Rose Hulman Institute of Technology Board of Trustees, Indiana Economic Development Corporation, the Evansville Regional Business Committee, the Task Force on Mental Health, and many other civic organizations.

Awards accumulated over the years include the Evansville Athena Award, Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation Hall of Fame, Indiana Academy, Henderson Woman of the Year, and she was listed as one of the 250 most influential business leaders in Indiana in 2022. Linda is a Fellow of the College of Healthcare Executives and has received top recognitions from the Buffalo Trace Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of Southwestern Indiana, the University of Evansville, and the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation. She also won the Richard Schlottman Business Leader of the Year Award.

Congratulations go out to Linda E. White for being recognized with the 2022 Evansville Rotary Civic Award for her remarkable leadership in healthcare in the greater Evansville region, expanding compassionate and caring service, for her contributions in forming a robust economy that makes life better for hundreds of thousands of people in the greater Evansville region, and her extraordinary record of public service.

2023 – 2024 Classroom Enrichment Grants

Chair: Christy Walker
Co-Chair: Beth Clark, Private/Parochial Chair
Co-Chair: Scott Hurt, Public School Chair

The 2023-2024 Rotary Foundation of Evansville and Liberty Federal Credit Union Classroom Enrichment Grants funded 44 projects totaling over $32,000 across 19 parochial/private and 25 public schools and programs.

Since the inception of the Classroom Enrichment Grants in 1987, the Rotary Foundation of Evansville and other partners have funded 1299 projects with a total of more than $975,331.

The Rotary Foundation was excited to have Liberty Federal Credit Union as the Exclusive Sponsor for the second year in a row. It has been a great partnership supporting projects that teachers would not have been able to do otherwise.

A couple teachers shared their appreciation:

Zach Wimpelberg with F.J. Reitz High School said, “The grants the Rotary funded have allowed our life skills class to have flexibility in their seating. This is a vast improvement over their old chairs. Prior to these grants both rooms had 3 chairs and one rower. This amount at times caused behaviors in the classroom. Since the introduction of these chairs and rowers, behaviors have improved dramatically in both classes.”

Mrs. Kati Hagerty, Kindergarten Teacher at Resurrection Catholic School, commented, “I am so excited about this opportunity. I have already started implementing some of my ideas, and they have been wildly successful!”

Thank you to Rotary Foundation of Evansville and Liberty Federal Credit Union for your generous donations!
International Convention
Kari Akin, 2022 - 2023 President

I would like to thank the club for annually supporting our Club President’s attendance at the Rotary International Convention. This was my 3rd International Convention! I often get asked by non-Rotarians why I would “waste” two weeks of vacation on a conference. All I can say is, “It’s all about the PEOPLE.” These conferences mean so much to me because it’s about the relationships and friendships that are made with Rotarians from around the world.

The 3rd pillar of the 4-way test is, “Will it build goodwill and better friendships?” When people gather from across nations and share stories about their culture over amazing cuisine and drinks, my experience suggests this is when understanding and peace talks begin. You begin to see the person as a friend – not just their nationality. The conferences have 15K-30K people in attendance from 200+ countries and offer so many opportunities to meet people from around the world and reunite with others.

It was amazing to enjoy this trip through my son’s eyes. It was hard to believe that it was winter, and that they celebrate Christmas in the summer. Their public transit is super clean, frequent and efficient. They drive on the opposite side of the street. And I could listen to their accents all day!

The 52 hours of travel and 4 flights each way were part of the experience. Melbourne has the friendliest people I have ever met! We explored Melbourne by visiting the Queen Victoria market; Dutton’s Garage to see a Pagani; we toured the artistic lanes and arcades; experienced an Australian Rules football game at Marvel Stadium; safely saw penguins and crocodiles being fed at the aquarium; celebrated with cocktails in the clouds at Eureka on the 89th floor; dined with our District at Marg’s; volunteered at the House of Friendship Mental Health Initiatives booth; made new connections, reunited with old friends, like Larry Luncford and Ignacio, who are International Directors, and Olga from Kyiv, Ukraine. I hugged 8 people for the first time, from my International Cocktails Club, who I had only met with virtually up until now. We discussed goals and cultures with Serbian friends at a casino, which was the only place open; listened to United Nations and Peace Talks breakout sessions; Rocked out to the Bee Gees and the Greatest Show at Opening and Closing Ceremonies. I was inspired by incoming RI President Gordan McNally’s theme of hope and was in awe of RI President Jennifer Jones’ history in the making year; Watched Sydney landmarks, like the Sydney Opera House, light up during VIVID, and experienced the Australian Outback and Great Ocean Road, filled with Koalas, Kangaroos and beautiful birds, with Jeffrey Berger, his family and Ali from Bloomington. It was an unforgettable experience, though I could have done without the 4.7 earthquake which woke us up from our sleep. But it’s another element that adds to a great story!

International Student Mentoring Rewarding to Mentees and Mentors

The Rotary International Student Cultural Exchange and Mentoring Program is seeking MENTORS for the fall semester! Time commitment: 1-hour per month for the semester or school year. Share your professional knowledge, hobbies, traditions, and make memories with these amazing college students from around the world.

Rotarian Bill Bohlen and his wife, Linda, have mentored students each of the last two years. “When asked to mentor Maria Lopez from Panama City, Panama, it could not have been a better fit. She is studying Civil Engineering at USI and will start her senior year this fall. While we are not civil engineers, my wife’s dad, uncle, and brother and our son were and are civil engineers.”

“One of the great things about a program like this is the resources we have in our club and elsewhere. Two items listed on Maria’s mentorship goal list were a job interview and an internship. First, Rotarian Vicki Hubiak gave us a morning to put together a professional resume. Next, we got our son involved – Will Bohlen P.E., a civil engineer in Houston, Texas. Will has collaborated with other engineers over his 29 years and some of them have an office in Panama City. So now Maria has a professional resume in the hands of three Panama firms with the potential to offer an internship.”

“We also had great help from Jeff Happe who took the better part of a day to talk to Maria about his projects and took her out to three of his job sites that were at the beginning stage, halfway done and nearly completed.”

“For the cultural aspect on Maria’s list, she stayed at our home for a week over Christmas. It was a real pleasure to have her. Linda enjoys sewing and quilting, so Maria had to take up sewing. They made a pillow to remember Maria’s chihuahua, Samson. Our relationship with Maria has been mutually rewarding and hopefully we have expanded her opportunities for the future.”

This is such a great program for mentees and mentors alike. Please send a message to our admin if you’re interested for the September 2023 fall semester.
**New Diversity Equity Inclusion Committee**

*Ryan Bixler-Rigg, DEI Committee Chair*

As a new member of Evansville Rotary, I’m quite proud and excited to be asked to Chair our clubs newly formed DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) Committee. This comes at a time when DEI is increasingly becoming a hot-button topic across the country. I’m glad to see that Rotary is pushing forward with their message of diversity and inclusion, rather than backing away. Now more than ever, I think it’s an important time to let people know they are welcome. I just joined Rotary last October and I’m glad to have someone like Randy Wheeler on our committee who has been a driving force in diversity and inclusion long before we even used those words.

Randy commented, “If you separate the acronym DEI from the culture wars that mark today’s politics, you may discover that true Rotarians may not consider it the big deal that news channels lead their audiences to believe it is. This graphic circulated by Rotary International amplifies the second article in Rotary’s Four Way Test of the things we think, say and do: “Is it FAIR to all concerned?”

“At our club, and some others”, says Wheeler, “the WE ARE ALL WELCOME graphic appears on our screens as we welcome visitors to our meetings. It underscores who we are and what we do as Rotarians. President Kari Akin has appointed a well-rounded committee charged with the mission of making sure that our club removes all barriers that could keep good people out – keeping us Fair to All Concerned. Our in-coming president Philip Hooper enthusiastically supports the work.”

Even though we have only had a couple of meetings, our DEI Committee has already been actively making plans. We plan to involve Rotary in cultural activities in the city to show our support of those communities, including the River City Pride Parade and the HOLA Festival on August 19 and Fiesta Evansville on October 8. If you would like to participate with us at these events or if you know of other cultural events in the community that we can add to our calendar, please reach out to me at rbixler-rigg@evansvilledayschool.org. We also welcome your participation in our DEI Committee.

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**District Friends Of The Foundation Social**

The Friends of the Foundation social was held at Myriad Brewing Company in Newburgh on Friday, February 24, 2023. Close to 100 Rotarians from District 6580 attended the event to socialize with other donors over craft beer and Pangea Pizza. End Polio pins were presented to Polio Plus Society members. You can become a member with a minimum $100 donation annually to the End Polio fund through your myrotary account.

Want to change the world through a donation? There are three ways to give:

1. A contribution to the Evansville Rotary Foundation (100% goes to projects funded by the Evansville Foundation Board, including annual Classroom Enrichment Grants).
2. A contribution to the Rotary International General Fund (50% can come back to our club/district for our projects, the other 50% goes towards disaster relief and other projects on a global scale).
3. A contribution to the End Polio Fund (100% is given to end Polio, this contribution is matched 3x's by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, until the world is free of Polio).

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*Rotary Club President-Elects from clubs throughout a four-district area converge in mid-March for the annual weekend “President-Elect Training Seminar” (PETS) held in Effingham, Illinois. Our District 6580 incoming presidents pose here for the picture.*
Santa Run #10: The Countdown Begins
Cathy Renner, Chair

The National Guard’s howitzer will salute the start of the 10th annual Rotary Santa Run on December 2, 2023. Come early to watch the “Elf Race” for children 1 to 9 years of age. The 5K run-walk begins at 9 am. To amp up the festivities, there is entertainment along the route including Kyilindi Pipe and Drum, Trinamic Trio, the Boom Squad, Morgan the Kazooist Extraordinaire, Brokaw, Nick Hamilton, Notter House Water Station, UE athletic student organizations, Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity from the University of Southern Indiana, Evansville Police Department Mounted Patrol, and of course, SANTA CLAUS.

Please mark your calendars for this signature Rotary event for serious & not so serious, walkers, families & friends.

As our Santa Run committee plans for the 10th annual Rotary Santa Run on December 2, 2023, I can’t help but reflect on the past 9 years and the impact this event has made in our local Evansville community.

It all started in the summer of 2014 when Rotary President Pepper Mulherin accepted my idea to have a signature project for the Rotary Club of Evansville – a Rotary Santa Run, with each participant receiving a Santa suit and beard with all the trimmings.

With only 4 months to plan, Rotary members came out to the State Hospital to help mark the 3.1-mile path within the grounds that served as the route for the first annual Santa Run. Though our numbers were small, with 115 participants, we were able to raise nearly $3,000 and it was decided these proceeds would be applied to our $100,000 gift to the City of Evansville toward the Robert’s Park project to commemorate the Rotary Club of Evansville’s 100th anniversary.

Now, in our 10th year, the Rotary Santa Run has generated nearly $200,000, served over 2,500 participants, and given back to the city of Evansville and local non-profit organizations. These gifts have supported The City of Evansville Robert’s Park, the University of Evansville Institute for Global Enterprise Changemaker Challenge, the United Methodist Youth Home for At-Risk Girls, The Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center Pediatric Psychology Services, Millie’s Downtown Dino Trail, and WNIN children’s project “Ideals of Service Above Self”. Our 10th year grant goes to the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile to deliver free or reimbursed healthcare to underserved pregnant women, post-partum mothers and infants up to 12 months old within the Promise Zone of Evansville, Indiana.

Rotary Speaker Highlights for the First Half of 2023
Philip Hooper, President Elect

As President Elect, I have enjoyed the responsibility of ensuring the speakers for our Rotary club meet our high standards. The weight of responsibility comes with being the preeminent civic organization in Evansville. While we strive for stories small and large; our club is not a BNI group. Our luncheon presentations seek to educate and enlighten, without a business sales pitch.

The scheduling of a diverse array of presenters does not go without scheduling changes and reshuffling of dates. Thanks to one such last minute schedule adjustment in January, we played Life Bingo in the tiny little Las Vegas room – and I still have Rotarians come up to me and tell me how neat that was. That was fun.

As a former community and economic development administrator, I was so glad that Josh Calhoun spoke on not only what his community development corporation does for affordable housing in Evansville, but also on his own story of growing up with housing instability in our community – and on the history of redlining in our city. The questions and comments afterwards, from growing up in the 1960s in Selma to taking down the redlining maps in bank board rooms in the 1980s, confirmed the value.

Brad Byrd spoke about his 45-year career in broadcast journalism and Tim Black presented WNIN’s Rotary Santa Run funded project. Both demonstrated that our club thrives as a platform for current media issues. And I love a good architectural story, so having Adam Theis speak on the Mies van der Rohe project at IU and having Sarah Schuler speak on Women in Architecture in Indiana were also some fun highlights for me.

But as I make perfectly clear, my personal favorite meeting of the year is always the EVSC State of the Schools. This year was no different – except it was even better for me, as our son’s New Tech Institute Robotics Team, had just won the Indiana robotics championship and competed at Worlds in Houston. They brought their robot – named Betty – to show off for the club and even let people drive it. How cool was that?
Welcome New Members

On behalf of all the members and the board of directors, we would like to extend our warmest welcome to our newest members. We are delighted to have you and look forward to your creativity, enthusiasm and ideas.

Jason Bennett  
Mortgage Loan Officer  
Heritage Federal Credit Union

Va Cun  
Executive Director  
United Caring Services

John Raisor  
Community & Economic Development Manager  
Fifth Third Bank

Shane Blair  
Corporate Sales Manager  
Dunn Hospitality Group

Shawn Graham  
Vice President, Actuary  
Fortitude Re

Alex Iber  
Retail Loan Advisor  
First Federal Savings Bank

Karen Johnson  
Practitioner  
Acupuncture & Sound Healing

Sudesh Mujumdar  
Dean of the Roman College of Business  
University of Southern Indiana

Donna Taylor  
Associate Broker  
Woodward Commercial Realty, Inc.

WNIN Presents The Four-Way Test

WNIN is the 2022 Rotary Santa Run Grant recipient and has partnered with the Rotary Club of Evansville to teach the ideals of service above self and The Four-Way Test to a new generation of children by creating a video version of the book Andy and Elmer’s Apple Dumpling Adventure written and illustrated by Andrew J. Shoup and Developed by the Rotary Club of Fairborn, Ohio. The storybook teaches children about The Four-Way Test, reminding them to ask themselves "Is it the TRUTH?" "Is it FAIR to all concerned?" "Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?" and "Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?" Rotary clubs across the country have used this story to share The Four-Way Test to children in their communities.

Edited by WNIN Multi-Media Producer, Maggie Batson, viewers are encouraged to use the video as a teaching tool to foster the Rotarian ideals of service and kindness among youth.

The video will be available for viewing on wnin.org, on social media and at Kids Fest 2023. The video will also be made publicly available for the Rotary Club of Evansville, the Rotary Club of Fairborn, Ohio, and any other organization to use in their outreach efforts. It first aired on May 1, 2023.

The WNIN Kids Fest on Saturday, September 23rd will include a special screening of the video version of Andy and Elmer’s Apple Dumpling Adventure and every child in attendance at Kids Fest will receive a free copy or the book.
Thoughts From Our Incoming President

Create Hope in the World is the Rotary International slogan for the 2023-2024 year, and it’s a perfect touchstone to reflect on what it is that we do. It's aspirational and it’s reflective, it’s a guidepost and a measuring stick. Are we? Can we further? But there are those words – I swear I didn’t mean to slip them in like that – “we do”.

“We Do” was our club’s first motto, back in 1913. And it’s also a great guidepost and measuring stick. Your friends might ask you: “What does Rotary do?” Well, mine say it like, “No but what does Rotary DO?” And while we all could stand to brush up on our elevator pitch for what both Rotary International and the Evansville club are DOing, I think this puts in perspective some things I’m excited about as the incoming president of our club.

Ensuring we’re continuing our doing and effectively communicating it on social media platforms will be critical to our club moving forward. The old ways and old meanings of being in a club have shifted with society’s bending towards technology. Museums these days have a similar challenge – they have to convince someone to put on their pants and leave their computer at home to venture into the wild and see something in person rather than peer at it through their smartphone screen. We too need to convince folks – who are watching on social media – that our club has purpose and value to them, for them to show up, in person, to do things, to learn things, and to socialize in ways they can’t get from their devices.

The Santa Run is a perfect example – engaging thousands of people and raising significant funds for local organizations to pull off projects. As the Rotary Santa Run enters its 10th year, I look forward to it being bigger than ever.

And I look forward to seeing our club continue other projects as well. The Tizmin computer project helps connect us to our sister city in Mexico, and things like continued tree plantings connect us to our community here. The Rotary Club of Evansville has a history of other great projects, like the Pigeon Creek Canoe Launch on Green River Rd. I would love to see us leverage that to some other Pigeon Creek projects, some of which could be small – as easy as helping the greenway update signage.

You’ll see our club continue to expand our committee’s work with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion this year as well. And guess what? This goes beyond worrying about the make-up of our membership. This connects once again to what it is that we do. We must partner with a diverse group of community organizations – we must do together – if we are to change the course of diversity for our club.

Through doing important things for the community – big and small – our club makes a difference. The networking is great, but it’s not the why of why we are here. Service above self requires doing. Having ways for new members to get engaged is important for member retention, but ‘get engaged’ in what? Get engaged in what we are already doing, yes. But what about things our local club is not doing?

We need to also ensure we have a platform for new members to create change and do new projects that they bring to the table. Helping new members get things done in the community that are important to them will help our club maintain its thriving position in our community. With the broad platform provided by the 7 causes of Rotary International – promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water, working with mothers and children, supporting education, growing local economies, and protecting the environment – there is still enough work to be done. By engaging in doing, in service above self, Rotary thrives – and creates hope in the world.

A Year with Rotaract

Bradley Colbert, 2022-2023 President

The 2022-23 FY has been an enjoyable one for Rotaract! We have accomplished our mission to strive to improve our community and engage its members to leave it a better place than we found it.

In September, Rotaractors volunteered for our Signature Project for the 2022 recipient, Hangers - EVSC Foundation, where we remodeled their storage space. This space included the demolition of lockers and putting together eight industrial shelving units in their place. Alongside that we built a clothing rack to hang suits and dresses as well as 100+ totes for storage on the shelves.

This year’s Signature Project Grant Recipient will be Children’s Museum of Evansville. Rotaract will be sponsoring three Family Free Nights where families who normally may not be able to access the museum can. Family Free Nights attract 400+ visitors, giving these children quality early learning and whole child development experiences.
CREATE HOPE in the WORLD

Rotary International President R. Gordon R. McInally calls for Rotary to create hope in the world by working for peace and mental wellbeing. He urges members to engage in tough conversations and earn the trust that’s necessary to realize these values.

DUTIES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The governing body of this club shall be the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall manage the business affairs of the Rotary Club of Evansville.

Current Officers for 2022-2023
Kari Akin, President
Philip R. Hooper, President Elect
Ashley Vezzoso Schaefer, Vice President
Pete Hillenbrand, Treasurer
Crystal Wildeman, Secretary
Bill Bohlen, Sergeant at Arms
Rick Moore, Past President

Incoming Officers for 2023-2024
Philip R. Hooper, President
Pete Hillenbrand, President Elect
Ashley Vezzoso Schaefer, Vice President
John Perkins, Treasurer
Taylor Gogel, Secretary
Bill Bohlen, Sergeant at Arms
Kari Akin, Past President

Board of Directors *Second of two terms
Term Expiring 6/2024
Jeffrey Berger*
Abbey Foroughi*
Mark Gerst*
Pepper Mulherin*
Andy Tharp*
Jim Spath
Andrew Alexander
Cathy Renner
Marcia Forston

Term Expiring 6/2025
Tim Black
Brian Burkett
Taylor Gogel
Pete Hillenbrand*
Arveneda McDonald
John Perkins
Kate Reibel
Crystal Wildeman*

Term Expiring 6/2026
Kari Akin*
Philip R. Hooper*
Steve Keck*
Ashley Vezzoso Schaefer*
Jordan Whitledge*
Clark Stanfill
Fred Emory
Grace Stevens
Kim Spence
Misty Cohen

Rotating off the board on June 30, 2023
Stacy Stevens, Adam Trinkel, Shawn Collins

New Directors for 2022-2023
Clark Stanfill, Fred Emory, Grace Stevens, Kim Spence, Misty Cohen

Lee Dahlgren
Administrative Assistant
Phone: 812.760.0344
info@evansvillerotary.com