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Rotary Club of Dalton Newsletter

<http://www.daltonrotaryclub.org>



This Week:

November 8
Greg Dent
Rotary Foundation

Upcoming Meetings:

November 15
Bill Chappell

November 22
NO MEETING

November 29
Zachary Taylor

The Northwest Georgia Autism Initiative

By John Hutcheson

Rotarian Pat Townsend introduced Rotarian Greg Dent and Past President David Aft for a presentation on a recent project to provide support for autistic persons and their families in Northwest Georgia. Greg is Director of the Northwest Georgia Healthcare Partnership and David is President of the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia.

Pointing out that autism is an important issue at both the national and local levels, David stressed that it exists from mild to severe degrees, so that each autistic patient has a unique configuration and each family whose lives are affected by autism has unique needs. Representatives of the local autism community approached the Community Foundation for assistance and the Foundation's leadership turned to the Healthcare Partnership for advice, making a small grant which led to formation of the Northwest Georgia Autism Initiative and its goal of understanding and addressing the autism group's needs and issues.

Greg explained that the Initiative's strategy has three phases: learning and organizing, engaging constituents and exploring programs, and establishing a full-service autism center. By way of learning, the Healthcare Partnership has completed a 148-page study (available on its website) covering nine counties in Northwest Georgia and showing the current system of autism care in the region to be very disjointed. The population of students having developmental disabilities is broken out by school systems, but these numbers only show those persons who have been diagnosed, and diagnosis itself is an issue, heavily influenced by the economic, social, and structural dimensions of family situations. Comparison of the Georgia Autism Plan with the work of the Chattanooga Autism Center shows that Georgia provides significantly more services than the Chattanooga agency, with which there are qualitative differences as well. For example, Chattanooga is stronger on family support services but not on early screening and identification or financial support for treatment.

David noted that such disparities between the Georgia Autism Plan and what's available at the nearest autism center reinforce the urgency of Northwest Georgia's autism needs. At the same time, though, the region covered in the Healthcare Partnership study has plentiful resources for developing a center of its own. The next task is to marshal these resources and build an income stream which will support programs to engage members of the autism community through things such as recreational events designed for autistic participants, conferences for caregivers, etc. Encouragingly, several corporations and agencies have already expressed willingness to help financially and otherwise.

Ultimately the goal is to establish a full-service autism center that will likely draw clients from an area extending beyond Northwest Georgia to Atlanta's northern suburbs and west into Alabama, holding a population of 700,000 to 800,000. Doing so will take time—twelve to eighteen months is a reasonable estimate for developing a business plan and another three years or so to complete the full project. Meanwhile, it's necessary to build an "army of advocates" who can unite their passion with resources and action.

A Rotary Minute with Valerie Brantley

Rotarian Valerie Brantley, who was inducted into the Club this past September 27th, related that as a military child she had moved frequently while growing up, but she regards Vero Beach, Florida, as her hometown since she graduated from high school there. After earning an undergraduate degree in English and a law degree from Mercer University, she moved to Dalton and joined the Minor, Bell firm, with whom she continues to work as general counsel for Hamilton Medical Center. She is the mother of a six-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son. Her favorite author is William Faulkner, and she collects pug dog Christmas ornaments—she has a special love for pugs. When she reaches retirement she wants to work in dog rescue and do pro bono legal work for juvenile causes.

Announcements

President Bruce noted that the special collection in observance of World Polio Day and the food drive for the Salvation Army have been extended, as has the silent auction for a collector's plate from Sweden. He also reminded members about the Celebrity Spelling Bee to be held this evening in support of the Whitfield Educational Foundation, with several Rotarians participating.

Club Officers:

Bruce Satterfield
President
Kevin Brunson
President-Elect
Frank M. Hogshead
Secretary, Treasurer
Jason Parker
Immediate Past President
Phil Woodward
Club Administration Chair
John Hutcheson
Public Relations Chair
Tray Brantley
Membership Chair
George (Smitty) Barnett
Community Service Chair
Scott Rhoden
Youth Service Chair
Scott Minter
Vocational Service Chair
Archana Srivastava
International Service
Chair
Greg Dent
Foundation Chair

Past President John Richmond reported that the Club's GRSP donation of \$50 per year per member generated a surplus contribution of \$1993.95 which the GRSP office has returned to the Club.

November 8th Birthdays and Anniversaries

Member Birthdays

Bradham, Robert L. (ROB)
Dobbins, Chuck (CHUCK)
Townsend, Patrick J (PAT)

Birthday

8-Nov
8-Nov
14-Nov

Partner Birthdays

Campbell, Kristy
Hawkins, Nancy
Morehouse, Dianne
Cope, Laurie

Member Name

Campbell, J Carl
Hawkins, Jim R.
Morehouse, Gordon C.
Cope, Don

Birthday

11-Nov
11-Nov
12-Nov
13-Nov

Member Anniversaries

Farmer, Joseph (JOSEPH)

Start Date

11/10/2015

Years

1

Wedding Anniversaries

Elliott, Judy M. (JUDY)

Partner's Name

S. G.

Anniversary

12-Nov

Years

28

