Strategic plan confirms our project goals, plus renewed focus on member retention

By John Meyer, president 2015-16

Basic education and literacy, water supply and sanitation, and economic and community development are the Wilmington Rotary Club’s primary service objectives, according to a three-year Strategic Plan developed this year.

Those three broad service aims are among Rotary’s six “areas of focus.” This club’s recent efforts have been concentrated in those three areas.

Getting new members engaged in club activities from the start is the best way to ensure they will become and remain active Rotarians, the plan says.

A third major goal is to streamline the club’s weekly meetings. That includes ensuring that programs meet members’ expressed wish for significant, issue-focused presentations, but also regular, detailed updates about current projects and the work of the club’s committees.

A collaborative framework

The strategic plan is meant to be a framework for decision-making during the coming three Rotary years, through mid-2019. A cross-section of the club’s membership participated in a two-phase process, beginning with a questionnaire that asked for opinions about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Then the group met for a half-day session on Jan. 30, with Rotarian Dale Smith as facilitator. The resulting plan represented a consensus of those participating about the club’s primary goals.

The Board of Directors first reviewed the resulting proposal at its Feb. 22 meeting. After some clarifications and other modifications, the board endorsed the plan at a special session March 9.

A path to instant engagement

A key recommendation is that the club immediately create a “New Member Committee” to which all recently inducted Rotarians will be assigned. This is to address many recently inducted members’ wish for a simpler pathway to getting involved. With our club’s size and our large number of projects and committees, it can be daunting for a new member to figure out just how to make a contribution.

President-elect Mike Beaudoin is in the process of recruiting leaders for this new committee, which will make it easier for new members to get immediately involved in the club’s activities.

Three-fold service focus

The portion of the plan that sets service priorities endorsed our biggest, highest-profile causes. First is the education and literacy focus, with an added emphasis on fostering citizenship.

That encompasses our Legacy Project at Williston Middle School; the Literacy Committee’s work in elementary schools; support for adult literacy programs through the Cape Fear Literacy Council; our long-standing college scholarship awards; and our support for the Boys’ & Girls’ Homes at Lake Waccamaw. To those projects the plan added two targets: serving high school students, in part by helping to establish Interact clubs; and supporting preschool programs to help get the youngest children ready to succeed in school.

The second service priority, water supply and sanitation, has been reflected in our recent series of international projects in Honduras, India and Guyana. A follow-up to the Guyana water
Wilmington Rotary Club Strategic Plan 2016-2019

March 9, 2016

MISSION
The Mission of the Rotary Club of Wilmington is to foster and provide service.

GOALS
I. Engage and retain new members
To help new members feel connected to the club, its members and its projects, a “New Member Committee” will be established. When new members are inducted they will be assigned to this committee, which will work on simple but important projects such as collecting books for the Literacy Committee, collecting coats for the Williston Legacy Committee and joining hands-on projects organized by the Service Project Committee. This will ensure that new members are engaged in club activities before committing to other committees or projects. Funding will be provided, as needed, for the New Member Committee’s work. The club will continue to encourage new members to serve on the Sergeant at Arms Committee as a way of getting to know their fellow Rotarians. The club will conduct an “exit interview” with resigning Rotarians, and their reasons for leaving the club to be reported to the Board of Directors.

II. Establish more focused, long-term club service priorities
A. Literacy, basic education and citizenship:
   2016-17: Continue and expand existing local efforts.
   - Members will tutor adults, youth and children at all grade levels.
   - The club will procure books for schools.
   - The club will extend its efforts to help ages 0 to 6 prepare for school.
   - Continue and expand efforts to help prepare the Williston Legacy Center, find a new meeting location.

2017-18: Go national: Seek wider opportunities to promote literacy.
2018-19: Go global: Add education component to partnership in Guyana.

B. Water and sanitation
2016-19: Local, national, and global:
   - Research potential projects or partnerships to supply clean, safe water in our region or elsewhere in the United States.
   - Guyana water projects: apply for Global Grant 2016-17.

C. Community development and services
In evaluating proposed projects for funding, volunteer work or both, the club will give priority to those with a strong economic and community development component. To support this goal, the club will:
   - Continue to apply for District Matching Grants each year.
   - Emphasize “hands-on” projects with involvement by individual Rotarians.
   - Focus on just one or two projects at a time, perhaps for multiple years.

III. Strengthen and streamline the Tuesday meetings and programming.
2016-17: Provide these guidelines for the Program Committee:
   - Clarify our policy on presentations.
   - Retain our focus on informing members about issues.
   - Continue our prohibition on direct solicitation by speakers.
   - Focus on programs that address these objectives.
   - Provide information about significant community issues.
   - Balance corporate, non-profit and governmental sources.
   - Relate to the club’s signature projects.
   - Allow members to share significant experiences or expertise.
   - Ensure that weekly meetings regularly include:
     - Club business, specifically including scheduled committee reports.
     - Periodically incorporate entertainment into meetings.
   - Ensure that all programs are educational, not self-serving, and comply with the Four-Way Test; that selection of speakers be diverse and inclusive; and that speakers are carefully briefed to ensure all programs conclude on time.
   - Other objectives related to weekly meetings:
     - Explore possibility of finding new, more diverse catering options.
     - Continue encouraging members to rotate their seating each week.
     - Establish firm protocol for courtesy to speakers: If it’s necessary to leave before program ends, do so before speaker begins; encourage voluntary $1+ “fine” (to CART buckets) for leaving meeting early.

2017-18: Measure Goals from 2016-17 and adjust as needed.
- Celebrate diversity, continue or reinstate such programs as non-profit day and vocational day, and consider ways to rotate the club’s meeting place.
2018-19: If required by redevelopment of the Coastline Conference Center, find a new meeting location.

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project is being prepared for the 2016-17 Rotary year. The plan suggests that the club also look for ways to help provide safe water supplies in our region and elsewhere in the United States.

The third area was defined as community development and service, to bring focus to a wide range of small-scale club projects. The board’s intention is that, when considering proposed projects, our Grants and Service Project committees consider how they meet the community development objective.

Assessing members’ wishes
Most of this club’s decisions are driven by what our members need and want, not by the club’s institutional habits, as much as we value consistency and continuity.

So this process was based on soliciting all members’ opinions and ideas about how we operate, our priorities, and how we allocate our time, energy, talent and financial resources.

When people ask us, “What’s Rotary all about?” we should each be ready to give a clear, compelling and consistent answer. I hope this strategic plan gives us a reliable and simple way to answer the question of what our club stands for, and what we do.

Our strategic plan isn’t meant to be a rigid code of rules. It’s more a set of broad guidelines. We can refer to these when facing the hard choices that come when faced with many worthy options.
Bernie Malman dies
Long-time Rotarian Bernard D. Malman died on Feb. 25. He was 79.
A large delegation of Rotarians said farewell to Bernie at the funeral, burial service and a reception on Feb. 28.
Bernie joined this club on May 21, 2002, sponsored by the late Jay Kapner. He had recently relocated to Wilmington from Cincinnati, where he had been a Rotarian for nine years.
He was a retired printer.
He chaired the club’s Attendance Committee from 2002 until his death.
Among ideas Bernie brought to our club were the annual Vocational Fellowship Day; community service awards; and the seating rotation initiative that we introduced in 2015.

Programs span health, law, war & education

Judge Richard Dietz of the N.C. Court of Appeals spoke Jan. 5 about the experience of arguing a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.
The Jan. 12 program was a club assembly about the RCDW Foundation and its Board of Directors.
Ronald Henderson, a retired admiral, spoke on Jan. 19 about the aircraft carrier “USS John F Kennedy” during the war in Afghanistan.
Rotarian Kyria Henry presented the Jan. 26 program, about her non-profit agency, Paws4People, which trains and places service dogs.
On Feb. 2, the Literacy Committee presented a program about its work in six New Hanover County elementary schools.

Four new members have joined the club since 2016 began, bringing net membership to 222.
Tolis Vardakis and Eddie Biedenbach were inducted on Jan. 5. Tolis, who gave his new-member talk on Jan. 26, is a retired engineer. He transferred from the Chestnut Hill, Pa. Rotary Club. John Meyer was his sponsor.
Eddie, a retired basketball coach, delivered our program on Oct. 27, 2015. Joe Owen sponsored him for membership.
Dr. Jose “Zito” Sartarelli joined on Jan. 26. He is chancellor of UNC-Wilmington and first addressed the club as guest speaker on Nov. 3, 2015. Albert Corbett was his sponsor.
Megan Heathcote joined the club on Feb. 16, sponsored by Joe Payne. She is a financial advisor.

Bernie Malman

Tolis Vardakis

Eddie Biedenbach

Zito Sartarelli

Megan Heathcote

Rotarian Ben David presented our annual “Service Above Self” awards to public safety officers on Feb. 9. For details, see page 4.
Jack Barto, CEO of New Hanover Regional Medical Center, spoke Feb. 16 about the hospital and health care in the region.
Richard Campbell of N.C. State University presented the Feb. 23 program, about the $2 billion “Connect NC” bond issue.
On March 1, Dr. Julie Byerly of the UNC Medical School announced a satellite doctor-training program to be established in Wilmington.
Inspirational speaker Matt Ham spoke March 8 about the importance of living a full life.

Dietz: U.S. Supreme Court
Henderson: Navy at war

Henry: Service dogs
Barto: NH hospital

Campbell: State bond issue
Byerly: UNC Med School

Ham: Living a full life
Resident boys welcome visiting Rotarians to Rotary Cottage on Feb. 21.

New TV in cottage’s living room donated by Wilmington Rotary Club.

Police officers honored for ‘Service Above Self’

Law enforcement officers were honored for “exceptional service to their community” at the annual “Service Above Self” awards on Feb. 9. District Attorney Ben David presented the awards. Honored were officers with:

**New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office**

Master Deputy Sean Dixon, who saved a bleeding accident victim’s life by administering first aid before paramedics could arrive.

Detective Sgt. John Leatherwood, for investigating and solving the multi-county case of a serial child-molester.

Two domestic violence detectives, Amy Womble and Kelly Sellers, did sexual assault investigations resulting in convictions and lengthy prison sentences for several defendants.

**Wilmington Police Department**

Cpl. Jeff Martens, assigned to the U.S. Marshal’s Fugitive Task Force, has repeatedly tracked down and arrested dangerous defendants in dangerous neighborhoods.

Capt. Donny Williams, who grew up in Wilmington’s inner city, has worked to improve police-community relations, focusing on youth to counter the influence of gangs.

**Carolina Beach Police Department**

Cpl. Robert Henderson was honored for his youth-focused community relations work, including National Night Out, bike rodeos, and providing Christmas gifts for families in need.

**Wrightsville Beach Police Department**

Lt. Jason Bishop, Sgt. Jordan Smith and Officer Sten Taub rescued a fleeing suspect from drowning and performed CPR to restart his heart, saving his life.

Scenes from Rotary Day at NC Boys’ & Girls’ Homes at Lake Waccamaw

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