

**A Very Brief History of ....**

# **The Rotary Club Of Stone Mountain**

**1965 to 2025**

***“The Friendliest Club in the Universe!”***

Co-authored by John Christopher, Jerry Crane, and Gillian Leggett  
with the assistance and contributions of many Stone Mountain Rotarians

Updated May 10, 2025

**In the beginning**, the Rotary Club of Decatur decided that they wished to help expand the Rotary world by sponsoring a new club in DeKalb, the Rotary Club of East DeKalb. Ceding a portion of their territory, ending their exclusivity to recruit within the area, the fledging Rotary Club of East DeKalb was chartered on May 12, 1965. A committee of three was appointed to aid in the new Club's formation: Chair, Charles Davidson, Jr. (of the Davidson Quarry family), along with members Frank Merritt and Clark Brand. All three, along with other Decatur Rotarians, Dr. Rufus Evans (Chair of the DeKalb Hospital Authority), Blake Perry (Blake Perry Realty) and Kingsley Weatherly (developer of many of the apartments in the Clarkston/Stone Mountain corridor), and others became members of the new Club once officially chartered.

The new Club was officially presented its charter on June 18th, 1965, and its day and time of the regular meeting was set as Tuesday each week at 12:15 PM, a time and day of meeting that exists until this day. The original meeting place was established at Tom Flynn's Plantation Restaurant which had a private banquet room in addition to regular restaurant facilities. A third accommodation which may have helped inspire its pick as meeting place was the private club attached to the restaurant which allowed it to serve mixed drinks, beer and wine. DeKalb was a dry county at that time with alcohol only allowed to be served publicly to members of private clubs. Some members came to the meetings early or stayed late to relax over a drink with friends.

The initial officers of the Club were President, Frank Merritt; V.P., Edwin R. Frieese; Secretary-Treasurer, Thomas Tidwell (the only Rotarian in the US with the Classification of "Bubble Gum Manufacturer"); and Sgt.-at-Arms, Joe Llorenz (Llorenz Stained Glass Studios). Directors and Board members were Fred S. Baker, L. Clark Brand, George M. McGinnis, B. Blake Perry and Edgar G. Tucker. Incidentally, the first President was also the Club's first Paul Harris Fellow as 10 club members each gave \$100.00 to The Rotary Foundation in his name to honor him when the club members learned of his terminal illness.

As of the Charter presentation date, there were 29 active Rotarians in the new Club and by the end of that month, the membership continued to rise. Among those first members not mentioned in those above were Charter members Dean Davidson, Everett Davidson, Doug McCurdy (McCurdy Chevrolet), Dan Pattillo (Pattillo Construction), John Chatfield, Tom Flynn of the aforementioned restaurant and meeting place, Hugh Jordan (Haynies and a state legislator), Bill Kelly (Kelly's Paving), Joe Lorenz, Jr., Jim Magbee, John Moore, Cas Robinson, Franklin Shumate, Cecil Tanner (Rich's), Walt McCurdy, Jr., and others. Not Charter members but other early members of the club were Dr. Bill Glaccum (Chiropractor), John Christopher, Gerald (Jerry) Crane (newspaper publishing), Mike Lubell, Dr. Maurice Mixson (Dentist), Mel Tillem (Rich's Belvedere manager), Jeff Russell (Russell Oil), and Brownlee Waschek (Music, DeKalb College). There were many others worthy of mention whose names are now lost in time.

The official name of the Club was changed on June 11, 1981, as a result of a Club majority vote based on the vision of member Jim Kent, who later became a Rotary District Governor in District 6910. In 1990-'91, Jim had visited a Club in Hersey, Penn., making up while vacationing. He was astounded that Hersey, PA even had its streetlights designed like Hersey chocolate candy kisses. His view was that our Club had a vague identity as East DeKalb. Renaming ourselves the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain would tie our identity to the natural world wonder of the gigantic granite monadnock that was receiving over 6 million visitors annually. He believed that a new name and identity would result in many more Club visits by Rotarians who came to the Park vacationing or on

business conferences and would give us additional recognition in our community to enable stronger membership growth. A majority agreed with him although others felt that it might be geographically limiting in the future. And so, the name change was made.

The Rotary Club of Decatur had originally ceded its exclusivity to recruit in the cities of Lithonia, Stone Mountain, Tucker, all of south DeKalb south of Memorial Drive, and Rockdale County to our Club when they sponsored our Charter. At that time, any member of a Rotary Club had to either reside within its territory or have their workplace be located within it. Decatur retained the right to recruit within this ceded territory, but no other Rotary Club could offer membership to a person whose career activities or residence was within it.

Sponsoring clubs had to cede territory for new clubs to come into existence as did Stone Mountain who has sponsored two new Clubs. The Rotary Club of South DeKalb was sponsored by our Club in 1967-68 as was also the Rotary Club of Rockdale County which we co-sponsored with Decatur in 1970-71.

## **expanding our reach/valuing diversity, equity and inclusion ...**

Our Club urged Rotary International to broaden the diversity of its membership, passing a resolution to send to the District to be forwarded to Rotary International at the next worldwide meeting in the early 80's! The resolution passed unanimously except for one negative vote by a Club member. While this action did not immediately accomplish its goals, the Supreme Court shortly thereafter handed down a decision that caused Rotary International to change its membership guidelines.

On May 4, 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Rotary clubs could not exclude women from membership on the basis of gender. Afterwards, Rotary International issued a policy statement that any Rotary club in the United States could admit qualified women into membership. The 1989 Council on Legislation's vote to admit women into Rotary clubs worldwide remains a watershed moment in the history of Rotary. The response to the decision was overwhelming. By June 1990, the number of female Rotarians had skyrocketed to over 20,000.

In 2025, the 38<sup>th</sup> year of the Supreme Court ruling, 23% of Rotarians worldwide are women, likely because the ruling did not apply to clubs in the world's other 219 countries. In North America, 34% of Rotarians are women. Our club and Rotary International both understand that cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture is essential to realizing our vision of a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change.

In the spring of 1988, Jerry Crane sponsored the first female member of our Club - Wilma Hipps, a former member of The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, then a lobbyist for Georgians for Better Transportation and much more. Barry Gray, an executive with the First National Bank of Atlanta, was the first African American member, co-sponsored by Bob Grant and Jerry Crane just a few months later.

Pat Wheeler (a former Mayor of Stone Mountain) was our club's first female president. Neville Anderson, sponsored by Casey Farmer, was our first African American president. Cynthia Dorsey Edwards (a former Vice President with Georgia Piedmont Technical College/formerly DeKalb Tech), sponsored by Bill Hawes, was our first African American female president, serving in this position twice.

Literally hundreds of outstanding individuals have been introduced to the tenets and test (The Four-Way Test) of Rotary by becoming members of the Rotary Club of East DeKalb, later of the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain.

## **meeting locations ...**

The Rotary Club of Stone Mountain has had six regular meeting sites over its five decades of service within its community, all of which were within its territorial limits. Its original site was Tom Flynn's Plantation, a rustic building on many acres which was later sold and now contains a closed Piccadilly Cafeteria among other business establishments. It was located on Memorial Drive west of Hairston Rd.

In the summer of 1976, the Club's home was located in the Rich's Warehouse and Service Center next to the Stone Mountain Freeway just west of Mountain Industrial. Jim French was instrumental in accomplishing the original relocation to here. We were served meals from the employee cafeteria, and the site was very enjoyable. Unfortunately, Rich's was sold to Federated, and this location was no longer available to us.

In November 1980, the Club moved to its third site, secured by John Moore: the Elks Club on Memorial Drive just east of our original meeting place at Tom Flynn's, except across the highway. The property was eventually sold and became an apartment complex with the Elk's moving to a new location on Montreal Road in Tucker. We moved too.

Our fourth and longest meeting location was the Stone Mountain Inn in Stone Mountain Park. We met in a private dining area on the top floor over the lobby beginning in April 1985. Occasionally, when the Park officials had to book this space for a private business conference, we would meet that day at other meeting venues in the park: the Commons or Evergreen Conference Center. At the Inn, we ate from their food line that was set up like a mini cafeteria with several entrees and vegetables offered daily. It was ideal as all got to pick whatever their preference was among several choices. When we had to move for the day, we were served selected plates for the meal.

We moved to Smoke Rise Country Club in 2007 at the urging of several members both of our Club and of the new Country Club. There, meals were again set up as a mini cafeteria line but with a more limited meal selection. As the Club was in the rear of a residential subdivision, we suffered with a sudden drop of visiting Rotarians as we were both difficult to find and quite a distance from the main road for those in a hurry to return to their businesses.

In 2017, we moved to a fellowship hall within the Stone Mountain United Methodist Church, located in downtown Stone Mountain where we used a caterer, and it was enjoyed by all. After a couple of years there, the club moved to a venue owned by a member and his wife, Claus and Hilde Frieze, The Village Corner Restaurant and Bakery, also in downtown Stone Mountain.

## **a pandemic rears its ugly head ...**

March 2020 put the entire world into a tailspin when it was announced globally that a virus, Covid-19, was quickly spreading. The United States went in to lock down leaving Rotary clubs in the US, and around the world scrambling for how to adjust. In-person meetings were cancelled, and clubs were left trying to figure out how to continue service to their communities and around the world under restrictive circumstances. Fortunately, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain was ahead of the

game since they already had a hybrid format and could easily switch to online meetings without any issue. Many clubs both in and outside of District 6900 contacted us for information on how to set up the online format. Our club continued with service projects, safely, especially helping to distribute USDA food shipments to community organizations who then distributed to their clients. In October 2020, we also moved back to the Smoke Rise Country Club, once it was safe to return to our in-person, social distancing/hybrid format. Smoke Rise welcomed us back wholeheartedly. However, in December 2023, metro-Atlanta experienced such low temperatures that many homes and businesses had water pipes to burst; Smoke Rise Country Club was one of them. They had just finished a complete renovation ... and had to close to start all over again! Since we had to relocate during the renovation, we were welcome to meet in the Conference/Training room at Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC) where one of our members, Chris Brand, is the Executive Director. We still meet there on the first Tuesday of each month today.

## leading for healthy growth and community betterment ...

The Rotary Club of Stone Mountain has been blessed with capable, energetic and visionary leadership by members serving both in our club and at the District level. At 60 years old, our Club holds the distinct and unique position of having four of our members serve as District Governor for District 6900, which is comprised of 67 clubs ... and growing. Based upon averages, our Club would now have offered only two Governors for the District instead of the four members who are Past District Governors. If you consider that our existence is roughly only half of the time the district has existed, this is even more phenomenal. In order of service, our Past District Governors from Stone Mountain were Bob Grant, Al Lipphardt, Casey Farmer, and Margie Kersey. Cynthia Dorsey Edwards has been selected to serve as District Governor for 2026-2027. All are also Past Presidents of the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain.

And while these outstanding Rotarians served (or will serve) as District Governors, many more members of the Club served as Assistant District Governors including Casey Farmer, Ned Webb, Durl Jensen, Suzanne Sykes, Gillian Leggett, Chris Brand, and Cynthia Dorsey Edwards. Additionally, members have served the District as Conference leaders in the Choral area (Jack Sartain), the social activity area (Harry Stack), in District Committee Posts (Mark DiGiovanni and others) and District Committee Chairs (Margie Kersey and Al Lipphart). Al also led as the Zone Membership Co-Coordinator for Georgia.

Although some were concerned that lending so much of our strength to District efforts would weaken the leadership at Club level, our Club still has had a long list of effective, strong, and committed leaders as its Presidents. Their names and years of service are as follows:

|           |                     |           |                      |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 1965-1966 | Frank Merritt*      | 1966-1967 | Everett Davidson*    |
| 1967-1968 | Tom Tidwell         | 1968-1969 | Clark Brand*         |
| 1969-1970 | Douglas N. McCurdy* | 1970-1971 | B. Blake Perry*      |
| 1971-1972 | Walter McCurdy*     | 1972-1973 | John F. Christopher* |
| 1973-1974 | Gerald W. Crane     | 1974-1975 | John C. Moore III*   |
| 1975-1976 | Robert C. McMahan   | 1976-1977 | Arden G. Hartman*    |
| 1977-1978 | James T. French*    | 1978-1979 | M. Lawrence Walker*  |
| 1979-1980 | B. Harry Strack*    | 1980-1981 | Robert W. Grant*     |

|           |                        |           |                        |
|-----------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1981-1982 | J. Ronald Lawson       | 1982-1983 | Maurice L. Mixson*     |
| 1983-1984 | Phillip D. Turner      | 1984-1985 | William J. Glaccum*    |
| 1985-1986 | William W. Davidson*   | 1986-1987 | James R. Fister*       |
| 1987-1988 | Jerry L. Silvio        | 1988-1989 | William Witcher, Jr.   |
| 1989-1990 | William W. Cooper      | 1990-1991 | Gordon K. Lee*         |
| 1991-1992 | Thom Clark             | 1992-1993 | John R. Cathy*         |
| 1993-1994 | Al Lipphardt           | 1994-1995 | Jim White              |
| 1995-1996 | Lamar Jones            | 1996-1997 | Bill Hawes*            |
| 1997-1998 | Pat Wheeler            | 1998-1999 | Ned Webb               |
| 1999-2000 | Ted Murphy             | 2000-2001 | Mac Willett            |
| 2001-2002 | Casey Farmer           | 2002-2003 | Bill Rosenfeld*        |
| 2003-2004 | Mark DiGiovanni        | 2004-2005 | Gary Peet              |
| 2005-2006 | Bud Schooler           | 2006-2007 | Suzanne Sykes          |
| 2007-2008 | Neville Anderson       | 2008-2009 | Joe Stock              |
| 2009-2010 | Tracy Swearingen, Sr.  | 2010-2011 | Durl Jensen            |
| 2011-2012 | Al Lipphardt           | 2012-2013 | Mark DiGiovanni        |
| 2013-2014 | Cynthia Dorsey Edwards | 2014-2015 | Chris Brand            |
| 2015-2016 | Donna Jensen           | 2016-2017 | Margie Kersey          |
| 2017-2018 | Gillian Leggett        | 2018-2019 | Scott McEvoy           |
| 2019-2020 | Lizbeth Dison          | 2020-2021 | Cynthia Dorsey Edwards |
| 2021-2023 | Irvine Weekes          | 2022-2023 | David Cesar            |
| 2023-2025 | Darlene Daly           | 2025-2026 | Marlene Randall        |

\*The asterisk by our Presidents' names indicates those who are deceased.

## contributions to the Rotary World ...

In addition to the four (4) District Governors who are or were members of our Club, the Assistant DGs, and the many who have led Committees for District Conferences, Club members made significant contributions to Rotary in other ways.

President Walt McCurdy put together the DeKalb Rotary Council after it was discovered that DeKalb clubs would and could co-operate when they agreed to fund an Economic Game Kit developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for all DeKalb High School sociology teachers. This effort was spearheaded by Jerry Crane through school contacts and from his Chamber of Commerce Board position. He met with all DeKalb clubs at their meetings, explaining the concept and asking for their cooperation and funding. Every DeKalb club agreed to jointly share the costs of purchasing the kits which helped explain capitalism and assisted in life's daily living choices. After this effort, President Walt re-contacted each club and suggested the formation of a Council to meet quarterly similar to the Atlanta Roundtable of Clubs that then met annually. The Council was initially led by Walt and continued to evolve into what we experience today.

The Club, under the leadership of John Christopher, eagerly participated in the International Conference held in Atlanta in 1973, serving both as welcomers to Rotarians from all over the world and other tasks that were asked of the members. And it again served in the International Conference held in Atlanta in 2017.

Stone Mountain quickly agreed to the "Apples for the Teacher Day" concept and members gave all teachers and staff an apple. Our members greeted them during their very special week at the start of one day at each school within our territorial limits with a shiny, glistening, juicy apple. Their thankful smiles were a joy to see as they recognized the community cared and respected their efforts on behalf of its children they taught daily.

Stone Mountain enthusiastically endorsed and has participated in the Dictionary Project, using our annual District/Community Grant funds to purchase the books. The Dictionary Project is a 501 (c) 3 organization whose goal is to assist all students to become good writers, active readers, and creative thinkers by providing students a gift of their own personal dictionary (& atlas). Since 1995, over **31 million students** have received dictionaries. The project continues thanks to the efforts of individuals, businesses, and service groups like Rotary Clubs. Our Club provides most third graders within our territory their very own personal dictionary tailored to their grade level. For many of the children within our area, it is the first book that they have ever owned personally. We have them put their names into the front of the dictionary in space provided to help them keep up with it and include signage from the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain. Don Sampler headed up both the "Apples for the Teacher Day" and the Dictionary Project for many years, spending many hours on the required coordination.

Since 1946, Rotarians in Georgia, USA, have promoted world peace through understanding by offering ambassadorial scholarships to international students for one-year cultural immersion and study in Georgia colleges and universities. This program, Georgia Rotary Student Program (GRSP) has sponsored more than 3,600 students since the program started – from more than one hundred (100) countries. These students always participate in our annual District Conference, some donning their native attire and carrying their country's flag in a formal parade of countries. We, as a younger-aged club after our founding, attracted the international students to our party rooms at the District Conferences, first at Lynn and Jerry Crane's beach home on Jekyll Island; then, at the Party Room atop the restaurant at the Sand Dollar Condos where most members stayed; and finally at Villas by the Sea. In 1973, we opened our first "Official" Hospitality Suite atop the Sand Dollar restaurant. Early on, Thursday night at the District Conferences held at Jekyll became "Boiled Shrimp Feast Dinner" at our hospitality room. We became known for our welcoming friendship and hospitality at conferences and had many visiting District officers drop by to visit and relax.

One of our members served as Host to every international student we had each year, furnishing them a shoulder to lean upon far, far from home. Many of the students almost became members of their Host Family, celebrating the holidays with them throughout their school year and staying in touch after their return to their home countries. Many of our Stone Mountain members hold extremely warm memories of their host year, and several members signed up for additional tours with a different student for other years.

This affinity with the international students led us to understand that for most of the students, their year spent in the U.S. at universities and colleges for which Rotary and our Club paid significant

sums was in most part nearly worthless as far as their education was concerned. Most foreign schools would not allow the credits to transfer upon their return and so many courses had to be repeated. This led to a less valuable educational experience for them during the year and a wasted year as far as their formal education was concerned. Mark DiGiovanni, as our representative at the District, urged changes in the Will Watt Foreign Student Program to allow a club to fund a four-year education through the program rather than requiring a new student each year. Upon rejection, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain ceased to fund the program. We pledged to restart once the aforementioned changes were made. Unfortunately, this has not occurred to date. Part of the funding was then switched to fund the education of three (3) students at the local technical college with student educational grants. This has continued to date.

We funded many other foreign projects, seeking and securing District grants to match funds we expended, and we joined other clubs' efforts financially and in-person to promote better health or better education achievements in selected projects internationally.

We achieved the honor and recognition of a 100% Paul Harris Fellowship Club early in the 21st century, which is a designation that only a small percentage of the Clubs in the world achieve. It means that at a particular point and date in time, 100% of our active members had either given or had given in their names a sum of \$1,000 each to the Rotary Foundation. This is a designation that once achieved is never lost. However, that does not mean that Stone Mountain Rotarians have ceased their support of the Rotary Foundation. Indeed, it is a part of the quarterly dues and billing that each active member pays and that most of the honorary members contribute to annually. As of May 2025, our Club and its members had contributed a grand total of \$446,774 since its charter was presented to help Rotary make the World a better place for everyone within it. The Foundation's efforts on behalf of humankind would fill the pages of several novels all by themselves. To date, nearly 200 Stone Mountain Rotarians or people they wished to honor have become or been named Paul Harris Fellows.

We were early supporters of the Polio Plus Fund done through the Foundation that with the help of other parties such as Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation when they saw the success the program was achieving. This has raised hundreds of millions to eradicate Polio throughout our world. Now, it is cornered in only three, repeat three remaining nations and hopefully will be totally contained soon.

The Rotary Club of Stone Mountain has won numerous Rotary honors including the Dick Mitchell Perfect Attendance Award, the highest percentage of membership attending District Conferences, the Best All Around Club in its classification, Best Newsletter Award. Additionally, we have been the runner-up to the First Place Clubs many times in numerous categories, including the highest individual gift average to the Rotary Foundation. But winning awards is secondary to the efforts to improve the world that our Club made that incidentally won these awards. But perhaps the most unique achievement was a full year of Perfect Attendance by every single member of our Club, under the tenacious leadership of President Al Lipphardt in 1993-1994. It required unique dedication and is unlikely to ever occur again, especially since Rotary International no longer emphasizes perfect attendance.

We have hosted Foreign Group Study Exchange groups several times from different nations that are made of Rotarians and/or members of the community funded by their local Rotary club for



mutual exchanges of ideas and culture, furthering Rotary's mission of peace and progress in the world.

We have also sponsored a "Hero Box" for a U.S. service member for their term of service. We would send them a monthly "Goodwill" package of goodies from home.

And, last, but by far no means least, in late 2016, the Club, under the visionary leadership of (PDG) President Margie Kersey, undertook a unique challenge. It is believed to have become the first club in Rotary International to become a hybrid club (RI President Germ has declared it so) with members either able to make meetings and enjoy programs by attending at the physical meeting place of the club OR by attending the meeting in real time via the web (live stream). Members and guests are even able to participate in the question-and-answer sessions, if they wish. This effort received recognition in the Rotary world and the successful effort was published in an issue of the Rotarian Magazine. Other clubs have used President Margie as a mentor as they considered trying the same. Although using online platforms such as Zoom has become commonplace, as always, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain leads the way!

## **equally active and supportive in our own communities...**

For many, many years we have funded annual monetary grants to ART Station, FODAC, DeKalb Technical College (now Georgia Piedmont Technical College) students, Alzheimer's Research (by the weekly passage of the CART) bucket, the Stone Mountain Food Bank (via a 50/50 raffle), Operation Santa for VFW, and Side-by-Side Brain Injury Center. We have bought gifts for the children of the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program, continued funding Rotary's Polio Plus Program, plus many, many more worthy causes during our 60 years of helping others. Club member Bob Maxwell, for a long time, volunteered to drive weekly to the Atlanta Food Bank to load his vehicle to the brim with loads of heavily discounted or free food to stock the Stone Mountain Food Bank. His enthusiastic assistance to the then fledgling Stone Mountain Food Bank is one of the reasons our Club still financially supports the effort today.

In past years, we would annually recognize Veterans by having a luncheon program at Park Springs Retirement Community in their private dining room which allowed many members to sit and visit with the veterans, many of whom were World War II vets. Park Springs is a very large, beautiful nearby residential community for senior citizens offering both regular and assisted living, caring for its residents until they no longer need it.

We donate to and buy from as individuals during ART Station's annual "Raising of the Green" near or on St. Patrick's Day. Its celebration includes sample dinner items from local restaurants and legions of items at auction to raise funds for the arts.

Don Sampler read weekly to elementary students at Stone Mountain Elementary and after he was no longer able to do so, other Rotarians started doing the same under Gene Fleeman's guidance. Gene is a "real" Rocket Scientist. He excited students about science by facilitating space and rocket programs, employing bottles and soda and water as the propulsion mechanism to entice their interest.

In co-operation with others, we help staff the tables each year at the downtown Stone Mountain Pavilion in conjunction with other organizations to pass out FREE school supplies at the beginning of each school year to make sure all children have an opportunity to start with supplies.

Under the leadership of David Champa, we held Merit Badge Clinics for Boy and Girl Scouts at the Smokerise Elementary School with members giving classes based upon their careers or their hobbies and interests. The young people gathered the knowledge to earn Merit Badges in those subjects plus enjoy a free Chick-fil-A lunch on the house.

We staff the Red Kettles and Ring the Bell for the Salvation Army at designated locations permitted on one full day during the Christmas Holiday season.

Early in our history, we started the Youth Achievement Award in co-operation with the DeKalb County School System at the high school level. This award recognized those youth who gave of their time and energy to help others and that led efforts to establish meritorious actions in the community. Teachers made nominations for the monthly award and submitted them to Stone Mountain Rotary which made a monthly selection of the one most worthy. This student was then featured in news releases to local media, recognizing the efforts they had made and hopefully encouraging other youth to emulate them in the community. This recognition and additional involvement sought was spearheaded by Jerry Crane.

The Club renovated and improved the landscape at Jim's Place, the park across from the Stone Mountain Post Office on two occasions, and on another, repainted and laid new foundations for the playground in that park.

Stone Mountain Rotarians picked up litter and trash despoiling the shores of one of DeKalb's lakes owned by DeKalb's Recreation Department that had become seldom used because of lack of funding to keep it presentable. The amount collected filled two County dump trucks by end of day.

At least two times, Rotarians picked up all litter covering the sides of the road on Main Street from the city limits out to where Rockbridge Road passes over the RR tracks and intersects with it.

Most years, we send local high school students to RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards), both the children of Rotarians and others.

Under John Christopher's guidance, we remodeled a bathroom at Camp Bert Adams Boy Scout Camp so it would accommodate handicapped scouts, even those confined to wheelchairs.

We joined the Stone Mountain Merchants Association, manning ticket tables for a Craft Beer Festival held on East Mountain Street in the Village. Some members sampled the beer. 😊

We began an electronic recycling effort in association with the Tommy Nobis Center and Stone Mountain Park which later evolved into a joint effort with the Rotary Club of Tucker (previously Northlake) that assisted many members of the community. We were helped by two local Boy Scout groups.

Annually, we try to participate with the community in the Stone Mountain Christmas and 4th of July parades in the village.

Many times, the Club has had volunteers meet at FODAC to sort through bins of medical supplies donated to the charity when the organization simply lacked enough staff and/or time to accomplish this required task in their warehouse.

***These are just a few of the ways we have assisted our community to prosper, be healthy, have fun, and be kind.***

## **equally involved and busy socially ...**

Firm believers in the adage that people who work AND play together enjoy a special gift of fellowship and fun, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain has always had an active social calendar.

We were one of the first clubs to have an open house/hospitality suite at the District Conferences, welcoming all ... our club members, other Rotarians, District officers, and international students ... to food, drinks, and fellowship throughout the conferences. Usually under the capable guidance of Harry Strack, traditionally the event kicked off with an informal dinner on the night before the conference began, furnishing arriving members a convenient place for a relaxing, fun evening with fellow members and friends. Harry Strack set up the first "official" club host site in a room over The Villa by the Seas Restaurant. He brought a juke box from home for music and Maurice and Martha Mixson arranged to have local seafood prepared for a delicious welcome. This is one of the hallmarks of the South's friendliest Rotary Club. In addition, club members spent a lot of time on one of the three golf courses on the small island or on tennis courts when the conference was on Jekyll Island.

Christmas has always been a special time for Stone Mountain Rotary with a potluck dinner normally at one of the member's homes with the favorite dishes of the Rotarian or their partner. The venues have been many over the years .... the Crane's, the Lunsford's, the Strack's, President Gillian and Anne's, Darlene Evans' home and many, many more. Long time member Bill Hawes was well known for the delicious ham that he brought, and he seldom bothered to take home the bare ham bone that was left. For years, a merry Elf with the last name of Lipphardt served as Santa's helper with gag gifts distributed to some well deserving members. Santa generally changed from year to year!

The annual installation banquet is a special memory in most Stone Mountain Rotarians' hearts. Often a formal occasion with special menus, the banquets are great! They have included Black Tie affairs which were held at venues within the Evergreen Conference Center Rotunda at Stone Mountain Park and at Smoke Rise Country Club to name just two. Normally, well-attended by members, we are most often graced with at least one District Governor if not several, including incoming ones and their Assistant Governors. It has always been a special evening and includes Club members pledging their best to the newly elected slate of officers and Board members for the upcoming years as well as saying "well done" to the outgoing leadership. The fun aspects of the evening are seldom forgotten, often with widely varied and talented entertainment.

No one can forget the annual "On to Jekyll Conference" parties at members' homes, later changed to "On to the District Conference" for venues changed due to the desires of the newer Rotarians who wished more action than Jekyll Island offered. Many of these were held at the Stracks' home as Harry was the "On to Jekyll" Chairman (or wherever the conference site was). The host home was filled with great food (the dishes brought by Rotarians), good drinks, and fantastic fellowship. It was a good start to Spring and Summer and a chance to get prepared for conference fun.

Additionally, the Club in the past hosted such events as Secretary Day, later changed to Administrative Assistants Day and at last, to Assistant's Day. We had Teacher Appreciation Day and Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. On Special Days like Valentine's Day, special menus

were planned and special guests (the Rotarian's partner in life) invited. Other times, there were parties just to have parties. During the Holiday season, a special luncheon was held with the Salvation Army Brass Ensemble presenting a program and members singing along on Christmas carols.

Certain events were fundraisers when members of the community were invited to join with Rotarians for a fun evening. Al and Carol Lipphardt and Donna and Durl Jensen led efforts to host a successful Casino Night with auctions highlighting the evening, consisting of items donated by Rotarians or local businesses. Bill and Carmen Rosenfeld followed this with two "Mystery Theater" fundraising evenings where MURDER was committed and attendees turned into sleuths to guess who at the dinner was the guilty party. Again, auctions were used to raise funds for charity endeavors. None were ever so successful that they were repeated year after year, but all raised a modest amount of funds in excess of costs and all participating had a grand time. In 2021, we decided to establish a signature event, "Celebrating Champions of Education." Cynthia Dorsey Edwards served as Director of Fundraising and Chair of this event. Successful in recognizing "Legends of Education," Inspirational Educators, as well as individuals and businesses who made significant contributions to the field of education and to students. During the three years of hosting this event, thus far, modest funds have been raised to contribute to our partner organizations and/or service projects.

Originally, the District Governor's visit was also an evening dinner night event, sometimes held at a venue and other times in a member's home. The following day, the DG would meet with the Board, then address the Club at the noon luncheon on goals, on their successes, or whatever he or she wished to share during their leadership period.

For years, Don Sampler put together and guided an annual fall trip to Georgia's mountains that many of our members annually enjoyed being a part of ... whether it be gathering around a smoking grill as members Ted Owens and Myron Baynes grilled the meat for dinners or rallying around a large TV set to cheer on their favorite college football teams. And through it all, favorite beverages were shared with one another. Don tried to pick weeks when the leaves were at their peak in the fall; sometimes it happened, others not. But the fun and fellowship were always there whatever the weather. The mountains may not remember us, but many of us have very fond memories of them and our visits.

The ART Station's "Raising of the Green" has been well supported by the Club in recent years in cooperation with the Stone Mountain Woman's Club (several Rotarians are also members of the Woman's Club). The support was by purchasing tickets to attend, donating items for the auction, and eating and drinking well. All was done with almost equal vigor. On several occasions, the Club has sponsored and attended an evening play performance by ART Station artists. It is always a pleasure to be in such good company, socialize with friends, and enjoy exceptional entertainment.

Many of our members also assisted the Woman's Club in a significant fundraiser, the Ghost Tours at the Plantation in Stone Mountain Park for many nights in the fall.

Of course, this list simply compiles some highlights, missing many, many more social gatherings where members enjoyed camaraderie and fun for an event. Under the extremely capable leadership of President Gillian Leggett and the energetic push of Social Chair Jenny Hall (also known as Party Captain), the social event calendar was expanded to monthly events with ghost filled evenings, history, medieval entertainment at meals, and much more.

## **a new kind of club ...**

In July 2021, the Stone Mountain club was responsible for another first: the creation of a Passport club. This club model was approved by the Council on Legislation in 2019. The Satellite Club of Stone Mountain Passport was the first to charter in the state of Georgia and the second one in Zone 34. The Passport club was founded to provide a Stone Mountain home for Rotarians no longer able to attend a weekly meeting. Soon, Rotarians that had left other clubs for similar reasons joined the Passport club. Today, the club has members from Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia, and Texas. As a satellite of Stone Mountain, they meet online and have their own bylaws and dues structure. As a Passport Club, the members are required, per the bylaws, to perform a minimum of 8 hours a month of service and to visit other clubs. PDG Al Lipphardt was the charter Chair. (Satellite Clubs have Chairs, not Presidents!)

2021-22 Al Lipphardt

2022-23 Dorothy Edwards

2023-24 Gillian Leggett

2024-25 Ed Outlaw

2025-26 Alan Janssen

2026-27 Lindsay McVicar

## **of course, there is much more to come...**

Any history is simply, at most, a snapshot of certain parts of the past, but the important thing in any group's or nation's history has always been its trends.

The Rotary Club of Stone Mountain has been blessed by strong, energetic, ethical leadership from its beginning with a recognition and a willingness to adjust to the circumstances it faces at any period in time. It often leads in the changes necessary to maximize success for its community, itself, and its Rotary world. Has it always been perfect? NO, but then nothing else has either.

The Club has made a remarkable impact among its members with many friendships enduring for half a century. It has assisted its community in so many ways that, while no single element had the impact of a tidal wave, like the tide itself, its value to its area is unarguable. Its effect upon the Rotary World has been significant in so many ways, many previously enumerated. The friendliness of the Club has been remarked upon by many after observing and experiencing the fun we have together, both in meetings and elsewhere.

Reciting the Four-Way Test brings home weekly what we have pledged ourselves to uphold, the values that guide our visions and our actions, at home, in the workplace, in the region, and internationally. Some of our Rotarians signed a Club Contract when they joined, but all learned the Rotary lesson during their membership, or they left.

The Club has been very stable with over 40% of members with many years of service. Most of the members have not only served on the Board or in other leadership positions, but a good number also have a Past Presidency under their belt. Three current members are Past District Governors. The institutional knowledge is strong, the goals are known, and the members are willing. However, we serve to attract, embrace, and encourage new members to join us and become engaged.

The history of the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain will continue for many, many more years than the 60 that are “under the bridge” as its torch is passed to newer members. Its light will glow, and it will

shine long after these authors are gone. New members will find additional personal growth, satisfaction, and purpose as they become more valued and active contributors of this vibrant Club.

## **to our members ...**

Paul Harris and the founders started Rotary in 1905; our founders continued it here in 1965. And now, the mission, the torch, and the fellowship fall to new blood to continue Rotary's avenues of service for yourselves, your Rotarian friends, your community, the region and the international world. As always, the Four-Way Test shows the method and the way!