

Next Meeting



Join us for our next meeting on March 4 in the IMU Georgian Room, where we will welcome Dustin Dillard as our guest speaker. Dillard, the Fire Chief at Perry-Clear Creek Fire Protection District, will talk about the past, present, and future of the Monroe Fire District. Dillard has overseen the merging of Perry - Clear Creek FPD, Indian Creek, Van Buren, Bloomington, Benton, and Washington townships into the renamed Monroe Fire Protection District through five separate merger processes and has negotiated contractual fire service agreements with Polk and Salt Creek townships. A Bloomington native, Dillard attended Bloomington South High School before graduating from IU with a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Safety Science with a minor in Public Management.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

Hoosier Hills Food Bank volunteer opportunity Feb. 28

Have fun with Rotarians this Friday! Volunteers are still needed for the Hoosier Hills Food Bank, Friday, February 28. There will be two shifts: 10 am–Noon and Noon-2pm, with space for up to 15 at each shift. [Sign up here >](#)

Annual District Grant

Traci Jovanovic reminded us of the Annual District Grant match project: \$3k from the district, matched by \$3k from Bloomington Rotary Club. If you're interested in suggesting a project, please note that the proposals require a Bloomington Rotary sponsor.

- [Here's a link to the instructions >](#)
- [Here's a link to the application form >](#)

Projects must engage at least 25 Rotarians in a day of service. Funding will be available in the first week of August. Applications are due by March 28, and the project timeline runs from August through the end of March.

New Member Orientation

Lori Garraghty and **Jim Bright** plan to co-host a new member orientation get-together for Tuesday, May 13, at the home of Jim and Anne Bright. It will be open to 15 members who have joined within past two years. If you're available to participate, please contact Jim Bright - jbright48167@yahoo.com.

Join us for the Rotary District Conference!

Mark your calendars for the [ALL IN Rotary District Conference](#), happening April 25-26 at the Sheraton Indianapolis at Keystone Crossing! This exciting event brings together members from three Rotary

Districts — 6540, 6560, and our very own 6580 — for a weekend of friendship, learning, and inspiration. It's the perfect opportunity to connect with fellow people of action, share ideas, and strengthen your Rotary journey.

Special Opportunity for New Members: The Bloomington Rotary Club is offering scholarships to cover conference registration for three new members (those who have joined within the last two years). If you're interested in attending, please [reach out to President Traci Jovanovic](#). Don't miss this chance to engage with the broader Rotary community—we'd love to see you there!

HAPPY DOLLARS

Ron Barnes donated \$20 in appreciation for support in helping him and Sheryl through difficult times. **Judy Witt** shared that it's her birthday this month. She also honored the memory of her husband, Lee, and announced that a celebration of his life will take place on Saturday, March 22, at 3 pm at the Unitarian Church. **Sara Laughlin** recognized **Dave Meyer** for assisting Rahim Mohammadi with obtaining a Green Card. **Jim Sims** reflected on Black History Month, noting its short duration but emphasizing the importance of inclusivity within the club. He encouraged members to participate in the remaining events and get to know their neighbors. **Charlotte Zietlow** expressed joy in being part of the Rotary Club, stating it is an important part of her life. **Ruth Boshkoff** shared her gratitude for the visit of two of her four daughters this weekend. From Chicago, **Raj Haddawi** appreciated a delightful Tuesday spent visiting with friends and expressed gratitude for being part of the Bloomington Rotary Club. He donated \$50 to cover Zoom expenses.

FEBRUARY 25 PROGRAM

<https://youtu.be/pFGHbGXgOAO>

Guest Speaker: Maria Talbert, "Access, Engagement, and Experience" — IU Auditorium's Commitment to Our Communities



Hank Walter introduced Maria Talbert, Executive Director of the IU Auditorium, but first, he reflected on his arrival in Bloomington 11 years ago (even now, he is sometimes considered the “new Winston Shindell”). He recalled being deeply impressed that a town of this size could support a venue as large and dynamic as the IU Auditorium. He emphasized that, beyond its size and scope, what truly makes the Auditorium special is the dedicated team that operates it—making it a true gem of Bloomington and Monroe County.

Built in 1941, the 3,200-seat venue hosts university ceremonies, conferences, concerts, and Broadway productions. At the helm is Maria Talbert, who brings more than 25 years of experience in marketing,

event planning, and facility management. She holds a master's degree in arts administration from IU and is an active member of the International Association of Venue Managers. Passionate about student engagement, she oversees opportunities for more than 600 IU students annually.

Maria Talbert spoke about the remarkable growth of the Auditorium's outreach and engagement programs over the past decade. She opened with a quote from playwright Eve Ensler, who visited IU in 2013:

"Theater has the potential to break through binaries, to bring us into a world of ambiguity and paradox. To unlock positional thinking, to disrupt the normal patterns in our brain. Art has the power to explode the heart and open up other energetic capacities to re-perceive. It defies boundaries and leaps tall buildings.

It transports,
it translates,
it transcends.

Transcendence is so important right now because our lives are so mechanized, controlled, and commodified; art has the capacity to open our souls and could be our revolutionary, evolutionary salvation."

Reflecting on her last presentation to the Bloomington Rotary Club in 2015, Maria shared how much the organization has evolved. She noted that, on March 11, 2020 — the same day the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic — the Auditorium staff made its first of many "pivots." Initially a team of 18, the staff has since grown to 22 members, enabling the development of new programs in response to community needs.

One of the most significant changes has been the expansion of outreach programming, which has increased fourfold since 2015. In the 2024-25 season, IU Auditorium is projected to host more than 100 programs, reaching 8,000 participants. These initiatives include master classes, interdisciplinary lectures, pre-show discussions, and educational experiences for K-12 students. The "Give the Magic" program, launched in 2013, continues to provide free tickets to underserved individuals and families, with this year's program benefiting 1,800 attendees.

Maria highlighted the Dance Theatre of Harlem's multi-campus residency, an initiative she first helped launch in 2015. This year, the program has expanded across Indiana, engaging more than 2,000 participants through performances, workshops, and educational events. A key component is the "Auditorium Kids on Campus" lecture-demonstration, where more than 1,000 middle school students will experience a professional dance company firsthand.

Beyond Bloomington, IU Auditorium's impact extends to surrounding cities and states, attracting audiences from Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. Maria emphasized the importance of partnerships with agents and promoters who connect the Auditorium with world-class artists. These collaborations have allowed the venue to curate programming that serves diverse audiences, including K-12 students, university students, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities.

Financial support has played a critical role in sustaining this growth. Maria said that donations have increased fourfold since 2015, with much of this growth occurring after the pandemic, a period when

many performing arts centers experienced declines in giving. A key development has been the establishment of an endowment to support a full-time position dedicated to outreach and engagement.

Maria concluded by emphasizing the transformative power of the arts. She shared a moving story from a parent whose daughter, a young Black dancer, was deeply inspired after seeing the Alvin Ailey Dance Company perform at IU Auditorium. Stories like these drive the Auditorium's mission to provide meaningful artistic experiences that change lives and strengthen communities.

She invited everyone to attend the upcoming Dance Theatre of Harlem events, reinforcing IU Auditorium's commitment to making the arts accessible and impactful for all. Her presentation underscored the organization's dedication to fostering cultural engagement and ensuring that the performing arts continue to enrich the lives of students, families, and audiences across the region.

Questions

Political Influence and Free Speech at IU: Maria reassured us that the IU Auditorium operates independently of political influence. She emphasized that IU values free speech and that the Auditorium has strong campus support to uphold its mission.

Upcoming Season Announcement: The new performance lineup for IU Auditorium will be announced in May or early June. With digital communications making season rollouts more flexible, the team now has additional time to make programming decisions.

How to Recommend Shows: IU Auditorium welcomes programming suggestions year round. Audience members can email Maria directly at mtalbert@iu.edu or participate in annual summer and fall show surveys to provide input..

Challenges in Booking Performances: As a smaller market, IU Auditorium does not always secure first-run tours, sometimes waiting decades for major productions like *Phantom of the Opera*. Booking high-profile acts, such as Trevor Noah, can take years. However, IU benefits from alumni agents and connections with Live Nation representatives in Indianapolis, which help bring top-tier performances to campus.

Community Engagement and Growth: Expanding outreach efforts remains a challenge, particularly in aligning community partnerships with touring productions. Maria highlighted the importance of IU's engagement specialist and outlined future plans, including an annual "Auditorium for Kids" program to introduce elementary and high school students to live performances. Additionally, a virtual tour of the facility is in development, showcasing the venue's architecture and artwork.

Performance Booking Costs: Booking fees vary widely. Major comedians typically command \$100,000 to \$300,000 guarantees, while Broadway shows often require a \$45,000 minimum guarantee, with revenue splits averaging 70/30.

Trends Over the Past Decade: The demand for comedy shows surged post-pandemic, making them easier to book. Music remains popular, but major promoters tend to favor well-established markets. There is growing interest in bringing bigger-name acts to IU, which requires long-term relationship-building. Some discussions have explored utilizing Assembly Hall or IU Stadium for large-scale performances.

Annual and Recurring Acts: Favorites like Straight No Chaser and Dennis James continue to be annual traditions. However, students have expressed a desire for more popular music performances on the IU Auditorium stage.

IU Auditorium as a Launchpad: Over the years, the venue has served as a starting ground for several new productions, further cementing its role in fostering emerging talent and fresh programming.

UDPATES

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

President Traci reminded us that we never know who we're sitting next to, and taking the time to learn from each other is invaluable. Our previous Rotaract President, Ethan Fragoso, was recently featured in an inspiring article in the O'Neill School newsletter. We encourage you to read it:

- [Ethan Fragoso: Building a brighter future through public service and advocacy >](#)

Ethan's story is one of resilience and determination. Growing up in Lake Station, Ind., he was 12 when he lost his mother to an overdose. At 17, he became a father and remained steadfast in his goal of attending Indiana University to build a better future for himself and his community. He has since achieved that dream and continues to make a remarkable impact through his work at the Center for Rural Engagement. Take a moment to read his story and get to know our Rotaract students. They are our future, and their dedication to making a positive difference is truly inspiring, especially in these times of rapid change.

REFLECTION

Cindy Brumbarger reflected on the current political climate, noting the overwhelming noise of passionate, angry, and fearful voices, some of which deliberately stir up fear. In such an environment, we often become defensive, frustrated, or even silent, losing sight of what unites us: our shared humanity. How we treat strangers — whether they look, speak, or live differently from us — reveals our true character. As Henri Nouwen reminds us, the way we engage with the stranger matters. Many people are on a painful search for safety, community, and a life free from fear. Yet too often, strangers become victims of hostility. Cindy emphasized the need to transform hostility into hospitality, to create a space where fellow human beings feel welcomed rather than met with suspicion or harm. Although we may cling to our anxieties and fears, we are still capable of fostering an environment of brotherhood and sisterhood. She closed with a simple hope: that each of us might encounter — and truly see — a stranger every day.

Elizabeth Thompson introduced our guests:

- Kevin Gifford – guest of Maria Talbert and the IU Auditorium
- Wade Brown – guest of **Heidi Schulz**
- Sheila Reid – guest of **Jim Capshew**
- Jackson Morris – Rotaract
- Yehya Kader – Rotaract
- Waasif Ali - Rotaract:

Birthdays:

- **Glenda Murray** – February 24

Member Anniversaries:

- **John Hobson** – 40 years
- **Carlos Laverty** – 2 years
- **John Zody** – 7 years

Acknowledgments

- Executive Assistant: Substituting for Natalie today were **Sally Gaskill** and **Marilyn Wood**.
- Meeting Greeter: **Diana Hoffman**
- Introductions: **Elizabeth Thompson**
- Reflection: **Cindy Brumbarger**
- Zoom Host: **Joy Harter**
- Camera/Mic Operator: **Michael Shermis**
- Zoom and Audio Producer: **Isaac Smith**
- Reporter: **Alain Barker**
- Photographer: **Jim Bright**