



Rotary



The Rotary Club of Macon

 **THROBS**

Published Weekly Since 1914

March 3, 2025

No Meeting

In keeping with our “three meetings per month” policy, there will be no meeting March 3. Please join us March 10 when our speaker will be Jim Stiff, President of Goodwill Middle Georgia and Central Savannah River.



Link for Zoom Recording

Click here to view the recording of our February 24 meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/23azrk4a>

FUTURE MONDAY PROGRAMS AND CLUB EVENTS:

March, 2025

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|
| 10 | Goodwill | Jim Stiff (President, Goodwill Middle GA and Central Savannah River) |
| 17 | USDA | Nikki Thomas, Acting State Director |
| 18 | Board Meeting | |
| 24 | Unified Defense/Prince Service & Mfg. | Eric Williams, CEO |
| 31 | No Meeting | |

April, 2025

| | | |
|----|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 7 | Chancellor Perdue | Sonny Perdue |
| 14 | Georgia Supreme Court | Justice Verda Colvin |
| 14 | Board Meeting | |
| 21 | Cherokee Brick | Kate Sams Peavy, President |
| 28 | No Meeting | |

May, 2025

| | | |
|----|--|----------------------------|
| 5 | Spring Picnic – no regular meeting | |
| 12 | GRSP Student | João Victor Verçosa Vilela |
| 19 | Performances by Morning Music Club’s Maerz Award winners | |

New Member Approval

The Board has approved the membership application of Greg Pope, who is Senior Pastor of Vineville Baptist Church. He would hold the classification of Christianity – Baptist.

Members have 10 days to make comments in writing to President Danny Gibson.

MEETING February 24, 2025

Attendance: 57.4% - 61 in person, 17 Zoom, plus 19 guests

CART \$10.99, Raffle \$75

Club Membership: 149 (including today’s inductions)

President Danny Gibson rang the bell to start the meeting, and said we have a full agenda today. Jim Smith led the singing and pledge, and he chose *America the Beautiful*. Danny later remarked that Jim is a new member, was put to work already, and all new members should expect the same.

John Patterson offered the prayer, and began by reciting Psalm 23, “The Lord is My Shepherd.” He expressed gratitude for the word, the club, the country, and the servicemen and first responders.

Danny thanked Jackie Riley for her piano prelude, and noted that in two weeks she will have been playing for our club 13 years. Jackie was applauded.

He then acknowledged our many guests, which included the Mayor, several pending or potential members, and four Macon North Rotarians.

STAR student Hayley Terry of Northeast High School was introduced by her principal, Donna Walter Thompson. Haylee runs track and cross country, plays flag football, and belongs to several clubs such as FBLA. She plans to attend either UGA or Hampton University and major in sociology with a pre-law track. Her goal is to become a corporate lawyer

We then had a special presentation by Mayor Lester Miller on the upcoming referendum to continue the SPLOST sales tax. He was introduced by Past President Stephanie Folsom. Stephanie began by asking if anyone had ever dodged a pothole and wished the road system was in better condition. She then asked if we thought it was a good idea to invest in modern technology that supports our law enforcement, and also investing in economic development that strengthens our community. Stephanie then said all of these would be addressed by the new SPLOST. Early voting begins today and goes through March 14, with election day March 18.



Mayor Miller then continued by saying there is a flyer on each table that outlines the “Go BIG,” or Build Infrastructure for Growth initiative. In the past, Macon-Bibb county has only been able to pave 6-8, or maybe 10 miles per year because none of the property tax revenues go to this. This 1-cent sales tax represents \$38-40 million per year, and would generate 70% of its revenue from visitors and non-residents. In addition, the funds would go for parks, recreation, trail development, and stormwater projects. The Mayor also highlighted the importance of transparency in the allocation of funds. He stressed that this is not a tax increase, but would replace the current expiring SPLOST.



President Danny then announced upcoming club birthdays and anniversaries. Today is member Rachel Adams' birthday. Others celebrating birthdays through March 9 are Brian McCommon (March 4), Buddy Marshall (March 7), and Bert Maxwell (March 8). Seven members have club anniversaries coming up. Jessica Walden has been a member for one year, Billy Fickling for two, Sam Hollis has 11 years of service, and Kris Vaughn has 13. Bill Baxley has been a member 24 years, and both Robert Slocumb and Jack Poole have been members for 28 years. However, Jack was a Rotarian for 13 years before joining the Macon club, and has 41 years of service to Rotary.

It was then time for CART brags, and we had some good ones. This included Marcus Tripp's mention that CBS news yesterday announced it was the 71st year of mass polio vaccinations. Many older people remember when polio was a major problem in the US, but thanks to Rotary and others this is now just a memory.



President Danny then said that one of the great privileges he has is to induct new members, and today we had three. They are:

Bruce Riggins – A Macon native and Morehouse College graduate, Bruce is the owner of Cicero's

Moving and Storage and Churchill's on Cherry, a premier cigar lounge in downtown Macon. He is a dedicated community leader, serving on various boards, including the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. He is the past president of the 100 Black Men of Macon-Middle Georgia. Bruce is married to Lisa and has two children, one of whom is a college student.

BJ Dunwoody – A longtime Macon resident and business owner, BJ has a background in commercial furniture and design. She has been actively involved in the community, serving on multiple boards, coaching volleyball, and advocating for children as a CASA volunteer. Her company, Dunwoody Design Development, contributes to downtown Macon's growth. She is also a yoga instructor and a member of First Presbyterian Church. BJ has a strong passion for community service and is known for her joyful personality. Oh, and she's married to Gene.

Krunal Patel – Originally from India, Krunal moved to Canada as a teenager and later earned an engineering degree in Vancouver. He has lived in Macon since 2007 and founded his own engineering firm in 2012. His work has contributed to key local projects, including Hotel 45, the Cotton Avenue development, and the Macon Mall redevelopment. Krunal is a valued professional in the city and is married to Rashanah, with whom he has a 15-year-old son.



It was then time for our speaker. Kathy McCollum introduced Jeff Battcher, highlighting his extensive career in corporate communications, his deep roots in Macon, Georgia, and his commitment to community service. Jeff is the principal of Battcher Communications, and before that he ran global public relations departments, reporting to CEO's at major companies like Delta Airlines, BellSouth, and Amazon. Now he advises boards of directors and CEO's at places like the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, the United Nations, Dow Jones, Amazon, Ring, Citrix, Red Cross, UPS, Dish Network, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Jeff is a native of Macon. He attended the University of Utah on a football scholarship, and lettered in both football and baseball. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree in business communication from Mercer, and an executive MBA in finance from Georgia State University. Despite his professional achievements, he remains devoted to his hometown, serving on numerous boards and spearheading

impactful local initiatives. He considers Macon to be the center of his universe.

Jeff opened his speech by reflecting on his role in hiring Kathy McCollum as CEO of the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank, which he considers one of his proudest contributions. He then transitioned to discussing the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program, a Major League Baseball (MLB) initiative aimed at providing baseball and softball opportunities to underserved communities.

Jeff recounted how he founded Macon RBI in 2014 after learning about the program through an MLB advertisement. Overcoming bureaucratic and financial hurdles, he successfully established the program in 2015. From an initial group of 36 players, Macon RBI has grown significantly, with local players receiving scholarships and life-changing opportunities. They have built a professional-quality field near Anthony Homes, which has one of the nation's highest poverty rates. He shared a moving story about a young man who, after attending an RBI event at Xavier University, was inspired to pursue college—despite being told he wasn't good enough.

In 2016, a major milestone was achieved when Sasha Norman, a Central High School student, secured a \$20,000 college scholarship through the program, becoming a physical therapist. Jeff emphasized how RBI isn't just about sports; it's about opening doors to education and personal growth.



Determined to provide a high-quality facility for the community, Jeff led efforts to build a \$1.6 million synthetic turf baseball field at the Tom Fontaine Complex, strategically placed in an underserved neighborhood. Through partnerships with organizations like the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation and local institutions, he raised funds and navigated complex logistics. The field was dedicated in 2020 and named after his former Little League coach, Vernon Sinclair, a mentor who profoundly impacted his life by ensuring he had opportunities to play sports despite a difficult home life.

Jeff shared emotional moments from the field's groundbreaking, including a visit from Atlanta Braves manager Brian Snitker and an unforgettable encounter with a young girl who thanked him for “giving [her] something to look forward to.” These moments reinforced the significance of his work.

In 2023, Macon RBI achieved another milestone by winning the regional tournament, defeating well-funded teams from the Atlanta Braves, Miami Marlins, Jacksonville, and Birmingham. This victory

earned them a spot at the RBI World Series in Vero Beach, Florida—an elite tournament at the historic Jackie Robinson Complex. Jeff described the overwhelming challenge of competing against teams with multi-million-dollar budgets, yet Macon’s team held their own, advancing deep into the competition.

... HARD WORK AND DEDICATION PAY OFF ...



One of the most powerful revelations of the speech was that many of the Macon RBI players had never traveled outside Macon before, let alone flown on a plane. Through the program, they gained not just athletic opportunities but exposure to new experiences and broader aspirations.

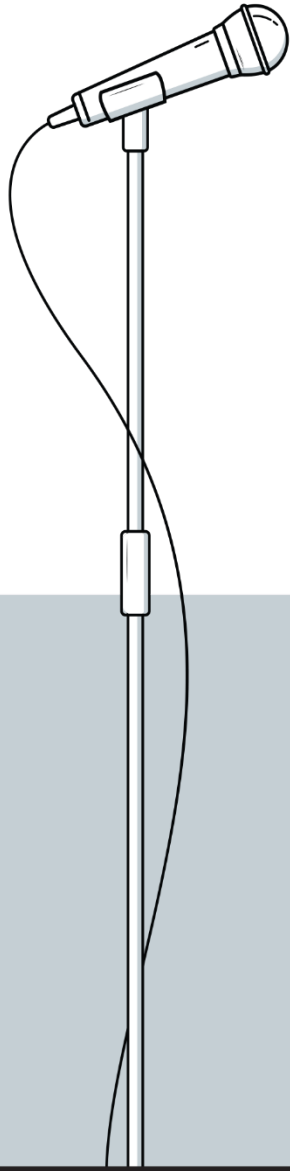
Jeff concluded by sharing that 25 Macon RBI participants have now received college scholarships, including one student who is currently playing baseball at Penn State. He emphasized that while he initially sought to create baseball opportunities, what he truly found was a way to give young people hope.

He closed with an appeal for community support, inviting donations to sustain and expand the program. His final message: Macon RBI is not just about baseball—it’s about changing lives.

The CART raffle pot was up to \$1,559, with just 13 cards remaining in the deck. Once again, Ed Olson had the winning ticket (I think he buys a lot!) but was unable to pick the Queen of Clubs, so the pot will roll over to our next meeting on March 10.

As is our tradition, the meeting concluded with recitation of the Four Way Test.

Important Reminder: The Rotary Speech Contest will be held March 8 from 10:00am at Middle Georgia State University. We still need some more student participants, and all members are encouraged to come out to show our support to these deserving students.



2025 ROTARY SPEECH CONTEST

High School students in Macon-Bibb County are eligible to register

03 | 08 | 2025

at 10:00AM

ARTS THEATER (located within the Arts Complex) at Middle Georgia State University

100 University Parkway, Macon, GA 31206

Scholarship Prizes

\$1,000 First Place

\$500 Second Place

\$250 Third Place

Winner who advances to Zone Level competition
will have an opportunity to win a \$1,000 scholarship

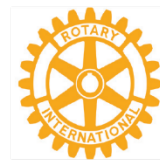
INFORMATION

Contestants must present a 3-4-minute memorized speech on the topic
“The Magic of Rotary” or “The Four-Way Test”.

Presentation is important (eye contact, body language, voice inflection, and appearance).
Families and teachers are encouraged to attend.

The Rotary Speech competition is an annual project engaging Rotarians, educators, and
students in a meaningful and rewarding opportunity for personal development of our
nation’s future leaders.

To register please send name and school to nancy.white1@mga.edu



THE FOUR-WAY TEST OF THE THINGS WE THINK, SAY, OR DO.

- Is it the **TRUTH**?
- Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
- Will it build **GOODWILL & BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned

Sponsored by:



Donate to Rotary Foundation and CART

Club members can make donations to The Rotary Foundation or the CART Fund online line using credit cards or EFT. These can be made in memory of, honor of, or personal donations. They can be setup as recurring or one-time. These online donations qualify as a tax deduction (but ask your accountant). Follow these easy steps:

The Rotary Foundation: Go to <https://rotary.org/> If you have never signed in you will need to register so it credits your Paul Harris Fellow account and our club. You may need our District number 6920 and club number 4202. Once registered you can SIGN IN to MY ROTARY then click DONATE button in upper right. Check the area ANNUAL FUND, DISASTER RELIEF FUND, or POLIO PLUS to donate, then just follow easy steps to make payment.

CART FUND: <https://mycartfund.org/Login.cfm> follow the online instructions. You will need our **Club number 4202** and **District number 6920**. (This link requires logging in to DACdb. If you have trouble with that, use <https://mycartfund.org/NewUser.cfm> instead.) All donations to CART go to support cutting-edge research on Alzheimer's.

Approved Makeups-Family of Rotary Events:

**Reminder - Makeups can only be used two weeks before or after a missed meeting
(There are no meetings in December)**

Anytime Rotary Project or Rotary Committee meeting
Anytime Volunteer at Macon Volunteer Clinic
Anytime Viewing of Monday meeting recorded on Zoom - See current or past *Throbs* link.

HOW TO MAKE UP MISSED MEETINGS

Please make up missed meetings to help our club's attendance percentage rank with District 6920 and Rotary International. **Members are encouraged to maintain an attendance average of 60%.**

Missed meetings must be made up **14 days before or after the meeting you miss.**

See list above of approved makeups. You can make up from the comfort of your home or office online at <http://rotaryclubone.org/> They will email a notice of the makeup to the Club Administrator and you will be credited. Also, attendance at another Rotary Club is a great option when you are traveling!

When you make up using the **Zoom link** of our meetings listed in meeting summary above or makeup in person at another club please send an email immediately afterwards to the Club Administrator, steve@eggmedia.com so your makeup can be recorded. Do not expect the club you visit to report to our club.

Excused Absences

Members have the opportunity to receive a board approved Excused Absence during a long-term family, health, or business crisis. When a member realizes they have a situation that will keep them from attending Monday meetings for an extended period they can contact the Club Administrator or President with the reason. This contact needs to be immediate and not after the crisis. The board can approve a beginning and ending date and attendance is excused on club and district level. Short term absences are best made up online.

Club Membership Applications

Our club continues to grow! To sponsor a prospective candidate to join our membership, contact Membership Chair Gene Dunwody gdunwodyjr@dunwodybeeland.com or any member of the Board of Directors to ensure a vocational classification is available for your candidate. Once the Classification Committee approves the classification, invite your new member candidate to a weekly meeting. If the candidate expresses interest in joining our club, then ask the Membership Chair to send the candidate an invitation to apply online. Applications are reviewed by the Board and then announced in Throbs, after which any member can express an objection.

Rotary Club of Macon
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