

# CLUB NEWS

December 17, 2024



The Wilmington  
**Rotary**  
Club



Founded April 1915 • A Century of Service Above Self

## International, literacy objectives outlined

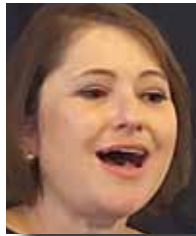
Two of our most important service committees summarized their recent work and presented wish-list items they hope to pursue during Foundation Day presentations on Nov. 19.



Rich: International

**Gabe Rich** listed the dozen foreign nations where we have supported literacy, health, sanitation and economic-development projects. He said his International Projects Committee is preparing a new Global Grant project.

**Nicolette Fulton**, co-chair of the Literacy Committee, described the work that group is planning, including a new “Together We Read” project to connect



Fulton: Literacy

adult mentors with beginning readers.

Both committee chairs explained how their projects use funds from both our club’s charitable foundation and the international Rotary Foundation.

In the past year, Gabe reported, “Almost eighteen percent of our fund-raising has gone to international projects.” The five-year total: \$53,000.

For details on our ongoing or recent international projects, SEE: *page 6*.

Pending this year is a proposed Global Grant project in Moldova, expanding on earlier projects led by

Wilmington East Rotary Club.

Gabe said our recent health-clinic project in Honduras shows how Global Grants work. Our \$5,000 investment was matched by other clubs, District 7730, and the Rotary Foundation RI, for a \$49,000 total.

Nicolette noted that we will spend \$6,300 this year to buy books for six elementary schools, and use a District Grant to help St. Mary Catholic School rebuild its library after damage from Hurricane Florence.

The new Together We Read project will start with one school and target first and second graders. Adult mentors will read books, chosen by students, to help develop a love of reading at a crucial development stage.

## Nominations and sponsorships needed for Leaders in Service Awards

Our solicitation team for the coming year’s Leaders in Service Awards has begun securing sponsors, and both the club and the broader community are being urged to nominate candidates for the awards. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 17, 2025.

The awards will be presented at a May 13, 2025 banquet at UNCW.

Leaders in Service is the club’s major fund-raiser. Our goal is for gross revenues, from sponsorships and ticket sales, to exceed \$110,000. After deducting both fund-raising and banquet costs, we hope to secure at least \$70,000 net for the club’s charitable foundation.

The awards honor business, non-profit, and governmental leaders whose work has improved our community.

Led by **John Hatcher, Jack Clark, and Mark DeLoach**, our solicitors include **Cathy Barlow, Mike Brown, Tom Dodson, Sean Frelke, Taft Martin, Don McGlynn, Albert Sementa, and Dale Smith**.

Sponsorship levels are \$10,000, \$5,000, \$2,500, and \$1,000. Individual ticket sales begin in the spring.

A form for nominations can be found on the Leaders in Service website: [www.leadersinservice.org](http://www.leadersinservice.org).

After nominations for the annual awards are closed, club members will be asked to propose candidates for the special Legacy Award, which recognizes lifetime achievement. That award may or may not be given in any year.

Previous honorees were guests at our Dec. 3 meeting. Those included retired educator and civil-rights activist Bertha Todd, recipient of our first Legacy Award; Brian McMerty, Charles Hardy, and Connie Parker, 2024 honorees; and J.C. Lyle, one of the three 2022 honorees.

The LIS committee is headed by **Bob Kitchen** and **Donna Cameron**.



2022 honoree J.C. Lyle, Past President Dale Smith, 2024 honorees Brian McMerty, Bertha Todd, Charles Hardy, and Connie Parker with plaque to which the names of this year’s Leaders in Service will be added.

## Bell ringers vie for bragging rights, aid Salvation Army

Continuing the club's 101-year history of supporting the Salvation Army, volunteer Rotarians have solicited donations to the Red Kettle campaign. The money helps children and families during the Christmas holiday season.

Our bell ringers were stationed at Sam's Club on three Tuesdays, Dec. 3, 10, and 17. In recent years, we have won the informal title as the Wilmington-area civic club that raised the most money.

To help bolster our contributions, proceeds from a special raffle during our Dec. 17 holiday lunch party will also be donated to the Salvation Army.



Top: Alex White, daughter Scout, and Laura Lisle; a serenade from Ken Morris. Above: Marty Feurer, Vicki Scott, Donna Shiro; Albert Sementa, Rafaela Dejanovic, and Cruella; bottom: Tiffany Kitchen and Donna Cameron; Dustin Hocken and Michael Gillespie.



Melissa White and Heather Evans.



David and Laura Lisle, Bob Kitchen, and Lou DiGiusto chat with Rotarians from other area clubs at Fifth Wednesday social Oct. 30.



President Paul Lawler stoops to schmooze with Chris Utesch and Mike and Gayle Beaudoin. The casual social gathering was held at Smoke on the Water.

## Social features sunset over Cape Fear River

The club's informal Fifth Wednesday social series continued on Oct. 30 at Smoke on the Water, a riverside restaurant in the Riverlights development.

A large contingent of Rotarians from this club, as well as members of other area clubs, attended. The host venue supplied hors d'oeuvres and use of a deck with views of the sunset over the Cape Fear River.



Our members and partners at the social included Dori Bishara, John and Mitzi Fonda, and Tiffany Kitchen.



Balmy weather and a beautiful sunset made for a pleasant autumn evening.

## Rotarian families clean Greenfield

The second in our series of "family friendly" service projects put Rotarians, spouses, friends, and children to work at Greenfield Park Dec. 14.

The club's Community Service and Environment Committees conducted the work day in partnership with the Plastic Ocean Project.

Volunteers included Rotarians **Dori Bishara**, **Kevin Crane**, **Heather Evans**, **John Fonda**, **David Grandey**, **Allan Lusk**, **Terry Smith**, and **Chris Utesch**; spouses Rachel Lusk and Becky Grandey; Dori's friend Matt Barbour; and children Josie Barbour, Jasper and Willow Bishara, and Charlotte and Kalyn Grandey.



Charlotte, Kalyn and Becky Grandey at work.



Dori Bishara and her son Jasper pick up trash.



Terry Smith wrangles debris near Greenfield Park's Rotary Wheel Garden.



Andy McGlenn of the Plastic Ocean Project briefs volunteers; they collected 60 pounds of trash around the Rotary Wheel.

## Under-forty group gathers

The club's Young Rotarians Committee held a small celebration of our seventeen members under the age of 40 on Dec. 4 at the Covey restaurant.

A few over-40 mentors—President **Paul Lawler**, President-Nominee **Tiffany Kitchen**, and Past President **Donna Shiro**—attended the gathering, held to thank the younger members for all they bring to the club.

Attending were **Jimmy Brewer**, **Rafaella Dejanovic**, **Chris Hoenic**, **Carter Jewell**, **Allan Lusk**, **Taft Martin**, **Lauren Matthews**, **Albert Sementa**, **Ally Thornton**, **Chris Utesch**, and **Alex White**.



Above: Tiffany Kitchen, Alex White, Chris Hoenic, Taft Martin, Ally Thornton, Paul Lawler, Donna Shiro, Chris Utesch, Jimmy Brewer, Allan Lusk, and Carter Jewell at under-40 committee's social December 4.



Right: Lauren Matthews, Albert Sementa, and Rafaela Dejanovic were also part of the group's festivities.



Heather Evans

Don McGlynn

Sponsor Chris Hoenig, new member Chris Sepich, and Secretary Elliott O'Neal.

## Inductions and talks: Club gets to know our new members

Our newest member joined our ranks Nov. 5 and introduced himself to the club Dec. 3. Two others, inducted in September, gave their new-member talks on Oct. 29.

**Chris Sepich** was sponsored by **Chris Hoenig**. A former internal-medicine and pediatric physician, he now runs Your Healthcare Power of Attorney. When he spoke to the club, he offered the “fun fact” that he is a skydiver and has jumped out of perfectly good airplanes eighteen times so far.

Also speaking Oct. 29 was **Heather Evans**. She has worked in hospitality, was manager of St. Thomas Preservation Hall on Dock Street, and now works for Salt Air Heating and Cooling, Inc. She is active in Cape Fear Crew, a networking organization for women in real estate. **Ramona Farrell** sponsored her when she joined on Sept. 10.

**Don McGlynn**, who joined Sept. 10, told us Oct. 29 that he recently moved to Wilmington after many years in the Washington/District of Columbia region. A Rotarian since 2012, he is past president of the Metro Bethesda Rotary Club. A retired real estate broker, he

was sponsored by **Joe Owen**.

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Juniors from New Hanover County's high schools, both public and private, gathered for a morning of discussions with Rotarian volunteers. Five Wilmington area clubs are sponsoring thirteen of them to attend the district RYLA conference in January.



Taniesha Young, UNCW's assistant director for freshman admissions, offered the RYLA students advice on the college application process.

## Conference cultivates student leaders

Thirty-nine juniors from ten of New Hanover County's public and private high schools gathered at UNC-Wilmington on Dec. 7 for a morning of conversations about leadership, values, and education. The students, all nominated by their schools' guidance counselors, were participants in the greater Wilmington Rotary Youth Leadership Awards conference.

Rotarian discussion leaders scored each student on participation, engagement, focus, and other qualities. The thirteen who ranked highest have been invited to attend the District 7730 RYLA conference the weekend of Jan. 24-26 at Pine Knoll Shores.

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**R.B. Richey**, chair of the Wilmington-area RYLA committee, presided. **George Gates** delivered the invocation. Discussion leaders from this club were **Katie Corpening, Terri Everett, Nicolette Fulton, Michael Gillespie, Taft Martin, John Meyer, and Chris Utesch**.

The thirteen students selected for the District conference will ride a bus supplied at no charge by New Hanover County, accompanied by a Rotarian chaperone. That conference will include students sponsored by the other Rotary Clubs in the seven-county District 7730.



Lucy Holman, Michael Gillespie, Terry Smith, and Matt Hillard at Trask Coliseum. For privacy reasons, the Rotary Cottage boys aren't shown.

## Rotary Cottage boys attend UNCW game as our guests

The residents of the Rotary Cottage at the Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina were the club's guests at the Nov. 30 basketball game between the UNCW Seahawks and Appalachian State's Mountaineers.

Rotarians who escorted the boys included **Michael Gillespie, Matt Hilliard, Lucy Holman, Allan Lusk, and Terry Smith**, along with Terry's wife Cheryl and Matt's daughters. The event was organized by the Boys and Girls Homes Committee.



Mimi Cunningham celebrates her \$153 win, a third of the Nov. 12 raffle pot.



Kevin Crane wins with lucky Queen of Clubs on Dec. 3.

## Raffle revision coming

Starting in January 2025, our weekly raffle will be simplified. Instead of the current four-ticket draw, which culminates with a drawing from a deck of cards, the new system will feature a single ticket, whose holder will be an instant winner. The split will be 50-50, with half of each day's pot going to the winner and half to the CART fund for Alzheimer's research.

In the old raffle's final weeks, **Mimi Cunningham** won \$153 on Nov. 12 and **Kevin Crane** \$74 on Dec. 3.

## Tiffany Kitchen confirmed as our 2026-27 president

A vote of the club's membership on Oct. 29 confirmed **Tiffany Kitchen** as president-nominee. She will take the gavel effective July 1, 2026, following **David Grandey**.

The club vote followed our Board of Directors' approval of the Nominating Committee's recommendation. David had been moved up to president-elect, to serve during the 2025-26 Rotary year, after **Debbly Gomulka** resigned from the club because of a family medical issue.

Also approved Oct. 29 was **Dale Lazar's** appointment to fill Tiffany's open seat on the Board of Directors. That term will expire June 30, 2025.

Tiffany joined the club in August 2021. She is a retired retailer. Dale joined in September 2022 after thirteen years in other Rotary Clubs. He is an intellectual property lawyer.



Tiffany Kitchen



Dale Lazar



Visitors to the Rotary Cottage during the 2024 Rotary Day at Lake Waccamaw included President Paul Lawler and Past President Nancy Bullock.

## Mark calendars: Rotary Day is March 22 at B&G Homes

Rotary Day at the Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina has been set for Sunday, March 22, 2025.

All members of this club, as well as others that have supported the Homes' Rotary Cottage, are invited. Visitors can expect to spend two or three hours on the Lake Waccamaw campus beginning around 10 a.m. The agenda for this annual event typically includes a chapel service, lunch, and a tour.

The Rotary Cottage, first built in the 1960s, recently underwent a thorough renovation.

The B&G Homes have challenged us to bring twenty to twenty-five of our members, according to B&G Homes Committee Chair **Allan Lusk**. If we succeed in reaching that number, we are likely to have the largest club delegation. Anyone interested in attending should contact Allan.

He says his committee will set up an online form for RSVPs closer to the event's date.



Paul Harris Fellows recognized on Foundation Day, Nov. 19, were (top) Joe Payne and Ken Morris, +2; Gabe Rich, +6; Tom Dodson, +4; (bottom) Nicolette Fulton, new PHF; Lynne Hershey, +1; Larry Sackett, +2; and Tolis Vardakis, +8. Not pictured: Don Wood, +1.

## Foundation donors honored with Paul Harris or 'plus' status pins

Eight members of the club were recognized as Paul Harris Fellow "plus" donors on Nov. 19, and one Rotarian became a first-time Fellow, to recognize their continuing generosity toward The Rotary Foundation.

**Nicolette Fulton** became a new Paul Harris Fellow for her \$1,000 gift to the Foundation. She received a medal and pin.

On top of the initial fellowship, each additional \$1,000 merits "plus" status, and more pins. Those honored were:



**Tolis Vardakis**, Plus Eight, for \$9,000 in giving. He is also a Paul Harris Society member, having pledged to give \$1,000 a year for ten years.

**Gabe Rich**, Plus Six, for gifts of \$7,000.

Past President **Tom Dodson**, Plus Four, representing \$5,000 in Foundation giving.

**Ken Morris**, **Joe Payne**, and **Larry Sackett**, Plus Two, for \$3,000 in gifts.

**Lynne Hershey** and **Don Wood**, Plus One, for \$2,000 in Foundation giving.

## A challenge on our support for RI Foundation

The club is falling short of its goals for giving to The Rotary Foundation, according to a Nov. 19 report by our Foundation Committee, delivered by co-chair **Ramona Farrell**. Unlike some smaller clubs in District 7730, not all of our members contribute to the Foundation every year. Increasing the percentage of members who give is the committee's first and most important goal.

Based on a fundraising analysis for the first half of the 2024-25 Rotary year, our contributions through early December totaled \$14,914. That averages to a bit less than \$94 per person so far, including both the Annual Fund and the dedicated Polio Plus Fund.

Despite a goal that we give an average of \$150 per member to the Annual Fund, our last accounting showed actual contributions of \$83 per capita. That compares to \$79 for District 7730 as a whole.

We are about halfway to our goal of adding seven new Paul Harris Fellows to the club's total of 112. We have honored three new Fellows so far, most recently on Nov. 19. Other goals: Add another major donor—giving \$10,000—to the club's current ten and add another Paul Harris Society member. We met that goal when a member pledged to donate \$1,000 a year for ten years.

A final goal is to support District 7730's expectation that every Rotarian support the district's goal for Polio Plus of \$50 per person per year.

## Highlights of international committee's recent work

In a Foundation Day presentation Nov. 19, International Project Committee Chair **Gabe Rich** offered these summaries of our club's work around the world.

**International Projects budget:**  
 2020-21 ..... \$3,500  
 2021-22 ..... \$10,500  
 2022-23 ..... \$12,500  
 2023-24 ..... \$12,500  
 2024-25 ..... \$14,000  
**Five-year total. .... \$53,000**

**Recent international projects:**  
**Central America:** Kiva micro-lending: Five years plus.

**South Sudan:** Lift up the Vulnerable: Meals and school uniforms. Three years.

**Ukraine:** Support for fourteen orphanages. Five years.

**Sierra Leone:** Rotifunk hospital and community: Aid to agriculture, hospital, health education for girls.

**Turkey:** Shelterbox: Shelter and survival gear for families displaced by war or natural disaster, most recently the 2024 earthquake.

**Rwanda:** Solid Africa: Meals for hospital patients, police and emergency workers.

**Guyana:** 2015-17 Global Grants

for rural village water supplies; water filters for an urban orphanage.

**Haiti:** Help for a partner club's medical clinic project.

**Ecuador:** Cataract surgery.

**Ghana:** Supporting a technology center in a women's school.

**Moldova:** Help for Wilmington East club for a medical library, children's health, and health education.

**Honduras:** Global grant for a diagnostic lab at Salud Hondu clinic.

For more about our Rotary Foundation goals, SEE: *story above*.

For more on our international and literacy projects, SEE: *page 1*.



Connors: Public libraries



Holman: UNCW libraries



Hickman: Air cavalry



Richey: Foundation day



Farrell: Rotary Foundation



Smith: Club's foundation



Meyer: Club history



Corpening: Justice

**Newsletter photos**  
 by Robby Collins, Donna Cameron, Heather Evans, Marty Feurer, Michael Gillespie, David Grandey, Allan Lusk, John Meyer, & Donna Shiro

## Books, libraries, war stories, justice, club's foundations & its history are program topics

Books, whether how to write them or how to make them available to the public, as well as military reminiscences and our local college's sports teams, were the subjects of our recent guest speakers' presentations. Rotarians have given programs about our charitable foundations, the club's history, and a new idea about how to prevent crime and help its victims.

How to turn your story, business history, or big idea into a book was the topic when **Dalene Beckel** spoke on Oct. 29. Her business, Living Legacies, offers ghost-writing, editing, and book design for novice authors.

**Dana Connors**, New Hanover County's library director, and Rotarian **Lucy Holman**, dean of UNCW's libraries, presented the Nov. 5 program about modern libraries' programs and services for both students and the general public.

For our special post-Veterans' Day program on Nov. 12, author and retired **Brig. Gen. Dan Hickman** spoke about his experiences in the Army's Air Cavalry during the Vietnam War.

Nov. 19 was Foundation Day. Foundation Co-Chair **R.B. Richey** introduced the program, with details about the international Rotary Foundation from Co-Chair **Ramona Farrell** and about our club's non-profit foundation from its president, Rotarian **Terry Smith**. The chairs of our International Projects and Literacy committees followed up on how they are using funds from both foundations. For more on this program, SEE: *page 1* and *page 6*.

On Nov. 26, with the club approaching its 110th anniversary, Rotarian **John Meyer** presented a summary of our club's history since 1915. He was the editor of our centennial history book, published in April 2015.

Two Rotarians, District Court **Judge J. Corpening** and former District Attorney **Ben David**, spoke Dec. 3 about the Community Justice Center, a project aimed at empowering crime victims and offering alternatives to prison for offenders.

Seahawk athletics, planned upgrades to campus sports facilities, and the challenges of new rules on compensation for student athletes were the program topics on Dec. 10, when UNC-Wilmington Director of Athletics **Michael Oblinger** was our speaker.

The Nov. 26 program was largely based on our club's centennial history book, published in 2015. Some hard copies remain available; new members can obtain one from the Membership Committee. The book's full content is also available online. Look for the 'Club History' page on the club website: [www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org](http://www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org).



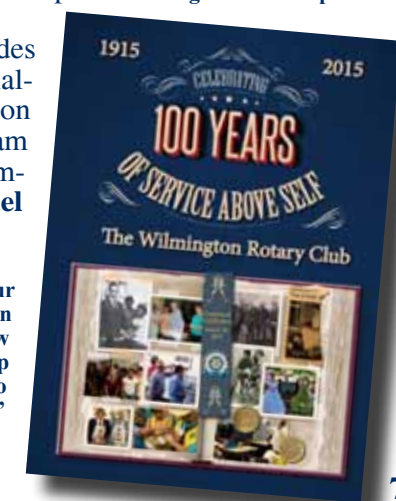
Beckel: writing your book



David: Community



Oblinger: UNCW sports



## Upcoming programs & events

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

Family holiday party, featuring food, fun, a festive clothing contest, a raffle, prizes, and entertainment.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24

No meeting. Christmas holiday break.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31

No meeting. New Year's holiday break.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

Economic outlook for the region, with UNC-Wilmington economics professor **Dr. Mouhcine Guettabi**.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

Encouraging native plantings and protecting trees, with **Margee Herring** of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees.

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

Board of Directors meeting, 5:15 p.m., LS3P Architects conference room, 101 N. Third Street, Fifth Floor.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

Trends in logistics, shipping and transportation, with **Ryan Legg**, founder and CEO of MegaCorp.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

Our hospital at a crossroads, with **Dr. Jon Martell** of the Five Star Project, a critic of Novant's management.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

Fifth Wednesday social, 5-7 p.m., venue to be announced.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

World-wide service and a global grant, with Rotarian **Gabe Rich** of our International Projects Committee.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Who is getting money from our hospital's sale, with **Dan Winslow** of the New Hanover Community Endowment.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Board of Directors meeting, 5:15 p.m., LS3P Architects conference room, 101 N. Third Street, Fifth Floor.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

A Wilmington-grown financial software start-up comes of age, with **Pierre Naudé**, CEO of nCino, Inc.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

Rotary Day at the Boys & Girls Homes of N.C. Tentative start 10 a.m. at the Homes' Lake Waccamaw campus.

TUESDAY, MAY 13

Leaders in Service banquet, 6 p.m., Burney Center at UNC-Wilmington. Tickets on sale spring 2025.

For updates, see [www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org](http://www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org)

## Rotary news briefs

**Attractions book sales aid hurricane relief.** The club sold forty-four of the Attractions coupon books this fall, keeping half of the \$30 cover price. George Gates reports that our \$660 total was added to the club's previous \$12,000-plus contributions toward Hurricane Helene relief in western North Carolina. Of that, \$5,000 came from club funds; the rest was from members.

**Blood shortages remain, drives to go on:** A special two-day blood drive, sponsored by area civic groups including this club, will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 19 and 26 at Independence Mall. Donations will be collected next to Aveda in the mall's Dillard's wing. Wilmington's Rotary Clubs, along with Kiwanians and Masons, are sponsoring these drives. The most recent was held Nov. 21. That brought in 35 pints of whole blood, for a total for the fifty monthly drives so far of 1,885 units!

**Website adds search function.** Looking for specific information about the club, or downloadable materials like document templates, logos, or club reports? A new search window, using Google technology, makes our website's contents fully searchable. [www.wilmingtonrotaryclub.org](http://www.wilmingtonrotaryclub.org).



Past President Donna Shiro congratulates Ally Thornton on her recent marriage at our Oct. 29 meeting.

**Member milestones: a wedding and a baby.** Rotarian Ally Thornton recently married Jim Adams; she says she will be taking his name. Also, Rotarian Alex White and his wife Amanda recently welcomed a new daughter, Georgia.

**Christmas Crawl canceled.** What was meant to be a progressive celebration through three downtown venues had to be called off Dec. 11 because of heavy rains and strong winds. The club's Social Committee had planned the Rotary Christmas Crawl to begin at the Hannah Block USO, proceed to the Children's Museum of Wilmington, and conclude at the Concorde Express Bar. "Stay tuned as the committee seeks another date," President Paul Lawler advised the membership by email.

**Holiday raffle to benefit Salvation Army.** A special raffle, with \$5 tickets and four gifts cards valued from \$50 to \$125 as prizes, will be held during the Dec. 17 holiday party. Net proceeds will go to the Salvation Army.

### Board of Directors Meeting *Get In Touch*

5:15 pm, 3rd Monday of each month  
LS3P Architects conference room  
101 N. Third Street, Fifth Floor  
Wilmington, NC 28401

President Paul Lawler . . . . 910-409-2425  
Pres.-Elect David Grandey . 910-352-2935  
Secretary Elliott O'Neal. . . . 910-397-3613  
Newsletter Editor John Meyer 910-297-7251  
Webmaster John Meyer. . . . 910-297-7251

### Submit News Items

Send photos or other information for the newsletter to [jmeyer1@ec.rr.com](mailto:jmeyer1@ec.rr.com). Please include all pertinent details: names, dates, etc.

### Website

[www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org](http://www.WilmingtonRotaryClub.org)