



At top left, past Presidents John Milkereit, John Grinalds and other dignitaries cut a ribbon to unveil the Club's Marion Square fountain. Below, Rotarians celebrate the "Day of Caring" volunteer service project in 2003. (Photos from Club files.)



The 2000s: Looking ahead to help more

Bob Baldwin and Andy Brack, contributing editors

Overview

As the new century dawned, Club members continued to provide local and state leadership, and participate in projects to better the greater Charleston area.

Membership

The Club started with 227 members at the beginning of the decade and had about the same number at the time of publication.

Projects and community service

Club members continued their valuable Rotary Reader partnership with a local elementary school to provide mentoring and help to disadvantaged students. They continued to work to support Project Living Water. They held two major "Polo for Polio" fund-raisers that benefited the Charleston Symphony Orchestra and Rotary International's efforts to wipe out polio. And they continued to provide funding to the Charleston Rotary Foundation to help provide money for a variety of charitable organizations.

Notable speakers

In the first half of the decade, members continued to have outstanding programs. Among the highlights were programs by Dr. Roger Ferguson, vice chair of the Federal Reserve System; Rudy Mancke, who discussed nature and his educational TV show;

author Josephine Humphries, who described how she always had wanted to be a writer. Other programs were on the new bridge over the Cooper River, visions of several college presidents, Sea Island cotton, literacy, fund-raising, storytelling and politics.

2000–01: Programs, service shine

President Sue Sommer-Kresse started the year by presenting four goals to the club: provide interesting programs, improve service to Sanders-Clyde Elementary School, continue international service and recruit more Rotarians.

Programs were a resounding hit. Member Bill Youngblood, who served as president of the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, gave a presentation on how the organization had completed a strategic plan and was forming a political action committee. Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. reported on improvements on the East Side and success at the S.C. Aquarium since it opened in May 2000. Local author Robert Rosen talked about the “drug abuse of history” and said history should inspire, not be used in harmful ways.

Fred Schwab, president and CEO of Porsche North America, highlighted his company’s success and discussed the impact of Charleston’s port on commerce. At another meeting, U.S. Sen. Fritz Hollings discussed his work over the years to reduce hunger. Rudy Mancke talked about nature and the program he hosted on educational television. Author Josephine Humphries discussed how she had always wanted to be a writer and discover new things. Doug Bostick described a project to save the Morris Island lighthouse.

S.C. First Lady Rachel Hodges highlighted her work to promote literacy and reading. World famous opera singer William Warfield delighted members with a rendition of “Ol’ Man River” at a June meeting.

The Club sponsored a debate between Democrat Andy Brack and Republican Henry Brown, both of whom were seeking election to U.S. Congress. The Club also heard from Sen. Ernie Passailaigue and his GOP opponent Lanneau Siegling.

Locally, service projects continued to shine. A groundbreaking for renovations to Marion Square Park was held Aug. 15, 2000.

The Club also committed to finishing raising the money to pay for a fountain at the corner of Calhoun and King streets.

The Club had a successful year of partnership with Sanders-Clyde Elementary School through its Rotary Reader program. It also provided computer training and other service throughout the year. Other service projects that moved forward were the Club's Living Water program and its Rotary Scholars program.

On Sept. 19, the Club honored Club greeter Linwood Sikes for 55 years of perfect attendance. Member Bill Nettles was honored with a District Service Award for his leadership and work with the Group Study Exchange teams. The Club had a successful cocktail party on the harbor at the Charleston Maritime Center.

By the end of the year, a dozen new Rotarians joined the Club's ranks. Money in the Charleston Rotary Fund totaled \$218,390.

Start: 227 members. End: 212 members.

2001–02: Water, fund-raising projects noted

During the term of President Debbie Sisco, Club members kept busy on international and local projects.

During a March meeting, member George Greene and his wife, Molly, outlined how Water Missions International, their nonprofit relief organization, was working to bring clean water to rural communities in developing countries. The organization developed transportable water treatment units to provide clean water – something that Greene said 20 percent of the world's population didn't have. The Charleston Club, in coordination with the Mount Pleasant Club, sponsored four units for communities in Ecuador. In a separate meeting earlier in the year, the Club honored Greene for his exceptional vocational service.

Locally, members started a new fund-raising event to benefit Rotary International's Polio-Plus program and the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. Headed by Mark Smith, the Club's Polo for Polio project raised more than \$10,000 in its first year during a May event.

Other accomplishments during the year included a "soup day" in which the club donated savings on lunch to a project that was

SPOTLIGHT:**Members work more on area projects**

1980s. Saul Krawcheck, a former member of the Club and the son of Jack Krawcheck, led a money-raising campaign in the Eighties to enhance the beauty of Wraggsborough Square in Charleston. His tireless efforts paid off when a fountain was built and dedicated on Oct. 15, 1990.

1990s. During this decade, Club members were challenged by Charleston City Council member Yvonne Evans to again help beautify Marion Square. A half century earlier, Club members were key to a project to reshape Marion Square, but by the Nineties, more work was needed. Because the City was planning to renovate Marion Square completely, members of the Charleston Club decided to donate a fountain, which would be placed at the corner of King and Calhoun streets. Members agreed the fountain would greatly enhance the beauty of Marion Square.

The Club's goal was to raise \$100,000, which would be matched by the City. Members held various fund-raising events – Club drawings, auctions and the like. The most notable event was a concert in the Gaillard Auditorium, which was called “The Three Coins in the Fountain” concert. Thanks to the efforts of members of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, who donated their services, the Club raised \$16,000 toward the goal.

Following a meeting in the former luncheon meeting location of the Club, the Francis Marion Hotel, members dedicated the fountain on Nov. 26, 2002. The finishing component of the fountain, a statue for the center, is part of the Club's Centennial Project to celebrate Rotary International's 100th anniversary. The statue is scheduled to be unveiled by 2006.

-- Andy Brack

able to provide 35,000 meals in third-world countries. Leslie Fellabom was named Rotarian of the Year. And the Charleston Rotary Fund grew to \$292,314.

The Rotary Readers program continued to be a success with past president John Milkereit at the helm. The Club also honored 19 Rotary Scholars, each of whom was a senior in an area public or private high school.

Club members also heard several exciting programs. Rotary International President Richard King fired up Rotarians July 24 at a joint meeting of area clubs. He challenged clubs to boost membership by targeting young professionals and businesspeople.

In other speeches, developer John Knott talked about the new redevelopment "Noisette" project in North Charleston. During another meeting, several speakers debated a Unified Development Ordinance aimed at controlling sprawling growth. Bobby Clair provided members with a behind-the-scenes look at construction progress on the new Cooper River bridge.

Santee Cooper CEO John Tiencken spoke about the California energy crisis and assured members that South Carolina's power needs would be met. College of Charleston basketball coach John Kresse talked about the benefits of athletics. S.C. House Ways & Means Chairman Bobby Harrell outlined the tough budget year ahead for the state due to the economic slowdown. Member Jimmy Stuckey provided an enlightening presentation about the history of the Club. North Charleston businessman Gene Ott gave an interesting talk on the Angel Flight program through which local pilots provided free air transportation to families for medical care not available in their communities.

Longtime Club greeter Linwood Sikes, who had 55 years of perfect attendance, passed away during the year. Jerry Nuss wrote in the *Keyway*, "His warm smile, his firm handshake and his cheerful, 'Hello Jerry, how are you?' [started] out each meeting with an uplifting note."

During the year, the Club moved meeting locations from the Rifle Club to the Alumni House at The Citadel.

Start: 212 members. End: 209 members.

2002–03: Marion Square fountain dedicated

In November, the Club dedicated a new fountain at Marion Square. Surrounding the fountain is a stone circular bench, symbolizing a Rotary wheel. The words of the Four-Way Test are engraved on the seats. Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. praised members for their work when he noted, "Because of the generosity and leadership of the Rotary Club of Charleston, we not only have this restored space with this beautiful fountain, but we also have these inspirational words for everyone."

Over the previous six years, Club members raised \$100,000 toward the construction of the fountain, a key component of the \$4 million renovation of the park. Through the years, the Club has been an integral player in the Marion Square area, from 1920 when members helped fund construction of the Francis Marion Hotel to 1948 when it raised \$10,000 to renovate the park with more than 10,000 plants and shrubs.

Also in November, S.C. Educational Television highlighted the Gift of Life program, which started in the mid-1980s due to hard work by Rotarians from the Charleston Club and other district clubs. The documentary described how it helped children get treatment they otherwise couldn't afford. It highlighted how the program had been adopted by clubs across the world.

President John Grinalds opened the year by encouraging members to lead by example. "Youths are our future and whatever we can do to bring them up in the ideals we espouse in Rotary will help our community," he said.

A series of programs featured top state educators. New University of South Carolina President Andrew Sorenson brought his "bow tie tour" to the Club as he outlined a vision for the school that was filled with partnerships and collaboration. Later in the year, new College of Charleston President Lee Higdon outlined his vision for more student-centered learning at the college. MUSC President Ray Greenberg said the university's impact on the local economy was worth \$1.6 billion. Trident Tech President Mary Thornley described how the college offered more to students and employers than ever before.

Club member Ted Creech, BellSouth's local top executive, highlighted communications infrastructure challenges. Club member Bernie Groseclose explained how security at the port was tighter than ever. Marketing consultant Rebecca Gonzales spoke about the emerging Hispanic market in South Carolina. Renowned artist Jonathan Green told about how his art would come to life in a new ballet.

Several programs highlighted local and national efforts in the battle against terrorism. Maj. Gen. Steve Siegfried, South Carolina's director of homeland security, outlined how better information could help win the war on terrorism.

Langhorne "Tony" Motley, the former U.S. ambassador to Brazil, described how embassies play a key role in the nation's war on terrorism. Another series of programs that featured economist Al Parish, Charleston Regional Development Alliance CEO David Ginn and ThinkTEC's Bobby Pearce focused on the region's economic growth.

Steve Hutchinson, chairman and CEO of GenPhar in Mount Pleasant, described how his biotech company was on the cutting edge of medicine. S.C. Aquarium Executive Director Chris Andrews provided insight into the facility, which had grown into the area's largest attraction.

The Club continued its business education partnership at Sanders-Clyde Elementary School with its Rotary Reader program and the HOSTS program, which provides one-to-one mentoring.

Club members also supported the second Polo for Polio fundraiser, which raised money to help fund the Charleston Symphony Orchestra and to help Rotary International efforts to wipe out polio. The event generated more than \$17,000 before expenses.

Club executive secretary Carroll Schweers was named Rotary District 7770's Secretary of the Year at the District Conference. The Club also received the presidential citation, governor's citation. Its Keyway was named best in the district.

Start: 209 members. End: 217 members.

2003–04: Club attracts big-name speakers

Under the leadership of President Anita Zucker, who opened each meeting with a historical tidbit of the Club's past, members heard from a wide range of important local, state and national speakers.

In federal affairs, U.S. Reps. Henry Brown and James Clyburn discussed the energy crisis and heritage tourism, respectively, in different meetings. U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham recounted his first year in the Senate. The Club also welcomed multiple politicians seeking the U.S. Senate seat of retiring Sen. Fritz Hollings. Among those who spoke were Charles Condon, Jim DeMint, Thomas Ravenel, David Beasley and Inez Tenenbaum.

Gov. Mark Sanford stressed the need for South Carolinians to work together on issues. Members also heard from five mayoral candidates in a special luncheon forum. Charleston Municipal Judge Michael Molony told members why the unique livability court was receiving national attention.

In a variety of speeches related to national security, Army Col. Will Grimsley, son of past president Alex Grimsley, told first-person tales about Operation Iraqi Freedom. James Ward, executive director of SPAWAR, outlined how the local space and naval warfare command was making huge contributions to the nation's national security efforts. During another program, Robert Zalaskus, commanding officer of the Charleston Naval Weapons Station, outlined how it supported the Iraq war.

Members also heard luncheon programs on literacy, Sea Island cotton, fund-raising, the Roper–St. Francis health care system, changes at the Gibbes Art museum, storytelling and the Star Gospel Mission's 100th year. Other programs focused on the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the new Charleston School of Law, healthy lifestyles and an update on educational television from SCETV President Moss Bresnahan.

Sue Sommer-Kresse was named the Rotarian of the Year for 2002–03 for all of her contributions to Rotary and the community. Member Ted Creech received the 2002–03 Vocational Service Award from the Summerville-Oakbrook Rotary Club for his "unselfish service to his profession and community."

Charleston area clubs contributed 176 units of blood in a competition with the Columbia clubs, which came in second with 159 units. Margaret MacDonald reported that 16 members of the Club's Interact Club at Ashley Hall participated in a beach cleanup at Folly Beach.

The Club also honored top students with Rotary Scholar awards and recognized the local school district's teacher of the year. The Club also thanked Magnus Monsen for his 35 years of help in preparing annual audits.

Club members enjoyed a fall oyster roast and a spring social at the City Art Gallery on Prioleau Street.

During the year, the Club provided more than 350 holiday gifts to needy senior citizens, helped with several projects at Fraser Elementary School, lauded the installation of water purification machines in Ecuador, contributed to Alzheimer's research and participated in the Red Cross blood drive. The Club won the presidential citation, district governor citation and awards for best Club secretary and electronic bulletin.

At the end of her tenure as president, Zucker recalled, "We were able to achieve our foundation goals and our commitment to fighting polio. Sharing our club's history through 'Rotary Moments' was special to me....The impact we have had on the entire Charleston region is amazing."

Start: 217 members. End: 225 members.

2004–05: Club celebrates Rotary centennial

As Mark Smith took over the presidency in July, he outlined several goals: continuing a focus on literacy, showcasing members' workplaces to fellow Rotarians, establishing a sister Club relationship and substantially increasing the base of the Charleston Rotary Fund by raising \$100,000.

During Smith's term, the Club became a sister club with Rotarians in Brisbane, Australia. Brisbane is the capital of Queensland, which is South Carolina's sister state. Smith's term also featured several successful open houses at members' businesses.

Also during his term, five members joined the new Paul Harris Society and 30 became Paul Harris Fellows. Club executive

secretary Carroll Schweers was surprised in January with a Paul Harris Fellowship from the club.

Club members attended a special "Black & White Centennial Ball Gala" on Feb. 23, 2005, at the Francis Marion Hotel to mark Rotary International's 100th anniversary and the 85th year of the Rotary Club of Charleston. In April, each member received a hardback copy of *Service Above Self*, a history of the Rotary Club of Charleston from its founding in 1920. Among members who worked to compile the history were David Abel, Bob Baldwin, Andy Brack (editor), Amy Jenkins, Peter Lucash, John Milkereit and Jerry Nuss.

Rotarians also were to celebrate a charity Casino Night in January 2005 to help raise money for the Fund. But when the State Law Enforcement Division balked because it claimed proposed blackjack and other games could violate the state's gambling laws, club members changed the event to a "Las Vegas-style show." It was a success.

In response to a cataclysmic Pacific tsunami, club members and the Charleston Rotary Fund gave \$20,000 for tsunami relief to buy two water-purification machines through a Living Water/Water Missions International.

Throughout the year, members heard a wide variety of speeches, including a stimulating talk from Dr. Roger Ferguson, the vice chairman of the board of governors of the Federal Reserve System. He outlined various factors that influenced business development and suggested the future was relatively positive for economic activity.

Robert Clement III, son of member Bob Clement, gave an engaging talk on the Magnolia/Silver Hill redevelopment effort to turn the Charleston Neck area into an economic generator. State Sen. Glenn McConnell reported on efforts to restructure state government, while House Ways and Means Chairman Bobby Harrell discussed economic development. White House reporter Bob Deans of Cox Newspapers, whose early career included working in Charleston, regaled members with stories of being a political reporter. Member Robert Freer outlined his think tank, the Free Enterprise Foundation.

State Attorney General Henry McMaster outlined what his office was doing to curb domestic violence. Retired U.S. Sen. Fritz Hollings outlined threats and challenges in the Middle East.

English Professor Jim Hutchisson of The Citadel spoke on the importance of Charleston's literary Renaissance in the 1920s. Other talks focused on the Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy, led by member Rob Dewey; the local Education Foundation; the state Democratic Party; Social Security; and the region's energy needs. Club members also heard pros and cons on a half-cent sales tax referendum that eventually passed in November.

Start: 225 members. End: 233 members.

2005–06: Multiple goals accomplished

New President Earl Walker set an ambitious agenda with 28 goals for the club to accomplish during the year, which had the theme, "Rotary Renewal: Regeneration and Rejuvenation."

By year's end, all but one goal had been accomplished, which was deferred a year. Noted Walker in his end-of-term speech, "Among our accomplishments are growth of the club to 250 members, adding many new younger members of the Club, raising over \$13,000 for Katrina Relief, an every-member canvass to increase service from Rotarians, improving our Web site, improving the Keyway with more writers and more pictures, making information on all Rotarians more available through electronic files, selecting a new Rotary Project and expanding our Club orientation to focus more on service."

During the year, members also nominated more than 25 potential projects to become the Club's big volunteer project for the decade. After members of the committee met several times to discuss a lot of worthy projects, they agreed to help fund a new production kitchen at the Lowcountry Food Bank -- after the club met its obligation to raise money for a statue inside the Rotary fountain at Marion Square.

Just as members dug deep into their pockets the previous year to help provide money for tsunami relief, members responded in

late 2005 generously to help victims of Hurricane Katrina by giving more than \$13,000.

Club member Tom Sweeny and others organized the first Charleston Rotary Leaders forum, which more than 200 people attended in February to learn about seniors and aging issues.

Member Anita Zucker was named the club's "Rotarian of the Year." A past president, Zucker has been intricately involved in community activities, including helping to plan the District Rotary conference. Club members donated time generously to organize and staff the district conference, which was held at the Francis Marion Hotel on March 24-26, 2006. U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint was keynote speaker.

Club members also met at the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce for a July 2005 meeting and learned the Chamber and its 2,500 members is one of the oldest in the country. A March 2006 club social featured an oyster roast at the Charleston Maritime Center.

Among the speakers during the year were Ellen Berlin and Bob Prenner, who spoke on men's and women's fashions; Marvin Dulaney on the Avery Research Center for African American History; Pam Zarask discussed security at the Port of Charleston; Nathalie DuPree and Angel Postell gave an overview of the new Charleston Food and Wine Festival; member Rob Dewey gave a moving talk on his experiences to help people in Mississippi affected by Hurricane Katrina; and Molly Greene gave an update on Water Missions International's clean water efforts.

Members also heard during the year from Stephanie Wheeler, a College of Charleston student who was our Ambassadorial Scholar to the University of South Africa School of Public Health. Also: Skip Godow outlined graduate degrees available at the Lowcountry Graduate Center; Ports Authority director and club member Bernie Groseclose gave an update on port expansion; House Speaker Bobby Harrell outlined his vision for his first term as leader of the S.C. House; and Charleston Police Department officer Tommy Rivers gave a riveting talk on crime and gangs in the peninsula.

The club again sponsored a Holiday Gift Tree for seniors at the Charleston Senior Citizens Center.

Start: 233 members. End: 251 members.