

Rotary This Week!



Utica, NY, USA

May 20, 2024

Utica Rotary announces 'Service Above Self' honorees



Felix LaBella

The Rotary Club of Utica is pleased to announce that **Felix LaBella** and **Michelle McCarrick Truett** are the recipients of the 2024 'Service Above Self' Awards. LaBella and Truett will be recognized at the Club's Third Annual 'Service Above Self' Gala, presented by the SBS Marketing Group, on June 7 at the Stanley Theatre.

"Our Service Above Self Award winners embody the spirit of Rotary community service, and inspire us to become better versions of ourselves," said Joe Caruso, awards committee chair. *SEE PAGE 2.*



Michelle Truett

Rotary Clubs to honor teachers on June 6

Rotary will honor local teachers at its annual Outstanding Educators Awards luncheon, which this year takes place at noon on Thursday, June 6, at the Irish Cultural Center in Utica. The program is a joint effort of the Rotary Clubs of Utica, North Utica/

Whitestown, New Hartford and Sauquoit.

Rotarians are encouraged to turn out in support of recognizing outstanding teachers. The cost of the luncheon is \$25. Please make your reservation at UticaRotary.org. *SEE PAGE 3.*



Last week's meeting featured Mary Stronach on her Africa trip and Clinton student Matt King. *SEE PAGE 4.*

Deadline for next newsletter (5/27) is Saturday, May 25 at 3 p.m.; submit to news@uticarotaryclub.org.

Editor Robert Stronach



TAKE ACTION: www.uticarotary.org

Utica Rotary to honor LaBella and Truett at Gala

By Joe Abraham

The Rotary Club of Utica will honor Felix LaBella and Michelle McCarrick Truett with its 2024 ‘Service Above Self’ Awards.

They will receive the awards during the Club’s Third Annual ‘Service Above Self’ Gala, presented by the SBS Marketing Group, on June 7 at the Stanley Theatre.

“Our ‘Service Above Self’ Award winners embody the spirit of Rotary community service, and inspire us to become better versions of ourselves,” said Joe Caruso, awards committee chair.

LaBella, a land surveyor by day, has dedicated countless hours to helping the area’s homeless population through his involvement with the Rescue Mission and Cornerstone Community Church, collecting and coordinating donations of food and clothing to help those most vulnerable.

Truett, owner of 484 Design, is involved in several causes including bringing music, culture and the arts to the community through the Levitt AMP Music Series; inspiring local youth as an instructor at the Mohawk Valley Community College’s Young Entrepreneurs Academy; and starting the Run Against Racism, a 5K promoting unity.

“Felix and Michelle are rockstars that set a positive example for all of us to follow,” said Stephen Turnbull, chair of the Rotary of Utica’s Gala committee. “We can’t wait to celebrate them and all the good they’ve done in our community on the Stanley stage at this year’s Gala.”

The ‘Service Above Self’ Award, presented at the Gala annually, recognizes individuals for their tremendous service to the community. Past winners of this award are the late Patrick Johnson (2021), Sister Elizabeth Greim (2022), and James Hamer (2023).

This year’s Gala benefits the ‘Arts for Many Hearts’ program at the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL). The black-tie event, held at the majestic Stanley Theatre in Downtown Utica, begins with Red Carpet treatment as guests arrive, followed by a cocktail hour, live music by Soul Injection, and a seated dinner on The Stanley’s stage. Tickets are \$150 per person, and going fast! Make sure to get yours before the May 24th ticket deadline.

For more info about the Gala, visit: uticarotary.org/page/service-above-self-gala-1.



Felix LaBella, left, with other volunteers at the Rescue Mission of Utica.



Michelle Truett, center, with Young Entrepreneurs Academy students.

OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS AWARDS PROGRAM

Rotary to honor teachers on June 6

Rotary will honor local teachers at its annual Outstanding Educators Awards luncheon, which this year takes place at noon on Thursday, June 6, at the Irish Cultural Center in Utica. The program is a joint effort of the Rotary Clubs of Utica, North Utica-Whitestown, New Hartford and Sauquoit.

Rotarians are encouraged to turn out in support of recognizing outstanding teachers. The cost of the luncheon is \$25. (*Go to Utica Rotary website or click on image below.*)

Utica Rotary's Outstanding Educators Chair Bart Gorman explains that the joint committee works with future leaders of our community and honors those who help mold them.



At each of two Rotary membership meetings over the school year, two students from each of seven area high schools are given an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Rotary members, and to learn about Rotary's community, regional and international services, which are the fulfillment of the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self."

The committee then organizes an end-of-the-school-year luncheon to

honor outstanding educators nominated by those students.

They're asked to select teachers who they believe exemplify the Rotary motto, **Service Above Self**, and the values of Rotary as expressed in its **Four Way Test** (*Is it the Truth? Is it Fair to all concerned? Will it build Goodwill and better Friendships? Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?*)

OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS PROGRAM



Get your tickets for the Outstanding Educators Awards Luncheon, scheduled for noon on Thursday, June 6, 2024 at the Irish Cultural Center in Utica.



OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS LUNCHEON

Get your tickets to the Outstanding Educators Awards Luncheon, noon, Thursday, June 6, 2024.

Lunch Tickets
One Ticket \$25.00 USD

Pay Now



Calendar of Events

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 5/23 | Club Social Green Onion Pub
5:30 pm | 6/19 | Board Meeting
noon Greater Utica Chamber |
| 6/6 | Meeting Outstanding Educators
noon Five Points Public House/
Irish Cultural Center | 6/20 | Meeting Allen Wilcox from
The Theatre at Woodhill
noon Mid-York Library |
| 6/7 | Service Above Self Gala
6:00 – 11:00 pm The Stanley | 6/27 | Club Social TBA
5:30 pm |

MEETING RECAP

Entrepreneurial spirit a topic for both student & guest speaker

Clinton High School student Matt King returned to Utica Rotary last Thursday with fellow student Aiden Soika and was introduced by Outstanding Educators Program Chair Bart Gorman.

Matt spoke about his volunteering and his love for baseball, basketball and soccer. He expressed how he wanted to be an entrepreneur, especially something sports-related as he's an athlete and would be studying finance in college.

That entrepreneur comment prompted guest speaker Mary Stronach to open her presentation by speaking directly to Matt and saying she saw the passion and spirit of "entrepreneurship" when visiting Nigeria in April.

Despite rampant poverty and village upon village of shacks and war-torn buildings, she witnessed joyful people determined to provide for their families by going out onto the streets hawking wares of all sorts – from water and food to a



Clinton High School senior Matt King.

variety of crafts.

She mentioned how bribery appeared to be commonly accepted – from officials at the airport in Lagos to several police roadblocks along the six-hour drive to Benin City. "Do you have anything for me?" was the question. Fortunately, her two Franciscan friar escorts got her through all these so-called bumps in the road.

Secular Franciscans from far and wide came to meet with her in Benin City. In fact, as her car pulled

up to the meeting place, she could hear them inside," She's here, she's here!"

A number of people came running out and greeted her with full embraces, calling her "mama", and once inside, they welcomed her with song and dance.

As vice minister general of the Rome-headquartered Secular Franciscan Order, Mary was there to oversee the election of national leaders of the order in Nigeria. *Continued on next page.*



Mary Stronach

MEETING RECAP

Continued from previous page.

Afterwards, she was subjected to a seemingly endless series of selfies and picture-taking. “Everyone wanted to have a picture,” she quipped.

She stayed at a Franciscan friary that night, where electricity was turned off at 10:30 p.m. The friary was in a walled compound topped by razor wire. They hadn’t experienced any problems but it’s there as a precaution, she said, especially since there has been a series of kidnappings in northern Nigeria. (Human Rights Watch reported that armed groups have abducted nearly 1,000 people so far in 2024, including nearly 300 children.)

The next day she returned to Lagos to take a short flight to the port city of Lomé, Togo’s capital. While there were still signs of poverty, economic conditions were improved and some prosperity was evident. And she said she received unexpected VIP treatment in the French-speaking nation. As she got

off the plane, she was greeted by a young woman who took her to the VIP lounge, retrieved her luggage, and escorted her through customs. She was then escorted to a waiting limousine, which took her to a retreat house where she would spend several days meeting with Secular Franciscans from all over the country as well as the local bishop, whom she described as an incredible personality who spoke a number of languages and was known for his singing and guitar playing.

While the electricity stayed on after 10:30 p.m. in Togo, she had the delight of being awoken for 6 a.m. services every morning not by an alarm clock nor someone pounding on the door, but by the rhythmic sounds of African drums.

The weather in both English-speaking Nigeria and French-speaking Togo was very hot and humid. Normally not a beer drinker, she noted, she found the local brew to be quite refreshing as

the temperature topped 108 degrees Fahrenheit. And the meals featured fish for breakfast, lunch and dinner – especially smoked mackerel and fish stew.

Before departing for Rome for meetings in the Eternal City, Mary noted that a Secular Franciscan couple presented her with an African dress made by their daughter. When she tried on the dress, she said she was concerned that it fell a little too low, revealing more skin than was comfortable; but the mother took her aside, made a few quick adjustments, and she wore it proudly to one of the last gatherings there.

One of her biggest challenges was understanding and speaking French. Even though she speaks Italian and Spanish fluently, her French is a lot rougher, she said.

Even so, she gave a 40-minute closing speech all in French.

“I told them, ‘pardon my French,’” she laughed.



3rd
Annual!

SERVICE ABOVE SELF Gala



- Red carpet
- LIVE music by Soul Injection
- Seated dinner on Stanley stage
- 1 hour of cocktail open bar

When:

Friday June 7th 6-11pm

Where:

The Stanley Theatre
259 Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13502

Gala Presented By:



Proceeds to benefit:



Purchase tickets @uticarotary.org



Hosted By:



3rd
Annual!

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Gala



Sponsorships!

Presenting Sponsor: \$5,000

- Presenting Name
- 8 Tickets (table included)
- Promotional video applied to business
- Logo on Stage backdrop & marquee night of event
- Logo on Thank you card
- Name on all advertising and promotion
- Social media thank you

Silver Sponsor - \$1,000

- 2 Tickets included
- Name on all advertising and promotion
- Logo & name recognition at event
- Social media thank you

Corporate Table \$1,200

- Seats 8

Gold Sponsor - \$2,500

(only 4 sold)

- 4 tickets included
- Naming sponsor (*Dinner, Cocktail, Award or Music*)
- Name on all advertising & promotion
- Verbal recognition at event
- Information table in lobby at event
- Logo & name recognition at event
- Social media thank you

Bronze Sponsor - \$500

- Logo & name recognition at event
- Social media thank you

Donations @ uticarotary.org

Rotary
Club of Utica



Proceeds to benefit:

