

**MEETING OF APRIL 1, 2008**  
**Minutes of Meeting of March 25, 2008**

- President Freddy Walter presided over the meeting.
- Frances Farmer offered an invocation.
- Felecia Warren led the Club in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Valerie Sartin welcomed visiting Rotarians and guests: Lisa Slay was a guest of Travis Sisson and Dr Joshua Otaigbe was a guest of Susan Light.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 1) The president thanked Heath Hillman and Dan Henley as greeters.
- 2) Visiting guest Lisa Slay asked if anyone knew of a strong woman. Wesley Medical Center joined with Lifetime Television for Women, Comcast Cable and local event sponsors, Women's Pavilion and Lights Jewelers, to honor 5 strong women from our area who have shown extraordinary character. If you know of strong women, you would like to nominate, please call (601) 261-5750 for more information. Deadline for applications is April 15, 2008.
- 3) Steve Ramp introduced Joshua Otaigbe as a new member of the Rotary Club. He is with the University of Southern Mississippi. Susan Light will be his mentor.

**LAST WEEK'S PROGRAM**

Dan Kibodeaux introduced Andrea Dixon, the Executive Director of Hattiesburg Area Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity has been building houses for 32 years in

over 100 counties. The motto is building lives, one home, one family, one community at a time. Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity has helped families with low income, over crowded, unsafe, inadequate and substandard living conditions. The applicant must possess three basic criteria's. They must have a need, the ability to pay for the home and the willingness to partner. It takes "450 sweat equity" hours and Habitat for Humanity educates on home ownership, budgeting, insurances, and home maintenance to name a few. The NBA has sponsored 10 houses and out of those, 7 are in our area.

The local office with a staff of nine, located at 5191 Hwy 42, has helped 40 area families. The goal is to build 10-12 houses this year and 15 in 2009.

A few static's about our area: population of approximately 160,000 in the area, the average home price is \$114,000.00, 63% earn less than \$30,000.00 a year, area ranked 25<sup>th</sup> highest in poverty rate, 80% heavy to sever cost burden, 30%-40% of income goes to rent, 35% of rental units older than 1970 and 5% of that is below substandard.

The first home store in Mississippi for Habitat for Humanity is located here in Hattiesburg.

**THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM**  
**Speaker to be announced**

**MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR**

**The best of Times**

In the nearly two years of gubernatorial responsibilities, what constitutes the "best of times" for a Rotary district governor?

No doubt, that would be RIGHT NOW, a little over two weeks from the district conference.

Yes, PETS, leadership conferences, membership and Foundation seminars, and especially visiting the clubs were all fun events. But nothing compares with district conference. The others involved PLANNING events; district conference CELEBRATES successes.

Our April 17-20 date came early this year. The last time I was governor eighteen years ago the conference came the final days of May, six weeks later. This allowed us a month and a half longer to fulfill our goals.

But even with a shorter service time, just wait until you hear what YOU, District 6840 Rotarians, have done! In what R. I. Director Tom Branum calls the "M & Ms" of Rotary, membership and money, we have set examples for the twenty-four districts of Zones 29 and 30. Note the resurgence in membership (pages three and four). In Rotary Foundation gifts, Chairman Rob Young of Stennis Space Center anticipates our reaching an all-time high in annual giving.

For the conference itself, we have already met our quota of rooms for Hotel Loews. In fact, they are so pleased with the response that they have consented to the Conference Committee's request that rooms continue at the special rate of \$159. If you have not called the hotel, please reserve now. Enjoy the fellowship at the hotel with a good rate.

There are still some places for the Audubon Park golf tournament, the Thursday night jazz dinner cruise, and the Cajun Cooking School and lunch on Saturday, as well as all other events.

Our hats go off to the Rotary Club of New Orleans for having already sixty registrations, a record for that historic club. They will also lead the way for our exciting International Convention in 2011.

Perhaps you are beginning to understand why, for a district governor, this is "the best of times."

**Editor: Gary Garner**