



SPOKES

Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Hattiesburg



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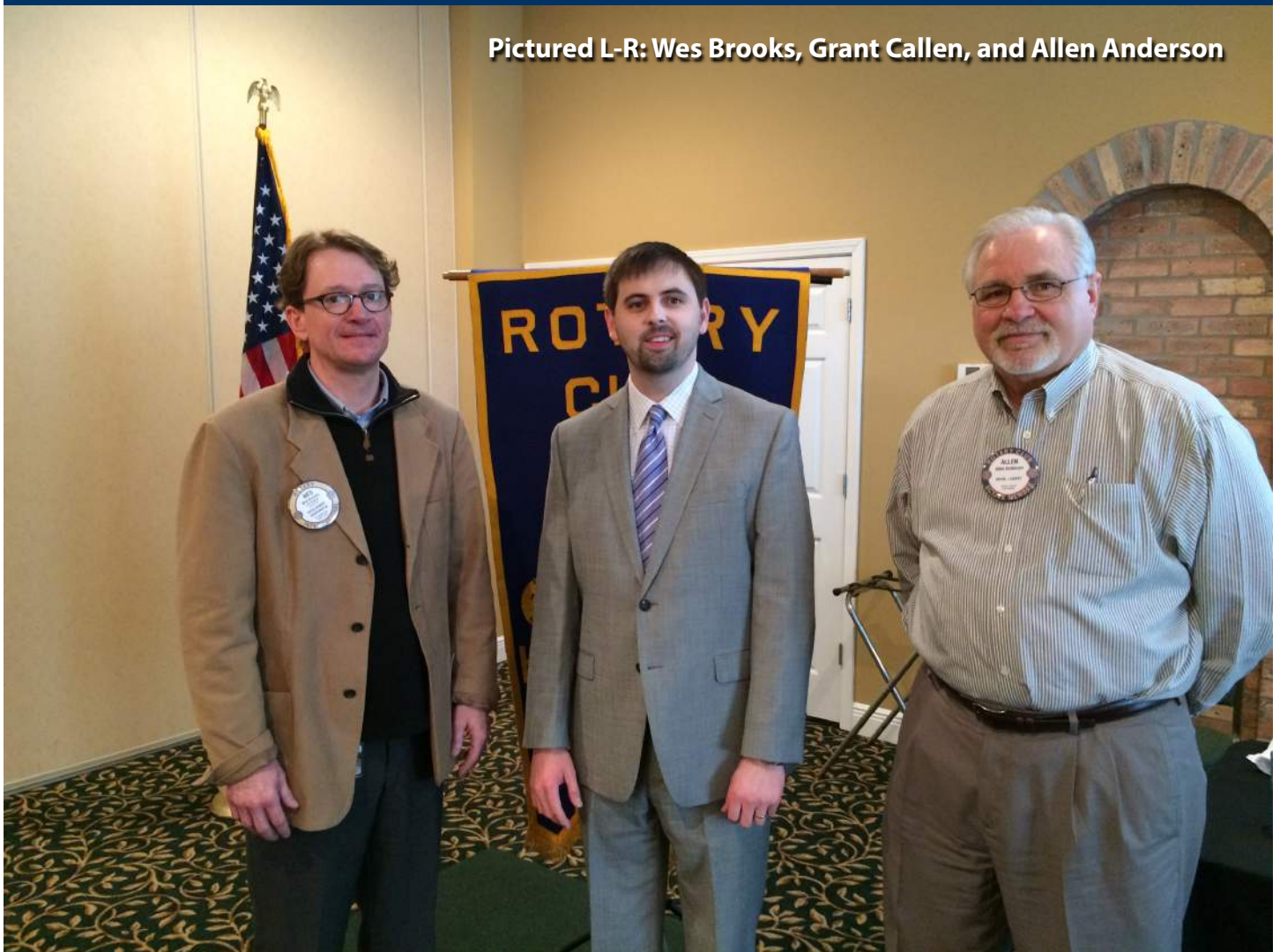
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Rotary Club of Hattiesburg
629 North Main Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

www.rotaryofhattiesburg.com

Pictured L-R: Wes Brooks, Grant Callen, and Allen Anderson



Minutes: February 3, 2015

President Wes Brooks presided over the meeting. Thanks to Paul Presley who gave the invocation and Scott Hummel who led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Thanks to Katherine Nugent for serving as our greeter today.

Aaron Ladner asked members with guests to introduce them. Scott Hummel introduced Dennis Cash, Florent Morlet and Valentine Bayh as his guests and shared that Florent Morley is visiting from Italy and Valentine Bayh is visiting from Germany. Johnny Stevens introduced his guest Jana Causey as a prospective member. Jerome Brown introduced his guest Van Jones. Melissa Phelps is a guest of Maura McLaughlin. Katherine Nugent introduced David Hayhurst who will be inducted later today.

Our speaker Grant Callen brought Chris Johnson as his guest. Chris is a candidate for District House 87.

Wes announced that April 21st is the date for our annual Night in Italy. The event benefits the Children Center for Communications and Development. More details will be available as the date grows closer. Ryan Kelly and Kristi Gould are co-chairing that committee. April, 10-12 are the dates for the 2015 District Conference. If you are interested in sponsoring, please contact Bill McLeod. We are encouraging all members to attend the conference. We would like the Hattiesburg Club to have a strong presence there.

Wes Brooks and Sean Priebe inducted David Hayhurst as a new member.

Allen Anderson introduced our guest speaker today, Grant Callen. Grant is the President of Empower Mississippi and founded the organization in 2014.

According to Grant, the goal of Empower Mississippi is to create opportunity and make Mississippi the most free and prosperous state in the nation. The organization's mission is to empower citizens to advocate for policies that help people thrive.

Grant says the organization educates and empowers citizens to ensure that Mississippians have access to quality educational opportunities and a restrained state government that operates efficiently, without an over-reliance on debt. The organization also promotes low taxes and pro-growth economic policies that reward productivity, a level economic playing field where government does not favor one company or industry

over another and minimal barriers for entrepreneurs to start a business and succeed

There are currently around 64,000 children with some type of special need in our state. Whether it is Attention Deficit Disorder, Dyslexia, Down Syndrome, etc., Mississippi is currently at the bottom of the list for educational programs and assistance for special needs children.

Mississippi is ranked as the 51st in the nation for K-12 student achievement. Our graduation rate is 75% with only 22% for the special needs children graduating high school. There are over 135,148 children who are failing in our school districts. We need more schools for the special needs children, and we need to offer parents financial assistance to assist if their child needs to attend another school.

Since 1970 there has been an increase in educational funds of about five-percent per year. Grant maintains that we keep adding money to the problem but nothing is solved. Empower Mississippi offers Educational Choice which would allow public charter schools, educational savings accounts for parents, and tax credits for scholarships.

New Orleans had the worst public school educational rating prior to Katrina. After the storm they changed all of their schools to Charter Schools. About ninety-percent of their children now attend charter schools. Their failure rate went from seventy-five to seventeen-percent. Forty-two states have already implemented the Charter School system.

Grant says his organization believes that empowering parents with education choice is an excellent option. By doing so we tear down barriers and help ensure that every Mississippi child has the opportunity to choose a quality education. By implementing policies that promote economic freedom, we remove obstacles for people to earn a living in a field of their choice says Grant. And by advocating for a fiscally responsible state government, we ensure that citizens retain more of their hard-earned money and have the resources to provide for their family.

Grant encouraged Rotarians to write to your legislators and join the movement. For more information, please visit www.empowerms.org.

*Minutes courtesy of:
Toni Lee on behalf of
Lamar Evans, Executive Secretary
Rotary Club of Hattiesburg*

Our Guest

Benjamin Morris

A native of Mississippi, Benjamin Morris is a writer and researcher whose work – poetry, fiction, plays, and essays – appears in the United States and Europe.

He is the author of *Coronary* (Fitzgerald Letterpress, 2011) and *Hattiesburg, Mississippi: A History of the Hub City* (History Press, 2014). Previously the coeditor of three anthologies of poetry and fiction from Forest Publications in Edinburgh, his work appears in such venues as *The Oxford American*, *The Rumpus*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *The New Orleans Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, and *The Scottish Review of Books*.

Among other honors, he is the recipient of a Pushcart nomination, the Academy of American Poets Prize from Duke University, and the Chancellor's Medal for Poetry from the University of Cambridge. His work has received fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission and Tulane University, a residency from A Studio in the Woods, and in 2012, shortlisting for the Crashaw Prize for Poetry from Salt Publishing.

His research work in culture and geography is based at the Open University in the United Kingdom. A graduate of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, in 2012 he was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. Presently, he is a member of the Mississippi Artist Roster.



Next Week

Dr. Benjamin Burnett
Dean, School of Education
William Carey University



UPCOMING

FEB 17	Ben Burnett, Dean, WCU School of Education
FEB 24	Jermaine Brown, Principal, Hattiesburg High School
MAR 6-7	Ole Man River P.E.T.S. (President-Elect Training Seminar)
MAR 31	Dr. Cynthia Scott, Chair, Mississippi Board of Physical Therapy
APR 10-12	2015 Rotary District Conference - "Rotary Rivage"
JUN 6-9	Rotary International Convention - Sao Paulo, Brazil
JUN 20	District 6840 Awards & Installation Ceremony



On March 6 & 7 Ole Man River Multi-District President-Elect Training Seminar (PETS) will be held at the Jackson Convention Complex, Jackson, Mississippi. Registration and other information will be announced later.

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A Night in Italy

APRIL 21

The Children's Center
FOR COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI