

November 19, 2013

# SPOKES

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF HATTIESBURG



## Extra Table: How It All Began

By Robert St. John

In 2009 I received a call from the Edwards Street Fellowship Center—a mission pantry that was helping feed 800 families a month—in my hometown of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. They had completely exhausted their food inventory and desperately needed help to make sure that they could supply their clients who would be showing up in a few days.

Being a 30-year veteran of the restaurant industry, I figured the

fastest, easiest way to get food to the pantry would be to call my Sysco sales representative, place an order, and have the truck drop-ship the order at the agency's doorstep the next day.

Unfortunately, it wasn't easy at all. Even though Sysco is the world's largest food service distributor, many of the items in their warehouse and database are large, institutional-sized Grocery products. A food pantry that is giving their

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## Leadership 2013-2014

Scott Hummel, *President*

Wes Brooks, *President-Elect*

Jennifer Payne, *Vice President*

Sean Priebe, *Secretary-Treasurer*

Brian Moore, *Sergeant-At-Arms*

Maura McLaughlin, *Past-President*

Allen Anderson

James Duncan

Chase Munro

David Owens

Lucy Parkman

Valencia Williams



*"Service Above Self"*

## Minutes: November 12, 2013

Scott Hummel presided over the meeting. Thanks to Dan Davis who gave the invocation and Wes Brooks who led the club in the Pledge of Allegiance. Thanks also to Sara Peterson and Tracie Fowler who served as our greeters today.

Brian Moore introduced today's guests. Prospective member Kemi Simmons was the guest of Tracie Fowler. Lindsay Glover was a guest of Chase Munro. Scott thanked the club members who volunteered to help this past weekend's Bike-a-Thon a success. The club is looking forward to other Bike-a-Thons in the future.

Lucy Parkman reminded members to bring their own lunch to next week's meeting. Lunch will not be served by Rotary and the money the club would have spent on lunch will be contributed to the Extra Table. Additionally, members are encouraged to bring a

## Extra Table

clients a box of dry goods to take home to prepare a hot meal for their family has no use for a 50-pound bag of rice or a six-pound can of tuna.

It took a few days to comb through the 15,000 food items in the Sysco catalogue, but I finally put together an order and had it shipped to the pantry just in time to make sure that the clients who were depending on Edwards Street to feed their families got the food they needed.

Afterward I wondered if other agencies throughout Mississippi, who were responsible for feeding those in need, were having similar problems.

To be completely honest, I was skeptical that there was a need, and wondered if we actually had a hunger problem at all. I had no difficulty believing that there were hunger issues in third-world nations halfway across the globe, but here in the United States, the richest, most prosperous country on the planet? No way. We have food stamps, WIC, welfare, and several other government assistance programs for those in need. The deeper I dug the more I learned how

wrong I was. Unfortunately, I was actually living in the state that had the most food insecurity in the nation.

As I travelled to other agencies similar to Edwards Street, I began to see the face of hunger in my state. I learned that there are seniors living on Social Security checks and fixed incomes who are— at this very moment— trying to decide between paying the electricity bill or going to the grocery store to purchase food. I met single, working mothers who were holding down two jobs trying to keep their children fed. Worst of all, I met children who were eating a school breakfast, a school lunch, and not eating again until the next day.

I had trouble reconciling that Mississippi was the fattest state in the nation and also the most food insecure. How could that be? On my tour I learned that the two— hunger and obesity— almost always go hand in hand. If one doesn't have enough money to purchase proper foods at a grocery store, he or she will go to the nearest convenience store and eat junk.

There was a problem— a huge problem.

**(Continued on pg. 4)**



**"EXTRA TABLE EXISTS  
TO END HUNGER."**

*By partnering with Sysco we are delivering brand new healthy and nutritious food-to-food pantries and soup kitchens at below wholesale prices each month. Join us in the fight against hunger.*

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### (Minutes, cont. from pg. 1)

grocery bag full of non-perishable items that will be collected and then donated to the Edwards Street Fellowship Mission. Members are encouraged to ask for their fellow employees, church members and others to consider chipping in to help with this project.

Scott congratulated Ryan Kelly on the addition of Andrew to their family. He also reported that the nominating committee has been formed and the committee will be seeking candidates for the board in the coming weeks. Those elected will begin their board service in July of 2014.

Mike Ratliff introduced today's guest speaker, Van Jones, Executive Director of the Pine Belt 360.

Van expressed his gratitude to have the opportunity to present his story to a club whose motto is "Service Above Self". Service, according to Jones is contagious and is a commandment.

Jones is one of five boys who grew up in Moorehead, MS. He was the third of the five boys and considered the Knee Baby. He says he mother told him he had the hardest head of all her sons and gave her more trouble than the others. Both of his parents were drop-out and his mother suffered abuse as a child. While in high school his father told the boys that they either had to act properly in church or not go so Van made the decision to stop his church involvement. That he says led to a ten year struggle.

For the next ten to eleven years Jones became a drug dealer. He thought he would be the only 6 foot 8 inch basketball playing drug dealer that never got caught. At the end of this period in his life he found Christianity and gave his life to Jesus. He met a man by the name of James Green who gave him the greatest opportunity of his life. Green should have kicked him off the USM basketball team many times but instead he gave him the kind of tough leadership he needed to become who he is today. Jones played basketball in thirty-nine states and two other countries. He was on the USM 2001 dream team. He had ambitions of making a fortune playing basketball.

However, an injury occurred and his life took another turn. He got involved in coaching high school basketball. For nine years he coached a team that placed 5<sup>th</sup> and then 1<sup>st</sup> in the state. Van then moved into school administration and became a principal. But he needed something else. As Jones stated, "If I'm not in purpose I have to leave what I'm doing and try something else."

He and his wife borrowed money and opened a day care and after school program. Shortly after that he became involved in an

## Mississippi Hunger

There exists in Mississippi the nations largest number of documented food insecure individuals. An astounding 28.3% of Mississippi's children are receiving a school breakfast and a school lunch, and are then going to bed hungry each night. Short falls in food are pervading the lives of 56% of individuals aged 65 and older, while hunger in our state is only on the rise. Not only is Extra Table filling the gap, but we are also compelled to provide only healthy, nutrient dense products to those in need. The foods we provide to soup kitchens and food pantries across Mississippi contain low sugar fruits, lean proteins, whole grains, and no high fructose corn syrup. While driving down hunger in Mississippi, we will simultaneously drive down obesity by getting healthy food into the hands of those who need it most.

There exist 210,350 children in Mississippi in a state of food insecurity. That is 28.3% of Mississippi children, while 21.8% of the entirety of Mississippi is choosing between paying a bill or eating dinner. The additional money required to meet the food needs of Mississippi is \$282,896,250, and there are more hungry individuals in Hinds County, MS (57,000) than there are in the entire state of North Dakota (51,850). Join us. Take a stand against hunger and stop it in its tracks. We can't help Mississippi without you.

*Article taken from [www.extratatable.org](http://www.extratatable.org)*



## Our Speaker Today



Raven Tynes is the Executive Director of Extra Table. Tynes studied at the University of Southern Mississippi obtaining a bachelors of arts in International Studies with an emphasis in Africa in 2007.

A life-long resident of Petal, MS, Tynes has always been committed to the less fortunate, having been one of the less fortunate as a child. During her time at the University of Southern Mississippi, Tynes started an organization, Six Mile Drought, to build water wells in Africa while holding down three jobs and working over 40 hours weekly.

Tynes previously worked for the Social Security Administration for 9 years, and considers her transition to Extra Table entrance into the Promised Land. She enjoys a fancy cup of coffee and currently lives in Petal, MS with her dashing handsome husband, Paul, and dachshund watchdog, Draiko.



**Extra Table (cont.)**

I approached the executive team at Sysco and proposed a question: "What if every business and home had an extra table where they could feed those in need? What would that look like?" They loved the idea, and Extra Table was born.

I took the original order I sent Edwards Street and expanded it into three, easy-to-order food bundles so that no one would need to spend two days putting together a shipment. There were two original principles that I knew Extra Table needed to follow:

1. The food must be healthy.
2. When someone donated food, 100% of that donation needed to go to purchase food. While traveling to various soup kitchens and mission pantries I learned that many of the clients wanted mac and cheese, but what was needed to live a healthy lifestyle were low-fat proteins, low-sugar fruits and healthy grains. The Extra Table food bundles had to contain those healthy foods.

In June of 2012, using a small grant given to Extra Table by Bill Ray and the Asbury Foundation, I made one of the wisest decisions of my business career and hired Raven Tynes as Extra Table's executive director. Raven— a young, dynamic woman with a burning-to-the-core desire to help feed those in need— had been working in a secure-for-life federal government position. She took a 50% pay cut, set up a desk in a spare corner of my restaurant office, and hit the ground running.

Today the Edwards Street Fellowship Center feeds over 1,200 families per month. Extra Table is shipping healthy foods to agencies— not by the pound, but— by the ton.

We host a couple of fundraisers each year to help cover our minimal administrative costs so that 100% of what our partners donate goes to purchase healthy food at wholesale prices.

After three decades in the restaurant industry, I asked myself a question: "At the end of the day, do I want to be the guy who fed people filet mignon, or do I want to be the guy who fed people canned tuna?" It's an easy answer. Canned tuna wins every time.

At Extra Table, our mission is to solve hunger. We take that challenge seriously, and— thanks to concerned citizens like you— we are meeting it head on.

**Minutes (cont.)**

Formed by a group of area leaders, Pine Belt 360 uses its resources to address challenges and opportunities in the Pine Belt. It was formed to help connect individuals, churches, and other organizations. The organization's vision is "in following the example of Jesus, we are seeking to bring about positive change to the Pine Belt area by unifying the Body of Christ to meet people's needs."

If you want to get involved, Van asks that you tell others about the organization and what it is trying to accomplish. You can also volunteer and be feet and hands on the ground to help others by using your talents. And thirdly, you can give of your treasures and can be assured that your donation will be used to help meet a wide array of community needs.

For more information or to become involved contact Van Jones by calling 601.310.1368 or by email at vanjonespb360@yahoo.com.

**Minutes, courtesy of:**

Lamar Evans, Executive Secretary  
Rotary Club of Hattiesburg

## Upcoming

**November 26**

*No Meeting*

**December 3**

*Italo Subbaro, WCU  
School of Psychiatry  
"Holiday Safety Tips"*

**December 10**

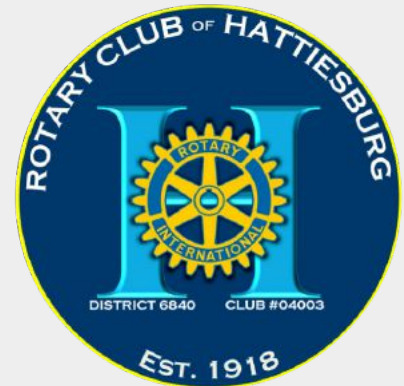
*Frank Baugh, WCU  
School of Psychiatry  
"Breaking the Holiday Blues"*

**December 17**

*Don Odom, WCU  
School of Music*

**December 24**

*No meeting*



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**Spokes Newsletter**

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