



SPOKES

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF HATTIESBURG

629 NORTH MAIN STREET • HATTIESBURG, MS 39401

THANK YOU TO OUR GUESTS LAST WEEK: ALECIA BRIDGES AND ANNIE JACKSON FROM THE MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S CENTER.



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MINUTES: AUGUST 25, 2015

President Sean Priebe presided over the meeting. Thanks to Brian Moore who gave the invocation and to Kemi Simmons who led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Thanks to Todd Watson and Tracie Fowler who served as our greeters today.

Wes Brooks sat in for Jaclyn Adams and asked that we keep Jaclyn and her family in our prayers in the loss of Jaclyn's grandmother. Wes then introduced our guest today, Shawn Harris who is a guest of Tracie Fowler.

Our Mystery Rotarian today had a reputation for getting under people's skin when he was younger. He was so bad that one day his two sisters put him into the garbage can and sat it on the curb to be picked up. He was later rescued by his mother. He grew up to become an Eagle Scout and President of the Knights of Columbus. He attended the University of Mississippi and had Archie Manning as a classmate. Johnny Stevens is today's Mystery Rotarian.

Sean reminded members that District Governor John Cornwell will be our featured speaker on September 9. He also reminded members of the upcoming Bike-a-Thon. Volunteer sheets will be available for sign-ups next week. Thanks to Owens Business Machines for printing the race posters that were designed by Wes Brooks.

Sean then introduced today's guest speaker Annie Jackson. Annie is the Program Director for the South Mississippi Children's Center. Annie introduced Alecia Bridges who works for the Center and will assist with today's presentation.

The South Mississippi Children's Center (SMCC) has been around since 1979. It is a home here in Hattiesburg for runaway and homeless children as well as children who may

be in a crisis situation at home for whatever reason. SMCC provide structure for the children, including entertainment time, homework time, and school time. Runaway and homeless children can stay at the center for 21 days at no charge. A child under DHS custody can stay up to 45 days. The Center serves children between the ages of nine up to 20. The capacity of the Center is 12 children at one time and it has remained at capacity for most of the last few months.

SMCC provides a safe shelter, room and board, medical and dental services, education services after-care support for up to 6 months and recreational opportunities. If needed the Center also offers group and family counseling, psychosocial/suicide risk assessment and trauma assessment. The Center serves about 200 children each year and most of them are from south Mississippi.

Enrollment in a school is a necessity. If the student is enrolled in an area school, transportation is provided. If they are not enrolled the Center gets them enrolled as quickly as possible in Hattiesburg Public Schools. They are provided school uniforms, school supplies, and a weekly allowance. They are taught independent living skills. They must practice completing a work application, develop a resume and go through an interview.

In addition to the services SMCC provides, Annie also wanted to talk about a present and ever growing problem across the nation and especially here in South Mississippi. Sex Trafficking is the fastest growing industry in the United States, earning billions in revenue each year. There are between 1.6 and 2.8 million runaways on our city streets every night.

(Minutes continued on pg. 4)



OUR GUESTS

1ST LT BILL WEDGEWORTH &
LT COL FELIX DIAZ



1st LT Bill Wedgeworth joined Civil Air Patrol 29 October 2012. 1st LT Wedgeworth started as an assistant to the Cadet Program for Pine Belt Composite Squadron. 1st LT Wedgeworth has logged numerous hours with the Cadet Program. He served as escort for the Color Guard team from Pine Belt Composite Squadron that competed at the Southeast Region Color Guard competition held at Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery Alabama. His dedication and mentoring enabled the team to earn Second Place Overall against teams from Florida, Tennessee, and Alabama.

1st LT Wedgeworth is currently the Deputy Commander for Cadets of the Pine Belt Composite Squadron in Hattiesburg. 1st LT Wedgeworth is also the Squadron Public Affairs Officer. He is married to Martha Wedgeworth and they have two children Mark Wedgeworth and Sarah Wedgeworth. Mark Wedgeworth is a Cadet in the Squadron.

Lt. Col. Felix D. Diaz is from Moca, Puerto Rico. Lt. Col. Diaz joined Civil Air Patrol in 1983 as a Cadet in Puerto Rico Wing. While serving in Puerto Rico Wing Lt. Col. Diaz progressed thru the Cadet ranks earning the Billy Mitchell Award and the Amelia Earhart Award. In August of 1994 Lt. Col. Diaz joined the Army as an Infantry Soldier. Lt. Col. Diaz is currently stationed at Camp Shelby, MS where he works as the Operations NCOIC (Non Commissioned Officer in Charge). When Lt. Col. Diaz joined the Army as an active duty Soldier he had to quit Civil Air Patrol because of training requirements in the Army. He has been deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Albania, and Bosnia. Lt. Col. Diaz rejoined Civil Air Patrol while stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia in 2005.

Lt. Col. Diaz is currently the Squadron Commander of Pine Belt Composite Squadron MS-072 in Hattiesburg. He is married to Amelia Diaz and has two lovely daughters Leslie S. Diaz-Roman and Britney M. Diaz-Roman.



Last Saturday, Sean Priebe, Erin Granberry, Dan Davis, Tracie Fowler and Wes Brooks attended the District 6840 Membership, Foundation & P.R. Seminar held at PRCC.



Immediate Past District Gov. Brian Hall leading the P.R. breakout session.

(Minutes cont.)

Sex trafficking is not confined to just young girls. Boys are also pressured or sold into service. In some cases, Annie reports that mothers have been known to sell their daughters for sex. Victims are as young as 9 years of age but the average victim's age is 12. They are kidnapped or persuaded by friends or family to participate. Once they are recruited they are usually gang raped and given no hope of ever returning to a normal life. Annie reports that 19% of those recruited are recruited by friends with 11% being recruited by family members.

During this year a study was conducted in a four country area around Jackson. The study group found 90 sex trafficking victims in just those four counties.

In 2013 the Mississippi Legislature passed a sex trafficking law. Those found guilty can go to jail for up to twenty years and be fined up to \$100,000. Minors cannot be prosecuted under this law, however the law defines a minor as someone fifteen years of age or younger. In some cases older minors are being prosecuted and will go the rest of their lives with a police record.

There are only 37 residential sex trafficking center across the nation. However, only 13 of those serve children 11 to 12 years of age. Mississippi does not have a center.

Annie asked Rotarians to be aware of their surroundings especially in shopping malls or theaters or other places where young people congregate. These are the most likely places where they are being recruited.

To find out more or to let the Center know of a child that is in need of assistance contact them by calling 1.800.635.9056 or by visiting their website at www.mchscares.org.

*Minutes courtesy of:
Lamar Evans, Executive Secretary*

SEPTEMBER 8
JOHN CORNWELL
DISTRICT GOVERNOR

SEPTEMBER 15
James Wilcox, Director
Center for Economic
Entrepreneurship
Education

SEPTEMBER 22
Robert Hopkins
USM Chief of Police

SEPTEMBER 29
Cameron Griffith
Southern Eye Center

OCTOBER 6
Brady Raanes
C3 Wine Company

OCTOBER 10
3rd Annual
BIKE-A-THON

