

SPOKES



NEWSLETTER OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF HATTIESBURG



MINUTES: November 10, 2015

President Sean Priebe presided over the meeting. Thanks to Rusty Edwards who gave the invocation and to Richard Topp who led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Thanks to Aaron Ladner and Curtis Bishop who served as our greeters today.

Wes Brooks stood in for Jaclyn Adams and introduced today's guests. Stacy Ahua and Mike Dixon are guests of Jonathan Shemper. Cole Pierce is a guest of Sean Priebe. Kevin Herring is a guest of Aaron Ladner and Monica Malone is a guest of Scott Hummel.

Today's Mystery Rotarian had a number of exhaustive careers in a variety of sports but seemed to settle in with a deep love for tennis. He competed nationally in the sport with much success. He married a good friend and they have two children. Their home was destroyed when Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The family relocated to the Hattiesburg area. After being recognized as father and husband of the year for some of the years he has been both, he has increased his community work within the last few years. Today's Mystery Rotarian is Jonathan Shemper.

Jonathan then introduced his two guests, Mike Dixon and Stacy Ahua with the Extra Table and asked them to come forward. Jonathan along with Theresa Erickson, Executive Director of the Greater Pine Belt Community Foundation presented the Extra Table with a check that totaled \$3,950. The check represents the club's effort at another successful Bike-a-Thon. Mike thanked Jonathan for his organizational efforts and the club for putting the work into a project of this magnitude giving back to the community through the work of the Extra Table.

Erin Granberry then introduced today's guest speaker, Theresa Erickson with the Greater Pine Belt Community Foundation. Theresa noted that this is National Community Foundation Week throughout the United States. The weeklong recognition was begun by President George W. Bush in 1989 in an effort to draw attention to the benefits of partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The Greater Pine Belt Community Foundation was started in 1997. Since then the donors have disbursed more than \$8 million back into the community. The Foundation now manages 170 different funds whose value exceeds \$4 million.

Areas of focus for the Foundation include Animal Welfare, Arts and Culture, Scholarships and Education, Community Enhancement and the Pearl River Valley EPA's Round up for Education, Human Service Grants, Grants for Religion, and Youth Grants. Funds have also been set up for specific purposes such as the Lamar County Park partnership, the First Dog Park Fund and a fund known as Improving Health. Improving Health is a new fund that was set up to assist area residents pay medical insurance premiums when they are faced with a catastrophic illness. The Foundation also gives back through community education programs. The programs and seminars share information on such topics as getting organized after retirement, setting up the proper trust fund for your specific needs and retirement investing.

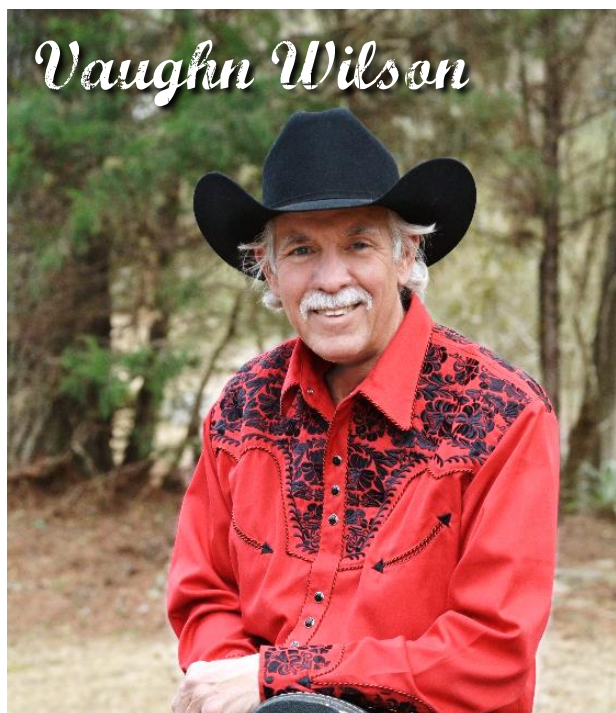
Theresa notes that the Foundation has applied for accreditation recently and expects to hear the results of that application before year's end.

She asked Rotarians to think about their individual passions and to think of ways they might leave a legacy to help that passion for many years to come. An endowed fund can be established for as little as \$1,000 for ten years.

For more information, to get involved or to simply make a contribution contact the Foundation by calling 601-583-6180 or visit their website at www.pinebeltfoundation.org.

Aaron Ladner encouraged members to get involved in Christian Service's Birthday Party for Jesus that is coming up on December 19. Members are encouraged to bring new, unwrapped toys between now and the event. Toys should be selected for birth to 13 years of age.

Minutes courtesy of Lamar Evans, Executive Secretary



Vaughn Wilson is many things to many people. He's an accomplished artist, portrait photographer, musician, award winning author, poet, motivational speaker, and a horseman. At his age you would think the man could decide what he wants to be when he grows up!

With over 40 years as a portrait photographer, Wilson's work can be seen in such places as the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame in Colorado Springs, the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and Museum in Fort Worth, the Musicians Hall of Fame and in the homes of clients in almost every state in the nation.

His passion for music and performing has been a lifelong blessing.

"When I was young I was told I shouldn't waste my time because I wasn't a very good singer," says Wilson, "I sang anyway, and that has made all the difference."

Whether he's playing for 10,000 people or 10, Wilson loves to perform. His love of the audience has taken him to the national charts in country music with his group, Lincoln County, and to many elementary schools where he performs classic folk music and reads books to the kids in the guise of his second self, Unkle Hokum.

The Unkle Hokum series of children's books came about when some teachers read stories from his coffee table book, **Tell Me about that Horse**, to their students and asked Wilson if he could write some cowboy themed stories just for kids. Not one to turn down a challenge, Wilson started writing, found a great illustrator in Colorado and published his first three children's books over the next nine months.

"I really enjoy writing for kids," Wilson says. "I call them '**real stories about real people for kids who need real heroes.**' I include a biography in the back of each book so the kids know they're reading about a successful individual."

Of course, Unkle Hokum is in all of the books along with the main character. Wilson says that added aspect brings the whole performance full circle when he goes into the schools.

"Yeah, I think it's fun for the kids to see Unkle Hokum play that guitar and sing for them. Then he reads a book with power point illustrations and they get to see him read the book in which he's a featured character," says Wilson. "I get to go with him to the shows too. He lets me carry his guitar. It helps that we look an awful lot alike although most people say he's better looking."

Wilson's love of horses comes from being born with a "need to be around horses".

"I guess I'm not what you'd call a true animal lover. Most of them I can do without, but horses are a passion. I've had the privilege of spending the majority of my life in the company of horses," he says. It was this passion that led him to write his book, *Tell Me about that Horse*. Wilson says he wanted to speak to other horsemen and women and ask if they had a "special" horse that inspired them in their lives just as he did. That idea took Wilson all over the country over a three year period, interviewing and photographing interesting people about horses that were special to them. Wilson won the prestigious *Will Rogers Medallion Award* in 2011 for his efforts.

No matter what hat Vaughn Wilson wears on any particular day, he wears it with pride.



Brian Hall

Past District Governor ('14-'15)

Brian is a member of the Rotary Club of Covington, LA. He has served his club in many positions and has also served District 6840 as Membership Chair, Assistant District Governor, and Annual Fund Co-Chair. He was active with the Host Organizing Committee of the 2011 Rotary International Convention, where he served as the chair of the Technology Committee, chair of the Visa Committee and as a member of other additional committees. He served Rotary Zone 31 as Assistant Regional Rotary Public Image Coordinator in the 2013-2013 year. He served as District 6840 Governor in the 2014-2015 Rotary year. Brian has served as Chair of Ole Man River PETS, a five-district PETS among districts in Louisiana and Mississippi, in 2015 and the coming 2016 year.

Rotary

District 6840



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