

COGS

Official newsletter of the
ROTARY CLUB OF KINGSPORT September 21, 2026

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SEPTEMBER 23 MEETING PREVIEW

Julia C. West Foundation: Honoring A Legacy



The mission of the Julia C. West Foundation is to encourage and empower charitable organizations and individuals in the areas of Education, The Arts, and Animal Welfare. The Foundation's grants and qualified distributions since 2024 are approaching \$500,000, honoring the memory and legacy of the late Julia Cyphers West, who was a Kingsport Rotarian. The Foundation's Executive Director, Tony Melson, will present their operating model and invite like-minded Kingsport organizations to submit grant applications.

Tony received a BS Degree in Chemical Engineering from Tennessee Technological Institute in 1996. He also served in the Air National Guard where he

served as the Commander, Security Forces Squadron at 134th Air Refueling Wing and as the Wing Executive Officer. He worked at Eastman Chemical Company for 28 years where he served as the Director, HSE Operations – Americas.

In addition to his duties with the Julia West Foundation, Tony has served on the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kingsport, Vice-chair of the Sullivan County Recovery Restoration Organization.

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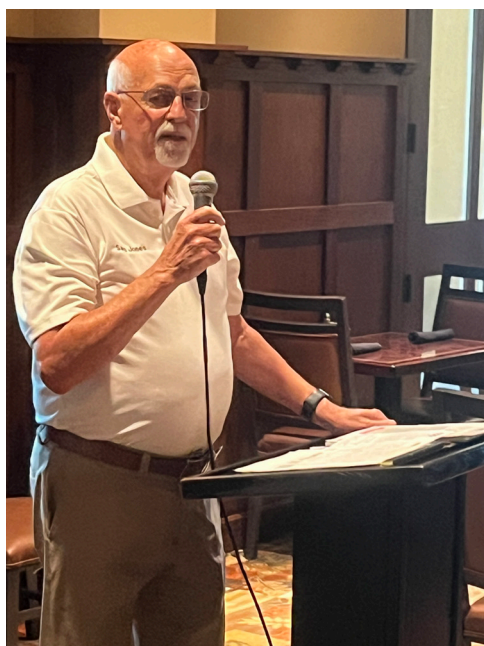


Club of Kingsport

CREATE LASTING IMPACT

September 16, 2026 Meeting Summary

Attendance was 52.8%



Our club heard it first. Sam Jones, Tri-Cities Military Affairs Chairman and Sullivan County Commissioner, introduced by Kitty Frazier, previewed regional veteran impact figures ahead of their release at a press conference: roughly \$2 billion in 2014, to about \$7 billion in the latest report. He drew a distinction worth keeping: a committee holds real power and influence, while a caucus merely discusses a subject.

Tennessee has two Military Affairs organizations, and the Tri-Cities holds one of them. The other is the East Tennessee Military Affairs Council in Knoxville. Sam spoke on Wreaths Across America, with local history here. He served on the committee that brought the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument to Kingsport in 2017. Leslie Lynch reminded members that our club's kiosk stands at that same memorial, the club's signature project, unveiled Memorial Day 2022 with Horizon Credit Union and TC-MAC. It maps more than 2,100 pavers by name or branch.

The ask this week: subscribe to the club's YouTube channel. Fifty subscribers unlock livestreaming. See this morning's PMail. Last week's reported attendance was 48 percent, and today's room

looked lighter. We miss you. Come back next Wednesday.

Polio Plus Committee report by Judy Fischer and Dr. Jerry Miller pointed members to the polio article in the September Rotary magazine, page 58, and the October 21 meeting will be devoted to Polio Plus with donations accepted.

Aundrea Salyer reported for the PR/Social Media Committee announcing Linda Coffey has begun posting on the club's Facebook page, so all active members should engage and share her content.

There is no regular meeting September 30; select members will meet for Power of One Hour to record video clips at Yvette Lynn Photography (downtown Kingsport). Co-President Aundrea Salyer presided and led the pledge, Jane Crawford gave the invocation, and Salyer closed with the Rotary Four-Way Test at 1:00. Next up: Tony Melson of the Julia C. West Foundation on September 23, and the Greenbelt walk Saturday, September 26 at 10:00 a.m. (meetup at trailhead beside Petsmart).



Bring your family, friends, and your dog,
let's go for a walk on our Greenbelt!!

When: Saturday, September 26 at 10 A.M.

Where: Greenbelt Indian Trailhead,
804 Indian Trail Dr. (located behind Petsmart)

RSVP: [Kingsport Rotary Website Calendar](#)

New Member Application Notification



Steven Bower Economic Development Director City of Kingsport

Steven is an economic development professional with more than five years of experience advancing community growth, business recruitment and retention, investment attraction, and strategic development initiatives. As Economic Development Director for the City of Kingsport, he leads economic development programs and projects while working closely with businesses, developers, investors, government leaders, and community stakeholders to advance local economic priorities.

He brings experience in economic development strategy, project management, market research and data analysis, grant initiatives, and public-private partnerships. His work has contributed to projects recognized by the American Planning Association and Tennessee Municipal League.

A Tennessee Certified Economic Developer, Steven holds a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Economic Development and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from East Tennessee State University. He also served six years in the Tennessee Army National Guard as a Cavalry Scout with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

By Ibim Semenitari, past president of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Cosmopolitan, Nigeria

From the earliest days of my childhood, I wanted to be a Rotarian. My father, my hero, was one, and I admired the way he lived a life of service. At the time, women were not allowed into Rotary in Nigeria, so I asked my mother why I couldn't join. She comforted me by saying that when I grew older and came of age, I could join the Inner Wheel Club. My mother herself was an Inner Wheel member and served as secretary of the Port Harcourt club. Service was the rhythm of our household.

My father is such an intentional dad and notices everything about me, even the smallest details, like the color of my nail polish and my tired eyes. My mum is just as deliberate and loving and one of the kindest people I know. She would go out on a limb to help someone in need. But it's no wonder because she is a Girl Guide, and a guide helps others in need. Since my parents modeled intentional, loving service, it's no surprise I grew up wanting to be like them. Service is in my DNA, as is Rotary.

Christmas in Port Harcourt

Christmas Day, 25 December, was never just about presents or feasting for my father and his fellow Rotary members. It was a day of service. These men, leaders of industry, heads of agencies, and community figures, would gather with their families to visit children's wards in hospitals. They brought breakfast, toys for the sick children, and gifts for their mothers.

I remember the clinking of pots in our kitchen as my mother prepared food before we rushed off to Christmas communion. After church, we joined the Rotary members in filling hospital wards with laughter and love. The serving of food was done by everyone — Rotary members, their spouses, and excited children. One Rotary member dressed as Father Christmas, handing out gifts, while the children ran around delivering food.

Sometimes, when food and gifts remained, we continued to the Cheshire Home in Port Harcourt, a home for children with special needs adopted by the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt. The children there had a choir, also set up by the club, and their beautiful songs serenaded us.

For me, Rotary became synonymous with friendship, service, and joy.

Growing into service

Those childhood experiences shaped me profoundly. Rotary was not just an organization; it was a family. It was a community where service was celebrated, and where joy was found in giving. When I eventually joined Rotary and became a club president, I sought to recreate that spirit of family involvement in service.

But my journey also deepened into advocacy for vulnerable populations, especially children with special needs. Watching my father and his friends serve with humility planted a seed in me, a conviction that service should reach those most often forgotten.

Adopting the special needs school

As president of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Cosmopolitan, I led our adoption of the special needs school in Borokiri. Though owned by the Rivers State Government, the school had long been neglected. Children who were blind, deaf, or living with physical disabilities struggled in an environment that lacked basic resources.



We provided desks and chairs, renovated the library, supplied books and shelves, installed alternative power, and repaired the ceiling of the laboratory building. We supported staff by funding a sign language teacher, ensuring that communication barriers could be broken.

Building hope, one project at a time

Successive presidents of my club continued the work. Classrooms were renovated, water and toilets provided, Braille machines donated, and vocational training introduced. Scholarships were awarded to some of the children, enabling them to pursue education up to university level.

One of our most impactful initiatives was the “Stitches of Ability” project. Children were taught to sew clothes and make shoes, and fashion designers partnered with us to mentor winners of the sewing contest. This gave the children not only skills but also dignity and hope for the future.

This year, we undertook our most ambitious project yet: a charity fashion show to raise funds for a girls’ hostel. Many of these children face discrimination at home and are not considered important by their families. By providing a hostel, we aim to keep them in school, ensuring that education

becomes a pathway to inclusion and opportunity.

A legacy of inclusion

Without Rotary, many of these children would have little hope. Rotary has become their advocate, their support system, and their extended family. And for me, this journey has come full circle.

It all began with a starry-eyed five-year-old watching her father and his Rotary friends serve with humility. That early inspiration has grown into a lifelong commitment: to make service not just an act, but a legacy.

Rotary taught me that service is not about titles or recognition. It is about showing up, about filling hospital wards with laughter, about teaching children to sew, about building hostels so girls can stay in school. It is about inclusion, dignity, and hope.

Full circle

Today, when I walk into the special needs school in Borokiri, I see the faces of children who remind me of those hospital wards on Christmas mornings. I see resilience, joy, and possibility. And I know that Rotary has given me the privilege of carrying forward my parents’ legacy of service.

Rotary is not just an organization. It’s family. It’s friendship. It’s happiness. And most of all, it’s hope.

Ibim Semenitari is a Rotary public image coordinator in Zone 22, past president of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Cosmopolitan, and a past assistant governor of District 9141 (Nigeria)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Cameron Yarberry - TDOT Projects	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Charlotte Whitted - Rotary District News	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Sam Jones - Wreaths Across America	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Tony Melson - Julia C West Foundation	24	28	26 Social Event Walk on the Greenbelt
27	28	29	30 No Meeting This Week.			

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sept 16 - Pam Rehart
Sept 17 - Jerry Lukach
Sept 25 - Tim Archer

MEMBERSHIP ANNIVERSARIES

Sept 01-Gary Bridges - 39 Years
Sept 01-Paul Gray - 12 Years
Sept 07-Isaac Webb - 10 Years
Sept 08-Sharon Moore - 5 Years

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Sept 10-Tim Archer - 32 Years
Sept 13-Lindsey Franks - 10 Years
Sept 19-Deborah Adams - 34 Years

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 26 - Walk on the Greenbelt - Greenbelt Indian Trailhead (behind Petsmart) 10:00AM
October 2-3, 2026—Erwin Apple Festival—Club Members Assist in Selling Apple Butter See sign Up Sheet
November 14 - Fall Day of Caring at Darrell's Dream Boundless Playground



HOW TO FIND US

Rotary Club of Kingsport

District 7570 | Area 13 | Club 5739

Meets Every Wednesday at Noon
at
The MeadowView Conference Center
1901 MeadowView Pkwy Kingsport, TN



facebook.com/RotaryClubofKingsport/



@RotaryClubofKingsport



KingsportRotaryClub@gmail.com



KingsportRotaryClub.org

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Leslie Lynch | 520-425-2259

INTERNATIONAL & DISTRICT OFFICERS

RI PRESIDENT:

Francesco Arezzo

DISTRICT 7570 GOVERNOR

Charlotte Whitted

AREA 13 GOVERNOR:

Joseph (Foe) Ley

DISTRICT SECRETARY:

Andrea Milliron

DISTRICT TREASURER:

Peter K. Howard

DISTRICT FOUNDATION CHAIR:

Paula K. Alston

Rotary THE FOUR-WAY TEST



- 1 | Is it the **TRUTH**?
- 2 | Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
- 3 | Will it build **GOODWILL** & **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- 4 | Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

LOCAL CLUBS FOR MAKE-UPS

MONDAY

Noon | Tri-Cities—Northeast State Community College, Pierce Admin Bldg., Room P309, Blountville, TN

6:00 PM | Johnson City Evening—Howard Hunt's Edward Jones Office, 4018 Roan St., Johnson City, TN

TUESDAY

7:15 AM | Scott County—Scott Co. Park & Golf Course Clubhouse, 247 Fore Drive, Gate City, VA

7:30 AM | Bristol Morning VA-TN—The Summit Co-Work Space (Expedition Meeting Room) 1227 Volunteer Pkwy., Bristol, TN

Noon | Bristol VA-TN—Bristol Train Station, 101 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Bristol, VA

Noon | Johnson City—Johnson City Country Club 1901 E Unaka Ave., Johnson City, TN

Noon | Greeneville—Tusculum University, Niswonger Commons Pioneer Café, 60 Shiloh Road, Greeneville, TN

WEDNESDAY

7:00 AM | Greeneville-Morning—Laughlin Memorial Hospital Cafeteria Conference Room, Greeneville, TN

7:30 AM | Kingsport-Sunrise—Food City Press Room, Suite 300, 200 Clinchfield St., Kingsport, TN

Noon | Unicoi County—Town Hall, 211 N. Main St., Erwin, TN

Noon | Elizabethton—First Christian Church of Elizabethton, Fellowship Hall, 513 Hattie Ave., Elizabethton, TN

THURSDAY

7:15 AM | Johnson City Morning—Food City Community Room, 920 N. State of Franklin Rd., Johnson City, TN

Noon | Kingsport-Downtown—Food City Crown Center, 1205 N. Eastman Road, Kingsport, TN

AVAILABLE 24/7—

www.RotaryeClubOne.org