



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

February 11, 2025

## 2024-2025 Board Members

President Kim Brattain  
Pres Elect Patrick Baker  
Past Pres Edwin Peacock  
Secretary Bill Gill  
Treasurer Craig Field  
Sergeant at Arms  
Mike Wollinger  
Exec Sec Christine Cipriano

### Directors 2023-2025

Linwood Bolles  
Terri DeBoo  
Andy Dinkin  
Donna Dunlap  
Joel Ford  
David Head

### Directors 2024-2026

Woodson Bradley  
Benton Bragg  
John Cantrell  
Tish Atkins Charles  
Dena Diorio  
Stuart Hair  
Jesse Hite  
Virginia Owen

Membership John Cantrell

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Luther Moore



## ***SUPERWOMAN spoke to Charlotte Rotary on Tuesday***

by **Marilynn Bowler**

For this year's prestigious Excellence In Leadership Award presentation, the meeting ballroom at Fairfield Inn & Suites was packed full. The program of recognition for incredible service to Charlotte-Mecklenburg and its surrounding areas is always something special because we are fortunate to have in our city and county a wealth of smart, dedicated, generous, wise, and savvy leaders who are committed to bettering our entire region.

The list of past recipients is an astounding tribute to this Award and what it means to Charlotte Rotary and our community-at-large and Tuesday's presentation defined that and MORE because this year's winner is truly "Excellent" with a capital "E."

**Dena Diorio** is self-made, and she took us on her journey looking back to her childhood when a Guidance Counselor commented to Dena's mother that Dena was "not college material." Much to her mother's credit, her inspirational comeback was, "My daughter *is* going to college." She could not have said it more strongly which took hold in Dena's brain and set off a determination to live up to her Mom's confidence in her.

Not only did Dena earn her college degree but she went on to grad school at Columbia University where she earned a master's degree in Public Administration. And so, it began ... her amazing career ranging from a social worker (where she realized her true passion was for public service and public policy) to achievements as a lobbyist for New York City's then Mayor, Office Policy Manager in two Connecticut cities, and a warehouse of business

experiences which finally brought her to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's County offices in 2007. Her determination to resolve Mecklenburg County issues, her creative solutions to longtime problems, her smart-as-nails focus on how to better serve our citizens, and her leadership skills made her a natural selection as County Manager in 2014.

In her own words, as she marched through her 37-year career she "learned a lot about relationship building, setting and achieving specific goals, resiliency, problem-solving courage, confidence and *loyalty*." The ten-point leadership traits she shared with us should be mandatory reading for young adults who are just getting started in their careers.

To know Dena is to recognize her long list of accomplishments coupled with her kindness and concern for others. The list of awards she has gleaned is huge and continues to put her at the top of the list for accolades in tribute to her incredible commitment to service ... She obviously lives our Rotary motto of "Service Above Self."

I would be remiss if I didn't give a shoutout to **Tony Zeiss** and **Colleen Brannan** who were wise enough to nominate Dena for the Excellence In Leadership Award and to the astute selection committee headed by **David Zimmerman** and composed of Charlotte Rotary members **David Anderson**, **Ron Kimble**, **John Tabor**, **Katie Tyler** and **Edwin Peacock**. These folks knew what they were doing when they named Dena as this year's Outstanding Leader.

Congratulations to our superb County Manager who, by the way, is married to our own **Phil Volponi**, and who, also by-the-way, *brought down the house with her acceptance speech*.

**Dena, you truly are *Superwoman*.**

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1056050955>

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1056467604>

The presenter's introduction begins at approximately 27 minutes and 35 seconds.