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Rotary International, Morristown AM begins first wave of distribution

BY GLENNA HOWINGTON

Tribune Staff Writer

Nonprofit leaders in Hamblen County attend their share of meetings during the average fiscal year. The agency directors explain program needs to the United Way's budget and allocations committee, regularly deliver facts and figures to their boards of directors and are always looking for the perfect fundraiser.

It was time to relax, however, at the April 16 meeting of the Rotary International, Morristown AM held at The Country Club in Morristown. After a breakfast buffet and a few jokes among the agency directors and club members, it was time to hand out checks.

"This is the first wave of our distribution," Rotary AM President Edwin Goan told the group of invited guests. "We had 11 invited here today. Our foundation board identified 19 nonprofit agencies. This comes to a total of \$13,000 that our club will be giving to the community this year."

The monies were generated in part by the annual Rotary AM golf tournament. The 2013 version of the popular fundraiser will be held on May 31. It was reported during the meeting that the brochures have been printed and local businesses should expect to be contacted soon.

The check distribution also offered several agencies the chance to update club members about current and upcoming programs.

Patrice Puglise of Stepping Out Inc. told the group the agency has experienced a lot of change, especially regarding programs and classes that have not produced a lot of fruit.

"With change comes a lot of discomfort," Puglise said. "We have focused our classes to meet a need in the community that no one else is meeting."

After explaining the agency will now work mostly with adults, Puglise said the programming will provide life skills education that participants were not provided during their younger years.

"The focus will be on basic skills: how to budget, anger management, cognitive thought changes, life changes and Bible studies. We will offer just 10 major classes," Puglise said.

Stepping Out assisted 127 new clients during the first quarter of 2013. Many of the clients are referred through the Hamblen County court system or the Department of Child and Family Services.

"They come because the judge said they have to come and they don't want to be there," Puglise said. "Then we have those who want changes. Out of the 127, we retained 29 to go through all the classes we offer. We can keep them for a year and a half. We have seen some significant changes."

John Seals, director of the Boys and Girls Club of Morristown, invited club members to tour the facility during hours that students attend.

"We want you to see with real certainty that we are serving kids in the community," Seals said. He also said that the club, chartered in 1958, has grown to serving 1758 kids as members in 2012, and served more than 2,000 with activities and programs.

"It is near and dear to my heart," he said. "I've been there most of my life. We can see a lot of the club's influence throughout the community, and I'm really proud of that."

Elizabeth Gibson, director of ALPS Adult Day Services, acknowledged Ronnie Reed, the facility's family services coordinator.

"Caregivers are who we really serve," Gibson said.

She said that ALPS averages 40 participants per day, numbers that multiply when considering the family members and caregivers that are affected.

"There are usually five family members, and even neighbors, who are able to keep their jobs and keep that loved one at home. Ronnie is the door they come through."

Gibson said, "We're so excited this year. Ronnie, along with Jane Joyce — with the Carson Newman University graduate program and ALPS board member — are adding a whole new program for the fall. It is selfhelp, self-care class for caregiver that is part of a national program. This will focus on a huge range of individuals."

Debbie Thayer, director of the Senior Citizens Center, said that although the agency's focus is the center itself, which is geared to recreation, the agency also features The Office on Aging that provides information for seniors that includes transportation, government programs, income tax preparation and referrals to other local agencies. The center provides a free Senior Directory that lists family resources, including websites and email addresses.

"And, yes, we have a good time," Thayer said. "We served 1900 seniors in 2012 in some capacity, either every day we operated or just one visit. Our Tai Chi class is growing by leaps and bounds. Our goal is to be a home away from home. And anyone, family members or guests, are welcome to go along on our trips."

Tina Dearing reported that the client list for Senior Citizens Home Assistance Services is now at 176. The agency takes care of the elderly or disabled in their home. SCHAS staff deliver meals, cook, transport clients to their doctor appointments, help with medication reminders and provide homemaker services.

SCHAS staff also keeps an eye their on clients' home conditions, including whether family members are providing adequate care.

"We do whatever they need to stay in their homes," Dearing said. "We work closely with Morristown Hamblen Central Services and the Department of Human Services."

Describing Central Services as "the grass roots agency in town," director Barbara Simmons said the agency's success can be attributed to their ability to work well with other community agencies.

"We do basic emergency social services; we provide help with food, rent, utilities, traveler's aid, and the Christmas program (**Citizen Tribune** Holiday Hope Fund). We're the agency that people come to when they lose their job. When they are met with a crisis, they don't know where to turn."

Simmons said when the agency moved into a larger space, they took on a financial challenge.

"We were nervous about biting off more than we could chew," she said. "We borrowed more than \$550,000, with no money in the bank. I'm happy to announce that we have paid it down to \$80,000."

After applause from her fellow agency directors, Simmons said, "Without this community, we would have to close our doors."

Other agencies that received donations at the meeting were Rose Center Council for the Arts, the United Way of Hamblen County, M.A.T.S. and C.E.A.S.E.



Chuck Hale / Citizen Tribune

Morristown Rotary AM President Edwin Goan, far left, and Rotarian Steve Amos, far right, present checks to representatives of Hamblen County nonprofit agencies during the club's April 16 meeting. The distribution marks the first of several that will in total provide \$13,000 from club fundraisers.