

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 1, 2024

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John Cantrell

Tish Atkins Charles

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Stuart Hair

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Virginia Owen

Membership John Cantrell

Foundation Joe Morris

Programs Luther Moore



A Synopsis ~ Top to Bottom: Two Men, An Apple Tree and A Dash Across A Crowded Road

by **Marilynn Bowler**

The proverbial "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," took life on Tuesday at Charlotte Rotary when Adam Rhew addressed our club. Seated at a table close to the dais was proud father and Charlotte news media legend, David Rhew, who is, no doubt, used to hearing rave reviews about his amazingly accomplished son but surely loved hearing them one more time.

Now spearheading SouthPark Community Partners as its CEO, Adam brought good news on the current and future status of Charlotte's highly sought destination for residents of our city as well as the gadzillions of visitors who find their way to SouthPark each year which, not surprisingly, comprises an area equivalent to eighteen city blocks.

Adam walked us through the evolution of what was formerly pastures and farmland but has transitioned to one of the largest and most popular shopping malls between Atlanta and Washington, DC, alongside gorgeous residential homes, striking condo buildings, and corporate headquarters. The economic development of SouthPark did not come without the strategic input of city planners, business leaders, and savvy politicians to whom we tip our hat.

SouthPark Community Partners continues to be linked closely with Charlotte Center City Partners in promoting and overseeing development

for our region and, thus, Adam works in tandem with CCCP President/CEO Michael Smith. In fact, Adam quoted Michael more than once during his address, including Michael's mandate, "Cities grow or they die." Stern but wise and meaningful words.

Taking us back in memory to the 1980's when shuttles were "the thing" in terms of moving individuals and crowds from one busy part of SouthPark to another, Adam excitedly shared the latest announcement about the "SouthPark Skipper." The free, on-demand microtransit service will kick-off in November, just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The "one-year pilot program" will show the potential for this new method of allowing passengers to move easily, safely, and quickly from one part of SouthPark to another. It's a sustainable and visionary model and it's a big commitment ... one which Adam feels strongly optimistic about.

Emphasizing the importance of relationships and partnerships throughout his presentation, Adam lauded the stakeholders whose ingenuity has kept SouthPark growing and thriving. Successful economic development takes all its partners working together so we become inter-related. As Charlotte's ~ and surrounding counties' ~ population continues to explode, the need for transportation infrastructure is even more critical. SouthPark is now considered a regional destination which attracts 45,000 people on weekdays and 69,000 on weekends. (Hence, the aforementioned new "SouthPark Skipper" vehicles.)

"We're strong. We're growing. We have work to do and we can't rely on what worked in the past," Adam said. He spoke well of our City Council which "created the SouthPark municipal service district covering one square mile and is really the true business core of SouthPark." He lauded his team and Board of Directors for "focusing on economic vitality, creating memorable experiences, and ensuring an extraordinary quality of life." And he filled us in on the bold and achievable *SouthPark Forward 2035 Plan* which "will act as the community's playbook to guide SouthPark's evolution over the next decade." Adam referred to the plan as "the new mandate for our work."

The words "safety," "relationships," "community," and "partnerships" flowed throughout Adam's address. And then there were his seven infamous last words of warning, "DON'T DASH ACROSS SHARON AND FAIRVIEW ROADS!"

We'd welcome you back to Charlotte Rotary any time, Adam. And that goes for your Dad, too.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1016397126>
The presenter's introduction begins at approximately 24 minutes and 40 seconds.