



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 8, 2024

2024-2025 Board Members

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Membership John Cantrell

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Who Knew A Meteorologist Could Sing?!

*(We now know that WSOC-TV's
John Ahrens can.)*

by **Marilynn Bowler**

As a super-fan of Frank Sinatra and with a voice to match, **John Ahrens** burst into song at the start of our Rotary meeting on Tuesday, delighting us with "Fly Me to the Moon and let me play among the Stars". Dr. Thomas Moore tickled the keys in his own, inimitable way and one could see several of our members singing along. What fun it was!

Longtime weatherman and now **WSOC-TV's Chief Meteorologist**, John is a man of many talents. He's into running, performing in major theatre productions, sports, and ~ as we found out on Tuesday ~ delivering interesting presentations.

His address was no happenstance. President **Kim Brattain** and Program Chair **Luther Moore** chose John to address our club to educate us all on the whys and wherefores of Hurricane Helene and forecast what Hurricane Milton would be wreaking. John filled us in on all of that and more. In her intro, Kim described him as a "superstar" in the world of meteorologists. She could not have said it better.

John began his remarks by thanking Charlotte Rotary for its longtime commitment to our community *and* to the far-away towns and villages we help every year.

Switching to the topic we're all talking about these days ...the weather ... he emphasized that his main job is to keep people safe; warn of impending

weather dangers; and make sure people are prepared. John took us back to some of his more challenging coverages including a tornado in Charleston, SC, which just happened to interrupt an episode of WEST WING on TV. In his words to us, "The emails and comments I received as a result of that interruption are not appropriate for this audience. Let's just say it was 'colorful commentary.' "

Zeroing in on his forecast of the impending Hurricane Helene two weeks ago when that massive storm was still gaining in strength in the Gulf of Mexico, he and his fellow meteorologists knew we were in for a bad one. He told us how they read the "trough in the jet stream or upper-level winds and this trough was positioned over the mountains so it would send massive amounts of rain to the NC mountains for days, even before Helene arrived at the Gulf." Although he said he never "compares" one hurricane to another, he did use the analogy that "Hurricane Hugo delivered the wind. Helene delivered the rain." We know the rest of the story because we were all glued to our TVs watching coverage of the flooding and devastation in Boone, Chimney Rock, Asheville, and surrounding towns. It was awful to watch, and it had to have been even more awful to predict it and know it couldn't be averted.

John spoke poignantly of feeling a burden of guilt and having sleepless nights wishing there was something more he and his team could have done. He then underscored that the National Hurricane Center is forecasting one of the busiest years on record. The wise people in the path of a hurricane warning will prepare and evacuate if needed. *Things can be replaced. Human lives cannot be replaced.*

During the ensuing Q&A, John addressed topics ranging from climate change to FEMA, to technology and computer models for weather forecasting, to "the butterfly effect: a (weather) flutter in South America affects us all."

Thanks for the superb, informative, and fascinating presentation, John. And thanks for the song!

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1018102389>
The presenter's introduction begins at approximately 32 minutes and 05 seconds.