

Rotary  
Club of  
Charlotte



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 29, 2024

## 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

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Donna Dunlap

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Dena Diorio

Stuart Hair

Jesse Hite

Virginia Owen

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**Foundation** Joe Morris

**Programs** Luther Moore



## *Disruptive Philanthropy*

by **Rick Handford**

**Karen Calder** introduced April Whitlock, the Head of Corporate Citizenship at LendingTree, who has been the Executive Director of the LendingTree Foundation since 2020. April initially joined the fintech company over 20 years ago when it was a start-up, and, after leaving to work on other ventures, she has returned to lead the strategic development and execution of impactful relational giving programs and volunteerism across LendingTree's U.S. footprint.

April is a creative strategist who excels in helping organizations, including the Foundation for the Carolinas and Carolina Pad, turn big ideas into successful ventures. Before LendingTree, April served as the Interim Director of Charlotte Corporate Affairs Professionals and was the business owner of Fundanoodle, a series of educational readiness products. In other entrepreneurial ventures, April started the Charlotte market for Mom Corps, a staffing firm for professional parents seeing flexible jobs so they can contribute at home and at work.

A Duke University graduate and Charlotte native, April values the importance of community and currently volunteers on the City of Charlotte Arts & Culture Advisory Board, the Children's Theatre of Charlotte Board of Directors, Share Charlotte, Classroom Central, and the Women's Impact Fund. She was recently honored as one of the 2023 Charlotte Ledger's "40 Over 40" and has also been named as Charlotte Business Journal's "40 Under 40" and Mecklenburg Times' "50 Most Influential Women."

In her free time, April enjoys exploring Charlotte and the cultural community with her husband, three daughters, and their rescue dog.

April began her talk by describing “Disruptive Philanthropy”, a term used to describe new ways to support nonprofit organizations. She provided an example of a teacher who came up with a unique way of improving reading scores. If he were to start up a new nonprofit and solicit a grant to fund the hiring of tutors to be able to teach more students, he would have a difficult time, because many donors prohibit gifts to fund salaries of nonprofit’s employees, considered to be “overhead”. By contrast, if he were to start an LLC and seek funding from investors convinced that he had a viable product, he would likely get more funding than requested so that he could grow the business faster.

She noted that Dan Pallotta had identified this problem in a 2013 TEDTalk, in which he pointed out that donors focus on low salaries and overhead expenses rather than growth and marketing, which are required for success, even though expensive. These issues are further discussed in “Uncharitable”, a 2023 movie featuring Dan Pallotta and a host of others. For information about the movie, see <https://uncharitablemovie.com/> .

April went on to look at inadequate compensation for leaders of nonprofits, donor reluctance to fund marketing, without which adequate infrastructure cannot be constructed to raise funds for operations, thus keeping the organization from being effective. Additionally, nonprofit donors are risk averse and don’t want to risk their money being “wasted” on unproven strategies; and they also want to see concrete results of their donations, limiting the ability of the organizations to work on long-term solutions to problems, even though that is often the only way to correct long-term problems.

Access to capital is another problem for nonprofits, because most lenders must be able to show that there is a clear path to getting their money repaid, with interest. If the nonprofit cannot show how it will be able to get a financial return from the loan provided, then the lender cannot make the loan. (Note that it can gift the funds, but only in a limited way.) She notes that the Return on Investment for nonprofits is “Social Change”, and asks why the rules can’t be changed to treat nonprofits the same way that we treat for-profits.

April then recommends that we watch the “Uncharitable” movie to learn about the subject and provided her contact information for those wishing to continue the conversation.

April Whitlock

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/aprilbwhitlock/>

Email: [april.whitlock@lendingtree.com](mailto:april.whitlock@lendingtree.com)

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1024745522>  
The presenter’s introduction begins at approximately 24 minutes and 30 seconds.