



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

December 3, 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

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



Byrd Bergeron



Hallie Rojascki



Isabella Warner

HIGWIA (How I Got Where I'm At) Featuring Charlotte Rotarians Byrd Bergeron, Hallie Rojascki, and Isabella Warner

by **Elly Clary**

Three women wearing red-bordered new member tags delivered HIGWIAs that revealed a shared trait: A drive to succeed and make a difference.

Their "How I Got Where I'm At" Rotary presentations detailed how they pursue their goals in decidedly different ways.

Isabella Warner helps others through her insurance profession and her values. **Hallie Rojascki** teaches "students who learn differently." **Byrd Bergeron** finds stability with her leisure travel company where she helps

her female team members create a foundation like the one she has fashioned.

Warner grew up in Kill Devil Hills on the Outer Banks, graduated from Appalachian State University in Boone's mountain setting, and moved to Charlotte to be near her sister. She's a senior client associate at the insurance firm ECM.

Her CPA mother taught her the value of a dollar, reinforced by her financial advisor dad who's a Coast Guard veteran. Her grandmother instilled appreciation for family tradition and close relationships.

At App State, she concentrated on Business, Insurance, and Spanish. For a summer, she studied in Spain. She also learned from her mom's "tireless work ethic" and her Rotarian dad's dedication.

"I try to live out the values of service, integrity, and connection," she said. "I'm excited to begin my journey as a Rotarian and to contribute to this incredible community."

Rojeski shared lessons from her parents and older brother. "Always show up. If you're not in the room, you can't make a difference or have an impact. Pave your own path. Create the world in which you want to live."

That outline ultimately led to special education. A native of New York's Hudson River Valley and an East Carolina University graduate, Rojeski has fashioned a 25-year teaching career.

"I have the joy of leading the John Crosland School," she said. "Students come to us because, where they were, it wasn't working, for whatever reason." The school teaches neurodivergent children.

Feeding her passion for travel, Rojeski and her brother regularly visit relatives in Poland. They're learning Polish and she's pointing toward dual citizenship. She calls herself a lifelong learner who's expanding and growing.

The mother of two, Bergeron is married to a retired F-18 fighter pilot.

"My childhood was as unstable as a childhood could ever be," she said. Her mother was in school when she was born and had been married seven times when Bergeron was a high school senior. Bergeron witnessed physical and verbal abuse and experienced homelessness and food insecurity.

"Luckily, as an adult, you're allowed to make your own future," she said. "My biggest issue was foundation and stability. I see that as owning a business."

She's CEO of The Travel Byrds, a leisure travel company she created five years ago that recently surpassed \$8 million in sales. A self-described "full-control freak," Bergeron works from home. Her team of 33 women toil remotely.

Her firm provided the foundation she sought, and she's proud to offer stability to her employees. Her mission is helping others and she hopes Rotary will be synergistic.

"Because I had the kind of childhood that I did," she said, "I understand that there are a lot of people still in that world. And it's not their fault."

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

With slides: <https://vimeo.com/1037021409>

Without slides: <https://vimeo.com/1036729954>

The presenter's introduction begins at approximately 8 minutes and 55 seconds.