



Rotary District  
6920



Lend a Hand

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## District Conference Highlights April 24, 2004

### Cox Commends District on Dedication to Literacy

Secretary of State Cathy Cox opened this year's annual conference as the keynote speaker for Friday's luncheon. In her address, she set the tone for the conference, commending District Rotarians on their efforts to increase the literacy rate in Georgia and challenged those same Rotarians to continue their far-reaching goal of "lending a hand."

"This organization has a long tradition of lending a hand, no matter where it is needed," said Cox, who grew up in Bainbridge. "Most of my play time at home was

spent reading. Although my sisters and I didn't have a yard to play in, across the parking lot was the library where the world was opened up to us."

Cox, who was one of the first female members of the Bainbridge Rotary Club, said those childhood days spent reading took her beyond the "boundaries of Bainbridge and Decatur County.

"Today, more than ever, a state's

economic health and wealth are created by knowledge," said Cox, who has served as Georgia's Secretary of State since being elected in 1998. "As we proceed to the new century, our workplace seeks a new kind of worker - a critical thinker, a problem solver."

Cox shared a quote from Indy Car Series World Champion Rick Mears in which

he says, "To finish first, you first must finish."

"It's equally true in our lives," she said moments before presenting certificates to graduates of the Footsteps for Success program. "Each of the young people we are going to recognize here

today are finishing the first critical hurdle in their education."

Gaining new skills, such as overcoming illiteracy, can open an individual to more earning potential, greater self-esteem and self-confidence and sets a better example for children and a better quality of life for a family.

"The good strong education I received along the way provides me with the ability to

make good sound decisions," said Cox. "The Footsteps for Success program is so important. Your emphasis on literacy will, literally, change lives.

"To every Rotarian here today, I thank you for your service, for adopting bold solutions," she added. "Georgia is a better state because of you."



Secretary of State Cathy Cox speaks with a guest following her presentation at Friday's kickoff luncheon.

### WELCOME!



Valdosta Mayor John Fretti (above) welcomes Rotarians to District 6920's 47th annual conference. Below, Ed Knecht, Rotary International President Jonathan Majiyagbe's representative, welcomes Friday's guests.



Lend a Hand

Look for More Conference  
Highlights Tomorrow

# Footsteps for Success



Receiving certificates for their completion of the Footsteps for Success program are Ashton Jones, Cathy Knapik, Jason Lewis, Almer Wade, Aaron Pineiro, Geneva Reed, Jody Grice (not pictured), April Rivera, Melissa Crawford and Claudia McCoppin. The students, who range in age from 17 to 50, were paired with area Rotarians, whom they shadowed for a day. The Footsteps for Success program was a project funded by five area Rotary clubs which covered costs for GED testing, graduation attire and career outfits for program participants. E.J. Harris Jr., executive vice president at Valdosta Technical College, headed the program.



Before the start of Friday's events, DGN Dallas Simon (not pictured), Bertha Daniel (above left) and PDG Lynn Hadwin (above right) sorted through District awards submissions. "She's our task master," said Hadwin of Daniel, "but she's tough and well organized." District awards will be presented Saturday morning, with the Club of the Year award being presented Sunday.



DGN Dallas Simon (left) enjoys a sweet treat prior to the start of Friday's events.



Valwood School Interact Club members Nick Bajalia, Katie Allen, Jordan Brown and Wade Henry were among those serving as hosts at Friday's luncheon.



Lynn Corbin, inset, leads Rotarians (above) in the singing of three patriotic songs during Friday's luncheon.



Valdosta North Rotary Club members John Bennett, Matt Martin, Bill Peeples and Matt Hart greeted guests as they arrived at Friday's luncheon.



At left, Earl Bennett, conference registration chair, assists Carlos McNair of the Ashburn Rotary Club.



Miss Valdosta Kaitlin Smith leads Rotarians in a song.



Five-time Grammy Award winner B.J. Thomas provides Friday night's entertainment.