

OPINION

YOUR SUBMISSIONS

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I Was Just Thinking By Catherine Ruby

What's in a name?

BY CATHERINE RUBY
COLUMNIST

Probably an ambiguous question, without a context. In this case, the name is Rotary, as in London Rotary Club.

For me, the answer to that question is easy: Rotary is a service organization with millions of chapters around the world. Its motto is “Service Above Self; One Profits Most Who Serves Best.”

Our club has been recognized several times for supporting this motto, and yet, I think most people here don’t realize the work that we do in our community.

You may recognize us at the events we sponsor. These include the International Dinner, co-sponsored with the Corbin Rotary Club. It will be in March, at the Corbin Arena. It raises funds for the largely successful international End Polio Now campaign.

In addition, we host the Carolyn Markum Lackey Memorial Golf Scramble, which raises funds for Come-Unity Cooperative Care.

Other fundraisers are the pancake breakfast the the May Primary and Election Day in November and the World Chicken Festival.

At these we raise money for many local projects.

These include a four-year college scholarship for a Laurel County student, disaster relief for the flooding in eastern Kentucky and for the recent tornado in Laurel County.

If you were unfortunate enough to have been hit by this last May, hopefully you received help from the club. This would have include an initial give-away of \$250 gift cards from Lowe’s and then the distribution of \$50 Kroger cards and a weather radio (with instruction for using it) at a December event.

If you or someone you know didn’t get these, contact a club member to see if you are eligible, because this project is on-going.

We also work with CCC to provide food baskets to needy families.

You may have had a third grader in your family a few years ago, when we sponsored a project which provided dictionaries to all the third graders in Laurel County. Members took the books to the schools and gave short presentations on the value of having one and how to use it. Sometimes children told us it was the first book they had ever owned.

That project has since morphed into cosponsoring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides a free book every month for ages birth to five, when they will start school and have easy access to books.

Other school-related programs include the Backpack program, which we both contribute to financially and help to fill the packs for students.

We also do Shop With a Cop each December, again contributing with both its cost and volunteering the morning it is held.

Outside of London, we are currently funding the Clay County Clean Water project. We are able to do this with a grant from Rotary International and the co-sponsorship of a Rotary Club in Mexico City.

This project involves installing septic tanks to families who have no access to city or county systems, and of course can be life changing.

Many years ago our Rotary Club built the Rotary Children’s Playground, with members doing much of the construction work themselves. That playground has evolved into a more modern facility and is now a major source of recreation for children and their families.

On their website, you can find other projects that the club sponsors. But in addition to these, each month the club’s Board of Directors accepts requests from various organizations to help with a financial need. They almost never turn down such requests.

A recent example of this was from a member who works with the Warming Shelter (Isaiah 58:10), which runs on volunteer help and was crucial in the recent on-going frigid weather that we experienced.

As you can see, the Rotary Club of London is very active in the community and beyond. Our membership is open to anyone who wants to serve in a voluntary capacity. Meetings are always open for visitors, and we meet on Wednesdays at noon at Old Town Grill.

I hope you will visit us soon. Any member will greet you when you come through the door, or you can just ask for me or our current President, Molly Barnett.

What’s in a name? For Rotary, it’s “Service Above Self . . .” Encompassed in the teachings of the Bible. Hopefully it is encompassed in your life values, too.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Affordability is a crisis for Kentuckians

Every poll tells us that affordability is the major concern facing hardworking Americans. Many are increasingly angry as they watch the cost of goods and services spike — from groceries to housing to medical care. At the same time, wages and incomes fail to keep up.

What’s behind this cost-of-living crunch? and what will our leaders do about it?

There are two sides to affordability: how much things cost, and how many resources people have to buy them. Both are a problem.

First, many Americans rightly believe that the price of basic needs has gotten out of control. Inadequate public investment means higher out-of-pocket costs for everything from child and health care to higher education. Corporate monopolies and financial speculation in industries ranging from housing to meat production to retirement savings have made things more expensive. And now across-the-board tariffs put in place by the Trump administration are raising costs further.

At the same time, wages for most workers have not kept up with growth in the economy since the 1970s. Wage growth comes from how much power workers have to bargain with their employers. And as policies have intentionally weakened unions and other forms of worker leverage, wages have fallen behind.

Thankfully, there are actions that can be taken now at the state level to address the problem of affordability. As KyPolicy outlines in a new report, “Building a Kentucky Workers Can Afford,” there are dozens of state policies that would grow worker power and family incomes while addressing the costs of basic goods and services.

For example, the state could repeal harmful laws undermining unions (like so-called right-to-work), expand collective bargaining rights and restore prevailing wage and minimum wage laws so there are more living wage jobs. Kentucky could also offer two years of tuition-free public higher education, and fund programs that help young people enter apprenticeships for good union employment.

The state could make historic one-time and annual investments in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to vastly expand the supply of houses and apartments. Kentucky can reinvest in public schools, helping kids succeed in life and families address child mental health and food costs while also giving teachers a real, much-needed raise.

The legislature could also create a Resiliency Fund to make infrastructure investments that can withstand extreme weather and spiking energy costs, creating good construction jobs in the process. That effort could include employing vulnerable young

adults in a Kentucky Colonel Corps where they do one year of living wage public service after high school.

And the state could support families, including by enacting a child tax credit allowance that lifts 20% of kids out of poverty; providing paid family leave, universal preschool and affordable child care; and creating more options to make health insurance affordable using the state’s purchasing and regulatory power to crack down on corporate profiteering. Kentucky could also join 20 states that help put a secure retirement in reach by creating a state-managed retirement option for employees of all businesses and expand public investment in high-quality home care as our population ages.

Many of the ideas in the report build on successes in Kentucky’s past or policies that are proven to work in other states. And we can pay for this agenda from its economic benefits and savings and by balancing the tax code so that those at the top chip in for the investments that benefit us all. The richest 5% of Kentuckians are now pocketing \$3.4 billion more a year because of state and federal tax cuts over the last decade. A windfall tax on those at the top could easily fund the ideas described above.

Affordability will be the political word of the year in 2026. Will it have real actions behind it?

Jason Bailey is executive director of the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, www.kypolicy.org.



By Jason Bailey
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy

LETTERS POLICY

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and telephone number so we can confirm that you wrote the letter. Illegible letters, form letters, anonymous letters or those without telephone numbers will not be printed. Letters will be edited at the discretion of the

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