

Rotary hears of family mentoring, scholarships

The Rotary Club of Dunwoody welcomed one of its previous presidents and a third generation Rotarian, Sydney Browning, now an Alpharetta Rotarian, as speaker to his former club. He was joined by Carol Swan, Program Director of Home Stretch, an organization in Alpharetta that helps previously homeless families gain financial stability through case management, life skills, and mentoring.

Home Stretch takes working families who are citizens with at least one minor child in North Metro Atlanta and moves them towards increased self-reliance and stability through financial mentoring.

Browning is one who serves as a mentor.

The goal is for them to pay off their debts, increase their income, and be able to move out of the program-provided, furnished, three-bedroom apartment in less than two years.

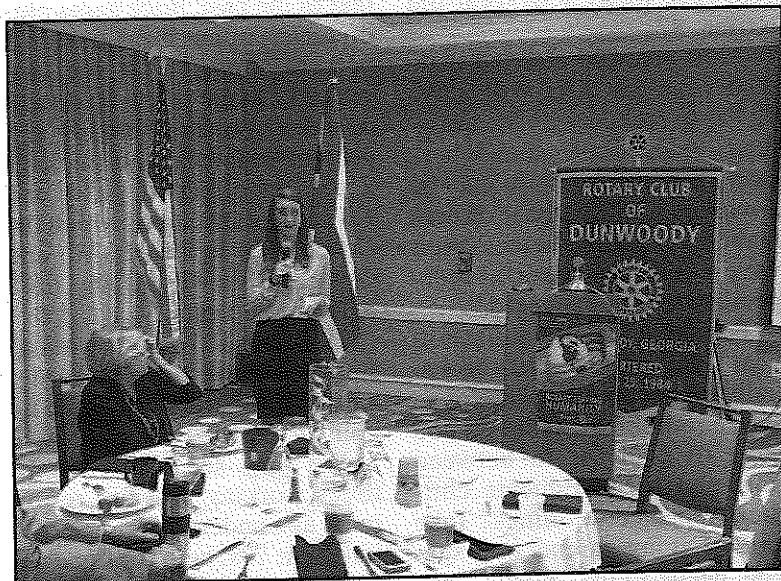
HomeStretch was started in Alpharetta in 1991 and now has 39 such housing units. Applicants must have a full-time job, substantiated by four to six weeks of paycheck stubs, and must agree to pay off debt by getting a better job or a second job. Classes in budgeting are required. Life Skills courses include finance, parenting, employment skills, and decision-making.

Follow-up shows that after a year, 85 percent of these families are financially stable. The Drake House helps them find better-paying jobs through an employment agency. Many Rotarians hire them in their businesses.

At its Sept. 23 meeting, Rotary members learned of a scholarship program that has funded more than 10,000 k-12 students in Georgia.



Rotarians discussed Home Stretch, a non-profit helping homeless families, at a recent meeting. Pictured, L-R: Carol Swan, HomeStretch Program Director; Tina Philpot, Dunwoody Rotary President; Sydney Browning, Alpharetta Rotarian.



The Rotary group learned of a little-known scholarship program, GOAL, on Sept. 23. The program began in 2008 and this year is the source of funding for 10,000 Georgia k-12 student to one of 131 participating private schools in 72 cities in the state. No means testing is used in granting the scholarships. Minority students account for 44 percent of the scholarships awarded. Only 1 percent of donors are also recipients. The accounting manager for the program, Avery Parker, and the director of Client and Legislative Services, Allison Saxby, brought the program description and explained how the dollar-for-dollar income tax credit works for donors. The GOAL Scholarship is the only tax credit for education available in Georgia. Each year there are \$58 million available tax credits for Georgians who donate. From the funds donated, 94 percent goes to scholarships and 6 percent goes to administration. This last amount is \$2.6 million less than the amount of fees allowed by law. More information can be found at their website, goalscholarship.org. L to R: Tina Philpot, Rotary Club of Dunwoody president; Allison Saxby, Director of Client and Legislative Services at GOAL Scholarships