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## Student inspires Rotarians



**Ben Hays stands at the podium as he speaks to the Rotary Club of Dixie County on Wednesday (March 29).**

**Story and Photo By Jeff M. Hardison © March 30, 2017 at 1:37 p.m.**

**CROSS CITY --** Members and guests of the Rotary Club of Dixie County were inspired and impressed by a Dixie County High School senior Wednesday afternoon (March 29) as he gave a speech to the group.

Ben Hays, 18, has been accepted as a future student at the University of Florida. He was introduced by Dixie County Rotary Club President Dana Johnson.

Other officers and club members present were Vice President Heather Smith, Treasurer Tonya Howell, Hayward Anderson, Anne Hodges, Katrina VanAernam and Peggy Marlatt.

The topic of Hays' speech was "Competition."

He based his speech on being a teenager, where he sees people in this age range as comparing themselves with each other.

"We compete against each other for grades," Hays said, "striving to be valedictorian or salutatorian, as well as at the top of our (graduating high school) class. We fight for popularity, and all the prizes that come with it like being on homecoming court or elected to an office of prestige in our clubs."

He said there is competition in romantic relationships in high school as well.

While he shared with the Rotarians that he understands the concept that these matters seen by teens today as paramount will fade to be less important as they become older, for those individuals experiencing these feelings now, this competition is among the most important activities in their lives so far.

After a series of competitions and losses, teens often have an epiphany, Hays said.

Competition is good for making oneself better, he said, but the participants in contests should not see winning as a basis for their happiness.

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In competing, too, he added, the competitor must not lose sight of his or her morals.

“Often we strive so hard to get ahead,” Hays said, “that do not consider the consequences of the things we might do to get there. This is when we must consider the Rotary Four Way Test.”

The Four Way Test follows:

“Of the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH?

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

Does it promote GOODWILL AND BETTER FRIENDSHIP?

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?”

Keeping the truth is vital in competitions, he said. If a person lies or cheats to win, then he or she has not accomplished anything.

He said the competitors must consider if the action they do are fair to everyone, or if it is just to improve the contestant’s own goals and agenda.

Hays said that in competing, a person must not drive away his or her friends and make enemies of them.

“Finally,” Hays concluded, “our actions need to be fair and beneficial to everyone. When we are competing with others, we often try to surpass people – thinking only of ourselves. We must consider if other people benefit from what we are doing as well.”

Competitions are important, he said, but the contestants must remember that they do not mean everything.

The Rotarians and guests were inspired by the young man’s sage advice in his speech. Hays served, too, as a reminder to some listeners of the fact that many young people today continue to carry forward the traits necessary for civilization to be sustained into the future.

While some number of ne’er-do-wells may find a limelight on the Police Page, there are far more young people who are working in positive manners to help all humanity.

The Theme of Rotary International in 2016-2017 is “Rotary Serving Humanity.”

The Dixie County Rotary Club meets at the Cypress Inn Restaurant, 15568 N.W. U.S. Highway 19, in Cross City, starting at noon each Wednesday.