

President's Speech for 2025

Good evening, Fellow Ruritans!

I am honored to be standing in front of you all tonight.

Our pledge states, and please say it with me,

Ruritans pledge to support

Urban and

Rural communities

In

Times of stress

And

Need through fellowship, goodwill and community service

Let's say that again,

Ruritans pledge to support

Urban and

Rural communities

In

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And

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How exactly are we doing this?

Clubs are providing scholarships for further education, which in turn helps our communities

-providing food to those in need,

-providing money and services to those who have lost everything in a fire or other disaster,
relieving a small part of their stress

-providing ramps for the disabled

-providing community fellowship through dinners, fairs, etc.

Districts are organizing walks to help raise funds for mental health

-holding golf tournaments to raise funds for various projects

And the list goes on.....

How do we accomplish this?

Through Fellowship, Goodwill and Community Service

WE ARE America's leading Community Service organization

WE ARE the hope for the future

How can we continue to help our communities?

Again, through Fellowship, Goodwill and Community Service

We need to make sure we are seen in our communities
Make sure we are doing projects that help our communities, not just write checks
Hold community activities such as picnics and dances

ARE **YOU** WILLING TO DO THIS?

We need to advertise ourselves
Wear our Ruritan apparel, talk about Ruritan, advertise **US**

ARE **YOU** WILLING TO DO THIS?

We need to think outside the box to form new clubs.
We have luncheon clubs, breakfast clubs, a motorcycle club – what about a virtual club for those that are more tech savvy? Or a club in a retirement community? Or a club within a large company? The possibilities are limitless. We just need to break out of our current mindset of how clubs should look.

ARE **YOU** WILLING TO DO THIS?

We need to make sure to talk and respect each other. Agree to disagree and shake hands and walk away as friends. We need to put our differences aside. We need to work as a team, motivate each other, mentor each other, encourage each other, and support each other.

ARE **YOU** WILLING TO DO THIS?

Ruritan co-founder Tom Downing was once quoted as saying “the main value of Ruritan is to get folks in a community to become civic minded, to consider together their common problems, and try to solve these problems.”

ARE **YOU** WILLING TO MAKE SURE THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED?

My logo this year is a service dog with the slogan, Serving our Communities. The dog represents my dog Tucker, who picked me up when I was at my lowest, has been with me through my good and bad times and has kept me on my toes (those who have heard Tucker stories, know what I’m talking about). And my slogan, Serving our communities. Well, that’s self-explanatory...That’s what we do as Ruritans.

The plan for this year is to continue with Ruritan’s 5-year long term plan to grow Ruritan. We will be starting the second year of our plan, and we will be able to accomplish even more. Our goal for the second year is to continue the net 5-member gain per club and for each District to form **two** clubs. This past year, 71 clubs met the 5-member gain, and 7 districts formed 1 new club. Now that we have worked toward our first-year goal,
Are **YOU** willing to make sure we accomplish our second-year goal?

What you do when you leave here, today, and for the rest of your lives will make your communities and America a better place to live and work. The opportunities are unending.

For more than 95 years, Ruritan has survived. We have faced challenges throughout our history. We have survived trials within our very organization. We are in the process of surviving a changing society. So, if you get discouraged, remember that Ruritan has survived many obstacles much greater than those we face today.

A story I heard when I visited the Spartan District reminds us that we never know how our acts of kindness can influence another person's life. Fifty-five years ago, a gentleman in the Spartanburg Community (who drove a green 49 Packard) decided to invest in the life of a teenage boy by sending him to the 5-day Soil-Conservation Camp that was held at Clemson University. As a result of that camp, this young man became a lifelong conservationist. He has dedicated his time and talents to make certain that our natural resources are protected for future generations. Oh- did I mention that the gentleman who sent him to camp was a RURITAN? And that 55 years later the young man is one as well??? So, remember, one simple act of kindness within our community can result in a life changing opportunity, and they too may return home to inspire new generations to go out and make a difference!

Above all else, Remember,

We WILL survive! We WILL continue to Make Ruritan and America thrive!

Be proud of who we are, Be Proud of being a Ruritan!

I look forward to seeing you in Lexington, KY on January 23 and 24, 2026 to celebrate all our achievements from this year!

We exist temporarily through what we take, but we live forever through what we give.

Douglas M. Lawson