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THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

Venerable Tampa service group has 1st woman prez

This probably shouldn't be revealed because Holly Tomlin will surely be embarrassed and it might lead to some hackneyed stereotyping.

But that the new president of the Rotary Club of Tampa choked up during her inauguration speech shows just how big a deal it is to be elected the first woman president in the club's 85-year history.

"This is one of the most important milestones of my life, ranking right up there with the day I opened my business 15 years ago," said Tomlin, the energetic president of Tomlin Staffing.

She likens the club, its rich heritage and longtime roster of influential members to a moving train.

"I'm just the next conductor in a long line of great leaders. ... We've always been at the vanguard, leading change."

Tomlin became a Rotarian in 1989. The Tampa club actually opened its membership to women in 1987, two years before Rotary International eliminated the "men only" clause in its bylaws. Although the Tampa club's membership is still largely male, female membership is on the rise.

Tomlin sees the inclusion as symbol-

ic of the club's open-minded attitude and the progress women have made in the workplace and public life.

NOW SHE HAS the weighty responsibility of leading the prestigious organization into the 21st century and, as its core membership ages, playing a critical role in its evolution, health and tradition of leadership and service.

The realization that the "buck" has landed squarely in her lap may well have fueled the intensity of her emotions at Tuesday's weekly meeting.

Tomlin has made history, but she

doesn't plan to change tradition.

"The role of the Tampa Rotary has been to be a catalyst," she says.

Her goals for the club during her tenure include providing food and clothing for a school in Africa, taking the Rotary creed into the Hillsborough school system, instituting a Reading Is Fundamental program within the club, and establishing a Good Samaritan award that will honor local folks who have contributed to the community. (Call Lynn Love, 813-244-6448, with

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JUDY HILL
Columnist

HILL / Tampa Rotary Club elects 1st woman president



Tomlin

◀ From Page 1 (nominations.)

Members of the Rotary Club of Tampa have had an enormous impact on the city's progress. Chartered in 1914 as the second Rotary in Florida, the club has always had a roster that included the city's Who's Who.

EARLY MEMBERS INCLUDED business and community leaders whose names remain familiar, such as W.G. Brorrein, Henry Snow, Frank Jackson and Howard Frankland.

The club history credits members with being involved in the creation or support of many of the city's arts, cultural and social service organizations.

It also was instrumental in the designation of what then was a

shell road winding from Howard Avenue toward Clearwater as Memorial Highway. It was involved in the conversion to the city of Tampa of the privately owned waterworks and the deepening of the channel into the Port of Tampa.

The Tampa club also sponsored the first international Rotary Club in Havana in 1916.

But all the dry history doesn't do justice to the warmth and enthusiasm of the members, who are extremely friendly and committed.

Enlightened, as well.

How is it to have a woman prez?

Stockton Smith, a 60-year member of the club, beamed proudly and answered: "It's great."

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