Rotary Club of Pasadena, CA

SPOKES NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT 5300 * Rotary Club 794 * April 24, 2026 * #01-062
www.pasadenarotary.com

TEACHERS of Excellence

Co-Chairs: PP Mary Lou Byrne and Gary W. Kearney

Special Guest: Dr. Elizabeth Blanco, Superintendent,
Pasadena Unified School District

Honored Teachers (from left to right):
Maria Barajas, Second Grade, Hamilton Elementary
Michael Birnbryer-Lao, Music, Blair High School
Sonia Covarrubias, Kindergarten, Willard Elementary
Ani Karapetyan, Sixth Grade Science and Math, Eliot Arts Magnet
Jocelyn Strickland, Third grade, Jackson Elementary

Pasadena Rotary is proud to present the 36th Annual Teachers of Excellence Program. This program started in 1990, a product of hard work and dedication

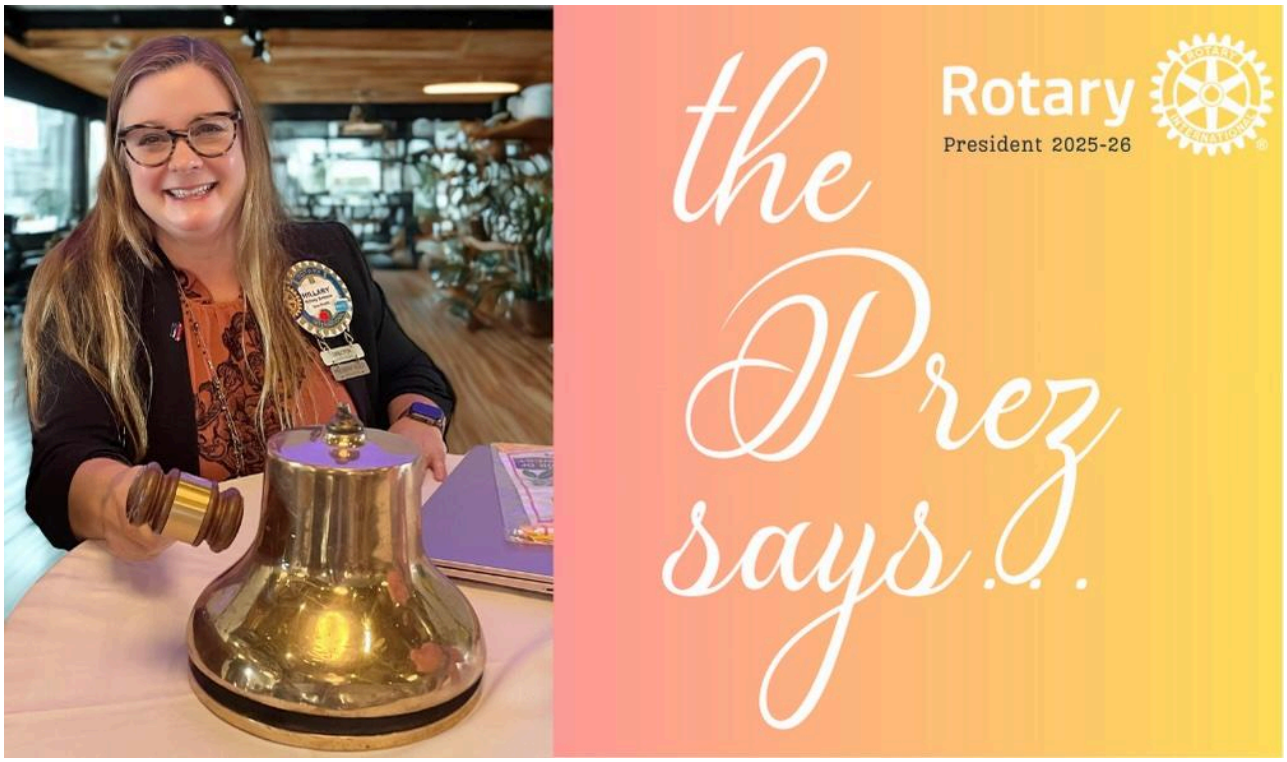
on the part of Pasadena Rotary members Joe Lonergan, Al Lowe and Christle Balvin, among others.

WEDNESDAY – APRIL 29, 2026
UNIVERSITY CLUB OF PASADENA
LUNCH BUFFET: 11:45 AM - MEETING: 12:15 PM
175 N. Oakland Ave, Pasadena 91101
Non-members are welcome - $45.00 includes lunch
CLICK ON: ***RSVP*** ***- Deadline: 5:00 pm MONDAY***

OVERFLOW PARKING: Across street behind Pasadena Heritage
Enter parking off Madison Ave.
OKAY to park in reserved parking spaces
ADDITIONAL PARKING: 221 N. El Molino - Northwest corner of El Molino & Walnut.
2 block walk to UClub. Cost: $1.00/2 hours

Meeting Host: President Hillary Schenk
Reception: Alan Schier & Mike Bernard
Song Leader: Don Andrues
Lunchtime Pianist: Ann Louise Christensen
Inspiration: Marilyn Buchanan
Scoot Zone Reporter: Dr. Sonya Sharififard
Photographer: PE Tammy Silver & Hans Rosenberger
Technical: Frank Fish & Scott Carlson
Sergeant At Arms: PE-E Robert Lyons

Meeting is also on ZOOM opens at 12:00 pm
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86515101523?pwd=dHhNZnV5c2ZqbzNQbWthbDNhYTladz09
Meeting ID: 865 1510 1523
Passcode: 667356



Sweet Impact, Global Reach: Pasadena Rotary and Brazil's Bees

Every now and then, a story comes along that perfectly captures what Rotary is all about connection, service, and a little bit of magic. This spring, that story arrived in the pages of *Rotary Magazine*, where a feature on Brazil's native stingless bees included a proud and meaningful nod to our very own Rotary Club of Pasadena. We provided financial support for this project through our international projects budget.

The article, "Sweet Honey," highlights an inspiring effort in Brazil to protect native bee species while helping local communities build sustainable livelihoods through honey production. It's the kind of project that checks all the Rotary boxes: environmental stewardship, economic development, and international partnership.

And at the heart of this connection is one of our own.

This project was spearheaded by Nevino Rocco, whose vision for supporting pollinator conservation in Brazil is deeply personal. His father, a dedicated Rotarian, helped lay the foundation for this collaboration. Together across generations and continents they've shown how Rotary's network can turn shared values into meaningful action.

Through this partnership, local beekeepers in Brazil are gaining tools, training, and support to practice meliponiculture the cultivation of native stingless bees. These remarkable bees play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity, and their honey provides both nourishment and income for families.

And on a lighter note, I'd like to go on record as a *very* enthusiastic supporter of stingless bees—purely out of admiration for their ecological contributions… and absolutely nothing

to do with the fact that I'm highly allergic to the stinging variety. Let's just say this is one Rotary project I can fully embrace without keeping an EpiPen on standby.

It's a beautiful reminder that even the smallest creatures can have a big impact and that Pasadena Rotary's reach extends far beyond our own backyard.

We're honored to be part of a story that is as sweet as it is significant. Congratulations to Nevino, his co-chair Sandy Goodenough and to all involved in bringing this project to life. It's Rotary at its best.

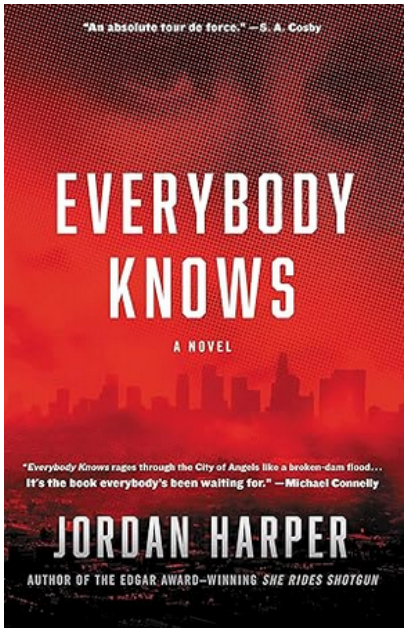
Service Above Self… with a little honey on top.

Hillary S. Schenk
President 2025-2026
Rotary Club of Pasadena
cell 805.358.8596

ATTENDING THE MEETING MEALS & SEATS ARE PROVIDED BASED ON *RSVP'S*.

CLICK HERE TO RSVP TODAY

ROTARY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS



ROTARY READERS

MONDAY - May 4th at 6:00 pm

On May 4 at 6 pm Rotary Readers will gather for Bill Opel's review of Everybody Knows by Jordon Harper.

Our host will be Martha Shenkenberg
Please RSVP to Martha Shenkenberg at
mshenkenberg@yahoo.com.
Please RSVP

Rotary Club of Pasadena Community Paul Harris Fellow Award Nomination Form

Each year a recipient for the Community Paul Harris Fellow Award is selected by the Awards Committee. The individual selected shall be from within the Pasadena community and not a current member of Pasadena Rotary. Organizations, groups and clubs are not eligible to receive the award. Nominees should exemplify the qualities and ideals of Rotary and “Service Above Self,” be active in community affairs, and be known in the business community as one who follows the “Four-Way Test.”

The Rotary Club of Pasadena Foundation will make a contribution of $1,000 in the recipient’s name to the Rotary Foundation, enabling them to receive the Paul Harris Fellow recognition. The recipient of this year’s award will be honored at an awards luncheon sponsored by the Rotary Club of Pasadena on Wednesday, June 3, 2026.

For more information and an applicaton form at our website:
https://www.pasadenarotary.com/home/paul-harris-fellow-award/

Volunteer to help staff the 2026 Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts!

Enjoy this beautifully decorated house, support Showcase's mission to fundraise for the arts, and earn donations for our club in the process. For every shift completed by one of our members, Pasadena Rotary will receive $50.

KEY DETAILS

- Shifts are 3 and 1/2 hours long (inside or outside) and you must stand the whole time (other than during a 15 minute break for water/snacks/bathroom).
- Parking for volunteers is at Santa Anita Park with shuttles to and from the house. There will be no drop off in front of the house, but Santa Anita is only a 10 minute shuttle.
- Your job will be to greet guests, answer basic questions, and direct traffic through the house.
- If you complete TWO separate shifts, you will receive a **free ticket** to tour the Showcase House any day after 1:30 p.m.

If you'd like to volunteer, contact our coordinator, Amanda Pumilia. She will upload your information into the volunteer portal, send you available dates/times, and confirm and schedule your shift(s).

Email: apumilia@yahoo.com or text: (818) 693-0331

Shifts are available on Tuesdays - Sundays from April 19th to May 17th

9:00 - 12:30

12:30 - 4:00

4:00 - 7:00

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

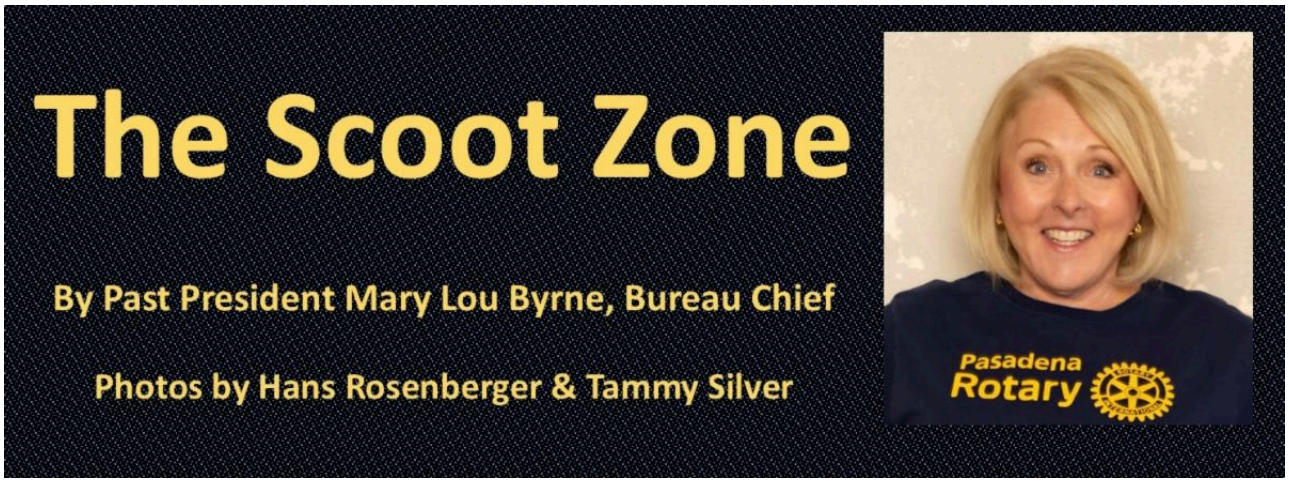
Rotarian Patrick Dinan brought his 11 year old daughter Eva Dinan to the meeting Wednesday.

She is in the 5th grade and plays the violin and cello.

Patrick thought it would be inspiratoinal for her to see young musicians at such a high level.

She was very impressed and said that everyone at Rotary was very welcoming.

Hmmm - maybe there's a future Dan Stover competitor coming soon!!



President Hillary Schenk rang the bell at 12:15 to get things started. **Past President Phil Miles** led us in the musical theater classic “76 Trombones,” in honor of today’s Dan Stover Instrumental Music Competition. We were accompanied by Ann Louise Christensen on the piano and the Four Way Test Singers. **Wende Lee** gave a moving Inspiration about the value of instrumental music, and how sometimes Service Above Self looks like “making sure a talented kid gets a moment to be totally heard.”

President Elect Elect and Sergeant at Arms Robert Lyons helped introduce our guests, who were hosted this week by **Past President Howard Raff, Lisa Cavelier, Paul Miller,** and **Patrick Dinan**.

Announcements:
Past President Mike Farrand announced that nominations for the Paul Harris Community Awards are open. See details above and please submit your nominees by May 8.
Past President Mary Lou Byrne urged everyone to do a volunteer shift at the Pasadena Showcase House of Design to support both the Showcase House and Pasadena Rotary. Details above.
Paul Roach reminded us about the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast on May 7 and said if you think you signed up but didn't get a confirmation email, please contact him at ***paul.roach@hmri.org*** or **Wendy Anderson** at **office@pasadenarotary.com.**

And with that, **President Hillary** turned things over to **Paul Roach** for the Dan Stover Instrumental Music Competition, which is one of the most distinctive traditions in our District, and is always one of the highlights of our Rotary year!

Paul first introduced his committee, who helped with the audition round last week: **Allison Burgos, Mary Lou Byrne, Nick Helms, Cedrick Jihanian, Gary Kearney, Peggy Kelley, Paul Miller, Ben Sellick,** and **Martha Shenkenberg**. The audition round was held at the Salvation Army Tabernacle and included fourteen talented student musicians sharing their work with us. "The level of artistry, and the courage it takes to perform, was evident across the board," said Paul. The committee identified three young musicians – all pianists – who were present at the Club Round, along with their families.

Paul explained the origins of the Dan Stover Competition: Dan Stover was an educator who always put students first, and a musician who brought energy and joy to every setting. In 1987, a year after his passing, a new Rotarian named Christine Monatan – Alhambra's first woman Rotarian – recognized an opportunity to honor his life that sat at the intersection of education, music, and service, and built the enduring Dan Stover Instrumental Music Competition.

What began as a local scholarship effort quickly grew into a district-wide platform. Over the years, it has supported generations of young musicians, helping them pursue further study at colleges, universities, and conservatories.

"One of the quiet privileges of community," said Paul, "is the opportunity to honor our forebears – not just in name, but in action. We carry forward what mattered to them: In this case, a commitment to young people to excellence, and to the role that music can play in shaping a life."

As we were all wiping away our sentimental tears, Paul introduced our judges. First was our own Ann Louise Christensen, a professional musician who has performed nationally and internationally for more than 40 years. She owns Christensen Music Studio, has a private teaching practice with 30 students, was a staff pianist for Nordstrom for 17 years, and currently plays for Oakmont Country Club, Pasadena Elks, and Glendale Kiwanis as well as the Pasadena Rotary Club.

Catherine Chan Biagini is a professional cellist who began studying piano at the age of four and added the cello at the age of nine. She graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Music Performance and during her last year in college won the position of assistant principal of the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, with which she performed all six Bach Brandenburg Concertos. She has worked with orchestras in Savannah, Georgia, Phoenix, Arizona, and Los Angeles, and has participated in music festivals and tours all over the world. She has also released five albums with Angels of Venice, a band that performs a range of repertoire from Renaissance to Metallica.

Vincent Houser is a violinist and graduate of the Indiana University School of Music. He has served as Concertmaster of numerous orchestras and taught at the college and secondary levels. He has toured with his own string quartet and the Henry Mancini orchestra in the U.S. and Europe. He arrived in Southern California when he was accepted as a member of the master class with legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz. Vincent is fondly known as “Art Deco” and leads his own orchestra, Art Deco Entertainment, which is one of America’s greatest dance orchestras and party bands.

Photo: Judges: Vincent Houser, Catherine Chan Biagini and Ann Louise Christensen.

Finally, the moment we had all been waiting for! The three contestants played their pieces one by one, to thunderous applause:

Contestant Number 1, Haydn Schlinger, attends Sequoyah High School and played Suite for Piano by Dello Joio.

Contestant Number 2, Simon Yao, is a freshman at Colburn School/Newbury Park High School and played Transcendental Etude No. 2 by Franz Liszt.

Contestant No. 3, Clayton Fong is a junior at the L.A. County High School for the Arts, and he played Legend No. 2: St Francis Walking on the Water, by Franz Liszt.

PHOTO:
Left to Right:

Co-chairs: Paul Roach & Allison Burgos

Musicians:
Clayton Fong
Simon Yao
Haydn Schlinger

President Hillary

After the performances, the judges retired to deliberate. The contestants introduced themselves and their family members and we had a very fun and interesting Q and A with them. It turns out they had a lot in common! They all started playing piano at very young ages, they all love their pianos, they all try to practice at least 90 minutes per day, and they all are interested in jazz in addition to classical music.

Finally, the judges came back from their deliberations. The winners were:
Third place, winning $200: Haydn, contestant no. 1.
Second place, winning $300: Clayton, contestant no. 2.
First place, winning $700 and the opportunity to compete in the next round (the group round): Simon, contestant no. 3.

We all gave the three winners a standing ovation and the meeting adjourned at 12:20.

Front Row L2R: Judges: Ann Louise Christensen, Vincent Houser & Catherine Chan Biagini
Back Row: L2R: COMMITTEE: Gary Kearney, Mary Lou Byrne, Peggy Kelley, CO-CHAIRS:Paul Roach & Allison Burgos, MUSICIANS: Clayton Fong, Simon Yao & Haydn Schlinger, COMMITTEE: Nick Helms, Cedrick Jihanian, Martha Shenkenberg, Ben Sellick & President Hillary

L2R: Dy-Min Chanel, Wende Lee, Cedrik Jihanian, President Hillary, PP Scott Vandrik, Deb Lewis, PE Tammy Silver, PP Ken Hill

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

SNEHA VILLALVA - April 26th

FRANK NICHOLAS - April 27th

CEDRICK JIHANIAN - April 30th

HAPPY ROTAVERSARY

Helen Baatz	4/26/09	26 Years
Carlos Huerta	4/28/25	1 Year
Antonio Rezik	4/29/24	2 Years

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

May 6th - Nicole Craig, FIDM/Fashion Institute of Design and Marketing - The Business of Fashion

May 13th - Akila Gibbs, Executive Director Pasadena Senior Center - Stories from the Fire

May 20th - David Klug, City of Pasadena Economic Development Director

May 27th - Robert Hartstein & Mike Bollenbacher - University Club - Back from the Ashes

June 3rd - Paul Harris Fellow Community Award

SPOKES is the weekly newsletter published by the Rotary Club of Pasadena

Weekly Live Wednesday Meeting by RSVP University Club Pasadena, 175 N. Oakland Ave.

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Ba
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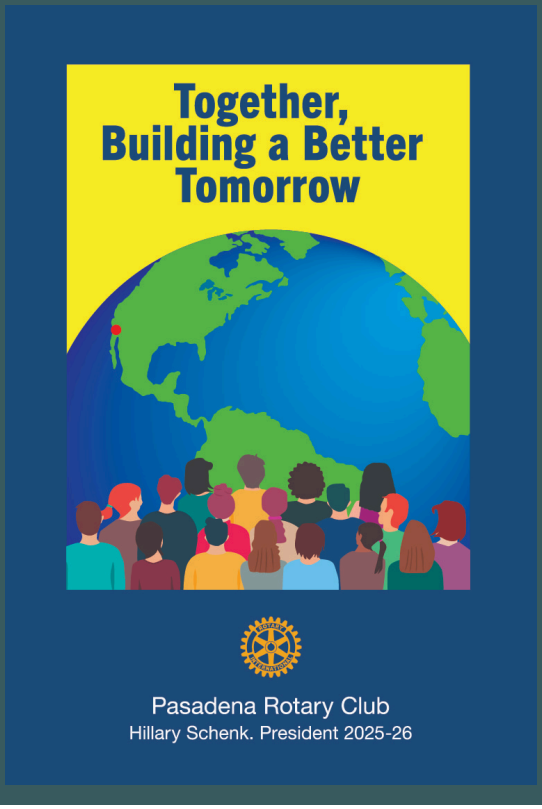

ROTARY CLUB OF PASADENA 2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETS the 3rd Thursday of every month at 5pm - University Club of Pasadena

PRESIDENT: Hillary Schenk
PRESIDENT ELECT: Tammy Silver
SECRETARY: Wende Lee
TREASURER: Allison Burgos
CLUB DIRECTORS: Don Andrues, Mike Bernard, George Falardeau, Frank Fish, J.P. Harris, Debi Kroman, Robert Lyons, David McAlexander, Nevino Rocco, Alan Schier, Dede Venkat
Non-Voting Member: Amanda Pumilia, Chair, The Impact Club

Rotary Club of Pasadena

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