



'SPARKS' OFF THE ROTARY WHEEL

An Award-Winning Newsletter

Edited by Sarah O'Brien

**The Rotary Club of Altadena meets Thursdays at noon
at the Altadena Town and Country Club**

Rotary Club of Altadena - #772

Chartered: February 14, 1949, P.O. Box 414, Altadena, CA 91003

RI Pres: Stephanie Urchick, Dist. 5300 Gov: Michael Driebe



IMAGINATION
INSPIRATION
INNOVATION
TEAMWORK



THIS WEEK: PCC VETERANS SCHOLARSHIPS

Westminster Presbyterian Church 12.00 - 1:30 pm

1757 N Lake Ave, Pasadena, CA 91104

Speaker / Program Chair: Craig Cox



The Altadena American Legion Post, when it disbanded, created through Altadena Rotary Charities an endowment to provide scholarships to Pasadena City College students who

were veterans, to help them on their educational journey. Working with the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) this year we will be providing four \$1500 scholarships.

This week meet you will be able to meet our three of our four scholarship recipients along with three additional Rotary Restore Altadena Recovery Grant Awardees.

Serving those who served
VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

APRIL 24, 2025

April is: Environment month

Officers

President: Maricela Viramontes
Vice President: Dawn Digrius Smith
President Elect: Brad Roeber

Treasurer: Mike Noll
Bus: 626-657-2287
Secretary: James Gorton
Bus: 626-793-6215

Directors

Craig Cox
Maria Perez-Arton
Mark Mariscal
Sarah O'Brien
Lisa Rickard
Doug Colliflower
Brad Roeber

Chairs

Executive Club Secretary: Mark Mariscal
Membership: Maria Perez-Arton
& Brad Roeber
Foundation: Steve Kerekes
Service Projects: Mike Zoeller

Subcommittees

Community Service: Craig Cox
Vocational Service: Steve Kerekes
Youth Contests, Scholarships, Awards: Mike Zoeller
Youth Activities: Tony Hill
International Service: Sarah O'Brien

<https://pasadena.edu/academics/support/veterans-services/>

LAST WEEK: RYLA AWARDS AND LOCAL BUSINESS GRANTS

Review by Steve Kerekes

This past week, our Club invited Muir students come to our luncheon and receive recognition awards for their attendance at RYLA – the acronym for the Rotary Youth Leadership Academy, a two and a half-day leadership training program for students selected by our Club from within our Rotary District. Tony Hill has been running this program for 15 years! In addition to developing their leadership skills, RYLA helps the students develop a recognition and understanding of their abilities, skills and potential as leaders – both presently and in the future. Also in attendance at the luncheon was Dr. Nancy Gonzalez Heusser, the guidance counselor at Muir who helps to direct the selection process. The following students were in attendance and received recognition awards:

Guadalupe Alcaraz Cervantes

Marco Costino

Elkin Follett

Esther James

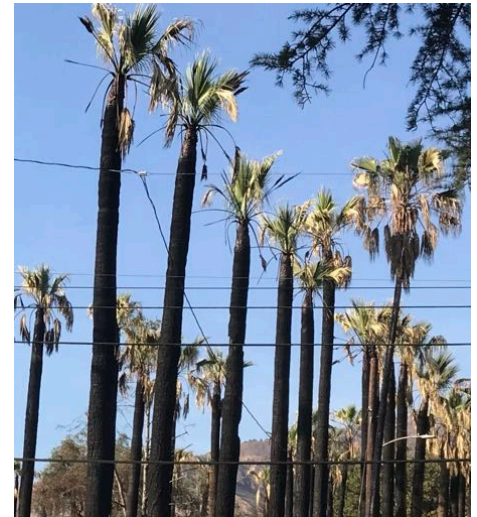
Shelly Romero Hurtado

Asa Swerdloff

Naira Wadley



www.ecsforseniors.org/montecedro



CLUB MEMBERS WHO LOST THEIR HOMES TO THE EATON FIRE:

Maricela

Lisa

Dawn

Mark

Rene

Sue

Carol

(Sue's sister and friend of Rotary)

Linda C.

Wendy

Lauren

Frank

Tony

Sarah

Roger Fennell

Dennis McGinley

Former member

David Smith lost his place of
business (carpenter shop)

Fire Relief Resources:

<https://www.altadenalibrary.org/news/emergency-resources>

<https://sd25.senate.ca.gov/eaton-wildfire-resources>

<https://altadenatowncouncil.org/2025/01/information-resources-eaton-fire/>

One other Muir student whom we sponsored was unable to attend the luncheon -- Ajani Khalfani. Each of the students spoke for a minute or two about their experiences at the RYLA camp.

In addition, there was one Muir High School Senior at the luncheon whom our Club sponsored to act as a "Senior Counselor" at the RYLA camp: Katy Hart. She had previously been an attendee herself. Two other Muir Seniors which our Club had selected to be "Senior Counselors" at this year's RYLA weekend were also unable to attend the luncheon: Jameel Franco and Aaydan Aquilar.

After the presentation to the RYLA students, the Restore Altadena Committee handed out grants to several local businesses which have been affected by the Eaton fire. The first was the DENA Relief Drive. Accepting on behalf of this organization was Brandon Lamar, its founder and President. He set up the DENA Relief Drive after the Eaton Fire to help local Altadena families. This organization has assisted more than 1,000 families in the Altadena area, distributing over \$100,000 in gift cards to families affected by the fire; over 600,000 lbs. of materials and products including air purifiers, generators and other essential goods; 500 emergency relief kits; 125 new mattresses and over 100 laptop computers.



Inspirational Thoughts
Shared by Tony Hill (selected)

"When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this: you haven't."

- Thomas Edison

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

- Our Altadena community is definitely going through some very challenging times right now. To varying degrees, all of us have been impacted, including the students here today.

- Given the day to day struggle many of us are experiencing, it is often difficult to find personal inspiration.

- For myself, and I think many others in this room, I have been inspired by the compassion and understanding I have received, and continue to receive from others - often from those whose daily challenges exceed mine. I particularly appreciate the ongoing support I have been receiving from my Rotary family.

In searching for inspiration at the time of the Great Depression, in the late 1920's & early 1930's, I discovered two wonderful songs that were written during that time: Woody Guthrie's, "This Land is Your Land" and the song "Happy Days are Here Again".

- To sum up, I think it helps to consider a popular phrase: **"When you get knocked down, pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start all over again"**. Tony

The next grant recipient was Havens House Youth Services. Accepting on their behalf was Dr. Abeni Carr Johnson, the Executive Director. Havens House helps transitional youth, ages 16-24, by creating a safe space and resource center for students and young adults who could be categorized as at risk, homeless, or foster children. Havens House plans to use this money to provide financial assistance to impacted families and teachers as well as help reinforce their organization's support ongoing efforts.

The last organization to appear and receive a grant was The Badon Tennis Academy. Present to accept the grant was Veronica Badon, the founder, President and head coach of the Academy. The Academy lost its location due to the Eaton fire but has since been able to relocate on the grounds of Muir High School. Several of Veronica's students have reached the top 20 in Southern California, which is one of the top areas for tennis talent in the country. Veronica indicated that she and the Academy are heavily invested in giving back to the community. The Academy has consistently given tennis and academic scholarships to students in the area, as well as necessary essentials to tennis students who could not afford items such as sneakers and rackets. She stated at our luncheon that more than half of her tennis students had lost their homes due in the fire.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!!

More recipients to be honored in the weeks ahead. Don't miss these meetings!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By President Maricela

Leaving on a Jet Plane!

This is the title to the song written by John Denver back in 1966. Peter, Paul and Mary recorded it soon after. The first line of the song is, "All my bags are packed and I'm ready to go". Daniela, my husband Javier and I are leaving on Thursday night along with Sarah, Isabel and Andrew on a flight to Cambodia. It is a big adventure for us. We figured that since we are currently homeless, we might as well see a few places. This trip will give me an opportunity to see what our club, and other rotary clubs from around the world have been doing to make life better in Cambodia. In advance, I thank Doug and Dawn for filling in for me during my upcoming absence.

Another Level of Paul Harris Fellow Award

By Steve Kerekes

Every year, as members contribute to the Rotary Foundation – either through direct giving, club fundraising or our contribution to the Polio Plus Campaign due to our Summer Concert Series 'Pass the Pitcher' campaign – club members reach a different level in their giving totals. Each \$1,000 in giving brings a club member to what is called a Paul Harris Fellow Award, plus 1, plus 2, plus 3, etc. until finally reaching the first level of being a Major Donor. This week at the club meeting, I am looking forward to presenting the PHF + 4 pin to Dawn Digrius Smith.

If any new member wants to learn more about the Paul Harris Fellow Award, please feel free to contact me or Mark Mariscal. We would be happy to share how your personal giving to The Rotary Foundation can make a difference locally and around the world!

Attention 501(c) Nonprofit Organizations:

The Rotary Club of Altadena is now accepting applications for the Restore Altadena Grant Program, offering \$500 to \$5,000 in funding to support community projects that aid in Eaton Fire recovery efforts.

Who can apply?

- 501(c) nonprofit organizations
- Projects benefiting Altadena residents, businesses, services, and charities affected by the Eaton Fire
- Organizations may sponsor projects by individuals, businesses, or local government

<https://altadenarotary.org/?p=stories&storyid=287709>

This past week has been busy for our club. Our Restore Altadena Committee approved a few additional grants, that bring our total giving to over \$110,000 to support programs and projects in Altadena. We witnessed the importance of preparing future leaders last week when we welcomed the RYLA students from Muir High School that had received funds to cover a weekend in the San Bernadino Mountains with students from across the San Gabriel Valley and the Southern part of Nevada. They learned teamwork, leadership skills and the importance of fellowship. A few of these same students were in the Rite Aid parking lot this past Saturday with Brad, Paula Eckert, Mark and Deb H, helping out at the Community Event organized by the Vassar College Alumni Association of GLA.



See you on Thursday. Stay Strong!

Also on Saturday, there was another Clean-up Day at Loma Alta Park in preparation of the May 17th re-opening of the park. Our club, along with District 5300 helped pay for the lunches on Saturdays in April for the 500 volunteers attending. This coming Saturday is the last volunteer work day. A special thank you to Mark for helping coordinate that program.



Above: Volunteers at Clean-up Day
Loma Alta Park



Another event this past Saturday was the annual Women of The Year Program hosted by Congressman Judy Chu. There were nine honorees (pictured above), me being one of them.

When I was introduced, the Congressman said the award was for the leadership role I held with the Altadena Rotary Club and Altadena Chamber of Commerce. Like the other 8 selected women, none of us felt we deserved the honor ourselves. Each of us, when it was our turn, spoke about the support of people behind the scenes. Their stories were powerful, mine too.

Little did I know that when I joined our Rotary Club back in 2018, the role of being Club President was in my future. And of course, while serving the first 6 months of my term, I was kept busy. After the Eaton Fire, our club jumped into action. Yes, I serve as the President and the DeFacto leader. In my speech, I stated that my efforts over the last 12 weeks would not have been possible without my family, friends, Rotarians, especially our Board of Directors and total strangers. Thank you all for helping and guiding me!



Brad, volunteering at the Rite-Aid
Vasser give-away event organised by
Jenifer Chang (below) w/supplies and
volunteers by Altadena Rotary.

