



## **'SPARKS' OFF THE ROTARY WHEEL**

*An Award-Winning Newsletter*

**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: Gordon R. McNally, Dist. 5300 Gov: Michael L. Soden



D.Vance Graphics

**May 2, 2024**

**MAY IS: YOUTH SERVICE MONTH**

### **Officers**

President: Dr Dawn Digrius Smith

Vice President: Doug Colliflower

President Elect: Maricela Viramontes

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

Maricela Viramontes

Doug Colliflower

Dawn Digrius Smith

Brad Roeber

### **Chairs**

Club Executive Secretary: Mark Mariscal

Membership: Maria Perez-Arton

& Brad Roeber

Foundation: Steve Kerekes

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

## **THIS WEEK: MINI-GRANTS TO TEACHERS**

### **Meet the Recipients!**

**Altadena Town and Country Club, Thursday at noon**

Program Chair: Ed Jasnow

### **THE BEST MEETING OF THE YEAR!!**

Yes, it's that time! Earlier this year our Club gave out 23 \$400 Mini-Grants to teachers in six different schools in the Pasadena Unified School District. This week, those teachers will be telling us about the remarkably creative ways they used those funds to enhance the classroom experience of their students.

This is a perfect meeting to bring a guest to, because they will see the direct impact our Rotary Club makes in the community.

Let's show these principals and teachers how much we support the work they do to educate our most valuable resource: our children.

**Special thanks to Sylvia Vega, realtor and former club member for sponsoring the teachers' lunches through a generous donation.**

See you there!



**Invite a guest - this is always a wonderful program!**

# LAST WEEK: Altadena Rotary PCC Veterans Scholarships, RYLA and our Hensel Essay Contest Winner!

Speaker Chair: Craig Cox with Tony Hill (RYLA and Essay Contest)

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 provided four \$1500 scholarships.

At this week's meeting Craig Cox introduced three of our four scholarship recipients and staff from the Veterans Resource Center. We also heard from Tony Hill who introduced the RYLA students so they could share their experiences with recent leadership training. Last but not least, Tony introduced our winning essay writer and her winning essay is printed below!

Our 2024 Rotary PCC Veteran Scholarship recipients are:

**Saul Diaz** served in the US Army as a cannon crewmember from August 2015 to August 2021, with deployments in Iraq and Syria. While stationed in Iraq, Saul demonstrated remarkable composure and empathy during a harrowing encounter with a suicide bomber, a moment that crystallized his aspiration for education. This scholarship not only relieves some of Saul's financial pressures but also stands as a testament to his unwavering dedication and resilience forged through his service to the nation. With a commendable GPA of 3.84, Saul is currently pursuing an Associate of Arts in Engineering Technology, with plans to transition to a Bachelor's in Computer Science. **Saul was unable to attend the meeting as he had an interview at Yale University!**



**Manuelita "Denny" Sanchez** proudly served in the US Navy as an Operations Specialist from June 2013 to July 2021. Inspired by the distinguished military legacy of her paternal grandfather, who served in the Marine Corps, and the revered Navajo Code Talkers within the Marines, she felt a deep sense of duty to follow in their footsteps. Despite this, her innate desire to explore the world led her to enlist in the Navy. Throughout her service, she completed two deployments in the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and

Operation Inherent Resolve. Following her initial enlistment, she chose to reenlist and took on the role of Navy Recruiter for Navy Recruiter District San Diego, based in Rancho Cucamonga. Currently, she is diligently pursuing an Associate's degree in Business Administration, will transfer to Cal Poly Pomona in Fall 2024. With a commendable GPA of 3.39, Manuelita is poised to continue her academic journey with the same dedication and passion that characterized her military service.



<https://www.ecsforseniors.org/montecedro/>

**Altadena Grocery Outlet is Proud to Host**

**The Semi-Annual Pancake Breakfast**  
Benefits Altadena Mountain Rescue Team (AMRT),  
Altadena Town Council (ATC), and Outward Bound Adventures

 **GROCERY OUTLET**  
Organic Market

**Saturday, June 1, 2024 • 8:00-10:30 am**

**Here or To-Go Tickets \$5.00**  
Tickets available at Sheriff Station, El Patron  
Restaurant, Grocery Outlet or [altadenarotary.org](http://altadenarotary.org)  
Sheriff Station (626) 798-1131

Proceeds benefit AMRT, ATC, and Outward Bound Adventures | Sponsored By - 

## Pancake Breakfast!

Tickets are now available for our June 1 Pancake Breakfast at El Patron and Grocery Outlet. Please invite friends, family and neighbors!

The event benefits Outward Bound Adventures, Altadena Town Council and of course, our terrific Altadena Mountain Rescue Team.

## Altadena Rotary Projects and Events Calendar

Craig Cox

May 5 - Staff Rotary Booth at the Altadena Guild Home & Garden Tour  
May 25 - Put up Flags for Memorial Day through Independence Day  
June 1 - Pancake Breakfast at Grocery Outlet  
June 29 - Melodia Mariposa Concert  
July 6 - Take down Flags on Lake Avenue  
July 6, 13, 20, 27, August 3, 10, 17, 24 - Summer Concerts  
August 31 - Melodia Mariposa Concert  
September 7 - SSGA Concert

To register for any event go to DacDB, Login, elect the My Club, tab, go the the Calendar icon, and go to the date. (Concert signups should be up by May 1st)

**Yuan Wenjue** – Mr. Wenjue is a motivated student with a 4.00 GPA. His career goal is to become a doctor. He is working on finishing his pre-med requirements before he applies to medical school. He dreams of becoming a doctor to provide the best health care services. Mr. Wenjue served 4 years in the U.S. Army as a combat medic. He was drawn to the medical field with the desire to help others. He was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, Hero of the Month, and many others.



## Upcoming meeting info and events (save the dates!)

May 9 - PCC Vocational Scholarships  
 May 16 - PUSD Scholarships  
 June 27 - President Dawn's Demotion Party



**LeChristopher Williams** - Mr. Williams served in the U.S. Navy as a Boatswain's Mate for 4 years where he honed his leadership skills and learned the importance of teamwork. While serving in the Navy, Mr. Williams learned the importance of integrity, perseverance, and resilience in the face of adversity. During his time at Pasadena City College, he has maintained a GPA of 3.8. He's confident that he can leverage his military background to achieve academic excellence and make a positive impact in his post-military career.



Carol Calandra, Veterans Case Manager, PCC



Craig Cox with Award recipients and staff - congratulations to all!



Tony Hill, RYLA Program



## The RYLA Program

By Tony Hill



Our Club sponsored 7 students to attend the RYLA weekend. They were as follows: 6 students from *Muir High School*: **Aaydan Aquilar**, **Jameel Franco**, **Katy Hart**, **Matthew Hart**, **Mia Rodriguez**, and **Elleni Samaras**; + 1 student from *Marshall Fundamental High School*: **Keilah Yu**. All of these seven students were in attendance at yesterday's meeting with the exception of Aaydan Aquilar who was unable to attend.



The following school personnel also attended yesterday's meeting: Accompanying the Muir students was Muir school counselor **Dr. Nancy Heusser**. Accompanying



the Marshall student was school counselor

**Maria Torres**. In addition, I would like to mention **Steve Kerekes** who, as Chair of our Interact Club at Muir, was very helpful in recruiting Muir Interact Members to participate in the RYLA program.



Four of the seven RYLA participants

sponsored by our Club were also members of our Muir Interact Club.



## RYLA (cont'd)

The students shared their experiences participating in RYLA 2024. For some, the prospect of spending time with strangers was daunting but they soon made new friends. Others found the practical activities organised to strengthen leadership and team-building qualities to be inspiring and memorable. All were grateful to Tony Hill, Steve Kerekes and Altadena Rotary members for the financial support and the positive experience of the program!



## Altadena Rotary Club's Essay Contest winner!

By Tony Hill



**Ariana Soto** is a Grade 10 student at John Muir High School. Her essay is titled: "The Ethics of Palestine". As winner at our Club level, Ariana was presented with a \$100 gift card. Ariana will now advance to the District Level Contest and the chance to win up to \$3000. Accompanying the George Hensel Ethics

Essay Contest winner was the school volunteer who works with our Club on many student related programs, including overseeing our Interact Club at Muir, **Carina Jacob**. Carina was also responsible for encouraging Muir Interact member, Ariana Soto, to enter the Ethics Essay competition.

### The Ethics of Palestine

Written by Ariana Soto, 10th grader at John Muir High School

What is ethics? In my understanding, ethics is the application of one's values, principles, and self-described purpose in the decision a person makes. Values are the qualities and things we care about. Many care for their friends and family, and agree with values like justice, love, and honesty. They want to treat those they care about well and act according to their values. When we are unable to solely follow our values to make an informed decision, we turn to our principles. Principles are the driving beliefs that dictate the most appropriate course of action in relation to our values. Principles ask the question of an ethical response in each situation. People employ principles in alignment with their customs, values, and beliefs. Some value accountability and adopt the principle of keeping their word. Others place importance of compassion and thus follow the principle of treating others how they want to be treated. But what happens when multiple important qualities and principles have contradicting potential courses of action? Both may be applicable to the situation at hand. How do we distinguish which principle to follow? This is how ethical and moral dilemmas arise.

The ethical dilemma that is disturbing me has to do with events taking place on the other side of the globe. I am referring to the occupation of Palestine by the government of Israel.



### ROTARIAN George R. Hensel

George, the founder of California Driving School, was an exemplary Rotarian with a 45-year record of perfect attendance. A real model of the Horatio Alger myth, going from sleeping on park benches during the Depression, through the Merchant Marines, to a Ph.D. in business and an impressive record of philanthropy giving millions of dollars to the community and Rotary. His legacy continues through the Rotary's George Hensel Ethics Essay Contest.

#### George R. Hensel Ethics Essay Contest

**\$3,000**  
to student with winning essay  
**\$1,000**  
to teacher of student with winning essay  
**\$500**  
to 3 Runner-Ups  
**\$200**  
to teachers of runner-ups

**PURPOSE**  
To create a venue for students to express their views of ethics and show Rotary's commitment to youth.



## The Ethics of Palestine *(cont'd below, then opposite)*

As most people are aware, the Israeli Defense Forces, otherwise known as the IDF, are currently preparing to go on the offensive towards Rafah, where over half of Gaza's population is situated. It is very upsetting that over a million people all in southern Gaza would have to flee from what the IDF had once reported to be a safe zone. Even in times of political disarray, there are still ethical policies and rules that should be followed. Ethically, people should not want to cause harm to others.

Despite this conflict being decades long, I want to focus on the current happenings, specifically the ones expanding from October 7, 2023. Since HAMAS' attack on October 7th, 1,410 Israeli lives have been lost. Comparatively, over 28,473 Palestinian people have died. Of the Palestinian casualties, 88 of them were journalists and media workers. This amount is more than double that of journalists' deaths that have occurred during the Russo-Ukraine war over the past 32 years (37 deaths, to be precise). The dilemma of choosing to kill others should not cause a question or debate. The murder of others without thyme or reason is unjust. When looking at the suspiciously high amount of media worker deaths, I cannot help but think that they were targeted. How could a person be killed for wanting to share news? I believe that there are other ways to come to peaceful reconciliation without needless casualties, such as having peace negotiations under a ceasefire.

I bring this up not to excuse or diminish HAMAS's actions, but to demonstrate the disproportionate loss that Palestinian civilians are facing amidst the conflict. It is difficult to miss the constant news and posts regarding the thousands of brutal deaths and killings of Palestinians. In my eyes, there should be no question regarding the dilemma the IDF faces of killing Palestinians. It is part of the government's duty to limit the civilian casualties that result from warfare. Videos circulating the internet showcase powdery, bloodied remains as the sounds of explosions are ever imminent in the background. Parents mourn the loss of their sons and daughters as they carry what is left of them in bags. Children are crying for their dead family members in this war. How can I be indifferent to these occurrences? Earlier, I mentioned how ethics is the way one applies their personal values, principles, and purposes to their decision-making. The last part, purpose, asks why: what is the reason? What is the IDF's purpose in this excessive aggression? Does the IDF's explanation of retaliating against HAMAS excuse the overwhelming number of deaths and immense quantity of collateral damage? It is clear that the IDF's purpose is not simply retaliation, but the complete relocation of Palestinians.

*(Cont'd opposite)*

What is the ethical dilemma I face in all this? My ethical dilemma is figuring out if I should just let the killing in Palestine continue or act. It is difficult to talk about morals and righteousness when facing a complex topic of careful consideration and nuance. No matter what decision is made by the groups in power, nothing will reverse all the harm that has occurred. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize the importance of kindness and empathy towards those who are suffering due to these hostilities. I firmly believe that what the Palestinian people currently need most is a call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. While we watch it unfold from the comfort of our homes, we should ask ourselves - what world do we want to live in? Do these events reflect Americans' values? If the answer is no, we should not ignore it. No matter how unsettling it is to view such disturbing media, we should want to adhere to our ethical, moral codes and our compassion for other human beings. We must not look away. The more I know of what is going on in Palestine, the stronger I feel that the killing needs to stop. Those who value righteousness and justice should not desire harm to others. What can I do to improve this instance of lack of ethics? As a U.S. resident, I would support our government providing shelter, medical attention, food, and water to Palestinians and suspend funding Israel's actions towards them. These sentiments and beliefs are what drive me and others to act and make a difference. I support my government officials that feel the same and therefore are speaking up for Palestinians. I will not turn my head to the unjust suffering of Palestinians when it is currently happening. Eyes on Rafah.