



'SPARKS' OFF THE ROTARY WHEEL

An Award-Winning Newsletter

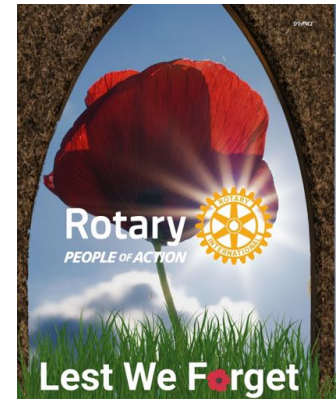
Edited by Sarah O'Brien

**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



NOVEMBER 7, 2024

**November is:
Rotary Foundation 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

THIS WEEK: MONIQUE JUAREZ COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

Altadena Town and Country Club, Thursday at noon

Speaker Chairs for October: Ashley Watts & Nikki Winslow

Monique Juarez, is a Community Health Worker for the LA County's Dept. of Mental Health. United Mental Health Promoters Program aims to reduce stigma associated with mental illness among culturally underserved communities in Los Angeles County by increasing awareness about mental health issues, removing barriers, and improving timely access to culturally and linguistically appropriate resources. For the last 12 years she's actively engaged and supported families involved with the Dept. of Mental Health, Dept. of Children and Family Services, Edelman's Children's Court, and Twin Towers CRDF doing her part in trying to make the world a better place.

Monique will be joined by **Idalia Oquendo** who is also a Mental Health Promoter with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, since 2019. In this role, she facilitates mental health workshops for individuals, families, and organizations seeking mental health resources and education. She is passionate about removing the stigma around mental health.

LAST WEEK: MELANIE SYMONDS A CAREER IN COSTUME DESIGN

Speaker Chair: Maria Perez-Arton Review: Doug Colliflower



On Halloween, our Rotary Club had the pleasure of welcoming Melanie Symonds, an Altadena resident with an extraordinary background in costume design. Melanie captivated our members with a walk-through of her impressive career. Her journey spanned from humble beginnings to supervising the costume shop at one of the world's most recognized theme parks.

Melanie's rich history in the industry includes the honor of working with major film and entertainment icons, providing both insight and inspiration - perfect for our Halloween season!

Early Education and Training

Melanie's foray into costume design began with her BFA in Costume Design from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, California. Adding an international layer to her education, she pursued a Diploma of Higher Education in Theatre Wardrobe at the Wimbledon School of Art in London, England. This foundation in costume artistry allowed her to approach the craft from a technical and creative perspective, ultimately opening doors to working on high-profile projects.

A Role-by-Role Overview of Melanie's Career

Melanie's early days in the costume industry were far from glamorous. She began her career as a "Dryer of Fabric," a title that might sound simple but belied a labor-intensive role under extreme conditions. Melanie described working in an environment that closely resembled a steam room, handling boiling water to treat and set fabric dyes. Her work at this stage included high-stakes projects like costumes for the *Rambo* films and creating flags for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, each requiring attention to durability and vibrancy.

Her next role, as a "Stitcher," was even more painstaking. Melanie shared the detail that hand-stitchers were forbidden from using machines, a testament to the era's focus on authenticity in costume production. She recounted working on two massive racks of petticoats that required hemming entirely by hand. She then shared the irony of the final product: the petticoats, though essential, remained unseen under the elaborate costumes worn by the actors. The experience underscored the



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



Flags Going Up on Lake Ave

Pictured: Brad, Mike Z, Tony (above) and Dennis, Craig and Doug (below)



Club Treasurer Mike Noll with guest, Emi Tsuji, at last week's meeting.

importance of the unseen but meticulously crafted layers that brought authenticity to each character's attire.

After mastering hand-stitching, Melanie moved on to work as a "Dresser." Dressers were crucial to the production, ensuring that actors could make quick costume changes during fast-paced scenes. Dressed in all black to remain inconspicuous, dressers operated with clockwork precision, often in choreographed collaboration with each other. Melanie worked with notable figures like Debbie Reynolds, Frank Sinatra, and Mikhail Baryshnikov, tailoring each costume change to the distinct needs of the performance. The role required not only technical skill but also an ability to work under pressure, especially when working with such high-profile personalities.

The Role of Draper and Beyond

Melanie's next position was as a "Draper." This role took her costume skills to a new level, working directly from artists' renderings to develop the patterns that would bring costumes to life. Draping required her to blend artistic vision with practical application, creating patterns that would form the backbone of each costume. As a draper, Melanie further developed her understanding of the structure of costumes and the detailed craftsmanship needed to bring a designer's sketches to reality.

Her final position in the entertainment industry was supervising the costume shop at Universal Studios' theme park. In this supervisory role, Melanie not only managed costume production but also encountered a distinct work environment that differed from her earlier experiences. Melanie revealed that Universal Studios had two separate costume shops: one for the film production side and another for the theme park. Despite the prestige of this role, she candidly shared that working conditions at the theme park costume shop were less than ideal, with occasional concerns about occupational safety. The environment was challenging enough that she worried about a potential visit from OSHA inspectors.

Reflections on a Dynamic Career

Melanie's talk was both insightful and perfectly timed, given the Halloween season. Her presentation offered a deeper understanding of the dedication and artistry involved in costume design, highlighting not just the glamorous aspects but also the hidden, labor-intensive parts of the job. Each role she undertook in her career taught her new skills, from technical hand-stitching to managing entire costume departments.

Throughout her career, Melanie's work has touched many facets of the entertainment industry, from film to live performances and theme park productions. Her journey exemplifies a blend of artistic passion and

Rotary Monthly Themes

- July - Maternal & Child Health Month
- August - Membership & New Club Development Month
- September - Basic Education & Literacy Month
- October - Economic & Community Development Month
- November - Rotary Foundation Month
- December - Disease Prevention & Treatment Month
- January - Vocational Service Month
- February - Peace and Conflict Prevention Month
- March - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Month
- April - Environmental Month
- May - Youth Service Month
- June - Fellowship month



Rotary International Convention 2025

The 2025 ROTARY International Convention will be held in Calgary from June 21 to June 25, 2025. The event is organized by Rotary International and is expected to draw attendees from more than 100 countries.

For more info and to register:

<https://convention.rotary.org/en-us/>



116 Children
and 90 Parents
Served Daily

<http://www.familiesforwardlc.org/>

resilience, showing our Rotary Club that there is much more to costume design than meets the eye.

In closing, Melanie's story reminds us of the often-overlooked craftsmanship that goes into creating the costumes that bring stories and characters to life. Her journey through the roles of fabric dryer, stitcher, dresser, draper, and supervisor underscores the importance of every detail in the world of costume design.



THIS WEEK! Altadena Rotary Social

Be sure to add November 7th at 5:30 p.m. to your calendar! This is the date for our Club's first evening social which is all about mingling and sharing.

This event will be at Plate 38, 2361 Colorado Blvd (the northeast corner of Colorado Blvd. and Sierra Madre). Parking is available on both Colorado and Sierra Madre Blvd. and in the lot on the east side of Plate 38. We will have a section of the restaurant reserved, so just mention you are with the Rotary Club on entry.

You can order from the full or Happy Hour menus. Everyone who attends will order directly with the waiter and pay their own bill. All bills will include an 18% service fee because of the individual billing.

The Happy Hour menu (which is in effect until 6 pm) includes small plates ranging from \$4 to \$13. The same menu also includes wines from \$10 to \$12 and draft beer for \$6.

This social get-together will start as a quarterly event. We will try out a couple more restaurants and then decide whether to continue "rotating" or stick with one location.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President Maricela

Foundation Month and Thanksgiving

October ends with Halloween, and the first two days of November are known in the Christian world as All Saints Day and All Souls Day. In my family's culture, we celebrate "Día de los Muertos" - "Day of the Dead". At this time we remember those who have left this world before us.

My daughter (Daniela, pictured right), and I stopped by El Patron Restaurant and Loma Alta Park on Friday to view the temporary altars built in remembrance of loved ones.



The month of November is special in the sense that we are reminded of 'giving'. From the point of view of Rotary members, this is usually done via the many service projects, the funds raised for our own local projects or for the Rotary Foundation. Our club is considered a Paul Harris Club. That means that (as of 2 years ago), all members had received their first Paul Harris Award from contributions of at least \$1,000 to the Rotary Foundation (made directly or by someone on their behalf). Since then, we have some new members and I look forward to speaking with each of them (joined by Steve Kerekes who is our club Foundation Chair), about the role played by the Foundation, and the impact of Paul Harris contributions in helping to support

Rotary's mission of 'Service above Self'. A reminder to all that donations can be made easily through Rotary Direct.

Our club has only three meetings this month. We skip the fourth Thursday in November since it is an official holiday. However, I would encourage any of you who have the time, to please consider participating in our two remaining service projects on Saturday, November 16 and 23rd. The first date is for packing the food boxes for the families of children at Families Forward Learning Center. The 23rd is for the actual distribution of the boxes. Please check the calendar on DacDb and sign up to help.

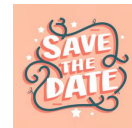
I hope to see some of you this Thursday evening from 5:30-7pm. at the Plate 38 Restaurant and Bar for our fellowship gathering. We shall have another one (joined by other organizations) on December 17th inside the Rose Bowl in the Arroyo.



A shout out to all of you who were able to stop by our Immediate Past President's House last night to help Dawn celebrate her 60th birthday (*pictured left*). In closing, please let me know how my articles are doing. I know that not everyone has an opportunity to attend meetings so I try to include plenty of information and all feedback is welcome!

These socials are in addition to our regular weekly meetings at the Altadena Country Club, not in place of a meeting.

If you have any questions or want to serve on the social committee, contact **Tom Polenzani** (polenzani@gmail.com, 626-675-4729)



**Save The Date:
December 17th**

On Tuesday, December 17th from 5-7pm., Altadena Rotary Club will join the Altadena Town Council and Altadena Library Foundation for a special Holiday Invitational Reception hosted by the Rose Bowl Operating Company. Club members and one guest will be able to attend. The reception includes appetizers, drinks and tours of the Rose Bowl grounds and locker rooms. More information will be available via email in late November.

HAPPY HALLOWEEN AT THE CLUB!



HAPPY DIWALI Hindu Festival of Lights



Greetings from the students at Lalgurash School in Mirge, Nepal. Supported by Altadena Rotary Club.