



'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



D.Vance Graphics

DECEMBER 12, 2024

**December is:
Disease Prevention & Treatment
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: HOLIDAY MUSIC
BY MELODIA MARIPOSA**

Altadena Town and Country Club, Thursday at noon
Speaker Chair for December: Steve Kerekes



At this week's meeting, a violin duo will entertain us! These professional musicians are representative of the caliber of musicians who perform with Melodia Mariposa throughout the year. Their founder, Irina Voloshina, started the program 4 years ago. Our Rotary Club was one of the early sponsors helping to expand her "FREE" concert series - from early performances in her driveway, to larger community events. You will not want to miss this short but festive concert! <https://melodiamariposa.org/>

LAST WEEK: ELIZABETH BROOKS - CRAFT TALK

Speaker Chair: Steve Kerekes Review: Doug Colliflower



In place of our scheduled speaker, who had to postpone through illness, we were delighted to hear the inspiring story of Elizabeth Brooks, a new member of our club and a returning Rotarian. Although Elizabeth is new to *our* Rotary Club, her Rotary journey began in 2001 when a colleague invited her to lunch with the Venice Marina Rotary Club. Reflecting on her introduction to Rotary, Elizabeth shared, “I enjoyed the vibe and the people and soon became a member, actively participating for twelve years.” She expressed her appreciation for the warm welcome she has received at our

club, echoing Maricela’s sentiment: “This Rotary Club feels like getting together with family.”

Elizabeth began her story by sharing her roots. She was born in Morelia, Mexico, and raised primarily by her grandfather, whom she described as an incredibly kind and intelligent man. Her grandfather was a guiding force in her life, instilling in her valuable lessons about business and integrity as they traveled together across Mexico and the United States. In contrast, Elizabeth noted that her parents were largely absent during her upbringing.

At just 14 years old, Elizabeth made the brave decision to run away from home, eventually landing in Baldwin Park with no family or support system. Realizing she needed to survive, she lied about her age to secure work, enabling her to support herself. Determined to improve her circumstances, she began attending night school to learn English, a skill she continues to refine to this day.

In the 1970s, Elizabeth married and had her first daughter. Shortly thereafter, she became a single mother, navigating the challenges and joys of raising her child on her own. In 1974, a serious car accident changed the trajectory of her life. Though injured, Elizabeth used the settlement money to purchase her first home in the Atwater/Los Feliz area. It was a two-unit property, and renting out the back house helped her manage her \$360 mortgage - an amount that felt monumental at the time.



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



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

In the mid-1980s, Elizabeth returned to school, where she studied medical and legal administration, leading to an 18-year career as a medical administrator. During this time, she also traveled extensively, visiting Asia and Europe. Two destinations that left a lasting impression were Nepal and Venice.

Elizabeth's family grew to include three more children - two daughters and a son - and she is now a proud grandmother to three grandchildren, ages 15, 13, and 3½.

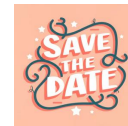
Most of Elizabeth's life was spent on the Westside of Los Angeles, where she loved being near the ocean. In 2008, she met her future husband, Steve, a professional cameraman and photographer who worked with movie studios and captured professional sporting events. When they married in 2010, deciding where to live posed a challenge: Steve loved the mountains, while Elizabeth preferred the beach. They ultimately compromised and made their home in La Cañada.

Steve was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia and Parkinson's in 2017, and Elizabeth became his primary caregiver until his passing in February 2024. Reflecting on this period, Elizabeth shared how the experience deepened her resilience and commitment to family.

Today, Elizabeth divides her time between managing rental properties she and Steve owned together and embracing her role as a grandmother. She cherishes spending time with her family and friends.

Elizabeth's return to Rotary was serendipitous. While attending one of Altadena's summer concerts, she met Mark Mariscal, who invited her to lunch with our club. As she puts it, "The rest is history!" Elizabeth expressed her joy in being a Rotarian once again and her pride in becoming a member of the Rotary Club of Altadena.

We are thrilled to have Elizabeth as part of our Rotary family and look forward to the impact her kindness, resilience, and experience will bring to our club and community. Welcome, Elizabeth!



**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.



Tom Polenzani sharing an inspirational moment.



Christmas Tree Lane Lighting Ceremony

Lisa & Dawn at our Altadena Rotary Club booth!

President's Reminder!

I would like to encourage all members to wear their UGLY Holiday Sweater for our meeting this Thursday. Yes, a little silly, but why not? The winner gets a prize! Also, since we will have a good crowd - incl. concert sponsors and maybe our new Assemblymember John Harabedian - fellowship will start around 11:50 and the buffet at noon.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President Maricela

Two Meetings Left in 2024!

At this Thursday's meeting, we shall be joined by the sponsoring businesses and individuals who provided funding for our 2024 Summer Concert Series in Farnsworth Park. The fellowship starts at 11:50 am, buffet opens at noon and the meeting starts at 12:25. It will be a full house. Please greet as many of our guests as possible. Also, if possible, please bring a

new unwrapped toy for the Toy Holiday Program that takes place the following day. AND... please consider wearing your UGLY sweater - the winner shall receive a prize!

Last Friday and Saturday, some of us participated in the Chamber's "Sip and Shop" event on Friday night followed, on Saturday, by the Christmas Tree Lane Lighting Ceremony. Thanks to all who volunteered at the Rotary booth at each of the events. In fact, Mark, Lisa and I (along with Victoria Knapp from Altadena Town Council), met and took a photo (see opposite), with our newly elected CA State Senator, Sasha Renee Perez. What a treat to see her out and about in our community! She had just been sworn into office earlier in the week.

In addition to our club bringing toys, refreshments and Santa to Farnsworth Park this Friday from 4 pm - 7 pm., volunteers will help guide the line of parents and children to meet Santa and pick out a toy. The next day, a few of you have also signed up to help staff our 'GAME BOOTH' with prizes at the Annual Holiday 'DOOR OF HOPE' celebration. Door of Hope in a non-profit organization. They are one of the only homeless providers that can shelter any kind of family together in their own private unit, including single moms, single dads and two-parent families together with their children.

On Monday (December 16), we will have a Fellowship Holiday Celebration at the home of Lisa Rickard. A separate email went out last week with instructions on how to RSVP before this Friday. On Tuesday the 17th, we will also gather from 5pm-7pm as guests of the Rose Bowl Operating Company. This will include appetizers, drinks and for those who made a reservation, a tour!

SEE YOU THURSDAY... wear an ugly holiday sweater if you have one, and plan to arrive early!



Robin, a guest of Maricela, w/Sue.



Brad and Dennis, helping take down the flags!



'SIP AND SHOP' with volunteers, friends and CA State Senator Sasha Renee Perez (see President's Message).