



'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



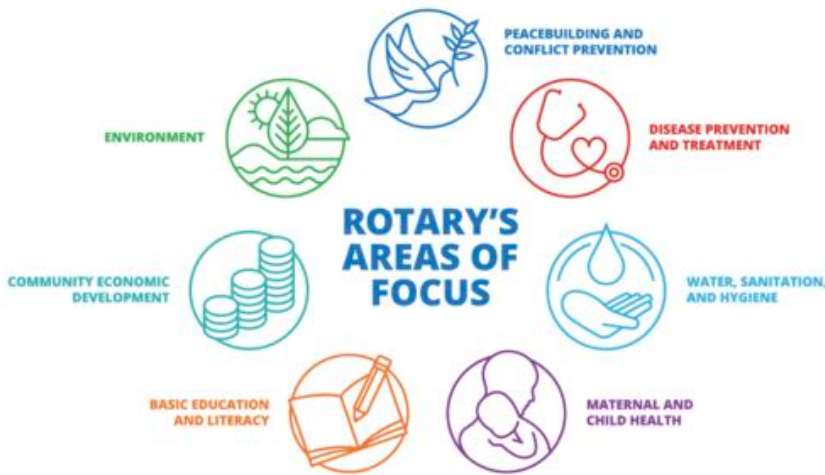
FEBRUARY 27, 2025



THIS WEEK: A MAKESHIFT CLUB ASSEMBLY!

**Westminster Presbyterian Church 12.00 - 1:30 pm
1757 N Lake Ave, Pasadena, CA 91104**

**February is:
Peace-building and
Conflict Prevention/Resolution**



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

Our program this week will be a relaxed open discussion about the remaining four months of the Rotary year. As you know, we did not hold our Club Assembly in January due to the Eaton Fire tragedy. There are programs to discuss. Examples include: Reading to Children at FFLC, Pancake Breakfast for the local Sheriff Station's AMRT program, our PCC Veteran's Lunch, Teacher Mini-Grants and scholarships to students from Pasadena City College and Pasadena Unified School District.

Please plan to attend and share *your* ideas!

LAST WEEK: MAJOR GENERAL JASON KELLY

Review by Tony Hill



Our program last Thursday was very timely. The speaker was Major General Jason Kelly, the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations for the US Army Corps of Engineers. Major General Kelly's current assignment is overseeing Phase 2 of the debris removal and clean up of the properties impacted by the recent California Fires. Also attending our meeting was US Army Colonel Sonny Avichal, who works

under Major General Kelly as the person in charge of overseeing the clean up of properties specifically in areas impacted by the Eaton Fire.

Major General Kelly's very impressive credentials are outlined in detail in last week's Sparks. Included in his vast experience during his 34 years in the Service, were tours of duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a native of Flint, Michigan and is a graduate of West Point.

Major General Kelly pointed out that the scope and scale of the recent California fires is unprecedented. He has worked on many US natural disasters in the past but he told us that the extent of the devastation that resulted from these fires is the worst he has seen. He mentioned how important it is, as part of his job, to have the opportunity to meet first hand with some of the victims of the disaster, as he was doing at our meeting of the Altadena Rotary Club.

Major General Kelly said that our input (and input from all victims of this disaster) was invaluable to him in carrying out his assignment. He said he was here on a "one way ticket" and that he and the rest of the Army Corps of Engineers will remain in our community until the job is done. He emphasized that he wants all those impacted to hold him responsible and to let him know how he and his fellow Army Corps members could do better - he even offered to share his personal phone number. He ensures us that he wants to work together with the community members to facilitate the rebirth of our devastated community.

Phase 1 of the clean up, run by the EPA to remove hazardous waste is coming to a close. Phase 2, being undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers is about to start. Their first priority is to gather "Rights of Entry" (ROE), providing them with authorization to enter the individual properties to do their work. Their crews cannot enter a property without such authorization by the property owner. This is unfortunately a slow and tedious process conducted by LA County. They are waiting for the completion of sufficient agreements from property owners to "opt in" to make their work efficient and speedy. It will work much better if they can work a block at a time rather than jumping around from one isolated property to another.



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/>

The Army Corp also has the challenge of determining sites to store, at least temporarily, the toxic waste materials that they remove from the properties, from such things as asbestos to burnt out motor vehicles. As you might guess, such locations are not always popular with surrounding neighbors. At this point they have 17 landfills authorized.

In answer to questions, we were advised that the problems with the water districts in Altadena do not fall under the Army Corps jurisdiction. However, Major General Kelly said he would pass on the concerns of the members to the appropriate person(s) with authority over these matters.

Regarding the issue of cutting down fire-damaged trees, we were advised by Major General Kelly, and by Colonel Sonny Avichal, that with the exception of damaged trees that impede the removal of debris, no trees will be taken down if the property owner objects and is willing to sign a waiver of liability. We were also advised that the white X's and arrows pointing upward do not indicate that the tree is to come down, only that there may be issues with such trees. Trees that the Army Corp of Engineers arborists believe should be removed will be marked with 3 blue dots as well as an orange ribbon around the trunk. In addition, and most important, a plaque will be attached to the base of such trees indicating it is the arborist's opinion that the tree should be removed. But even in this case, there is a provision that "not all marked trees will be removed. Property owners may submit paperwork to request certain trees remain".



As horrendous as all of the impact of the Eaton Fire has been and continues to be to our Altadena community, we appear to be in good hands with Major General Kelly and Colonel Sonny Avichal in charge of the debris clean up phase, so we can all move on to the rebuilding phase.

NEW MEMBERS INSTALLED!



In case you missed it, our club is growing! New members recently installed include Frank Mayor and Peter Huisling (L to R) above with membership chair Maria, and President Maricela.. This is Frank's first time joining Rotary. His wife Huan Gu is active with Altadena Heritage. Peter transferred from a club in Tucson, AZ. His wife Henrietta (Hank) is a member of the Sierra Madre Rotary Club.



**CAMBODIA
CLEAN WATER
& TOILET PROJECT**

Honorary Rotarian Isabel O'Brien with brother Andrew (International Service Chair Sarah's kids), visited the Clean Water and Toilet project with Rtn 'Dunny' Darrel in rural Cambodia this week, supported by Altadena Rotary Club.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By President Maricela

HIGHS AND LOWS

Over the last 49 days since January 7th, we are asking each other the same questions: *How are you feeling? How is the family doing? Is there anything you need?*

Have you found housing? Do you see any changes going on with your daughter? What phase of clean up (1st or 2nd) is your property at? Have you taken time for just you?

Let me tell you, ALL of us have heard these questions, especially those who lost homes. Always with a smile, I have attempted to stay strong while answering. But let me say, it is not always easy. For example, last Friday Mark Mariscal and I were asked to attend the Southwest President Elect Training Seminar (PETS) at the Marriott Hotel near LAX. Brad Roeber was also in attendance. Mark and I were there to share our experiences of the devastation that occurred both to us personally and also to the community. Joining us was a woman from the Rotary Club of Santa Monica who had recently purchased a home only 14 months earlier in the Palisades community. She lost her home too. She stated that this public gathering was the first time since the fires that she had come out to a crowded event and more significantly, shared her story. Like many of us in Altadena, it was sad and hard to listen to the details. What struck me was her describing how the fire spread so fast during the day, she did not have much time to pack anything when she evacuated. She described the scene that many of us saw reported in the news: cars that were abandoned on Sunset Blvd and side streets, due to the congestion with the fire fast approaching. Her husband is a doctor and many of the individuals that are part of his practice also lost their homes. She said that added insult to injury. Between both fires, more than 11,000 single family homes were destroyed.

On a more upbeat note, during lunch on Friday (at PETS), Mark received a text from a Rotary member of Mesa, Arizona asking if anyone from Altadena Rotary was attending. Mark responded that in fact, he, the Club President (me) and Brad were all in attendance! She responded that she had a check for the club. After lunch she met us in front of the stage and handed us a check payable to ARC in the amount of \$7,200. What a HUGE SURPRISE! It was unfortunate that we did not have longer to talk. We took a photo, thanked her and hurried to our presentation. However, I will not forget the kindness in her voice and how proud she was in being

Presentation at Southwest PETS Training

By Mark Mariscal



(Please see President's Message)

This photo was taken after the presentation to attendees. Larry Lunsford (pictured R), has been a Trustee of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. Over the last four years, I have had the privilege of seeing him at training events in addition to exchanging emails. He has always been responsive and forthright in his answers to my many questions regarding The Rotary Foundation.

Pictured above: L-R: Mark Mariscal, Nora Bohn, Santa Monica RC, Maricela and Larry Lunsford, Trustee of The Rotary Foundation.

Below: Mark Mariscal, Wyn Spiller, Rotary International, Director-Elect, Club President Maricela Viramontes and Brad Roeber



able to offer help on behalf of her Club. She said “I know your club will use these funds to make a difference during the Fire Recovery Period.”



Please keep **March 15th** on your calendar for the next Rotary “Day of Service”. We will again be partnering with Grocery Outlet, Shelter Box USA, Society of St. Vincent de Paul and our Altadena Town Council as we try to help families affected by the Eaton Fire.

See you on Thursday - stay strong!

RESTORE ALTADENA: Rotary Club of Altadena Fire Relief

Application Form is now available (check your email)

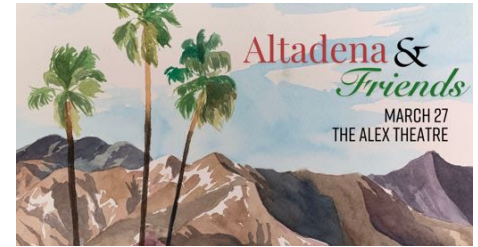
GUIDELINES: In the wake of the Eaton Fire and in support of Altadena’s disaster relief and recovery efforts, the Rotary Club of Altadena has established a fund to provide support for immediate and long-term relief efforts through disaster response grants. We will also work on requests with our historically recognized community partners.

What Rotary disaster response grants support: Community projects that benefit Altadena residents, businesses, services, and charities affected by the Eaton Fire. Applications will be considered and prioritized on the basis of need and impact.

Who can apply for a disaster response grant: Grant applications must be completed by not-for-profit 501(c) organizations only. Organizations may sponsor projects by individuals, businesses, or units of government. Grant projects must be intended for and completed within the unincorporated area of Altadena.

Grants are available between \$500 and \$5,000. Matching funds are encouraged but not required. Funding for a purpose that is part of a larger project is acceptable. **NOTE:** We do not provide funding for the personal use of individuals. Rotary Club members are not eligible for these grants except as part of a request from a recognized community organization.

FIRE RELIEF CONCERT March 27



FIRE RELIEF CONCERT

Host a LiveStream party with your club!

Details coming soon

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!



Additional Concert Info Here
(or contact Zoot):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNkGT9zEe00>

Or:

https://feverup.com/m/300309?utm_source=landing&utm_medium=partner&utm_campaign=300309_lax&utm_term=33379

“If we can sell out the 1300+ seats of the Alex Theatre, we can raise over \$120,000 for Fire Relief! With the district leveraging that, it could be much more!” Zoot Velasco



**FIRE RELIEF /
DONATIONS TO
ALTADENA
ROTARY
CHARITIES**

<https://givebutter.com/EatonFireARC>
Eaton Fire Recovery Fund