



'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



**THIS WEEK: JEFF PRANG
LA COUNTY ASSESSOR**

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



Los Angeles County Assessor Jeff Prang was elected in 2014 as the 27th Assessor for the County of Los Angeles and re-elected in 2018 and 2022. Raised in Warren, Michigan, Assessor Prang is a graduate of James Madison College at Michigan State University. After graduation, Mr. Prang relocated to California where he served nearly 18 years as a councilmember for the City of West Hollywood, including four terms as Mayor among many other positions in the public sector. Upon

taking office in 2014 as the Los Angeles County Assessor, Mr. Prang implemented sweeping reforms to ensure that the strictest ethical guidelines rooted in fairness, accuracy and integrity would be adhered to in his office. The Los Angeles County Assessor's Office is the largest office of its kind in the nation with 1,400 employees and provides the foundation for a property tax system that generates \$24 billion annually.

Assessor Prang is a State Board of Equalization licensed appraiser, an Executive Committee member of the California Assessors' Association (CAA), and an active member of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) and the Society of Auditor-Appraisers (SAA). Assessor Jeff Prang lives in Baldwin Hills with his husband Ray Vizcarra, who is the instrumental music director at Warren High School in Downey.

MARCH 13, 2025

March is: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 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

LAST WEEK: DR. KATIE CLARK

ALTADENA TENANTS UNION

Review by Steve Kerekes



Dr. Katie Clark is the founder of the Altadena Tenants Union, a group which has organized to protect tenants' rights after the Eaton Canyon Fire. Dr. Clark is herself a long-term tenant of Altadena. Many tenants in Altadena had their homes burn down or else damaged beyond habitability by smoke and fire.

They have not been able to return to their homes. Tenants are confronted with some different problems that homeowners do not face. They have much less control over when and how their house or rental unit is remediated. In a few cases, unscrupulous landlords have delayed any remediation efforts in order to tire out the tenants who have a rent controlled rate so that they will leave, which opens up the unit and allows them to rent it to a new tenant at fair market value. In at least one case which Dr. Clark relayed to us, the landlord added insult to injury by sending out a notice to the tenant that the landlord deemed that the tenant had abandoned the property and was not coming back, and therefore the landlord would be re-renting the property. She pointed out that your average tenant, just like your average homeowner affected by the fires, does not know what her or her legal rights are or what the way forward looks like to returning to a life in Altadena.

Dr. Clark has lived in Altadena since 2009 and told us that she has loved her building and her neighborhood here. Like many others, she lost her home in the fire. She formed the Altadena Tenants Union to assist tenants by sharing information, learning what their rights are, and overcoming the many hurdles they face to keep their rental unit or, if necessary, relocating elsewhere.



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-eat-on-fire/>

She quoted some interesting statistics. She stated that the Harvard Center for Housing found that in 2024, out of 24 million households which rent, more than half spent greater than 50% on housing costs. The Princeton University Eviction Lab found that low income renters are at a much higher risk of eviction and that evictions have more than doubled since the pandemic. In California, renters comprise a whopping 44% of all households. This is the highest of any state. In the City of Los Angeles, the number is even greater – 63%. At the same time, certain rental markets, like Southern California, have not had accomplished any estimable increase in rental unit inventory in recent years. This has resulted in significant demand pressures to increase rents. On top of this continuing demand is another pressure - tenants who have been burnt out of their rental homes have to compete with others made homeless, to find a new home, even though there are now fewer housing units due to the fires.

Dr. Clark pointed out that the majority of relief efforts, and talking points, have been addressed to homeowners, not tenants. This has left many tenants feeling voiceless and invisible. Especially vulnerable are the disabled and seniors who, on the whole, are not as mobile and have a harder time accessing information and services. Many are still living in hotels in the Pasadena area. She formed the Altadena Tenants' Union to change this perspective and feeling of invisibility. The Union reassures tenants and helps them in their struggle to find a way to come back to live affordably in Altadena.

Compounding these problems is the fact that there are currently no disclosure obligations for landlords regarding what remedial efforts they have undertaken, or which were recommended but they have failed to undertake. Under current law, if a landlord re-rents a unit, the new tenant has no way of knowing what recommended remediation efforts have been completed or not. The Altadena Tenants' Union is attempting to remedy this by lobbying for legislation in Sacramento which would impose minimum requirements as to what a landlord must disclose to a potential tenant in the way of required and completed remediation after a fire.



www.altadenatenantsunion.org/

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

First application deadline: March 31, 2025

Apply now:

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

Help us restore Altadena—please share this with organizations making a difference!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By President Maricela

When Should We Scream?

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ICE CREAM! That is known as a 'pun'. It is a form of word play which suggests two or more meanings by exploiting multiple meanings of words for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect.

I think I could have screamed **before, during** and **after** the meeting last week. I think we all need to let a little bit out instead of holding it inside where it can do some emotional, physical and mental anguish to our body's system. We heard some strong emotional words last week from two of our members. One, an Active member and the other an Honorary member. The words and emotional plea were like a punch in the gut. The impact of what each said: about the importance of helping our own club members in addition to the community, was razor sharp. The room went silent. Our speaker, Dr. Katie Clark, understood the importance of the moment and was able to shorten her presentation. A big thank you to our speaker for being flexible.

While reflecting on last week's meeting, I had to remind myself that Rotary is a team. We see that time and time again when reading or hearing about what is going on in other clubs throughout our District. This week, we our helping our District - or should I say they are helping us? - with a big DAY OF SERVICE on Saturday, March 15. We will once again play host to hundreds of families in need of air purifiers, household items, fresh food, etc. I hope you have signed up to volunteers for at least one of the four-hour shifts. A special thanks to the planning committee - Mark Mariscal, Doug Colliflower, Jose and Sandra Valenzuela, Rene Amy, Peter Huisking, Sabrina Verduzco and DG Mike Driebe. Our President- Elect, Brad Roeber will also be in town working the event. He looks forward to seeing everyone.

Our programs with Pasadena City College and Pasadena Unified School District are in the final planning stages. We will be awarding more than \$28,000 in scholarships.

See you on Thursday - stay strong!

LAST WEEK AT THE CLUB:

A visit by Keni 'Arts'!



Pictured with President Maricela



Rotary Community Give Away on March 15 from 11-2 pm

This give away is for the Fire Survivors. Please consider signing up for some of the items available to the public. One of the ideas behind the air purifiers are to try and get them to people STILL living in 91001 zip code so that they can use them now if in their homes or soon when they get back in.

Besides yourselves, if you know families LIVING in homes in Altadena (91001) that would like an Air Purifier, please have them sign up quickly. We anticipate the list will fill up fast.

The giveaway will also include other items. Check your email for the Google sign up link from Mark.