



The Joshua Tree



March 25, 2025

EATON FIRE: A CAREER FIRE FOR THE AGES

The Rotary Club of Victorville had the honor of hosting **Josh Sprague**, Battalion Chief with the City of Victorville Fire Department, as this week's guest speaker. With 29 years of experience in San Bernardino County, Sprague shared his harrowing firsthand account of battling the devastating Eaton Fire of 2025, one of the most intense fires of his career.



Fire response in California operates as a cooperative effort between northern and southern jurisdictions, following the principle of "Neighbors Helping Neighbors." When a major fire breaks out, resources from various departments are mobilized to assist. On January 7th, Sprague served as a Strike Team Leader, overseeing five engines and crews from multiple area departments. Due to high wind warnings the night before, they were placed on alert in preparation for potential deployment.

Initially, the crews were scheduled to convene in Devore, but their orders shifted when the County Fire Chief redirected them to a wind-driven fire in Colton.

This fire, fueled by strong winds and encampments in the area, was swiftly handled. Following their response in Colton, the teams were stationed at a hotel in Rancho Cucamonga, awaiting further assignments.

As fires raged in Pacific Palisades and the Pasadena/Altadena region, an urgent request for 200 engines came through. The Eaton Fire was escalating rapidly, and at last, Sprague's team received the call to respond. They were deployed to Altadena Drive and

Woodbury, arriving to a catastrophic scene—everything around them was ablaze.

Despite his extensive career fighting wind-driven fires, Sprague had never encountered destruction of this magnitude. Commercial structures, schools, car dealerships, and businesses were engulfed in flames. The team focused their efforts on saving residential areas, strategically positioning themselves at opposite ends of an alley that was itself on fire.

The conditions were brutal. The relentless wind forced firefighters to lie flat on rooftops for stability, as standing upright was impossible. Sprague fought fires for so many hours that his eyes swelled shut from exposure to sand, dirt, and smoke. By 4 a.m., the high winds intensified, causing the fire to spread further into Altadena, leaving devastation in its wake.

After 56 hours of continuous firefighting, the team finally received a break. However, their work was far from over—they returned to extinguish hot spots and secure

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This Week's Functionaries

Invocation: Chris Ackerman

Flag Salute: Darron Poulsen

4-Way Test: Bob Basen

Fine Master: Ryan McEachron



HOVE'S HELLO

Good day Rotarians!
It was fun to be back at the podium for a week, filling in for our

President Bryan Gillespie. I want to thank Josh Sprague for stopping by this week



and sharing his story fighting the Eaton Fire from the frontlines. A harrowing story, and one of bravery too.

Our next service project will be making our Easter Baskets, which will take place on April 15th. There is still time to donate, so sign up, donate, and make these baskets our largest yet! We are also looking for volunteers to help pass out the baskets in teams. Please sign up and see lives changed right before your eyes!

On September 6th we will celebrate our 75th Anniversary as a Club with a big fundraising event at the Spring Valley Lake Community Center! With great food and a look back on our many years as a Club, we will also be giving away \$10,000 that night! We will be selling 100 tickets at \$250 each with one lucky person getting some surprise wealth! We are looking for people to join the event committee, so please let Bill Edwards know if you'd like to be a part of the fun!

Jon Hove

Sprague...

Continued from Page 1



the area. The mental toll was significant. Adrenaline was replaced by the weight of loss, reports of missing individuals, and the discovery of human remains. To combat the emotional strain, Sprague encouraged his team to take breaks in Pasadena, where grateful residents expressed their heartfelt thanks. These moments of appreciation helped uplift the firefighters as they pressed on.

For nearly two weeks, the crews worked in grueling 24-hour shifts before the Eaton Fire was fully contained. Just as they prepared to return home, they were reassigned to another fire in Beaumont, extending their mission even further.

Every firefighter has what they call a "Career Fire"—one that will stay with them forever due to its sheer scale, intensity, and emotional impact. For Sprague and his team, the Eaton Fire will always be that defining moment. It was a test of endurance, skill, and resilience—one marked by adrenaline, exhaustion, heartbreak, and gratitude.

The Rotary Club of Victorville thanks Chief Sprague for his service and for sharing his powerful story. His courage and dedication, along with that of all first responders, remind us of the sacrifices made to protect lives and communities in the face of disaster.



THE MAGIC OF ROTARY

Big Blue Poker Chip



Chris Ackerman had the chance to draw the Blue Chip but picked green and saved the chance for another.

We will continue next week with 8 chips and \$350 for the lucky Rotarian who can draw the Blue Chip!

Fine Session

Ryan McEachron was our Fine Master this week and started by giving **Chris Ackerman** a \$5 fine for misprinting the title of Battalion Chief Josh Sprague's presentation, and **Keith Metzler** received



a \$10 fine for just showing up at the meeting. **Bill Edwards** also received a \$10 penalty for giving a Rescue Alliance Gala wrap up report.

Raffle

Chris Ackerman brought a VVTA microfiber cloth that was won by guest **Tony Camargo** and a Victor Valley Transit bean bag phone holder that will be used by **Keith Metzler**. **Ryan McEachron** brought a power pizza wood wheel that will be cooked up by **Rob Kilpatrick**.

Spoon of Exception



Arsalee Morales had her final time with the Spoon and reminded Rotarians about Apple Valley Communication's \$99 Spring Security Special. Arsalee also mentioned they will be at the High Desert Home Show soon, so please

stop by their booth to get more information on the special. You can also contact Arsalee at 760-247-2668 for full details.

It was then time to raffle off the Spoon for the month of April, and **Rob Kilpatrick** offered \$100 for the Spoon and took it home!

An advertisement for Apple Valley Communications (AVCOM) featuring a blue background with yellow poppies. The text reads: 'APPLE VALLEY COMMUNICATIONS Spring Security System Special \$99 Call Now For Details 760-247-2668 APPLEVALLEYCOMMUNICATIONS.COM HOME SECURITY FROM AVCOM OFFERS YOU PEACE OF MIND AVCOM'.

Rotary Guests

This week we were introduced to **Veronica Sprague**, spouse of speaker **Josh Sprague**, and **Tony Camargo** from the City of Victorville attended the meeting as a guest of **Keith Metzler**.

The Polio Pig

Collected this week: \$36.00

Polio Pig: \$16 + Chip (Chris Ackerman) \$5 = \$36.00

Collected to Date: \$21,302.83

Total equals: 103,584 Doses!

**One dollar equals 2 Doses of Vaccine!
\$500 pays for a Polio Clinic!**



VICTORVILLE ROTARY CLUB OFFICERS

Board of Directors

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| President 2024-2025 | Bryan Gillespie |
| President 2025-2027 | Bill Edwards |
| President 2027 - 2028 | Please be Interviewed |
| Immediate Past President | Steve Murray |
| Executive Secretary/Foundation/Grants | Margaret Cooker |
| Treasurer/Scholarships | David North |
| Youth Services/Ethics Essay | Ron Boyd |
| Club Service & Membership | Bill Edwards |
| Community Service/Speech Contests | Mike Johnson |
| Vocational Service | Please Volunteer |
| International Service | Ben Tafoya |
| Member At Large, Young Leaders Contact | Arsalee Morales |
| Member At Large, Special Projects | Rob Kilpatrick |

Members-at-Large: Bob Basen, Darron Poulsen, Angel Espino

Positions & Committee Chairs

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| BOD/PP Secretary | Pam Murray |
| Special Billing | Esther Mears (TBD) |
| Public Service Awards | Please Volunteer |
| Teacher Mini-Grants | Angel Espino |
| Dan Stover Music Contest | Angel Espino |
| Joshua Tree Editor | Chris Ackerman |
| Read B4K | Please Volunteer |
| Foundation & Grants | Margaret Cooker |
| Food Baskets | Please Volunteer |
| Interact (Junior Rotary) | Please Volunteer |
| Programs | Mike Page |
| Fundraising | Stefanie Montoya |
| S.T.A.R. Students | Angel Espino |
| Club Learning Facilitator | Please Volunteer |

The Victorville Rotary Club meets every Tuesday for fellowship
at 11:30 a.m. and meeting at 12:00 noon at the Bear Valley
Country Club, 13229 Spring Valley Parkway, Victorville

Make-up Days and Locations

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| MONDAY: | San Bernardino East, Imperial Palace, noon |
| TUESDAY: | Rancho Cucamonga Sunrise, 7:15 a.m. Empire Lakes Golf Course Rancho Cucamonga, 12:00 p.m., Etiwanda Gardens |
| WEDNESDAY: | San Bernardino Crossroads, Hilton, noon, Barstow, DiNapoli's Firehouse, 1358 E Main St, Barstow, CA |
| THURSDAY: | Apple Valley, Rusty Bull, 13685 John Glenn Rd, Apple Valley, Noon. Ontario, 12:15 p.m., Doubletree Hotel San Bernardino, Denny's at I-15, 7 a.m. Redlands, Masonic Temple, noon |
| FRIDAY: | San Bernardino North, Elks Lodge, 12:05 p.m. |

Calendar Dates

April 7: **Board of Directors Meeting**
5:00pm Fellowship
5:30pm Board Meeting
Location: Robar Enterprises
17671 Bear Valley Road, Hesperia, CA

Rotary
Club of Victorville, CA



Upcoming Programs

April 1: **Francis G. Beatty Memorial 4 Way Test Speech Contest** (Johnson)

April 8: Collin Rowe, Assistant Superintendent of Admin Services, VESD **TOPIC "VESD Facilities Update"** (Page)

April 15: Ryan McEachron **TOPIC "Understanding the County Board of Education"** (Page)

Rotary Easter Baskets

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