

# The Joshua Tree

August 6, 2024

## A JOURNEY OF DRUGS, VALUE AND CITIZENSHIP

The journey for **Marisol Escalante** to the United States began long before her arrival at age 9. Born in Mexicali, Baja California, a town known for its scorching heat and challenging living conditions, Marisol's early years were marked by hardship. Growing up in such a tough environment, her most treasured possession was a simple play phone, a small comfort amidst the chaos of her parents' troubled marriage.



with peril. Marisol, her mother, and her little sister had to cross the border illegally, navigating rivers and streams and scaling a 15-foot fence to escape. Upon reaching the other side, they were immediately detained by border patrol agents. At that time, U.S. immigration laws prevented families from being separated, and because her father was a legal resident, Marisol's family was allowed to stay.

When Marisol was very young, her parents' tumultuous relationship ended with her father moving to the U.S. to become a legal resident. Her mother stayed behind in Mexicali, raising Marisol and her younger sister on her own. On Marisol's 9th birthday, her father called with unexpected news: not only was he reconciling with her mother, but he was also bringing them to the United States.

In 1993, Marisol arrived in Adelanto, California, expecting to find the land of her dreams. Instead, they were placed in a run-down apartment, and the reality of their new life quickly set in. Her father turned out to be not only a drug addict but also a drug dealer, and her mother fell into alcoholism. At just 9 years old, Marisol was forced to grow up rapidly, becoming the primary caregiver for her family. She learned English quickly, serving as a translator between her parents and the police.

For Marisol, the U.S. was a land of dreams and fairy tales. She envisioned a magical place where dreams came true and wished for a wonderful home and countless toys. However, the journey to this dreamland was fraught

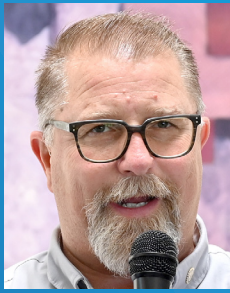
As the situation deteriorated, her mother's addiction escalated from alcohol to drugs, eventually landing her in a mental institution. Marisol was left to manage the household, protect her younger sister from the influx of strangers visiting their home, and keep up with her schoolwork. Despite these overwhelming challenges, she continued to go to school, engage with other students, and learn English.

One pivotal night, Marisol's father took her to meet a prominent female drug lord. Marisol, only 10 years old at the time, was confronted with a terrifying sight: a gun pointed at her head and a powerful woman who seemed

**This Week's Functionaries**

<b>Invocation:</b>	<b>Mike Johnson</b>
<b>Flag Salute:</b>	<b>Kirsten Acosta</b>
<b>4-Way Test:</b>	<b>Bill Scott</b>
<b>Fine Master:</b>	<b>David North</b>

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## BILL'S BANTER

Thank you to  
Marisol Escalante  
for coming by this  
week and sharing

her harrowing  
tale of her  
upbringing in  
Mexicali, Baja  
to her escape  
into a life that  
many of us

could never image in Adelanto, and at such  
a young age. Please read her tale as our  
cover story in this week's issue.

We now have a date for our Teacher Mini  
Grant event. Please make sure you join is  
on November 5th for this incredible lunch  
meeting. We are still looking for Rotarians  
to donate monies towards the grants for  
our area teachers.

Opportunities are also available to  
sponsor a shelter with our friends at Shelter  
Box. You can purchase a full shelter box  
package for \$1,000, a set of solar lights for  
\$30 plus different price points in between.  
See Margaret Cooker for more information.

Remember that Congressman Jay  
Obernolte will speak to the Club on August  
20th. Please sign up for your attendance  
and invited guests as soon as possible to  
Margaret Cooker. We'd like to fill the big  
room at the Bear Valley Country Club that  
day.

*Bill Edwards*



## Marisol Escalante

*Continued from page 1*

to have everything she lacked. This encounter left Marisol determined to become a powerful figure in the drug trade herself.

Over the following weeks, Marisol's life continued down this dark path. However, a turning point came when a local pastor and his wife, despite facing threats from her father, persisted in offering groceries and kindness to Marisol's family. Their unwavering generosity, even in the face of intimidation, profoundly affected Marisol. One day, while her father was passed out from drug use, the couple told her, "You have value." This message resonated deeply with Marisol, who had long felt worthless.

Eventually, Marisol's family was evicted from their apartment, and the pastor and his wife took them in. Under their care, Marisol experienced a stable, loving environment for the first time. This new beginning inspired her to abandon her aspirations of becoming a drug lord and instead focus on becoming a U.S. citizen.

Throughout high school, Marisol worked illegally at Jack in the Box and received essential supplies like glasses and backpacks from organizations such as Rotary. Despite her efforts and determination, her immigration status remained a significant obstacle. She was nearly deported on the day she applied for citizenship, even with a CNA certificate and letters of intent.

Marisol's perseverance paid off when, after seven years of marriage, she was finally granted residency and, two years ago, became a U.S. citizen. She remains deeply grateful for the support she received along the way and views her citizenship as a privilege and honor. Her journey from a childhood marred by adversity to a life of service reflects her resilience and the profound impact of compassion and support from others.

A postscript to her story is that, before her father passed away, both of her parents overcame their addictions, found faith, and, along with Marisol, dedicated their lives to serving others. Marisol's experience has shaped her commitment to helping those in need, and she feels a deep sense of gratitude and humility for her American citizenship and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.



# THE MAGIC OF ROTARY

## Big Blue Poker Chip



*Bill Scott had a chance to pick the Blue Poker Chip, but picked Green and saved the chance for another Rotarian next week. We will continue next week with 13 chips and \$225 for the one lucky Rotarian who has their ticket drawn.*

## Fine Session

**David North** served as our Fine Master this week and began by asking for a 10% tithe from both **Kirsten Acosta** and **Bill Edwards** as a result of the checks they received for the Victor Valley College Foundation for \$4,000 and \$5000 from the Rotary Club of the High Desert respectively.

**Mike Page** returned this week from his vacation, and wondered why he didn't retire while he was away. As a result, he was fined \$10 for not retiring and continuing to work.

Finally, **Mike Johnson** was penalized \$10 for interrupting David during the fine session.

## Give a Check...



towards Rotary scholarships.

In our many years partnering together, the Rotary Club of Victorville has given in excess of \$35,000 in scholarship dollars to the Foundation.

This week the Club was honored to present Rotarian **Kirsten Acosta** from the Victor Valley College Foundation a check in the amount of \$4000, going

## Raffle



**Bill Scott** was a big winner this week, taking home a bottle of wine from **David North**, a Flagstar piggy bank, mouse pad and sports bottle from **Mike Johnson**. **Arsalee Morales** also left the meeting with a Flagstar Bank

sports bottle. **Arsalee** wasn't done yet, as she won a Red Rock RV backpack from **Russ Stringham**.

**Margaret Cooker** received a Flagstar clip and pen from Mr. Johnson and Mike himself will enjoy reading a copy of "Stopping Pain", written by the brother of **Bill Edwards**.

## ...Receive a Check



Foundation for community service projects to our Foundation.

Although we were saddened to hear of the ending of the Rotary Club of the High Desert (formerly the Victor Valley Sunrise Club), we were equally as blessed to receive a check of \$5000 from their

## Rotary Guests

Our Stand-In for this week was **Stefanie Montoya**, who attended on behalf of **Bryan Gillespie**.

## The Polio Pig

**Collected this week: \$8.00**

*Polio Pig: \$3.00 + Bill Scott: \$5.00 = \$8.00*

**Collected to Date: \$20,601.83**

**Total equals: 102,182 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 .....	<b>Please be Interviewed</b>
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 .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>
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 .....	<b>TBD</b>
Public Service Awards .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>
Teacher Mini-Grants .....	Angel Espino
Dan Stover Music Contest .....	Angel Espino
Joshua Tree Editor .....	Chris Ackerman
Read B4K .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>
Foundation & Grants .....	Margaret Cooker
Food Baskets .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>
Interact (Junior Rotary) .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>
Programs .....	Mike Page
Fundraising .....	Stefanie Montoya
S.T.A.R. Students .....	Angel Espino
Club Learning Facilitator .....	<b>Please Volunteer</b>

**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

<b>MONDAY:</b>	San Bernardino East, Imperial Palace, noon
<b>TUESDAY:</b>	Rancho Cucamonga Sunrise, 7:15 a.m. Empire Lakes Golf Course Rancho Cucamonga, 12:00 p.m., Etiwanda Gardens
<b>WEDNESDAY:</b>	San Bernardino Crossroads, Hilton, noon, Barstow, DiNapoli's Firehouse, 1358 E Main St, Barstow, CA
<b>THURSDAY:</b>	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
<b>FRIDAY:</b>	San Bernardino North, Elks Lodge, 12:05 p.m.

## Calendar Dates

- Aug 12:** **2023-2024 ReadB4K Backpack Giveaway**  
10:00am  
VESD Family Resource Center  
Located off Mariposa Road  
*Please join this celebration and show your support of this program*
- Sept 9:** **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

- Aug 13:** Jonathan Weldy, Silverwood Director of Development **TOPIC "Silverwood Development"** (Page)
- Aug 20:** **Congressman Jay Obernolte** (Page)
- Aug 27:** Bo Goulet, Real Estate Broker **TOPIC "Real Estate in Today's Political Climate"** (Page)

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