



The



Joshua Tree

July 7, 2026

PATRIOTISM THROUGH ACTION

As the new President of the Rotary Club of Victorville, **Brad Letner** kicked off his first program year with his annual patriotic presentation; a thought-provoking discussion that challenged members to think differently about what it truly means to love and serve their country.

Rather than beginning with a flag or a pledge, Letner opened with a simple but powerful question: "Would you fight for a country you were taught to distrust?"

The question set the tone for a presentation that focused less on politics and more on citizenship, responsibility, and rebuilding trust in America's institutions.

Letner described patriotism as "love with obligations," explaining that genuine love of country requires more than emotion. It calls for loyalty through difficult times and a duty to serve, preserve, and improve the nation for future generations.

"Patriotism isn't believing your country is always right," Letner explained. "It's caring enough to say, 'We were wrong,' and then working to make it better."



He contrasted blind loyalty, which insists a nation can do no wrong, with constructive patriotism, the belief that Americans should continually work to improve their country while remaining committed to its ideals.

Drawing on recent national polling, Letner noted that American pride has steadily declined since the unity experienced following the September 11 attacks. According to Gallup, the percentage of Americans who say they are extremely or very proud to be American has fallen significantly over the past 25 years, with the sharpest decline occurring among younger adults.

Rather than criticizing younger generations, Letner urged members to understand why the gap exists. "Young Americans aren't apathetic," he said. "They're divided."

He pointed to research showing younger people place greater trust in organizations and people they can personally observe making a difference, neighbors, nonprofits, local government, and the military, while expressing much lower confidence in Congress and social media.

Letner also challenged what he described as "event patriotism." He compared it to cheering "USA! USA!" during the FIFA World Cup before returning home and forgetting about civic involvement once the excitement ends.

This Week's Functionaries

Invocation: **Brad Letner**

Flag Salute: **Bob Basen**

4-Way Test: **Steve Murray**

Fine Master: **-**

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LETNER'S LETTER



Tuesday, I hosted my first meeting as President of the Rotary Club of Victorville, and I

couldn't have asked for a better start to the year.

It was great to see familiar

faces, share a few laughs, and officially begin what I hope will be a fun, energetic, and meaningful Rotary year. I've never been very good at simply maintaining the status quo, so I'm sure we'll try a few new things, chase a few big ideas, and probably learn a little along the way. I also hope we remember that Rotary should be something we genuinely look forward to.

Most of all, I'm grateful for the people who make this club what it is. I'm excited to see what we can accomplish together. I intend to enjoy the ride, and I sincerely hope you do too.

Tickets will be available next week for our \$10,000 raffle ahead of our 76th Anniversary fundraiser coming up on October 17th.

Brad



Brad Letner

Continued from page 1

Instead, he encouraged Rotarians to practice patriotism through everyday civic engagement: voting in every election, becoming involved in their communities, volunteering, and accepting the responsibilities that accompany the freedoms Americans enjoy.

"We have freedom of speech," he noted, "but freedom works best when it's sprinkled with responsibility."

Quoting Benjamin Franklin's famous response after the Constitutional Convention, "A republic, if you can keep it", Letner reminded members that democracy depends upon active citizens rather than passive spectators.

As for rebuilding patriotism, Letner believes the answer is not simply telling people to "be more patriotic."

"You cannot defend what you do not understand," he said.

He advocated for stronger civics and American history education that teaches the nation's full story, its founding ideals, its failures, and the progress made through generations who worked to correct injustice.

Only by understanding both America's achievements and shortcomings, he argued, can citizens develop a genuine appreciation for the freedoms they inherit and the responsibilities they share.

Letner concluded with a practical five-step civic strategy: Know. Belong. Serve. See. Tell.

Learn the nation's history. Join organizations that strengthen community. Serve others. Witness the positive impact of civic engagement. Then pass those stories on to the next generation.

The presentation served as an appropriate beginning to Letner's presidential year, reminding Rotarians that Creating Lasting Impact extends beyond club projects, it also includes strengthening the communities and country they call home through informed, responsible citizenship.

CREATE LASTING IMPACT

Big Blue Poker Chip



Craig Garrick had the chance to draw the Blue Chip but picked green and saved the chance for another. We will continue next week with 5 chips and \$425 for the lucky Rotarian who can draw the Blue Chip.

Rotary Guests

This week we were joined by our Read B4K guests **Mantza Duque**, along with **Maribel Arellano** and her three children, two who are Read B4K graduates! Our Stand-in this week was **Stefanie Montoya** for **Bryan Gillespie**.

Spoon of Exception



Angel Espino had his first week with the Spoon and shared a story about a client who wanted to invest in 30 different semiconductor companies. Rather than purchasing individual stocks, Angel recommended an Exchange-Traded

Fund (ETF), which is a single investment that holds a diversified collection of stocks. In this case, the ETF would provide exposure to many semiconductor companies at once, reducing risk while offering the potential to benefit from the industry's overall growth. It was a great reminder that sometimes the simplest investment strategy can also be the smartest.

Raffle



This week, **Chris Ackerman** donated some new VVTA summer swag. **Craig Garrick** won a VVTA shoulder bag and **Steve Murray** received a VVTA stadium bag. **Pam Murray** donated an Arctic Cup, that will be used by **Bob Basen**.

Read B4K Testimonial

The Club was blessed to hear from **Maribel Arellano**, who is a parent who put two of her children through Rotary's Read B4K program. She discovered the program two years ago, and her middle child was ahead of the rest of her kindergarten class thanks to Read B4K. She was nervous that her youngest at 3 years old, wouldn't be able to grasp it, but she surprised everyone! Halfway through the program she was already fully reading on her own! To show the results, her youngest child, now 4, stood in front of Club and read from her favorite book!



His Last Act as President



Steve Murray's last act of President to our Club was to present a bouquet of flowers to **Shannon Oban**, Hospitality Manager at the Bear Valley Country Club. She is always on top of her game each and every week, whether it be seating charts, audio/visual equipment for speakers and so much more!

Thank you Shannon for being part of our Club's success!



VICTORVILLE ROTARY CLUB OFFICERS

Board of Directors

President 2026 - 2028	Brad Letner
Immediate Past President	Steve Murray
Executive Secretary	Pam Murray
Treasurer	Darron Poulsen
Foundation.....	Jon Hove
Membership	Bryan Gillespie
Club Service	Arsalee Morales
Community Service	Craig Garrick
Vocational Service	Angel Espino
International Service.....	Ben Tafoya
Youth Service	Ryan McEachron
Directors/Members-at-Large.....	Bob Basen & Dr. Ron Boyd
Joshua Tree/Marketing	Chris Ackerman
Recording Secretary.....	Pam Murray

Positions & Committee Chairs

Scholarships.....	Kirsten Acosta
Billing	Pam Murray & Darron Poulsen
Public Service Awards.....	Arsalee Morales
Teacher Mini-Grants	Angel Espino
Special Projects.....	Rob Kilpatrick
Dan Stover Music Contest.....	Angel Espino
Read B4K	Brad Letner
Grants.....	Please Volunteer
Food Baskets.....	Ben Tafoya
Interact (Junior Rotary).....	Please Volunteer
Programs	Mike Page
Fundraising	Brad Letner
S.T.A.R. Students	Chris Ackerman
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

- July 25** **Movie Night at the Hove's**
Movie: Pretty Woman (1990)
Time: 6:30pm
18970 Appaloosa Rd, Apple Valley
- Aug 3** **Board of Directors Meeting**
5:30pm Board Meeting
Coldwell Banker
12138 Industrial Blvd., Suite102
Victorville, CA 92395

Rotary
Club of Victorville, CA



Upcoming Programs

- July 14** Tony Winkel, Mojave Water Agency
Senior Principal Hydrogeologist **Title:**
"The Hide and Seek River"
(Part 3.5) (Page)
- July 21** **OPEN**
- July 28** Ryan McEachron, CEO, ISU ARMAC
Insurance **Title: "Insurance Industry
Update"** (Page)
- Aug 4** **OPEN**
- Aug 11** **OPEN**
- Aug 18** **OPEN**

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