



The Joshua Tree



September 9, 2025

A TALK FROM THE BIG LITTLE BROTHER

Dr. Derek King, Superintendent of Excelsior Charter Schools spoke to the Rotary Club of Victorville this week, offering not only a look at his professional mission, but also a candid and inspiring account of his personal journey. At Excelsior, Dr. King leads a network of campuses across the High Desert with the guiding principle of "Preparing Students to Be Successful Adults." He emphasized that education is not simply about earning A's and B's, but about developing smart, capable, and resilient young people who can thrive in the world. In addition to his role locally, Dr. King represents charter schools statewide as a member of the California Advisory Commission on Charter Schools.

In his presentation, Dr. King reflected on his early life, which was marked by both hardship and inspiration.



Raised by his stepfather, rather than his biological parents, he shared that his mother—once a high school valedictorian and cheer captain—fell into addiction shortly after graduation and spent 50 years living on the streets. Despite growing up in a home with a wine cellar, Derek avoided alcohol entirely until his thirties, determined to choose a different path. He credits much of his sense of purpose to his grandparents, who pastored a large church in Compton, CA. His grandfather was larger than life and a commanding speaker, and as a boy Derek believed he was destined for something greater because of that influence.

Life, however, presented unexpected revelations. At just 11 or 12 years old, Derek attended a family gathering where he met a sister he didn't know he had and came face-to-face with his biological father for the first time. He discovered his father had 22 daughters by 17 different women. Within his family, the divide was stark: half were ministers, and the other half drug dealers or gang members. Some uncles embodied this contrast directly, with one serving as a minister, while his own brother became a major dealer. Derek noted that these dynamics gave him a unique perspective on the power of choices, consequences, and the determination to forge his own way forward.

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This Week's Functionaries

Invocation: Mike Page

Flag Salute: Keith Metzler

4-Way Test: Bryan Gillespie

Fine Master: Ryan McEachron

BILL'S BANTER



Thank you to Dr. Derek King for giving us a "Craft Talk" about

his incredible life that led him to become Superintendent of Excelsior Charter Schools! Speaking of Excelsior, I am honored to join their Board of Directors and make a lasting impact on students.



Congratulations to Rob Kilpatrick on taking home a whopping \$5,000 at our 75th Anniversary Gala last Saturday night. Along with Rob for his great

presentation, I also want to thank Arsalee Morales, Steve & Pam Murray and others who made the Gala so successful! We will do it again in 25 more years.

Finally, as a reminder, our Tuesday meeting next week on September 16th will be held at 3:00pm in the large room at the Bear Valley Country Club, as we will be joined by the Apple Valley & Barstow Clubs to host our District Governor Gilda Moshir! We will NOT meet at 12 noon.

Bill Edwards

Dr. Derek King

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Despite such challenges, Dr. King went on to earn five college degrees, including his doctorate in education. A lesson from his father still resonates with him today: "It's not what you do at work that matters, it's what you do after work." Growing up in the middle of 15 siblings—with seven older and seven younger—he became known in his family as the "Big Little Brother." That role shaped his character, teaching him responsibility, humility, and the ability to relate across generations. Beginning work at age 12 with his father, a contractor, he developed skills in construction. While he chose not to pursue contracting full-time, he used those abilities to begin flipping houses, he later moved into mortgage brokering, and eventually found his niche in investment trading.

Dr. King also shared a glimpse into his hobbies and passions. His disciplined approach to investing includes buying no fewer than 1,000 shares when he commits to a company, reflecting both confidence and long-term vision. At home, he enjoys caring for his 7,000-gallon koi pond, which he built himself and stocked with 30 large koi fish. These pursuits—whether in finance, construction, or even caring for koi—illustrate his belief in patience, growth, and building something lasting.

Today, Dr. King channels his life experiences into his leadership of Excelsior Charter Schools, ensuring that students are not only prepared for higher education and careers, but also for the larger challenges of life. His story, from a family divided between pulpits and prisons, to his role as a state-level advocate for charter education, demonstrates the power of resilience, discipline, and vision. His message to Rotary was both humbling, and inspiring: that success is not an accident, but a choice we make daily, one that he now strives to instill in every student who passes through Excelsior's doors!

UNITE FOR GOOD

Big Blue Poker Chip



Arsalee Morales had the chance to draw the Blue Chip, but picked green, and saved it for another.

We will continue next week with 3 chips and \$475 for the lucky Rotarian who can draw the Blue Chip.

Raffle

Chris Ackerman donated a pair of Victor Valley Transit Hi-lighter pen sets that went to **Keith Metzler** and **Jim Murray**. Jim also took home a Gala swag bag, as did Ackerman and **Ryan McEachron**. Ryan was the final winner, as we will enjoy a bottle of wine from **Jim Murray**.

Fine Session



Ryan McEachron was our Fine Master this week, and told **Dr. Derek King** that he would be fine free this week if he shared his investments with everyone. **Bryan Gillespie** was met with a \$10 penalty for attending the Board of Education for over 5 hours this week

in San Bernardino, and **Rob Kilpatrick** left with A \$10 fine for not splitting the Opportunity Drawing money this past weekend when Ryan's ticket was in the top 10!

Rotary Scholar



Annabella Garcia stopped by the Club to share her excitement and extend her thanks that she will be off to Scotland in a week to begin her schooling majoring in Human Anatomy and Forensic Osteology. Schooling runs for one year from September to September to obtain her masters, and she will be Board Certified by February 2027!

Annabella also shared that her tuition is fully paid, thanks to her Rotary Scholarship! She will be doing work with the Dundee Club in Scotland and will also travel to attend meetings in Ireland and the UK.



Her time was concluded with a gathering of Past Presidents including **Brad Letner**, **Jim Murray**, **Mike Page**, **Bryan Gillespie**, plus **Ryan McEachron** and current Rotary President **Bill Edwards**. Annabella was presented with a Paul Harris Fellows pin and 10 Club Banners to take to the other Clubs she will visit overseas during her time in school.

Rotary Guests

This week we welcomed **Chandale Sutton** and **Karen Diaz** from High Desert Pace, who attended as a guest of **Bill Edwards**. Margaret Cooker invited scholarship winner **Annabella Garcia**, her mother **Sheila Garcia**, and **Kathy Northcliffe**.

Our only stand-in this week was **Alyy Martinez** for **Angel Espino**.



VICTORVILLE ROTARY CLUB OFFICERS

Board of Directors

President 2025-2027	Bill Edwards
President 2027 - 2028	Please be Interviewed
Immediate Past President/Club Service	Bryan Gillespie
Executive Secretary/Grants	Margaret Cooker
Treasurer	Please Volunteer
Youth Services/Ethics Essay	Please Volunteer
Foundation.....	Darron Poulsen
Club Service & Membership	Bryan Gillespie
International Service.....	Ben Tafoya
Youth Service	Ryan McEachron
Community Service	Arsalee Morales
Vocational Service	Angel Espino

Members-at-Large: Bob Basen, Ron Boyd, Steve Murray, Ron Boyd, Rob Kilpatrick

Positions & Committee Chairs

BOD/PP Secretary.....	Pam Murray
Scholarships.....	Please Volunteer
Special Billing	Esther Mears (TBD)
Public Service Awards.....	Please Volunteer
Teacher Mini-Grants	Angel Espino
Special Projects.....	Rob Kilpatrick
Dan Stover Music Contest.....	Angel Espino
Joshua Tree Editor	Chris Ackerman
Read B4K	Brad Letner
Grants.....	Please Volunteer
Food Baskets.....	Bill Edwards
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

Oct 6 **Board of Directors Meeting**
5:30pm Board Meeting
On ZOOM

Upcoming Programs

- Sept 16:** **District 5300 Governor Gilda Moshir**
Special Start Time 3PM!
Social (Meal) Meeting with Apple Valley Club (Edwards)
- Sept 23:** **OPEN**
- Sept 30:** **OPEN**
- Oct 7:** **OPEN**
- Oct 14:** **OPEN**
- Oct 21:** **OPEN**
- Oct 28:** **OPEN**

