

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF CAMARILLO

It all began in mid-1955, when Camarillo was just a small town. A group of prominent local business and professional men decided to start a Rotary Club, and since each new club must be sponsored by an existing club, nearby Oxnard Rotarians agreed to help.

On September 8, 1955, the first organizational meeting of the Rotary Club of Camarillo (our official name) was held in the old community center on Ventura Boulevard, and Guy Craig, personnel director of Camarillo State Hospital, was elected president. Regular weekly meetings continued to be held, and on October 24, 1955, the club was granted its official charter, admitting it to Rotary International.

In 1958, our club took its own turn at sponsorship when we helped organize the Rotary Club of Thousand Oaks, whose charter was granted on November 20, 1958. That chartering in turn led to the formation of at least six other Rotary clubs in our district.

The following year marked the beginning of Camarillo Rotary's oldest ongoing project, the annual track meet for elementary and junior high school boys and girls in the Pleasant Valley, Somis and Mesa Union school districts. The meet was the idea of club president Charles Honn, Pleasant Valley superintendent, and club member Charles Jones, Somis superintendent. The board approved the project on October 23, 1959, and the first meet was held at Camarillo High School in 1960. The event was named the Hap Rapp Memorial Track Meet in 1988, after the death of longtime club member Hap

Rapp, who had devoted countless hours to the meet year after year.

Our second oldest project, our scholarship program, began in 1962 after a tragic accident claimed the lives of two of Charles Honn's sons. Honn Memorial Scholarships (and other named scholarships added in recent years) have provided thousands of dollars in aid to graduating seniors at Camarillo, Rio Mesa and Frontier high schools each year.

In June 1966, club member Joe Dacanay organized the Interact Club at Camarillo High School. Camarillo Rotary continues to support Interact, which gives students the opportunity to organize and carry out service projects to benefit their school and community.

1971 saw the birth of another successful tradition—the annual “Viva La Comida” dinner. Rotarian Earl Bennett, board president of the Boys Club of Camarillo and Chuck Welch, Rotary president in 1970-71, along with Rotarian Mike Loza, then owner of El Tecolote restaurant, began the dinner to help raise funds for the Boys Club. A Monday night was originally chosen for the event because Mike's restaurant was closed on Mondays, allowing him and his staff to work with club members in preparing the food. Since 1971, nearly 50,000 meals have been served at Viva La Comida.

In 1985, we organized and chartered the Breakfast Rotary Club of Camarillo (now Camarillo Sunrise Rotary Club), providing many more Rotarians with the opportunity to serve the community.

In 1993, we created the Care For Kids Golf Classic, under the leadership of Al Lowe and Camarillo Breakfast Rotary's Stu Avery. This hugely successful event has allowed our two clubs to donate more than \$1.8 million

to Casa Pacifica Homes for Children & Families (including funding for the Casa Pacifica library/learning center), and the Camarillo Rotary Foundations.

In 2005, we chartered the Rotaract Club at California State University Channel Islands, giving college students the opportunity to organize and carry out service projects to benefit the community and their university.

Today, the Rotary Club of Camarillo continues to exemplify the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self", and is a powerful force for good in our community.