

# Immigrants Among Us

By Lina Broydo

**T**he earliest reported Women's Day event, called the National Women's Day, was held on February 28, 1909, in New York City. The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in 1975, which had been proclaimed the International Women's Year. In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as an official UN International Women's Day holiday for women's rights and world peace. It has since been commemorated annually by the UN and much of the world, with each year's observance centered on a particular theme or issue within women's rights.

The Los Altos Rotary Club (LARC) joined the March 8 worldwide annual celebration of International Women's Day. Nearly 20% of the LARC's members were born abroad, and they have become some of the most active members of our community.

"The immigrant women in LARC have been a powerful force, in getting things done, their leadership, and their passion for our mission. I can't imagine our club without them."

**- Charles Lindauer, LARC's President (2023-2024)**

"I am so glad to live in a country and culture that embraces and welcomes people from other countries and cultures. Immigrants make our lives richer and I am always intrigued to learn their stories."

**- Donna Verna, LARC's President-Elect (2024-2025)**

"What do these immigrants have in common? They have all worked in this country, contributed their tax dollars, and their service has immeasurably enriched our Los Altos community experience!"

**- Marlene Cowan, LARC's Past President (2005-2006)**

I posed the questions, "Where did you immigrate from?" "Why USA?" and "Why did you join the Los Altos Rotary Club?" to some of my fellow Rotarians:

**Ying Liu**

I came to the US as a Chinese teacher in 1997 from Beijing. Two of my aunts came to the US for studies in the mid-80s and had inspired me to come to the US and explore different growth paths. Now I call California my home and China my homeland. The US and China offer very distinct lifestyles. Every day I am appreciative of the opportunity to choose where I want to live and travel back to my homeland freely.

I have had the privilege of meeting numerous Rotarians who go above and beyond for our community. Witnessing their dedication and



From left to right: Annie Ju, Jie Bai, Duanni Hurd, Mandy Bach, Laura Fay, Charles Lindauer (President of Los Altos Rotary Club), Diana Neiman, Lina Broydo, Jackie Olson, Tatiana Razumova. Photo by Steve Pomeroy.

selflessness has reinforced my belief in the importance of creating a better community and a better world. This belief serves as my guiding principle that directs my priorities in my daily life and as the Founder & CEO of "Blue Lake Packaging" company.

**Duanni Hurd**

I came from Beijing, China after graduating from college for the American dream. I was accepted into a Ph.D. program with a full scholarship from the University of Tucson, Arizona in the United States. After riding a motorcycle for 20 years in China, in America I fulfilled my dream of driving a pick-up truck.

I joined the Los Altos Rotary Club because at that time I founded my business, Starlight Caregivers, and finally was able to direct my time to spend on community services. I couldn't do that when I worked in the high-tech industry as a business development executive for fifteen years.

**Jackie Olson**

I came from Peru by myself in April 1986. I was 18 years old. I came to go to college but left Peru in a hurry as the terrorism situation hit close to home. I had not applied to college when I arrived, but with the help of a few great people, I was able to apply during the summer and was accepted at the University of Colorado at Boulder in the fall. I always wanted to come to the USA. My brother was already here working after college, and this is the place where I wanted to study. However, I never expected to stay.

I joined the Los Altos Rotary in 2014. Taking a break from my career to spend time with my teenage daughters, I felt the urge to give back to the country that I loved and was never able to return to. I was pointed to the Rotary organization as one that focused on supporting underdeveloped countries. I was sponsored by Rotarian Dennis Young, and soon after started working on the grant to support families in Puno, Peru. We are now in our sixth grant application and have helped over 150 families.

**Annie Ju**

I immigrated to the United States from Taipei, Taiwan with my parents and sister in 1977 at the age of eight. Our journey was orchestrated by my uncle, a member of the Taiwan Consulate. The decision to choose the USA as our new home was rooted in the opportunities it presented. Many individuals in Taiwan wanted to come to the US,

seeing it as a land of education and career opportunities. All of my Mom's siblings/families immigrated to the Bay Area over a span of five years, so we could help and support each other:

What struck me about the Rotary Club was the remarkable blend of accomplished individuals who were also warm and friendly. Their commitment to making a positive impact and aiding others resonated deeply with me. I feel good about helping others and having fun doing so."

## Gigi Kubursi

I immigrated from Lebanon after the 1989 earthquake. Upon arrival, my father proudly refused to accept food stamps, saying, "Somebody else deserves them more than me. I have arms and legs, so I can work!" I am grateful to this country as I wake up every morning in my bed, I have a roof over my head, constant running water, hot or cold to shower, to drink and to cook; food in my fridge with milk for my morning coffee. I am grateful to have met my American husband and for having two beautiful children.

I joined the Los Altos Rotary Club, a selfless team of dedicated people whose personal responsibility is to the community and the world at large. I admire and am grateful for them. It is my wish to not let them down because I would then be letting my country down.

## Diana Neiman

I emigrated from England first to France, then the Netherlands and finally to California in 1987. At the time I was working for Apple Computer and it was a career move to their headquarters in Cupertino. I soon met my husband Martin and have lived happily in Los Altos for 33 years.

A friend suggested I might enjoy Rotary several years ago when my children went off to college and it was a natural progression from PTA activities to serving on Nonprofit Boards. Los Altos Rotary is one of the most active clubs in the area with many different avenues of service: truly something for everyone.

## Shirley Chang Flegel

I am from Taiwan and immigrated to the United States in June of 2019 to marry an American businessman. I am the Founder and President of the Taipei Precious Love Rotary Club and since my move to the United States, I decided to transfer my Rotary membership to LARC.

I chose the LARC because it is an excellent club. It is very active and provides a lot of good services. They have international service, community service, and good fellowship. I am proud to be a member of LARC.

## Mandy Bach

I came from Germany to the US in 2008 (and to California in 2012) for my husband's work in the automotive industry (VW, Tesla, Lucid). While he's working in the corporate world I decided to raise our four kids. In

2021 we moved to Los Altos Hills. I joined Rotary to connect with the community and also to use my skills and energy outside of the family.

## Laura Fay

I immigrated to the USA from Dublin, Ireland. I came as a result of being offered a job in California, upon graduating from Trinity College in Dublin with a degree in computer engineering. I joined LARC in the summer of 2023 as I wanted to have more personal involvement in my causes of interest and looked forward to getting to know more of my fellow Los Altans in the process. I just found out that the Oscar-winning Irish actor Liam Neeson known for his leading role in "Schindler's List" was honored with an Honorary Membership by the International Rotary Club Organization for his contribution work to the community at large. Who knew?

## Elsbeth TeBrake

I was born and grew up in Delft, The Netherlands. Immigrated to the United States due to the great opportunities for high-tech and social impact. Enjoyed over 30 years at HP/HPE in the valley.

I joined the Los Altos Rotary Club to have a broader impact in the Bay Area. I want to work with the Los Altos Rotary local community in their impact locally and globally. I enjoy my current position as the co-director for LARC Scholarships and contributing to the World Community Services team. Besides enjoying playing in the Uke group to make beautiful music for the club and the community.

## Evette Tai

I came from Taipei, Taiwan in March 1980 by joining my father who was already in the US for seven years while trying to obtain US Citizenship. He believes the USA is the land of opportunities. And finally after working hard on it for seven years my entire family was able to immigrate.

I decided to join the Los Altos Rotary Club due to its reputation, and I would like to do more volunteer work and meet interesting and diverse people in my area.

## Lina Broydo

One of the most distinguished Los Altos Rotarians since 1968, Dr. Richard Henning, encouraged me to join the Los Altos Rotary Club 12 years ago with the words "The Rotary Club will become your family and the Rotarians will be your best friends forever."

I was convinced. He was right. And I am forever grateful.

Cheers,

Lina

Award-winning writer/blogger/columnist Lina Broydo lives in Los Altos Hills. She immigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union and has been a Los Altos Rotarian since 2012. She received the 2016/2017 Outstanding Rotarian of the Year Award.



Crysta Krames, the Los Altos Rotary's President Elect, with Los Altos Rotarian Elsbeth TeBrake, an immigrant from The Netherlands. Photo by John Hammerschmidt.