

# THE GOLDEN rotarian

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LA JOLLA GOLDEN TRIANGLE ROTARY CLUB'S NEWSLETTER

JULY 18 2025



## LEX GILLETTE

### NO NEED FOR SIGHT WHEN YOU HAVE A VISION: WHAT BLINDNESS CAN TEACH US ABOUT RISK AND LEADERSHIP



RI President 2025-26  
**FRANCESCO AREZZO**

District 5340 Governor 2025-26  
**LUIS R. CARRANZA**

LJGT Rotary President 2025-26  
**DAVID CHONG**

## AOS MEETINGS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

1st Friday of the Month.....Community Services Committee  
(follows club meeting)

2nd Friday of the Month.....International Services Committee  
(follows club meeting)

3rd Friday of the Month.....Youth Services Committee  
(follows club meeting)

4th Friday of the Month.....Peace Committee  
(follows club meeting)



Lex Gillette is the most accomplished totally blind long and triple jumper in U.S. Paralympic history. He's a five-time Paralympic medalist, four-time world champion, 18-time national champion, and the only totally blind athlete ever to jump farther than 22 feet.

Lex's journey began with adversity at just eight years old, when a series of retina detachments took his sight. After ten unsuccessful surgeries, his mother, Verdina Gillette-Simms, delivered the life-changing news—but also committed to teaching him everything he needed to succeed without sight.

At the age of 19, Lex won his first Paralympic silver medal in the long jump. His achievements at the 2004 Paralympics in Athens, Greece were the culmination of years of hard work and training. Since that time, Lex has solidified himself as a tenacious competitor for Team USA. Each of his athletic performances since that time have resulted in medals with the most recent being silver in the long jump at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Lex now has not only competed in but medaled in five consecutive Paralympic Games and he's looking for more. Ultimately, there is one goal, and that is to win gold for the United States of America. As an athlete, motivational speaker, and singer-songwriter, Lex epitomizes the phrase "No Need for Sight When You Have a Vision®". Today, Lex is not only a record-breaking athlete, but also a renowned speaker and published author. His story of resilience and vision continues to inspire global audiences to push past limitations and pursue greatness, no matter the obstacle.





# REPORT

from the last meeting



## UPCOMING SPEAKERS



2025

### AUGUST - SPEAKER

1.....Dr. William Twayigize  
SDSU  
Curriculum International Specialist

15.....Scott Wahl  
Chief of Police  
San Diego Police Department

### SEPTEMBER - SPEAKER

5.....Frank Urtasan  
Port of San Diego  
Board of Port Commissioners

**President Luke Ervin** called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Most Dynamic Rotary Club in the World!

**ROTARIAN OF THE DAY** President Luke introduced one of our newer members as Rotarian of the Day - **Dr. William Twayigize**. Dr. Twayigize is a Professor of Internal Security, Climate Change and Sustainability and serves as Curriculum Internationalization and Global Perspective Symposium Coordinator at San Diego State University.

Dr. Twayigize reminded us of the four way test of Rotary, which is reflected in an African word "Ubuntu" which means "I am because you are." The four way test and the term are the same philosophy: We are our brother's keeper. He also noted it is Refugee Day as he told us of his escape from a refugee camp at 14, being an orphan of war, his life as a beggar at a young age and ultimately to his education and life in the US.

His scholarly accomplishments are impressive but his life story is equally impressive. He left his country with his family when the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda were assassinated and many were massacred. His family were among 3 million who left his country and became refugees. After two years, the refugee camp was invaded because the area was important to mining. Many were killed, including his family, but he escaped and walked 6000 kilometers to safety in Congo. Safety was short lived, since he and young people were kidnapped, tortured and imprisoned and many were slaughtered. He was one of few who survived; the Red Cross protected him when they found him. He returned home to find his family had all been killed and his neighborhood was destroyed. Because of his knowledge of the wars, he was told to leave for his own protection and then went to Kenya. He became a beggar and slept on the street. A missionary helped him get off the streets and another couple supported his education. After his education in Kenya, he worked there, and then got a scholarship in the US and then a PHD in Australia. He is grateful to be in America where he could share his story with us. Luke thanked him for his membership in the club and sharing his remarkable story. All of us were deeply touched and gave a standing ovation

in appreciation of his strength and accomplishments.

**Guests:** **David Chong** presented his parents, wife and daughter. **Stephen Tako**, introduced **Judith Han**, who is interested in Rotary because of her interest in Motivated to Act. **Phil Morgan** and **Erwin Rubenstein** were on Zoom.

The President also reminded us there is only one meeting in July - the 18th. But also, there is a Promote/Demote party on the 12th - a sports style soiree at **Alex Monroe's** house. So sign up, wear your favorite sports team outfit and get ready to party! **Alex** needs a head count to determine food quantities - so sign up!

**Luke** proceeded to celebrate "real" birthdays and Rotary birthdays, including **Jan Bernardy**, **Bev Laursen**, and **Lisa Galstian**. **Maria** celebrates her first year anniversary with Rotary. **Fary** and **Jan** celebrate Rotary birthdays. **Sam** celebrates 10 years (including Rotaract) and **Christie** celebrates 12 years with Rotary. **Luke** celebrates his ninth year in Rotary.

The Most Dynamic Auctioneer in Rotary - **Alex Monroe**, successfully auctioned concert tickets for performances at the Conrad Center, UCSD for June 20, June 24 and 26.

**Steve Brown** talked about how contributions to the Rotary Foundation were used for a global grant to provide computer labs for four schools in Mexico. The previous Tuesday, **Melanie**, **Fary** and **Steve** went to Mexico for a dedication ceremony to inaugurate a new lab with computers. We were shown slides of the lab and a plaque with **Luke's** name forever memorialized in Mexico. (Probably a benefit if he ever gets in trouble in Mexico).

**Steve Brown** presented **Jan Percival-Lipscomb** with a Paul Harris award and thanked her for everything she does for the club.

**Michael Slentz** inducted four new members. We welcomed to our ranks **Ricky Ricardo**, **Matt Browne**, **Cami Eiskamp** and **Brett Cattell**. Our club welcomed them because "they exemplify the true spirit of Rotary in business, social and private life." Their sponsors pinned them and our members stood to honor "the newest Rotarians in the World".

**President Luke** thanked all who helped him throughout his presidency - **Christy, Sharon, David Chong, Tim, Gary** and **Sandi** and "mugged" them. He also thanked members of the board: **Bonnie, Eric, Marty, Wayne, Dennis, Steven, Rich Papike, Melanie** and **Mike McQuary**. Finally, thanks went to **Jan Percival, Maria, Samson** and **Gary** for all the help they provided throughout the year. Honorable mentions also went to **Eric Freeberg** and **Jim Davies** for their assistance.

**Luke** shared his memories of the year and his accomplishments. He felt he was a good steward, following **Christy**, who kept the club on an even keel financially. He feels the fundraiser, successfully run by **Gary K.** and some decisions made throughout the year ensured the club a long term success. Importantly, he orchestrated major changes regarding our meetings and our dues, in the hope potential members (particularly younger members) will be attracted to our club. Also, he feels the Stephanie Urchick event was a success. **President Luke** is thankful for his year as president since he forged amazing friendships and strengthened others. Finally, he reminded the men to step up a bit since five of the eight previous presidents were women. So - come on guys, take some more leadership positions. However, he is thankful to the female leadership in the club and thanked all who made this year a success.

**Passing the Gavel:** **Christy** thanked **Luke** for leading the club this year and began the time-honored tradition of recognizing our previous Presidents and passing the gavel to the incoming President for 2025-26. Thanks to all who served as President of La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club since it was formed in 1986. "Little did they envision several of them would be celebrating the club's 29th year change of command." The gavel was handed to **David Chong** as president for 2025-26 and the Rotary slogan will be: "Unite for Good". Welcome **David Chong**!

~Reporter

*Janine Pack*

# PHOTOS FROM LAST MEETING



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**LJGT ROTARY LEADERSHIP 2025 - 2026**

PRESIDENT ..... David Chong  
 VICE PRESIDENT ..... Christy White Brook  
 PRESIDENT ELECT (2026-27) ..... Timothy Fronczek  
 TREASURER ..... Sharon Council  
 SECRETARY ..... Lisa Galstian  
 PAST-PRESIDENT ..... Luke Ervin



**ROTARY  
 INTERNATIONAL  
 CONVENTION**

**TAIPEI, TAIWAN | 13-17 JUNE 2026**



Rotary  |  **TAIPEI  
 2026**



*Ellen* BRYSON

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