

# Chulatarian

Rotary  
Club of Chula Vista 

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ROTARY CLUB  
OF CHULA VISTA

## BOARD 2025-2026

President  
Ben Koala

[koalacpa@gmail.com](mailto:koalacpa@gmail.com)

President-Elect  
Rasha Roshdy

[seducator2014@gmail.com](mailto:seducator2014@gmail.com)

Treasurer

Risa Baron

[rbaron@republicservices.com](mailto:rbaron@republicservices.com)

Secretary

Bill Torre

[wtorre@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wtorre@sbcglobal.net)

Past President

Jesse Fernandez

[fernjam@pacbell.net](mailto:fernjam@pacbell.net)

Executive Secretary

Carmen Sandoval Fernandez

[csandovalzf@gmail.com](mailto:csandovalzf@gmail.com)

**Directors:**

Jeanette Badal

Kathleen Carroll

Rochelle Carroll

Mike Green

Bernard Hernandez

Jan Mellinger

[www.chulavistarotary.org](http://www.chulavistarotary.org)

P.O. Box 324 Bonita CA 91908

Editor: Carmen Sandoval  
Fernandez

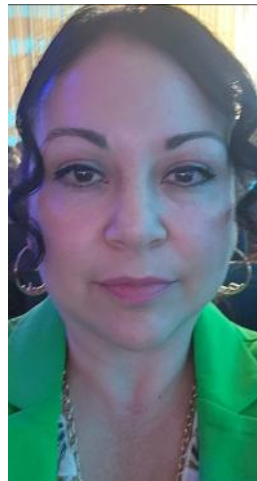
[csandovalzf@gmail.com](mailto:csandovalzf@gmail.com)

Rotary   
Club of Chula Vista

The weekly newsletter of the Rotary Club of Chula Vista

Chartered February 16, 1926 - Club Number 908 - District 5340  
Meets Weekly, Noon, 4475 Bonita Road, Bonita (Chula Vista Golf Course)

LUCY FRAGOSO  
READING LEGACIES  
Friday, JUNE 12, 2026, Noon



Lucy Fragoso first became involved with Reading Legacies in June of 2024 when she began volunteering. Her original goal was to volunteer at the women's jail, but after reading the mission of Reading Legacies, she fell in love with the work and the impact it creates.

Since then, Lucy has supported several program areas. She helps facilitate Family Story Hour, manages Story Corner and leads workshops in both the women's and men's jails. In addition to program facilitation, she also manages the volunteer program – welcoming new volunteers, guiding them through the onboarding process and providing support as they begin their service.

Reading Legacies is a non-profit organization dedicated to uplifting children, families and communities through shared reading experiences. Our mission is to create positive intergenerational connections by empowering incarcerated parents, youth and community to build meaningful relationships through reading. We believe that reading together strengthens bonds, supports emotional well-being, and fosters a lifelong love of learning.

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## IN & OUT HIGHLIGHTS



Songmaster Chuck Bevan created another masterpiece to give President Ben the proper send-off - a Beatles tune re-arranged as “The Tax Man” to honor just one of Ben’s many talents. Lisa Johnson subbed in for Betty Waznis providing very informative news. Past President Jesse hosted the event in plaid and giant pretend computer glasses (like Ben wears).



Several members presented special certificates to President Ben including Jerry May for almost being the one President to never lose his gavel. **HOWEVER**— turn out Jerry did it **FIRST!** John & Tana Lorah presented Ben with a special scroll. Bill Torre gave him an honorary engineer recognition. Bernard Hernandez added fun and levity with his Rotarian of the Year 2025 in hand.



**JIM BIDDLE  
NEWS AT NOON**  
  
**BY  
BETTY WAZNIS**

**PRESENTED BY GUEST EDITOR LISA JOHNSON**

Good afternoon, Rotarians and guests. Today's edition of the Jim Biddle News at Noon is brought to you by Arts District Liberty Station, and the Liberty Station Community Association.

Well, since this is Ben's send off and Jesse asked me to do something a little special, I thought, let me find some news stories about CPA's. Gosh, I tried to find some interesting news about CPA's, but there just wasn't anything. So then, I looked for something related to Ben that was also in the news. Cute...but not the news photo...just a cute bear photo. In the news...

A bear attack left four people injured in two factories and a residential area in northern Japan's Fukushima area on Tuesday. A record 13 people were killed by bears in Japan last year, and there has been a jump in sightings as the animals emerge hungry from hibernation. "A bear-related human injury incident... occurred in Fukushima City, injuring four people," the prefectural police said in a statement. The bear was first spotted in a car parts factory, prompting an emergency call explaining that "employees had been bitten," the Yomiuri Shimbun daily reported, citing police and fire department officials. The outlet reported the bear still had not been located.

President Donald Trump has been briefed on a growing list of deaths or disappearances of U.S. experts in advanced space, defense, and nuclear fields in recent years, calling it "pretty serious stuff." The White House intervention comes after speculators online moved some lawmakers to call for closer scrutiny of the cases, which include a retired Air Force general's disappearance and a leading astrophysicist's killing. No established link between the cases has been made at time of publication. Trump said he hoped the series was "coincidence," but that White House officials would know more in the next week and a half. "Some of them were very important people, and we're going to look at it over the next short period," Trump told reporters on Thursday.

Obituaries and memorial posts are offering rare, concrete details about the missing and deceased scientists—and how abruptly their lives ended. A *Daily Mail* report on Thursday renewed attention on the 2022 death of Amy Eskridge, a 34-year-old scientist who reportedly died in Alabama of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after expressing concerns about her safety. Another *Mail* report highlighted that Michael David Hicks, a longtime NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) scientist involved in asteroid and comet research, died in 2023 with no public cause of death disclosed. The *Mail* reported that Hicks, 59, worked at JPL from 1998 to 2022 and contributed to more than 80 scientific papers, including roles on NASA's Deep Space 1 mission and the DART asteroid-deflection project, before his death on July 30, 2023; the report said his cause of death was not publicly disclosed and that it found no record of an autopsy.

Among the missing are retired Air Force Major General William Neil McCasland, last seen February 27 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and aerospace engineer Monica Reza, who disappeared in June while hiking in California. Both have been cited by online sleuths as part of a pattern, though officials have not linked the cases. Former FBI Assistant Director Chris Swecker told the *Daily Mail* recently "You can say these are all suspicious, and these are scientists who have worked in critical technology."

This week, the body of a missing nuclear lab employee has been discovered, 11 months after she mysteriously walked out of her home and vanished without a trace. New Mexico State Police announced that they positively identified the remains of Melissa Casias, 54, who was last seen alive on June 26, 2025. Her body was found in the McGaffey Ridge area of the Carson National Forest, approximately six miles from the last place Casias was seen walking before being declared missing.

In celebration of our designation as a California Cultural District, Arts District Liberty Station presents a free Summer Arts Fest on the North Promenade on June 13 from 2-8 PM for an unforgettable day

(Continued on page 6)

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## MORE INSTALLATION & OUTSTALLATION HIGHLIGHTS



WELCOME TO OUR CLUB! Sergio Gutierrez was installed as the final new member for the 2025-2026 Rotary Year. He was previously in the Tijuana Rotary Club a few years back. He is pictured above with outgoing President Ben Koala and his sponsor Fernando de los Santos. He has an IT business and lives in Chula Vista with his family.



L-R: Kathleen Carroll (outgoing Board member), incoming Secretary Rochelle Carroll, President-to-be (effective July 1), Rasha Roshdy, President-elect Risa Baron, Treasurer Bill Torre, outgoing Past President Jesse Fernandez, Jan Mellinger, outgoing Board member Bernard Hernandez and outgoing President Ben Koala. Thank you for your service to the Club as members of the Board—Kathleen, Jesse, and Bernard.

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President Ben Koala presents the Club gavel to Rasha Roshdy—who promptly (as in almost immediately) allowed Jan Mellinger and her cabal of thieves to steal it. She may or may not have it now.



President Ben presented Rochelle Carroll with the Rotarian of the Year Award in recognition of her many contributions to the Club including organizing the Trivia Contest and Welcome Table. Tana Lorah was recognized with the “Rising Star” award.



President Ben receiving more certificates and gifts during his roast from Jan, Michael M. and Neisha. Incoming District Governor Jeb Bakke was on hand to install the new Board which includes Tana Lorah, Fernando de los Santos and Kimberley Marshall. President Ben gave a WOW performance of “My Way” as his farewell. It was great fun at the Living Coast.



CREATE LASTING IMPACT

2026-2027  
Board and Directors

- ▶ Rasha Roshdy – President
- ▶ Risa Baron – President Elect
- ▶ Bill Torre – Treasurer
- ▶ Ben Koala – Past President
- ▶ Jeannet Badal
- ▶ Mike Green
- ▶ Jan Mellinger
- ▶ Fernando De Los Santos
- ▶ Tana Lorah



### MEMBER NEWS

Our most sincere condolences to **Fiona Liba**, wife of President Ben, on the loss of her brother, Simphiwe Liba, in a car crash. She has been in South Africa working to get his body there from Botswana where the crash occurred. There have been many delays and much bureaucracy.

**Betty Waznis** sends her thanks for the get well card that many of you signed recently. She is on track to return in July—all is going well.

**Beverly Sumwalt** is seeing the world and sends her greetings from BORNEO!

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**DARK—NO CLUB MEETING—Federal holiday—Juneteenth—June 19**

**SPECIAL MUSICAL PROGRAM—Friday, June 26, Noon**

**4TH OF JULY BBQ—CV VETERANS' HOME, 5:00 P.M.**

**2026 ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION  
TAIPEI, TAIWAN—June 13-17**

### **JIM BIDDLE NEWS AT NOON (continued from page 3)**

celebrating art, creativity, and community. This is an event you won't want to miss! In addition to main stage performances, you can enjoy handmade pizza, craft cocktails, an art market, and many more fun activities.

But why not spend your entire day at Liberty Station! Back for the third year is our Anchored in Wellness event, also on June 13<sup>th</sup> from 9AM – 3PM. Join us for a day filled with movement, mindfulness, and fun! Tickets are still on sale at [libertystation.tix.com](https://libertystation.tix.com) or, if you bought raffle tickets today, you just might win two tickets from me! This event features two immersive zones – movement with Pilates, yoga, and dance; and mindfulness with meditation, breathwork, and a sound bath. Additionally, there will be three stages with non-stop classes, contests, giveaways, and more. All classes and a cold plunge are included with your ticket.

A month's long surveillance by Homeland Security on a fake South County business led to the discovery of a nearly 2,000-foot-long border tunnel connecting San Diego and Tijuana that was 55 feet deep underground. The U.S. DOJ reports four people were arrested related to the distribution of more than a ton of cocaine from the Otay Mesa storefront. Suspicious activity led Homeland Security Investigators to start surveillance on the supposed Buy 4 Less retail store near the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. The store was watched from December 2025 to May 2026. According to the federal complaint, a new group of around seven or eight "employees" were seen regularly inside and around Buy 4 Less in December 2025, and investigators noticed minimal foot traffic at the store from customers and noted activity around the store did not appear to be consistent with a normal retail location. The "employees" were also seen transporting large numbers of suitcases out of the store and into vehicles or walking the suitcases across the border into Mexico, which law enforcement said appeared to be empty.

The DOJ reports that four people are facing charges in connection with the investigation. And, for my favorite cheesy line of the week, U.S. Attorney Adam Gordon said, "For these defendants, it wasn't a light at the end of the tunnel. It was lights and sirens."

And we'll conclude the news today with some sports facts. Not the Padres, the NBA, the NHL, or SDSU. Ben, or at least Ben's better half, Fiona, are pickleball fans, so we'll talk a bit about pickleball news. Pickleball is continuing its incredible rise after being named the fastest-growing sport in the United States for the fourth consecutive year. In 2024, pickleball players, known as "Pickleheads," grew in number by more than 45% over the previous year. Last year, the number of pickleball facilities in the United States grew by more than 55%.

And, because our Prez is a numbers guy, we'll end with more numbers...

The average player age is lowering. The 25-34 age group now has the most pickleball players (2.3 million), and 1 million more children started playing the sport last year. The average pickleball player age is 34.8 years old. There are now 68,458 pickleball courts (and counting) in the US, according to the Pickleheads court database, confirmed by the USA Pickleball Annual Growth Report.

USA Pickleball approved 1,225 new paddles and 81 new balls in 2024 while registering 476 new manufacturers and brands.

And this concludes today's edition of the Jim Biddle News at Noon, brought to you today by Arts District Liberty Station and the Liberty Station Community Association.