



2025 Civic Leadership Honoree - Jon Blickenstaff

What a blessing it is to be born into a family of Love and Care, Support and Discipline. This provides such a major head start in Life. Added to this blessing is the extended family and the local Community. Also add a share of Good Luck, Faith, and Hard Work; the result is the expectation that these fortunate folks should be good people and contributing members of society. Without meaning to sound conceited I feel positively overwhelmed and extremely fortunate to be in this category.

I've adopted a few "rules" which I believe to be very important to follow, none of them are original...
"THE GOLDEN RULE": Treat other people the way you like to be treated.

FOUR DAILY COMPONENTS OF A GOOD LIFE: Fill every day with a suitable balance of FUN, WORTH, LOVE, AND FREEDOM. The emphasis is on a daily Balance

ATTITUDE & GRATITUDE are not challenges, they are CHANCES & OPPORTUNITIES.

HOME #1 2100 ORANGE STREET 1944-1955

I arrived in La Verne at age 4 days, having been born in Pomona Valley Hospital on September 5, 1944. The house in the midst of three very large orange groves is no longer there...Orange Street has also been removed from the City.

Life as a youngster was like a wonderful dream, with wide open spaces. We went "uptown" for haircuts, groceries, ice cream, and hardware. I started kindergarten at Palomares Elementary, on Palomares Avenue. The school is gone, and Palomares Avenue has become Arrow Highway. During my kindergarten year students were moved to the new J. Marion Roynon Elementary School, serving grades K-8. I continued at Roynon, graduating from eighth grade in 1958. In addition to school activities and an excellent educational experience I joined the Cub Scouts at age 8. This was the beginning of the trail in Scouting, MY goal was to achieve the rank of Eagle as a Boy Scout. I achieved this rank at age 15, the path of an Eagle Scout continues for a lifetime!! I also became a charter member of La Verne Little League, which played our games on the Roynon School campus. I remember knowing that the population during those years was around 5,000 residents.

HOME #2 2974 PEYTON ROAD 1955-1964

Our parents sold the Orange Street property in 1955 and the house was demolished. Much of the lumber from this demolition was salvaged by my sister Nadine and her husband Frank Johnson. This

lumber was used to build their first home at 2034 Cottage Way (then called 8th Street. Our parents built a new home on Pevton Road (just south of Bonita High School), this was only the third house on the street and so “remote” that mail service wasn’t provided. My older siblings Jim and Nadine were living with their own families by that time. Older sister Janice and younger sister Ann and I, with Mother and Dad, made up our family of 5 on Peyton Road.

I had wonderful experiences all through elementary school at Roynon. One highlight I fondly recall and a life long influence in the primary grades was being able to earn the privilege of working in the school garden if we finished our class work on time. I also recall my first job working for pay was in the 8th grade, in the school kitchen washing dishes. Another highlight at Roynon was the woodshop & drafting classes for 7-8th grade boys; the girls were in homemaking classes (no gender boundaries could be crossed!). I was elected Student Body President in Grade 8 and also selected to be the Master of Ceremonies at our Graduation.

During the Summer break between 8th grade and high school I had the amazing experience of joining a program called “Montana Trails for Boys”, a 5 week trip led by La Verne College Coach Roland Ortmyer and his family. Focus was on camping, hiking, backpacking, and most of all the art and science of Fly Fishing. All this was in Montana & Yellowstone Park. We caught so many native trout, all “catch & release”. Truly this was the trip of a lifetime...overwhelming! It also was a highly positive influence on my progress as a Boy Scout.

As a ninth grader I attended the “old” BHS, now Damien High School. I played freshman football and baseball; this was the end of my athletic career. The new BHS campus on D Street was being developed and we move there at the beginning of my 10th grade in 1959. I continue to feel VERY fortunate to have attended BUSD schools K-12, High school was great, teachers, administration, classmates...all excellent. I am especially grateful to have found a girl friend who happened to be from San Dimas...Joan Dodge and I became high school sweethearts. More about her later. It was during high school, actually 9th grade, when I got my first real job. First was the work with my brother-in-law Frank Johnson, in his Upland orange grove. Next I worked as a box boy at the La Verne Alpha Beta, in the building which now houses the ULV Library. When I turned 16 I went to work at Frank’s Texaco Service Station, across the street from ULV. I loved working with Frank, he was an amazing person, great businessman, and also became active in the City of La Verne as a volunteer fireman, City Councilman, and Mayor. My gas station experience strongly enhanced by budding interest in cars. I worked at Texaco for 2 years in high school and 4 years in collage...great experience!

I graduated from Bonita in 1962 and enrolled in La Verne College (now ULV). I lived at home on Peyton Road, going to college, working at Texaco, being very busy, and enjoying a wonderful life. Joan and I became engaged on December 21, 1963 and set our wedding date of June 21, 1964. This wedding date marked the end of living on Peyton Road.

HOME #2 ½ WALNUT AVENUE IN San Dimas 1964, June, July

As newlyweds we moved into a small apartment for about 6 weeks, while our rental house in La Verne was in transition with prior renters. This was the only time we lived out of La Verne during my first 80 years.

HOME #3 2034 COTTAGE WAY 1964-1966

Following this very brief move out of La Verne we moved back “home” to a rental house at 2034 Cottage Way (then named 8th Street) in La Verne. This was the home which Frank & Nadine had built, using some of the salvaged lumber from our demolished house on Orange Street. The rent was \$75.00 a month, it was very comfortable and conveniently located close to college and work. Joan and I lived there very happily for 2 years.

HOME #4 1533 MAPLEWOOD 1966-1968

After renting for about two years we decided it was a good time to become homeowners. I was in my final year at La Verne College, still working at Texaco. Joan was working as a dental assistant. The home we found was a two bedroom place near Grace Miller School. Our housing cost would increase from \$75.00 monthly rent to \$94.00 monthly, including principal, rent, property tax, and insurance. Could we afford this? We decided to take the leap, never to look back! Home ownership in La Verne during that era proved to be a major piece of fiscal security in the years to come. This home was conveniently located in a good neighborhood, we celebrated my collage graduation here. We lived in this home when I began my teaching career in Azusa Unified School District, and when I entered a active life in the La Verne Community by becoming a member of the La Verne Volunteer Fire Department.

HOME #5 2610 BONITA 1968-2007

We were so excited when we found out about the home we most admired in La Verne was for sale by owner, not yet listed. We made contact with the sellers and quickly made the decision to sell Maplewood and move to this Bonita Avenue property. It is a Craftsman style home, build around 1910, three bedrooms, two baths, and built on property which includes two adjacent lots with a large swimming pool. Joan and I loved the idea of buying this home, others wondered why we would want such a big, old house for only two people. Against the advice of some, we made the purchase. Again there was discussion about affordability, the monthly payment, all inclusive, would go from \$94.00 to \$118.00 monthly. We made what proved to be the right decision, proceeded with the purchase, and never had even a single regret for nearly forty years!

After a couple of years on Bonita Avenue we decided it was a good time to begin our family. Laura was born in July, 1970 and Todd was born in May, 1974. It was the perfect home, thrilled with our kids, and a nice neighborhood. We loved being there for those many years. Significant life changes during these times included my career transition (teacher, assistant principal, principal), Joan working in the Roynon School office, and my Community involvement. In 1980 I listened to many of our friends and Community members and ran for an elected position on the La Verne City Council. I was elected, which meant retiring from the La Verne the Volunteer Fire Department. My involvement in local government progressed quickly when Mayor Frank Johnson announced his retirement and urged me to run for election as Mayor. I was also successful with this campaign, elected as Mayor, and began serving in this position for the next 27 years, a total of 13 terms. I retired as Mayor in 2009. I reflect on these years as complete and total positive experiences in the wonderful and amazing Community!

HOME #6 6980 WHEELER 2007-2009

We sold our beloved Bonita Avenue home and moved into a rental house as part of a transition of empty nest and desire to downsize. This was care free, and served as a home base while we searched for our new home during a very slow moving housing market in La Verne.

HOME #7 5757 SHEMIRAN STREET 2009-2025

Our search for the right house in La Verne was very fortunate to be served by very good luck and pure chance as we were driving around and saw a "For Sale" sign in an obscure location. Upon closer checking we found that the property was in foreclosure, to be sold by sealed bid through a bank in New York. We were the successful bidder on the property/house, as is, that needed everything! The purchase of this property coincided with my retirement as Mayor, providing me with lots of free "do it yourself" time, along with the help of some really good professionals. Joan and I moved in after nine months of really challenging work, inside the house and outside, front and rear yard...A major Labor of Love. This house turned out to be a perfect home for more than 15 years, we sold it in 2025.

After settling into our "new" 100 year old home on Bonita Avenue both Joan and I were established in our chosen careers and ready to expand our family. With two extra bedrooms, two additions seemed about right; Laura was born in 1970 and Todd in 1974, Both kids were warmly welcome by parents and extended family, including four grandparents, two on each side and all of them local. We have always felt richly blessed to have kids who were healthy and happy; active in Bonita schools throughout K-12. Their circles of friends from the neighborhood and schools provided positive social relationships and enhanced their academic experiences.

Our family experienced lots of fun times with vacations, travel, and home-centered activity, such as swimming, gardening, and family celebrations. Highlights include frequent visits to our small mobile home in Laguna Beach, travels in a camper, and trips to Hawaii.

Laura completed her course work in the field of nursing, and has continued to work in this field since passing her State certification. She's had various positions over the past 35 years and continues to be highly committed to the patients she serves professionally.

Todd graduated from ULV and attended Claremont Grad. School, earning his Master's Degree. He now works for corporate Toyota in Dallas, in the Lexus department. His wife Nikki also works for Toyota in Dallas.

Joan and I are very proud of our kids, and our three grandchildren, Brooke, Bryce, and Allison. Brooke, a nurse by profession, recently added to her family with Charlie, our first greatgrandchild, born May 1, 2025. She's the sweetest, cutest, and smartest child ever (great grandfather's opinion, ya think). Bryce graduated from ULV, and is now in the L.A. County Fire Department training program, from which he should graduate this March. Allie is studying for a career in nursing, much like her mother.

Joan and I have a deep sense of appreciation for "family". The best example is our commitment to each other, we celebrate Anniversary #62 this June, truly looking forward to many more! We continue to share the Joy of being in Love, and being Best Friends!

This is a brief summary of our family, without going on and on. Suffice it to say our family is Priority #1, we're very proud and dedicated to past, present, and future family...their success, and their happiness!

My family history, heritage, and commitment to Service in our La Verne Community is based on three generations, including a broad involvement in schools and education, volunteerism, church commitments, and the following specific individual services:

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| GRANDFATHER | ELDO BLICKENSTAFF, MAYOR |
| FATHER | HARRY BLICKENSTAFF, FIRE CHIEF & SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER |
| MOTHER | MARGARET PRICE BLICKENSTAFF, PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA) |
| UNCLE | JOHN PRICE, MAYOR & TEACHER/BUSD COACH |
| BROTHER-IN-LAW | FRANK R. JOHNSON, MAYOR & BUSINESSMAN |

With this and additional family background it was a family and personal expectation, a natural and positive commitment to our La Verne Community...Get Involved! For me personally the following:

1965-1980 La Verne Volunteer Fire Department
Along the way, involvement in Save Old LaVerne's Environment (SOLVE) and La Verne Historical Society

1968-1974 La Verne Aquatics Program, Summers at Las Flores Pool Lifeguard
WSI Certified Swim Instructor, and Pool Manager

1980-1982 La Verne City Councilmember

1982-2009 Mayor

The highlight of my Community Service experiences was my being elected and service as Mayor. I can best describe these 27 years as being a member of The Dream Team. This Team included Council members, Planning Commissioners, Managers, Department Heads, Staff Members, and the Community. I worked to ensure that my focus as Mayor was always having our local government in La Verne characterized by

QUALITY OF LIFE

INGTEGRITY, NEVER COMPROMIZED!

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, A FOCUS ON LISTENING...REALLY LISTENING!

VERY CLOSE ATTENTION TO AND EFFECTIVE FISCAL MANAGEMENT, FRUGRAL

HIRE AND RETAIN THE VERY BEST EMPLOYEES; APPROPRIATE, COMPETITIVE

COMPENSATION

CREATIVITY & INCLUSION

PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY; ENHANCE, REFINE, CREATE

NATIONAL HOT ROD ASSN, (NHRA), GOLD LINE CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY,

BROAD COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & PARTICIPATION:

*Tri City Mental Health, 27 years, 10 as Board Chair

*L.A. County Sanitation District, 27 years, 27 as Board Chair

*Inland Empire Regional Composting Authority, Founding member, for 15 years, 12 years as

Chair

- *Gold Line Construction Authority, 5 years, 3 as Chair
- *Hillcrest Homes, 6 years, 2 as Chair
- *Fairplex Association Board granted lifetime membership

*SOME PRIORITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hillside Preservation: Hillside Development Ordinance (safety, density, aesthetics)

Mobile Home Housing: Mobile Home Park Zone, City ownership of one park, support in another park for residents to purchase their park,

*STRONG, POSITIVE EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS, RESPONSIBLE COMPENSATION

*SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT

*EYES ON THE FUTURE

*SERVICE TO RESIDENTS, FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE

For me, being Mayor of La Verne was the highest privilege and honor I can imagine, truly a rewarding and joyful experience. In a relatively small town, it's my belief that local government can function well and really make a difference. I tried to live and serve as Mayor the areas of focus noted above.

A very brief example of making a difference: Many years ago at the opening ceremony of Little League Baseball and Girls Softball I watched the boys play their first game, and then walked to a far corner of the fields where the girls were playing. The girl's field had no improvements (back stop fence, dugout fences...nothing except temporary bases). I mentioned this to the Parks & Recreation Director, by the next week significant improvements to the girl's field were in place.

Along the way we entered into an additional chapter in our lives, Joan and I began a quiet family business called Blickenstaff Rentals, complete with a City Business License and a bank account. Our "business" never advertised, but we would evaluate, buy, renovate, and rent or sell residential property, only in La Verne. Sometimes we had partners, friends or family, and sometimes we did it on our own. It was "do it ourselves" projects for almost everything; finding the property, carefully evaluating it, renovations, finding rental tenants, managing the property, and making decisions about next steps.

It is said that TIMING IS EVERYTHING. We were a good example of that concept, buying and selling at the right time. We bought single family homes, duplexes, a tri plex, and ended up with 4 apartments (we owned/managed these for nearly 40 years. The property locations included 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Bonita Avenue, 5th Street, and 7th Street (the property we owned the longest, by far). We sold these apartments in 2024. The length of time we owned these individual properties varied, the shortest was a couple of days before being flipped and the longest was the last one we owned for 40 years. We kept this business small and manageable, rarely owning more than one property at a time.

My professional career began after graduating from La Verne College in 1966. In September I began student teaching while continuing to work full time at the Texaco station. Teachers were in short supply, a Texaco customer who worked in Azusa ask me to come to teach there after 1 ½ weeks of student teaching. Long story short, three days later I was hired in Azusa, teaching a 4-5 grade combination class at Paramount School. I remained at Paramount for 5 years, then requests a transfer to an Intermediate school in order to broaden my experience. During this time I also took classes at Cal. State L.A., earning a Masters Degree in School Administration. I moved to Slauson

Intermediate School, where I taught 8th grade Math for one year, then was hired at Slauson to be Vice Principal.

The next year I was offered the opportunity to become the Principal of Valleydale Elementary, where I served for eight years. Next I applied for and was selected to be the Principal of Center Intermediate School, where I served for 14 years, coming to believe that students in the “middle”, between elementary and high school, are the most challenging, and the most fun. My years at Center are very high on my list of favorites...great staff, wonderful students and parents/families. Many of my Center School colleagues have become long-time friends.

In 1994 I transferred to Slauson Middle School where I served for most of one year. My career took a significant change when I was recruited by the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) to be the National director of the Jr. Drag Racing League, a drag racing program for youngsters age 8-17. This was a major change in my career path with lots of travel (Atlanta, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Pomona) and working within the Drag Racing world with kids. This change in careers was major; exciting, challenging, and proved poor match for me. After one year with NHRA I left and returned to Azusa Unified, first back to Center School and then for the last 5 years of my full-time work as Principal at Mt. View Elementary School. I retired from Azusa in 2002.

My first year of retirement was disrupted when Azusa invited me back to be a Principal's Coach. This was the first of 16 invitations to return to school administration, 13 in Azusa and 3 in Bonita Unified (Roynon, Gladstone, and Oak Mesa Elementary). These interim assignments lasted from 2 weeks to 4 months, and they included assignments at all grade levels K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. I fully retired in 2018. I had no idea that my retirement would be modified by these interim invitation assignments, but this proved to be a wonderful and enjoyable culmination of my professional career in education.

Post note: This past Spring I receive a phone call from a student who was in my first classroom as a teacher, which was in 1966, nearly 40 years ago. She was a fifth grader, she tracked me down and got my phone number from La Verne City Hall. Yolanda and a classmate of hers, Gloria, wanted to renew our memories and friendship, they invited me to breakfast. Tears were shed as we deeply enjoyed each other's company; pictures were taken. They both told me I was their favorite teacher ever. My career was officially over but the joys of education are gifts which keep on giving.

La Verne continues to be a wonderful Community, I am deeply appreciative of having spent most of my life here. It's hard to imagine how a person could have better experiences, more opportunities, and be surrounded by better people than what I have experienced. Being Mayor is such a highlight, an honor which I appreciate and will treasure forever. It's my belief that all our citizens, all ages were well served...our highest priority.

I have the deepest gratitude for the support and involvement of the La Verne citizens and supporters of local government in our Community.

On Friday, June 13, 2025 Joan and I drove away from La Verne for the last time as residents. We've settled in Santa Ynez, in the Central Coastal area near Solvang. The main reason we moved is “family”. With great granddaughter Charlie arriving in May, we now have 4 generations living in very close proximity, it's wonderful. This is a major change for us, it's been wonderful!

Being honored by inclusion on the Downtown La Verne Walk of Fame makes me feel humble, honored, and very appreciative. THANK YOU!