



# viewpoints

Winter 2013 - 2014

Volume 44 Issue 2

A Community Newsletter from the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association



## Come One, Come All!

Saturday, January 4th | 10 am at the Firestation at Vivera & Mt. Helix Drive

Join us again on Saturday January 4th to ring in the New Year with one of our most popular activities—the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Welcome the New Year Walk Up Mt. Helix! This event has grown each year as word spreads about the family and dog friendly walk, which starts at 10 am at the fire sta-

tion at 10105 Vivera. Stroll up Mt. Helix Drive behind our big yellow banner with friends and neighbors! Look for photos of your dog featured on our website and in the pages of the next Viewpoints! Once at the top complimentary refreshments are offered, from coffee donated by Starbuck's, tea, and water, to breakfast

treats and fresh fruit. Don't miss this opportunity to join old friends, meet new neighbors and enjoy the celebration of our great community at the top. As always children and well-behaved dogs are welcome. Questions? Contact us at [yourgmianeighbor@gmia.com](mailto:yourgmianeighbor@gmia.com). ▲

## Improving Our Community



**GMIA Receives Award:** In recognition of our Improvement Project at the Interstate 8 Park & Ride (the eastbound Fuerte/Severin exit), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) presented GMIA with an award for outstanding service. Committee chair Larry Nichols accepted the award from Caltrans District Director Laurie Berman, who noted the “beautification pilot project” was the first time in San Diego County

that an organization adopted a Park & Ride with multiple components including planting, tree trimming, irrigation, mulching as well as ongoing litter control and maintenance. Our thanks to Caltrans for partnering with us on this project and to Supervisor Dianne Jacob for helping us get the ball rolling.

### GMIA Seeks Night Lighting:

GMIA members have asked us to investigate the possibility of adding nighttime lighting to the Park & Ride lot. We've requested lighting be installed but Caltrans has advised they do not have funding. Yikes! We've visited the Park & Ride at night and it is very, very dark. Although our initial request was turned down, we are pursuing the possibility of special funding to ensure the safety of our residents using the lot in the evening hours. We'll keep you posted.

**Thanks to Volunteers:** Thanks to volunteers Gretchen and Kathy Morrison, who took one hour out of their month to work with our board members Tom Osteen, Kay Bickley, Larry Nichols, Susan Nichols, Dagmar Miller and Holly Yarris to clean up the Park & Ride. GMIA is obligated to maintain the area and we have scheduled a once-a-month clean up on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.

For those who honk and say thanks as you drive by—we appreciate your acknowledgement BUT we would RATHER have your HELP! Please contact Improvement Committee member Tom Osteen at [tosteen2@hotmail.com](mailto:tosteen2@hotmail.com) or 619 464-8887 to lend a hand pulling a few weeds and picking up litter. Help one time (pick a month) or make it a habit. Thanks! ▲



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX  
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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440-1607

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Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership  
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**Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.**

*This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.*

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Coyote Press Graphic  
Communications

**Printing:** Best Printing, Casa de Oro

**www.gmia.net**

#### MISSION

GMIA is a 75+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

## Message from the President

### Show me the money...

Responsible stewardship of our treasury is very important to your GMIA board. Our modest membership fee of \$18 per household supports the many aspects of our organization, but we want you, our members, to know how we spend your money.

First and foremost, GMIA has no paid officers or employees. All dues and additional contributions are used to further our mission to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the neighborhood, and foster pride in the region.

Our annual budget has six basic expense categories:

- ◆ Our greatest budget item is production and mailing of our informative newsletter. Our primary method of communicating with members, it is written by board members with occasional articles by members. A professional graphic designer formats the articles for printing and we use a service to process the newsletter for mailing at a reduced nonprofit rate. About 20% of our members prefer to “go green” and receive our newsletter by email which saves us paper and postage costs.
- ◆ Insurance for the organization is a necessary expense. Fortunately, we have never had a claim, but we recognize the need to provide coverage for unexpected contingencies.
- ◆ Subsidizing community events is our third budget category. This year (2013) was a busy one and we incurred expenses for our New Year’s Walk Up Mt. Helix, Art & Garden Tour, Annual Dinner, Ice Cream Social and Community Forum. Feedback from our 2012 member survey told us that members wanted opportunities to meet their neighbors and GMIA has worked hard to build community throughout the year. We hope that you consider this money well spent.
- ◆ Maintaining a robust membership is essential to be sure our voice is heard when working with governmental agencies and other entities. Our Membership Committee uses funds to print and mail membership campaign supplies. We have just completed designing a new brochure; let us know if you would like us to send you one or deliver it to a neighbor to encourage new membership.



See **PRESIDENT** on page 7

## Thank You Donors!

**T**hanks to the following donors who have made gifts to GMIA of \$25 or more in excess of their annual dues in the past three months:

Henry & Olinda Arnold  
Ruel & Carol Bench  
Gail & Lorri Bordeaux

Kenneth Bullock  
Robert & Judith Gennette  
Paul Liederman

Robert & Marcia Malkus  
Mike & Mary Qualls  
Brent & Susan Yoder

## Permit for Bar on Avocado Boulevard Denied

A standing room only crowd filled the meeting of the Valle de Oro Planning Group on September 17th. Members of our community were anxious to voice their opposition to a proposal for a bar to be located near the Avocado Boulevard/Fuerte intersection. The site is currently a gold buying business (between 7-11 and the donut shop).

The bar applicant stated his intention to create a high-end wine and beer venue with limited hours to serve our community. He noted his many years of experience in the restaurant business and also his family's residence in our Mt. Helix community.

Your GMIA representative spoke in opposition to the proposed bar, along with many community residents and Planning Board members. We all envisioned many problems that could arise with a bar in that location. Concerns included the lack of adequate parking, danger to children who walk to the donut shop and convenience store, increased traffic with potentially inebriated drivers, and excessive noise. It was clear the "cons" outweighed any benefits a bar would bring to this busy commercial area.

After hearing from the applicant and community members, the Valle de Oro Planning Board voted to deny the application.

Maintaining the character and quality of our community has been our GMIA mission for over 75 years. Thank you to the many concerned residents who joined us to oppose this inappropriate land use. ▲▲



## Safety & Crime Prevention Forum: SUCCESS!

by Kathleen Hedberg

Over 100 residents attended our October Crime Prevention Forum to hear a panel of expert speakers from law enforcement agencies and other organizations who provided the latest information and answered our questions. We also launched a community-wide Neighborhood Watch program.

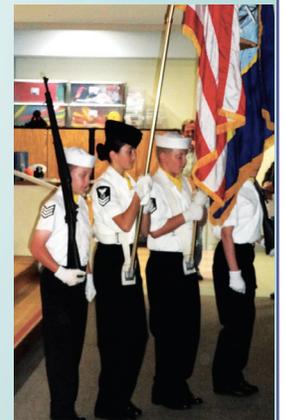
Sheriff Captain Pete Callewaert told us our Mt. Helix region has a low crime incident rate compared to other areas of the County. His advice: be observant and always report anything suspicious—the community must be the eyes and ears for the Sheriff. If you see something, say something. For non-emergencies, contact Sheriff's Dispatch at (858) 565-5200.

SD County District Attorney's Office representative Jesse Navarro spoke about the fastest growing crime, identity theft. Our speaker asked for a show of hands of those who had been a victim of identity theft. Shockingly, about 25% of the room responded. Victims of identity theft should contact the Sheriff's Department to report the crime and request credit reporting companies place a fraud alert on their credit reports. For tips on preventing identity theft: [www.sdca.org/preventing/identity-theft.html](http://www.sdca.org/preventing/identity-theft.html)

US Postal Inspector, Ricky Vida, regaled us with stories of mail fraud, mail theft, deceptive mailings and scams. He recommended never raising the red flag on your mail box as it alerts thieves to the presence of mail. If you suspect a mail scam, visit <http://ehome.uspis.gov/fcsexternal/default.aspx>

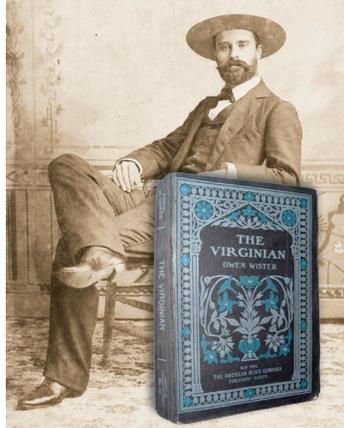
Sheriff Crime Prevention Specialist Jose Ortiz highlighted the benefits of tried-and-true Neighborhood Watch programs, an extremely effective method of crime reduction. To have a meeting in your area, contact Jose and he will help you organize your neighbors: 619-337-2000.

Thank you to Murdock Elementary School for allowing us to use their facilities and to the US Navy Sea Cadets for the color guard. If you have questions or would like more information contact Kathleen Hedberg: [kchedberg@cox.net](mailto:kchedberg@cox.net) or (619) 660-7487. ▲▲



## Tidbits of HISTORY

Savvy land developer Ed Fletcher promoted our region to his celebrity friends as an Artists' Colony. Author Owen Wister, whose most well-known work is his 1902 novel *The Virginian*, was among the famous who built a residence on Mt. Helix. Our Grossmont-Mt. Helix neighborhood is home to three streets that commemorate the life and work of this early 20th century literary figure.



Born in 1860 in Pennsylvania, Wister attended Harvard where he made lifelong friends, most prominently the future president Theodore Roosevelt. After graduation Wister wanted to pursue a career as a composer and studied music at the Paris Conservatoire. However, Wister's practical father ordered him to find a proper job. He returned to the United States to a position computing interest at bank but hated the drudgery. He then received permission from his father to attend Harvard Law School, but shortly thereafter began to suffer a number of nervous and mental problems that incapacitated him and worried his family. His physician eventually prescribed a "rest cure." Following the doctor's orders, Wister made the first of numerous trips to Wyoming and to other parts of the West. This cure became the inspiration for the work that made Wister famous.

During the 1890's Wister wrote short stories about Western themes, then decided to create a novel about a character who had appeared fleetingly in some of his earlier stories, a character known only as "the Virginian." Wister dedicated his Western masterpiece to his friend Teddy Roosevelt. The novel creates many standard features of the Western genre: fast-draw contests, noble code of conduct, the Eastern school-marm, and many others. The *Virginian* was made into at least four movies and a television series. It is considered the first novel to establish the cowboy and the Wild West as a unique literary form.

Sadly, Wister never lived here. Upon the premature death of his wife in 1913, his home at 9499 El Granito remained a place for brief visits only. Wister's influence on our community remains today as he named several streets in our neighborhood—Mollywoods Avenue for the quintessential Western "school-marm" (Ms. Molly Woods) in his classic novel, Wister Drive and Virginian Lane. 🌱

## Ice Cream Social

Thanks to Ice Cream Social event chair Holly Yarris and her committee for organizing our GMIA Ice Cream Social held on the first day of Fall. Ice cream sundaes and root beer floats were enjoyed by neighbors socializing and exploring the beautiful Mt. Helix Park.



## Helpful Contact Information for the Unincorporated Area

Compiled by Pat Ryan

Animal Control.....	619-236-4250
Abandoned Vehicles .....	619-401-2000
California Highway Patrol .....	858-637-3800
Code Enforcement.....	858-694-3741
Grading Violations Hotline.....	858-694-2705
Dead Animal Pickup.....	888-299-9905
Dig Alert .....	800-227-2600
(Call 2 days before you dig gas/phone lines, electrical wiring, or water pipes)	
Environmental Health	
Code Enforcement/Information.....	619-338-2222
Graffiti Hotline/Caltrans.....	858-467-4042
Graffiti/County Property.....	858-694-2705
Hazardous Materials Disposal:	
Information Hotline.....	877-713-2784
To schedule a drop off.....	619-596-5100
Mail Theft Complaints (USPS).....	877-876-2455
Noise Enforcement .....	858-694-3741
Potholes/Road Maintenance.....	858-694-3850
San Miguel Fire District .....	619-670-0500
(Business & Administration)	
Sheriff's Station Lemon Grove .....	619-337-2000
SD Sheriff (Non-Emergency) .....	858-565-5200
Vector Control .....	858-694-2888
(Rodents, Mosquitoes, Flies, etc.)	

Please clip and save this list for future reference.



Please “Like” Grossmont Mt. Helix Improvement Association on facebook to see pictures of our past events. Pictures of the garden tour, the annual “Meet and Greet” at the Water Conservation Garden, the Walk Up Mt. Helix, the Ice Cream Social, our improvement project work days, and the recent Community Forum have been posted. Also, you can see the commendation award your GMIA just received! Check us out on Facebook! ▲▲



### Trees of Mt. Helix

*Spathodea campanulata ‘Aurea’ – Yellow Flowering African Tulip Tree*

*Chorisa speciosa – Floss Silk Tree*

by Jeff Rule

The featured *Spathodea campanulata ‘Aurea’* (African Tulip Tree) and *Chorisa speciosa* (Floss Silk Tree) are located on the property of GMIA members Guy & Laurie Halgren. The Halgrens have lived on La Perla Way since 1985. Their beautiful property has been featured on our Garden tour at least three times. A GMIA past-president, Guy was our garden tour curator for many years. What makes these two trees special: they are not commonly planted trees, have beautiful flower color, and are of immense size (from 5 gallons planted 15 years ago). The African Tulip Tree is a medium size deciduous flowering tree that can grow 40’ feet tall by 35’ wide. This tree has a fast growth rate, takes regular watering, is sensitive to frost conditions, and has beautiful yellow tulip shaped flowers with oblong ovate leaves. The large Floss Silk Tree can reach 60’ tall by 40’ wide and is briefly deciduous. Its heavy trunk is green to gray and studded with thick spines. Leaves are divided into leaflets and drop during the flowering season in the fall. The tree has large showy pink to purple flowers similar to a hibiscus.

Members are encouraged to share their favorite or special tree with others through these articles. If you have a tree that you would like to share, please call Jeffrey Rule (Director) at (619) 466-0362, and he can schedule a site visit. Thank you for your interest. ▲▲



## Mt. Helix Grape Vines Have Doubled Since Last Year

by Kay Bickley

The Mt. Helix Wine Growers' Association started just two years ago with a core group who met at our 2011 GMIA Garden Tour and discovered a common passion—wine and vines. Vic & Janet Ryder, Dawn & Jeff Silva, Jim & Anne Wermers and Stephanie Young talked to their friends and the Association took root, as did the number of vines in the ground. Last year there were 1,000 vines, and now there are close to 3,000. The Association's common goal is to have fun, share resources, learn from each other, and grow as many vines

as possible in the area. The long-term vision for this grass roots Association is to have the area designated as its own "appellation."

Stephanie recently hosted a second gathering of anyone in the area who grows or is interested in growing grape vines. About 50 people came to share and discover. Of those who attended, half have vines already in the ground, and of those, 10 percent make wine from their own grapes and 10 percent also make wine from purchased grapes. It takes a few years for vines to mature enough to produce grapes for wine. Throughout the afternoon there

were discussions by experts in design or installation of vineyard, vineyard maintenance programs, wine making and storing, soils and organic supplements, gopher eradication, and problems with insects, most notably the glassy-winged sharp shooter. Following this article, read Dawn's successful method for eliminating gophers.

At the end of the day, the half of the group who currently do not have vines will be planting some soon—and now they have names and numbers of people they can call for help. If you have questions about the Association and future gatherings, email Dawn at [dnsilva@cox.net](mailto:dnsilva@cox.net). 🌱

## Gopher Control for Your Vineyard or Garden

by Dawn Silva

San Diego County has traditionally always had a high gopher population due to weather and surrounding landscapes, and these critters can pose a serious threat to our vineyards. Some folks are proactive and install chicken wire in the holes prior to planting vines, but for those who utilize bait or traps, I find using the "Victor® The BlackBox™ Gopher Trap" (either Dixieline or Home Depot carries it) extremely effective without the use of chemicals or poisons. Most importantly, it is imperative to diligently knock the numbers of these critters down when you first see activity in early spring. The "black box" is a chocker loop-style trap that is placed



in the gopher tunnel. When you see two mounds of dirt above ground you want to find the freshest mound which is notably obvious by its soft dirt, does not have a crust, and is usually located at the end of several consecutive mounds. Dig between the two mounds with a shovel and remove the dirt once you find the tunnel. Set the trap and face it flush to the hole in the direction of the fresh mound. I tend to put a rock on the back side of the trap so it will not move once the gopher pushes into the trap and a trash can lid over the area to darken the tunnel; this usually produces a catch within 48 hours. I consistently eliminate 12-15 gophers every spring. Good luck! 🌱



## WATER-WISE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX HOMEOWNER Rain Barrel Rebates are Here!

by Kathleen Hedberg

As mentioned in our Water Wise article in our Summer 2013 GMIA newsletter, rainwater harvesting just got easier through the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California SoCal Water\$mart rebate program. The rebates now include rain barrels and soil moisture sensors and Helix customers are eligible to apply for reimbursement of part or their entire purchase price. Rebates for rain barrels start at \$75 (for up to four barrels) and rebates for soil moisture sensors start at \$80, or \$25 per sensor for large residential lots.

Rebate programs still include other items for household use such as high-efficiency clothes washers and toilets, weather-based irrigation controllers and rotating nozzles. Program offerings are available through the agency’s fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2014 unless otherwise specified. See the program website for details: <http://www.socalwatersmart.com>.

Rebate applications are only available online. After filling out the required form, it must be printed and mailed with a sales receipt or invoice that includes the brand, model and price of the qualifying device, and a copy of the customer’s water bill. Questions? Call the SoCal Water\$mart rebate hotline: (888) 376-3314. 🌱



### Helix Water District Celebrates 100 Years

The majority of our Grossmont-Mt. Helix residents are served by the Helix Water District. This year the District is celebrating its 100th anniversary as a public agency. In 1913 citizens voted to publicly acquire the formerly private San Diego Flume Company. The special district was then known as the La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Spring Valley Irrigation District. Our region grew rapidly and in 1956 the agency merged with the El Cajon Valley Irrigation District and La Mesa Islands to become the Helix Irrigation District. As East County became more urban than rural, the agency’s name was changed to Helix Water District. Today the District comprises a \$1.5 billion infrastructure with more than 55,000 metered connections, 722 miles of pipeline, 23 storage tanks and 25 pump stations serving more than 260,000 customers. 🌱

PRESIDENT from page 2

- ◆ GMIA budgets funds to maintain and create new Improvement Projects. We are thrilled to be able to make a visible difference in our neighborhood.
- ◆ We maintain a reserve to enable us to advocate for political candidates and causes. Mailing to our geographic area requires substantial resources and we are careful to set aside funds should we need to reach the 7,000 households in our region regarding an issue of concern.

Along with these categories, there is also a variety of small ancillary expenses such as our website service and other incidentals, but rest assured, your GMIA board is very careful to use our finances wisely.

Nowadays, we often hear comparisons of what things cost in terms of the number of cups of coffee at Starbucks or other small luxuries. So, it is with pride that we reflect on our record of maximizing our impact with limited resources. For the price of (insert here, for example, a tall skinny soy latte once a week for a month), your membership dues help ensure we all continue to enjoy the wonderful lifestyle of our unique neighborhood. Thanks for your support! 🌱

*Susan Nichols*

### Share Before Recycling

Please share this newsletter with a neighbor before you recycle it.



**P. O. Box 2751  
La Mesa CA 91943-2751**

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To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2014 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18. You may renew online at our secure website [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

## 94/125 Congestion Relief Efforts

GMIA Past-President Guy Halgren and President Susan Nichols again met with Caltrans officials to discuss construction of the “missing link” between 125S and 94E, as well as the dangerous bottleneck on the 125N between 94 and the Lemon Avenue exit. Currently, drivers on 125S must exit at Spring Street then travel on surface streets to get on 94 eastbound. This is a particular problem for our members. First, those drivers who do stay on 125 and exit at Spring Street are delayed. Second, those who do not want to go through that hassle are pushed onto Fuerte and Bancroft, which increases the traffic through our community.

We were encouraged to learn the “missing link” project remains slated for 2020. To date SANDAG has funded the initial Environmental Study. GMIA will advocate with SANDAG to encourage them to fund the Design & Right of Way phase which is the next step in the lengthy process. However, the congestion on I125 that grinds traffic to a near halt from 3:30 pm on remains a difficult problem to resolve. We have asked CalTrans to consider all options to help with this issue. 🌱

## 2014 GMIA Calendar

**Saturday, January 4th 10:00 am  
Walk Up Mt. Helix  
to Welcome the New Year**

**Sunday, May 4th  
Art & Garden Tour**

**Sunday, June 22th  
Annual Dinner Meeting**

## Go Green

If you would like to “go green” and receive this newsletter by email (instead of postal mail) let us know at [yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com](mailto:yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com). We are pleased to offer our online newsletter in full color!