



viewpoints

WINTER 2015

Volume 45 Issue 2

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

Come One, Come All

*Let's walk up Mt. Helix, with friends we'll convene,
Enjoy a marvelous morning and welcome 2015!*

Join us again on Saturday January 3rd to ring in the New Year with one of our most popular activities—the 8th 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 station 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! At the top, complimentary refreshments are offered from coffee (donated by Starbuck's), tea, and water, to breakfast treats and fresh fruit provided by GMIA. Co-sponsor, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, provides our magnificent location and volunteer assistance.

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.

DATE: Saturday, January 3rd

WHEN: Meet at 10 am

LOCATION: Fire Station at Vivera
and Mt. Helix Drive



Say "So Long" to Utility Poles on Fuerte Drive

It will be a few years in coming, but GMIA is thrilled to announce the proposal we submitted to request undergrounding of utility poles has met the criteria for the P.U.C! We are now in the queue for the removal of the ugly utility poles that line Fuerte Drive from Grossmont Boulevard to Avocado Drive. Hurray!



As we previously noted, funding is limited due to budget considerations, so this is a long term project targeted for 2020. Engineering and design will begin in 2018 as a combined effort by SDGE, ATT and Cox. We have been advised that the utilities will be buried in a 24" deep trench and paving restored thereafter.

Thanks to our members who spoke up at our Annual Meeting to ask for undergrounding to improve our Mt. Helix views. A huge shout out to Supervisor Dianne Jacob who helped GMIA connect with San Diego County decision-makers at the Department of Public Works Capital Improvement Section.

Currently, guidelines for undergrounding require: a high volume of traffic serving a large population on a main thoroughfare, a scenic corridor, and safety or fire concerns. Fuerte Drive, a busy designated scenic corridor, met all these criteria. While we would like to see every Mt. Helix road improved by removal of utility poles, other less traveled streets do not currently meet the stated requirements. GMIA will shepherd the Fuerte Drive project to ensure its completion, and continue to monitor guidelines in hopes that other roads in our community might qualify for undergrounding in the future. 🌱



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership
440-1607

Kay Bickley, Secretary
318-5260

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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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Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,
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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

Your GMIA Board of Directors gathered in November to begin the process of charting a new five year Strategic Plan for our organization. Our last Plan, drafted in 2007 and updated in 2010, was a useful management tool to focus our energy and resources. As we approach 2015, your all-volunteer Board agreed to devote time outside of our regular monthly board meetings to evaluate our progress, prioritize our concerns, and consider new initiatives.



Phase one of our planning retreat included a detailed review of our earlier 2007/2010 plan, and a subsequent assessment of our efforts. Board consensus was that we reached the majority of our measurable goals. Some of our previous objectives included:

- ◆ Dedicating funds for a community improvement project
- ◆ Expanding our communication with members
- ◆ Expanding our member events and benefits
- ◆ Offering volunteers meaningful work within our organization
- ◆ Partnering with like-minded community stakeholders

Founded in 1938, GMIA has a long tradition of serving our community. Continuing that tradition, your Board is pleased to have reached many of the benchmarks we identified over the last five years. As we look to the near future, and the decades beyond, we want to be sure we continue to set realistic, actionable, and measurable goals that fulfill our mission to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the region.

Your Board will soon meet for the second phase of our Strategic Plan – and we couldn't do it without your support. Thank you to our hundreds of members who responded to our GMIA survey online and by postal mail. Your input has given us invaluable information to consider on our agenda. Thanks also to our committed Board of Directors who volunteer their time and talent to benefit our community. With your help, we will continue our efforts to make sure our unique neighborhood remains the special place we all treasure.

Susan Nichols

Thank You Donors

Thanks to the following donors who have made gifts to GMIA of \$25 or more in excess of their annual dues. We appreciate your support.

Henry & Orlinda Arnold, Mike & Yvonne Gagen, Norm & Valerie Hapke
The Goicoechea Family, Alex & Jody Mincks, Bob & Darity Wesley



GMIA Awarded Caltrans Volunteer of the Year

Our efforts to improve and maintain the Park and Ride at the I-8/ Fuerte exit have again been recognized by Caltrans. GMIA was designated a Volunteer of the Year for our work keeping this litter-free and maintaining the flowering trumpet vines we planted to screen the chain link fence.

Accepting the award on behalf of our organization, Board members Tom Osteen, Kay Bickley and Larry Nichols noted that the monthly clean-ups can be done in record time when community volunteers lend a hand. Stop by on the third Saturday of each month at 9:00 a.m. to help out. We'd love to have more help! ▲

Helix Water District Board Election Results

Congratulations to Kathleen Hedberg who was elected to another term in a landslide victory. Kathleen has been a strong advocate for the local rate payers and we are glad to have her represent our area for another term. Congratulations are also in order for Steven Rotsart who led a strong race against the incumbent and was edged out by 214 votes in a very close race.

GMIA members can be assured that our Board will remain vigilant about water rates and other issues that impact our community. Please stay informed by reading our quarterly Viewpoints and accessing our website at www.gmia.net ▲

Who We Are & What We Do

The Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is one of the oldest and largest associations of its type in San Diego County. Formed in 1938 as a result of community concern for the lack of adequate land use planning and zoning type requirements, we are a non-profit public benefit corporation. We represent over 7,000 single-family residences with a population approximating 20,000 people. Our region includes parcels east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd.

The primary mission of GMIA is to work on behalf of all GMIA community members to ensure that the quality and character of our community is preserved and enhanced. Unlike a typical "homeowner's association,"



GMIA does not own any property or facilities, nor is it responsible for any property maintenance. GMIA is served by an elected, unpaid Board of Directors and has no paid officers or employees. GMIA works with County and regional governmental entities to help resolve issues that impact our community such as transportation systems, traffic control, planning and land use, zoning, code enforcement, as well as crime prevention and law enforcement.

GMIA invites and encourages all residents in our membership area to become active members and support our efforts to ensure we will continue to enjoy our wonderful lifestyle. For more information on GMIA, please visit our website at www.GMIA.net ■

Neighborhood Little Free Libraries

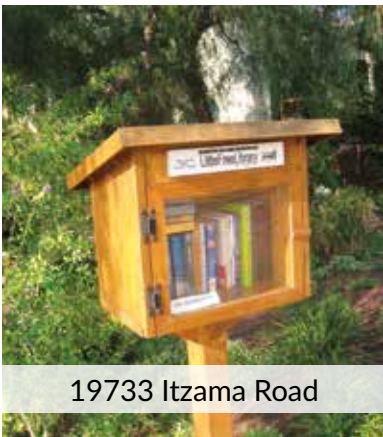
Many homeowners in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community have joined a world-wide movement to promote literacy and a love of reading by building free book exchanges. The very first Little Free Library was built in 2009 in the shape of a one room schoolhouse by a Wisconsin resident as a tribute to his mother, a former school teacher who loved reading. His neighbors loved it, and so he built several more and gave them away. Each had a sign that said FREE BOOKS. The concept is simple: give a book, take a book. The library is not only encouraging readers, it's giving neighbors opportunities to get to know each other.

Since then, Little Free Libraries have been featured in thousands of stories in newspapers, broadcast news, and online news services around the world. As of January 2014, over 15,000 Little Free Libraries in 62 countries have been built.

Right here in our own community, neighbors are joining in. Little Free Libraries are not only in front of homes, but one is located at Sprouts on Palm Avenue in La Mesa.

To find out more about Little Free Libraries, check out www.littlefreelibraries.org. The website encourages people to send in a picture of their library so it can be posted on the website. In return they get a "Little Free Library. Take a Book, Return a Book" sign to post on what they've built, as well as a Little Free Library Charter number.

If you know of other Little Free Libraries in our community, please let us know at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. We'll get the word out. 🌱



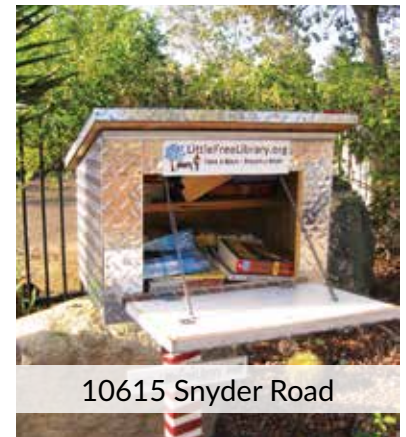
19733 Itzama Road



4622 Grandview Terrace



4424 Nabal Drive



10615 Snyder Road



10805 Melva Road



4837 New Ranch Road

Taking Out the Trash

A GMIA member contacted us to find out what remedy might be available for a neighborhood eyesore: trash cans left at the street 24/7. GMIA spoke with Eric Wolff of the Department of Public Works to research the issue. He advised that in the unincorporated area, cans may be out at the curb from 6 p.m. the day before pick up and removed by noon the day following collection.

If you have a similar concern about a home in your area, Eric will be glad to help out. He will send a letter on County letterhead without naming the complainant. Contact him at (858)694-2468 or via email at eric.wolff@sdcounty.ca.gov. 🌱



Historic Wall Repaired

We are pleased to report the restoration has been completed on the Mt. Helix Drive historic rock wall. Last year, concerned members contacted GMIA after a homeowner's workman applied cement to the face of the stacked stone wall. GMIA, along with the Valle de Oro Planning Department and other community stakeholders, sought remediation.

The County Historic Site Board worked with the homeowner to ensure that proper repairs were made. Thanks to GMIA member Jimer DeVries for spearheading this effort. ▲

Our Gem of a Library

by Holly Yarris

Stop by our Casa de Oro Library and meet Ruth Burkhart, President of "The Friends of the Library" and a dedicated volunteer since 1987.

Ruth's love of the library is contagious! In the face of continuous budget cuts, Ruth's energy and enthusiasm have generated much needed funding for library programs through annual and ongoing book sales. With these funds, "Friends" has purchased a new large screen TV, craft materials for the toddler program, popcorn and refreshments for Movie Nights and supplies for the Summer Children's Program and Adult Workshops.

Ruth has lived in the Mt. Helix community for 52 years and is a retired Casa de Oro Union Bank manager. She is seeking volunteers to staff book sales and numerous other activities. Additionally, she is also looking for donations of gently used books for their fundraising sales. "The more books we sell, the more funds we have for library programs." If you are interested in volunteering, stop by or call the library at (619) 463-3236 and ask for Ruth Burkhart or Allyson O'Brien, Librarian. Books may be dropped off at the library any time during open hours.

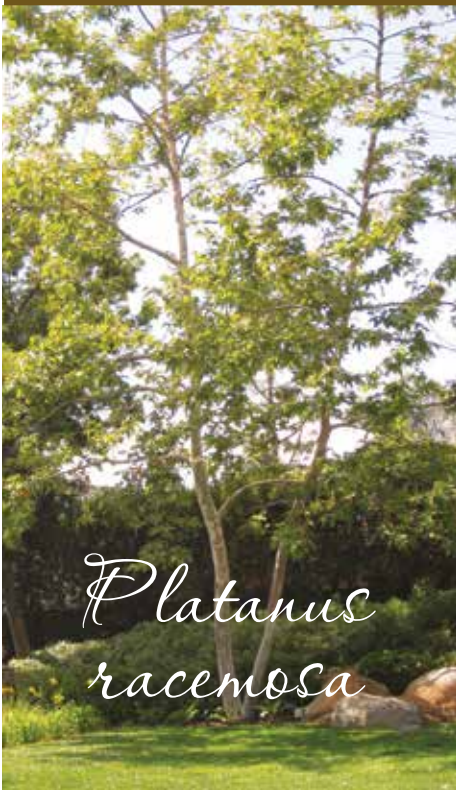
When I visited our library, children's story hour was underway, a craft table was set up to make Pilgrim hats, several adults were working on computers, and an ESL tutoring session was being taught, not to mention many patrons browsing the well-stocked aisles and displays looking for their next read.

The Casa de Oro Library is located next to the Post Office on Campo Road. Ruth would love for residents to reacquaint them-



selves with our community library. A calendar of events with ongoing event dates and times is available on line (www.sdcl.org) or in the library.

GMIA thanks Ruth for her commitment and countless hours of service to our library and community.



*Platanus
racemosa*

Trees of Mt. Helix

Platanus racemosa | California Sycamore

by Jeffrey Rule

The California Sycamore tree featured is located in the front yard of GMIA members Jeffrey and Claire Rule. The tree was planted from a 24" box container in 2001. The Rules have lived in the Horizon Hills neighborhood for 13 years. What makes this California Sycamore tree special to the homeowners is its picturesque multi-trunk branching form that is gracefully twisted and contorted. This light and airy focal point tree shades the house from the early morning sun and is lighted at night by 3 LED up-lights. The California Sycamore tree is a deciduous California native and can grow to 30' – 80' tall by 20' – 50' wide. They have a fast growth rate and take regular watering. The California Sycamore was a one of the favorite trees of early California *plein air* painters in the early 1900's.

This is part of a series of articles about interesting trees within the GMIA area. Members are encouraged to share their special tree with these articles. If you have a tree that you would like to share with fellow members, please call Jeffrey Rule (Director) at (619) 466-0362, and he can schedule a site visit. Thank you for your interest.



BATS!

by Pat Ryan

Mt. Helix, like other areas in the inland valleys, hosts many of the 22 species of bats that reside in San Diego County. Bats, the only mammal that can fly, can reach speeds of 40-80 miles an hour and can range from 30 to 50 miles from their roosts. We count on them to forage most of the night and feed on up to 1000 mosquitoes and insects each hour. Bats are not blind, but have excellent vision as well as echolocation (sonar) capabilities. They need streams, forests, fields, marshes and chaparral to provide insects or nectar, as well as safe roosts to raise their young. One pup is raised yearly (May to September) and is ready to fly and feed itself in three weeks. They stay with the parents for 6 to 10 weeks. Bats are very clean animals and groom almost constantly to keep their fur soft and clean. They can live for a decade and some weigh about the same as a nickel!

Bats are fascinating creatures, and valuable indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Unfortunately, many longtime residents report seeing fewer and fewer of them. Inland valley habitat loss is proceeding rapidly and many species appear to be on the decline. Pesticides kill the moths that form the majority of their diet; palm tree trimming during the maternity season kills many pups; and domestic cats are a major

threat, along with artificial lighting and loss of suitable roosting areas.

If you are lucky you can still see them, along about dusk. Be on the lookout for our two most common stable species, the Mexican Free-Tailed Bat and the Big Brown Bat. Help insure their survival by preserving our open space. Wherever possible, reduce artificial lighting; avoid the overuse of pesticides; and avoid trimming your palm trees from May to September. Investigate putting up a bat box.

Let's do all we can to preserve the habitat of these hard-working mammals and guarantee they keep foraging for the millions of mosquitoes and insects on Mt. Helix!

Resources: batrescue.org; batslive.pwnet.org; Miner and Stokes: "Bats in the South Coast Ecoregion." ▲



Ask a Master Gardener

by Kay Bickley

Over 200 qualified Master Gardeners in San Diego County offer FREE advice and information about local home gardening and pest control. They can help answer questions about:

- ◆ Planting a winter vegetable garden
- ◆ Problems with citrus trees
- ◆ Effective methods for pest control
- ◆ Preparing for the changing weather
- ◆ Dividing perennials, and planting or separating bulbs
- ◆ Creating a sustainable, earth-friendly garden
- ◆ Growing native plants

So what qualifies someone as a Master Gardener? Every Master Gardener is a volunteer trained and supervised by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE). The County of San Diego provides support for the local UCCE office, also known as the Farm and Home Advisor Department.

The program attracts volunteers who have a passion for gardening; they are trained to provide accurate, up-to-date information on home horticulture issues for local residents. Training is offered only once every two years and limited to 45 applicants. A 50-hour program of 16 classes is taught over a five-month period by a specialist in the field. To be certified, students must successfully complete the coursework and pass a final exam. During the first year, each new Master Gardener graduate must volunteer at least 50 hours of time in public education activities. We are fortunate to have this wonderful resource. 🌱

The Master Gardener Hot Line is 858-822-6910 and their website is www.mastergardenerssandiego.org.

Be sure to look at the list of FAQs on their website; it is quite extensive and may help answer some of your questions.





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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 2015 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18 (2 years - \$36; 3 years -\$54). You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (R.S.V.P.)

You've seen them directing traffic at accident sites, performing vacation house checks, and serving as the eyes and ears for our law enforcement services. Helpful R.S.V.P. volunteers increase crime prevention programs and provide additional resources for our Sheriff's department in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix community.

Volunteers, minimum age 50, must pass a police background check, have effective oral and written communication skills, be in good health, and have a valid California Driver's License. They volunteer for three 8-hour shifts/month.

GMIA thanks the R.S.V.P. volunteers for assisting our law enforcement officers and helping our neighborhood. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer, call 619-660-7021. ▲

Calling All Artists!

GMIA is busy planning for our 2015 Art & Garden Tour. We invite local artists to show and sell their work. There is no fee or charge of any kind to participate. All media are considered. Over the years, we have found that artists whose work is moderately priced and related to the garden tends to sell well. If you are an artist or know of a local artist who would like to be involved, contact Susan Nichols at 619-440-1607 or yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

Our Art & Garden Tour takes place Sunday, May 3rd. ▲

Calendar

Sat., Jan. 3rd Walk Up Mt. Helix for the New Year	Sun., May 3rd Art & Garden Tour	Sat., May 23rd Succulent Swap
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