



viewpoints

FALL 2017

Volume 47 Issue 4

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

Family Fun

Halloween Harvest Festival

Sunday, October 29 | 2 - 5 pm

Save the Date!

Celebrate our wonderful neighborhood at our new Halloween Harvest Family Festival on Sunday, October 29th from 2 - 5 pm. The event will take place at the top of Mt Helix. Please park at the fire station at 10105 Vivera where shuttles will be provided. At the top, local businesses will sponsor kid-friendly booths with crafts, snacks, and activities. Enjoy live music provided by Lenny & The Lounge Lizards.

Everyone is encouraged to wear costumes! There will be a Costume Parade at 3:30 and all participants will receive a prize.

This event is free for our community. Thank you to our event partner, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, and thanks to many local businesses for their support.

If you would like to volunteer or have your business involved in this event, please contact Krista Bishop Powers at 619.985.1445.

Give the Gift of Community

For the holidays, please consider giving an annual membership to GMIA.

Your \$18 gift will bring a neighbor this informative quarterly newsletter and invitations to all our community events, plus support our mission to preserve and enhance our unique semi-rural neighborhood. Our website www.gmia.net has a membership form which you can either print and return by postal mail or complete online. Thank you! We appreciate your membership. 



Are You Current?

Please take a moment to look at the mailing label of this newsletter. You will find the expiration date of your membership. Some members may discover they have overlooked payment needed to support our organization's expenses. Dues (\$18 one year, \$36 two years, \$54 three years) may be paid online at our secure website www.gmia.net or by postal mail: GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943. Thanks for your support!



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Paul Geldbach	Elizabeth Smith-Chavez
Kathleen Hedberg	Mike Valley
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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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MISSION

GMIA is a 79-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.

President's Message

With Thanksgiving on our horizon, it seems timely to recognize the dedication and time devoted by our entire GMIA Board of Directors. Our organization benefits every day from their thoughtful contribution of year-round service.

With this message, we say goodbye to two of our best – Jeff Rule and Michael Sciulli. Both these Board members spent countless hours working to better our community. Jeff fulfilled a vital role in producing our popular Art & Garden Tour for many years. Michael worked to innovate and streamline our administrative functions thereby improving our event logistics and marketing. Both stepped up to help out with all phases of events and initiatives, working behind the scenes and also serving as the face of our organization in the community. We are sad to have them resign but appreciate their need to manage busy lives (careers! relocation! kids!). We wish them well in all their endeavors.

GMIA's leadership is characterized by strategic thinking, and most valuable, tireless efforts to help preserve and enhance the quality of the unique neighbourhood we all cherish. By all measures, our region benefits from their diligent, careful stewardship of our community's character.

Looking forward, as younger families discover our great neighbourhood and move in, GMIA has recognized a need for outreach. We know that the future of our region will depend on this next generation of residents to carry on and support our pivotal role. For 79 years, GMIA has been at the forefront of efforts to retain zoning for large lots and semi-rural character. We are pleased to have recruited a contingent of younger board members who, along with our "seasoned" members, are working together to be a force for good.

In this issue of Viewpoints you will find a new column featuring our Board, with future editions that will continue to highlight individuals. This spotlight includes their photos. We hope that when you see their familiar faces at the grocery, at GMIA events or around the 'hood, you will let them know you value all their efforts. Thanks for your membership and support. 🌱

Susan Nichols



Thank You Donors!

Special thanks to the following members who donated a gift of \$25 or greater in excess of their dues.

Dieter Fischer, Paul & Janel Pehau, Henry Jordan & Daniel Lamb,
Judith & Peter Prichard, Chris & Betsy Quinn, Dr. Tere Trout & Jonathan Becker,
Gary & Janice Paul, Dean & Judith Allen, Josephine Swikard,
John Grasberger & Eva B. Goode, Judy & Brian Pike, Robert & Holly Yarris,
Andrea & Frank Goicoechea, Mary Jo Stalder, Allen & Jennifer Westermeyer,
Tim Young, Dr. & Mrs. Jerome Heard, Frank & Cathy Lubak

Meet Your Board of Directors

by Pat Ryan

The GMIA Board of Directors is made up of 18 dedicated, hardworking residents of our community who contribute their professional expertise, experience and active participation to advocate for our semi-rural way of life. Several Directors have served on the board for over 27 years, and many have served 10 to 15 years. Recently, younger members with families have been invited to join, bringing new energy and reflecting the changing demographics of our neighborhood. So, it's time to meet your board of Directors, most often seen at all our GMIA events wearing bright yellow vests saying "GMIA at Work!" In this and future issues we will introduce members of our board and highlight their professional skills, interests, years of service, some recollections from the past, and committees on which they participate. We've asked them to tell us what is special about GMIA, community improvements they deem important, and to note aspects of our region they identify as crucial to preserve.



Sue Creveling

"I love our neighborhood's semi-rural feel! It is wonderful to have fairly easy access to most of San Diego, but be able to enjoy our rural lifestyle," says Sue Creveling. "We love walking in our neighborhood, biking on our nearby mountain trails, and having room to grow fruits and vegetables." A retired nutritionist, Sue took Ornamental Horticulture

classes at Cuyamaca College where she also volunteers at the Garden. A board member for over 7 years, Sue is active on the Communication Committee, the Curb Appeal Award, Annual Dinner, and Membership Committees. She is responsible for organizing our volunteers as the Volunteer Coordinator for all our events. Sue's focus is to help GMIA work together with our community to preserve the lifestyle and character of our neighborhood. Sue believes "The growth around our area has impacted our traffic and services over the past couple of decades, that is a given, but with vigilance, we can continue to preserve our rural lifestyle in the GMIA area." With this in mind, Sue continues to work with GMIA to improve the Avocado/Fuerte commercial corridor.



Liz Chavez-Smith

"I first moved to the GMIA area in 1985, I was attracted to the almost rural nature of the area, with a commute to my downtown office of only 15 minutes," says Board member Liz Chavez-Smith. "I was on the Board, and even President, in the 1990's before moving from the area. We worked hard then to protect the park at the top of Mt. Helix." Liz is

an attorney specializing in real property issues. She returned to our Board two years ago and is in the process of retiring from her law practice. Liz serves on the Administration Committee, the Legal Subcommittee and the Community Events (Forum) Committee. "When I moved here, my daughters were the only small children in the neighborhood," she observed. "Now I am seeing more families with children. They are the future of the area, and we should do all we can to support families. I love the fact that GMIA is planning more family oriented activities." She notes that GMIA has "increased involvement...in public affairs, and (developed) the relationships with government leaders, including the wonderful Diane Jacob." Faster police protection response time is an issue Liz believes will better our area.



Tom O'Steen

"We have the best of both worlds. We live in a wonderful semi-rural community, surrounded by higher density neighborhoods and towns. We are like an island of fresh air in our area of San Diego County, yet are just 12+ miles from downtown and the ocean/bay front," says Board member Tom O'Steen. Following retirement

as a 35-year real estate professional, Tom is an avid gardener whose interests align with GMIA's mission to maintain and preserve our lifestyle. A Board member for over seven years, Tom says he "helps in any way to maintain our wonderful environment". As Co-Chair of our Park & Ride Maintenance Committee and serving on both our Logistics and Improvement Committees, Tom is very active at all of our events. Tom's focus for GMIA is to better our police protection response time and to continue our work to bring about more affordable water rates.



Kay Bickley

"I have always been drawn to rural environments." With a childhood as a military dependent, and a professional career as a consultant helping employees of large companies manage enterprise-wide system upgrades, Board member Kay Bickley has seen the world through extensive travel. She moved to the Mt. Helix area in 1990,

proclaiming this is where she has chosen to "spend the rest of my life." Following retirement Kay found time to volunteer and fulfill her desire to "make a difference in my community...encouraging neighbors to take an active role in their neighborhood." Kay has served as GMIA Secretary since 2004 and serves on the committees for our Art & Garden Tour, Annual Dinner, Walk-Up Mt. Helix and Membership. She cites outreach to our community to ensure the longevity of our organization as an important area of emphasis, along with working with code compliance, the police and highway patrol for the betterment of our region.

Valle de Oro Community Planning Group Update

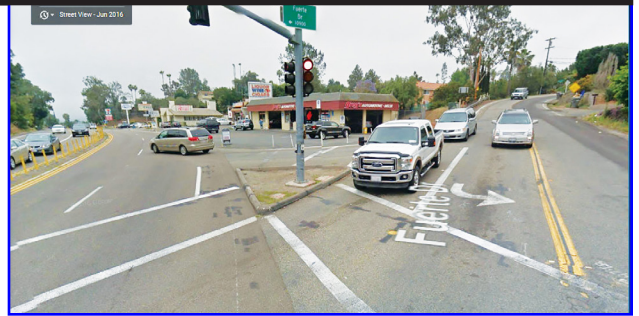
by Mark Schuppert

The VDOCPG meets at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of each month at the Otay Water District Offices located at 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd. The planning group serves as a platform for community involvement regarding land use decisions in the Mt Helix, Casa de Oro, and Rancho San Diego neighborhoods.

We review discretionary permits such as variances, site plan amendments, lot splits, etc. and also lobby for public improvements in our area. Our decades long effort to develop Estrella Park in Casa de Oro is now in its final design stage with construction planned to begin in the near term.

Recent VDO involvement also includes a hearing for the request for a liquor license for a 7/11 that is proposed in the former Starbucks suite near the corner of Conrad and Campo Roads. The application for the liquor license was not supported by the VDOCPG; its approval is now at the County level. Other active projects include a request for a five-lot subdivision off of Tropicco Drive and a lot split along Lavell Street.

Our meetings are open to the public and offer the opportunity for your input on any agenda items and an opportunity to speak on items that are not on the agenda. For more information, call David Johnston, Chair at (619) 977-6497. 🌱



Improving the Ugliest Intersections

GMIA members have asked for help with a series of road issues. Based on your input, GMIA requested removal of the delimiters (plastic “candlesticks”), installation of proper center median islands, and safer turn patterns at the intersections at Avocado/Fuerte, Puebla/Fuerte, and Calavo/Fuerte. We have been working toward this improvement since 2014 (the wheels of government can move slowly). This project now hinges on available County funding in conjunction with the approved Fuerte/Alzeda realignment. We will keep you updated as we learn about the particulars of this project.

Currently, the County is moving forward to realign the intersection Fuerte/Alzeda to create safer road conditions. Utilities to be relocated in advance include overhead power lines, gas lines, waterlines and sewer lines. Seven different contractors will be on site at different times during the next seven months beginning Monday September 11th, 2017 and scheduled to be completed in late April 2018. After the utilities are relocated, work will begin to realign the road. Please use caution and plan for minor travel delays. 🌱



Please Share Your Extra Produce

Many of us in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix community are fortunate to have abundant gardens and ample produce. If you have more fruits and vegetables than you can utilize, organizations including Senior Gleaners, Produce Good, and HarvestCrops would like to harvest your surplus to feed hungry residents of limited means.

Last year, San Diego gleaners distributed nearly 252 tons of food. However, in our county, 500,000 people live in poverty. It makes sense to support groups like gleaners who will get food to people who need it, keep edible food out of our landfill, and discourage rodents who may feed on unpicked produce.

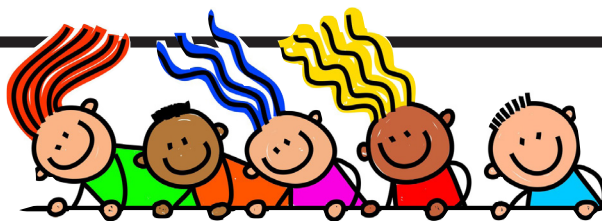
Visit www.sandiegogleaners.org to learn how you can join hundreds of people already involved. The groups need all types of fruits and vegetables, volunteers of any age, assistance transporting collected food and cash donations to support their work. You may also contact Monte Turner, Senior Gleaners Volunteer Board President at (503) 364-1542. 🌱

We Tip Our Hats

Volunteers are the life's blood of our organization. Thank you to our Family Meet Up and Pizza Party volunteers who pitched in to lend a hand. We'd like to recognize them for their help: Amelia Knezevich, Brooks Fess, Erin Svalstad, DJ Larry Powers, Jane & Mike Pisor, Christine Leefeldt, Allan Arthur and GMIA board members.

A big shout out to Board member Krista Bishop Powers for creating the concept of this event and then making it happen, and for planning our upcoming Halloween Harvest Festival.

If you would like to deepen your commitment to GMIA, please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com or call Susan Nichols at 619-440-1607.



Family Fun

by Krista Bishop Powers

Welcome to our new column with information for families. Our beautiful area has seen a growth spurt of new young families moving into the neighborhood. I myself recently moved back with my husband; we feel blessed to raise our 2 ½ year old and soon-to-be second boy amongst the beauty that I was fortunate enough to experience growing up.

In my support of GMIA, my goal is to help the parents and children of the Mt Helix area meet each other. To kick off this goal, we had our first end-of-summer "Family Pizza Party" in the incredible backyard of the Trout-Becker household on August 13th.

We had over 100 people, and the day was filled with pizza, rock painting, games, crafts, music, a tortoise, and even a miniature horse! We look forward to making this an annual end-of-summer event.

SAVE THE DATE

Our next family activity will be a "Halloween Harvest Family Festival" at the top of Mount Helix on October 29th from 2 to 5 p.m. Local businesses will sponsor booths with games and crafts. There will be also live music by Lenny and the Lounge Lizards. Wear your costume and join in the festivities.

We can always use additional volunteers. If you are interested, please contact Krista at 619.985.1445. See you there. 🌱



Your Yard Could Be a Certified Wildlife Habitat

by Carey Hultgren

During a recent morning walk, I stopped to read a curious sign posted in the front yard of a home shaded by old pine trees. “Certified Wildlife Habitat,” it read.

It happened that the garden’s owner was outside pruning and noticed my interest. We struck up a conversation and she directed me to the National Wildlife Federation’s website (www.nwf.org). She said she’d been happy to learn from their site that with a few, easy modifications, her garden qualified as a Certified Wildlife Habitat.

Our family has always worked towards keeping a natural, healthy garden, for both ourselves and our local wildlife. Even in our semi-rural community we are feeling the impacts of urban encroachment: from dramatically increasing airplane traffic to higher density housing to more cars on the road. The need to preserve wildlife corridors and establish new environments for birds, small mammals and vital insects is more critical than ever.

Together, my husband and I reviewed the guidelines and started on our certification path. To establish a wildlife habitat, a yard must support various forms of Food,



Water, Cover, Places to Raise Young, and Sustainable Practices. Using our ½-acre yard as an example, we first identified our three Foods as the fruits and twigs of our satsuma tree, and nectar from our flowering Palo Verde trees. We needed one Water source, so we installed a bird bath in the heart of our garden. Our two forms of Cover included rolling beds of yellow Lantana (home to dozens of lizards) and a dense bed of agave. Filled with nests and burrows, our mature white Sapote tree and our 20-foot tall stand of Peruvian succulents provide two areas for Places to Raise Young. It surprised us most to learn we’d excelled in Sustainability. Since breaking ground on our garden, we’ve replaced our lawns with xeriscape,

brought in truckloads of mulch and compost, converted a sprinkler system to drip irrigation, and eliminated our use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. In fact, we met the required Sustainability Practices. With that, we officially certified and registered our garden with the National Wildlife Federation.

For our family, it wasn’t particularly difficult to certify our yard. The unique topography and large properties in Mt. Helix afford many of us the luxury of open space, mature trees, abundant bramble patches, ground cover, rock walls, ponds, streams and dozens of other habitat sources. Certifying our yard elevated our awareness of the life-giving habitats that, in many cases, we already had. It also strengthened our resolve to protect those environments and create more of them. Our hope is that these efforts bring us more wildlife, like singing birds, Monarchs, and honeybees. We certainly need them and they need us. Creating a wildlife habitat in our own backyard made a home for us all.

Certify your backyard as a Wildlife Habitat at www.nwf.org/certify. ▲

Grossmont-Mt. Helix Fire Station

by Wendy Tinsley Becker

In 1957 GMIA requested support from the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to form a fire protection district for the greater Grossmont-Mt. Helix community, wherein the County would provide fire protection services staffed by the State Forestry Department. Newspaper accounts indicate that the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Fire District was established. In 1958, the BOS reviewed a request to lease a portion of the Mt. Helix Nature Theatre property to construct a fire station for the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Fire District.

Built circa 1959, the fire station was constructed at the southeast corner of Mt. Helix Drive and Vivera Drive. The building was constructed in a modernistic Ranch style to emulate the Ranch style dwellings being built throughout the community. The fire station design deviates from a Ranch home through the increased roof height and pitch, and a wide garage door, all to accommodate fire engines. An open house was held for the new fire station on April 10, 1960.

We appreciate the vision of early GMIA leaders who recognized the need to build this facility to protect and maintain our way of life in our greater Grossmont-Mt. Helix community.





Casa de Oro Progress Report

The Casa de Oro Alliance continues its work to upgrade this neighborhood on our southern GMIA border. Thank you to the many volunteers who have stepped up to help.

Following their well-attended and successful Community Clean Up on June 10th (photos above & below), the organization is sponsoring a 2nd Annual Fall Festival on Saturday, October 21st from 10am - 4pm at Spring Valley Academy (formerly Spring Valley Middle School) located at 3900 Conrad Drive. The family friendly event is free and will feature food, fun, vendors and games.

In late September, with the support of Supervisor Dianne Jacob, the Alliance will present its request to the entire County Board of Supervisors for funding for an urban planner. This edition of Viewpoints will be in production at the time of the decision. To learn of result and more about this organization, follow them at [www.facebook.com/CasadeOro Alliance](http://www.facebook.com/CasadeOroAlliance). 🌱



REMINDER

Don't Overpay Sales Tax

7.75%

For those of us living in the unincorporated area of San Diego County, check out our members' tales of being overcharged sales tax.

Member Sue Cherlin shared with GMIA her recent experience of an online vendor who charged 8.5% sales tax for a purchase. Sue recognized that was too much as it is the sales tax for the City of La Mesa. The vendor should have used the San Diego County sales tax of 7.75% instead. When she contacted the seller and advised that her residence (where she was mailed the goods) is located in the unincorporated County, they revised the amount and refunded the difference.

As we noted in previous editions of this newsletter, you may have been overcharged by the DMV on major purchases and didn't realize it. GMIA member Bob Perry wants you to know that residents who live in our unincorporated areas but have La Mesa or El Cajon zip codes are at risk of overpaying sales tax on DMV purchases such as cars, boats, motorcycles and planes. Bob bought a new car and was overcharged hundreds of dollars because it appeared he lived in the city of El Cajon due to his 92020 zip code. GMIA Board members Pat Ryan and Larry Nichols report they had the same experience.

Those who live in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County should rightfully pay the 7.75% sales tax rate on DMV purchases no matter where they buy them in California. Sales tax in El Cajon is 8.25%; the city of La Mesa is 8.5%. The difference can be hundreds of dollars on larger purchases.

Officials with the California Board of Equalization, which collects sales tax, tell us those who have overpaid should first talk to the retailer. If they don't get their money back, then file a request for refund within six months with the CA Board of Equalization at www.boe.ca.gov/formspubs/pub117/.

You can also contact the California Board of Equalization at (800) 400-7115. GMIA encourages you to be aware of this discrepancy. Thank you to members Bob Perry and Sue Cherlin for letting us know about this potentially costly tax issue. 🌱

To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the expiration date of your membership. 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.

Note: if the date is June 2018 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

Looking for Gardens and Artists

Do you have or know of a wonderful garden in our area? Are you an artist or know a local artist?

GMIA is looking for participants for our Spring Art & Garden Tour. Although spring may seem distant, now is the time we lay the groundwork for this popular event. Our committee would love to hear from you to learn about your landscape and schedule a time to meet.

Artists, please note there is no fee or charge of any kind to participate. Please contact our Art & Garden Tour Director Pat Ryan at 619-248-1619 or dpryan4@cox.net.



CALENDAR

