



viewpoints

WINTER 2017

Volume 47 Issue 4

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

10th Annual Walk Up Mt. Helix to Welcome the New Year

It's hard to believe that our event is in its tenth year. This popular gathering brings our neighborhood together to celebrate our wonderful community. We begin at the Fire Station at 10105 Vivera and stroll as a group behind our big yellow GMIA banner to the top (1 and 1/3 miles round trip). At the summit enjoy beverages, pastries, fresh fruit along with live music along with stunning views. Thanks to our event partner, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, for providing the beautiful venue.

This is a great chance to meet your neighbors – over 200 people walked with us last year. So, relish the beauty of our neighborhood and start the New Year off right with a delightful stroll. As always, well behaved children and dogs are welcome.



Photo by Bob Cederdahl

Help Us Compile Our Neighborhood HISTORY

by Wendy Tinsley Becker

In anticipation of GMIA's 80th anniversary, in 2018, we are researching a history of our organization and our greater Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. As part of the effort to gather information locally, we ask that you help us by answering any or all of the following questions.

- ◆ Please share your memories of the neighborhood, what it was like, physically and socially, when you first moved here? Be sure to provide the year that you moved here.
- ◆ Are there any major projects or issues that you or your neighbors were involved in that would have or have impacted our community?
- ◆ Do you have copies of old GMIA newsletters, or other organizational documents?
- ◆ Do you know the names of any previous GMIA officers or Board Members?
- ◆ Do you have older (vintage or historic) pho-

tographs of the community, including but not limited to your specific street, block, or area; the commercial strip at the intersection of Fuerte Drive and Avocado Boulevard; Campo Road in Casa de Oro; and Rancho San Diego prior to and during the development of the planned community?

- ◆ Can you recommend any long-time residents that we can contact about our area's history?

Send us your answers three ways:

1. Email us your answers at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com
2. Call GMIA Director Wendy Tinsley Becker at 619-302-0425
3. Mail us at GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943

Thank you!





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IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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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

Disaster doesn't make an appointment; you have to be ready when it arrives.

You might assume there is no point in planning for catastrophe, or believe that by planning ahead you are tempting the disaster gods to strike.

All of us are overwhelmed by constant news reports of calamities and devastation.


But take heart: being informed is empowering. Join us for our February 21st Community Forum focusing on Disaster Preparedness (details on page 3). GMIA knows that emergency preparedness is a team sport and we need to work together for the best outcome. At our Forum you will learn how to minimize the impact of natural disasters for your property and family, acquire emergency skills that can come in handy anytime, and find out how you can help our community during a disaster.

Bringing our community together for social interaction and educational opportunities like our Forum is an important component of our mission. Our many GMIA events serve as an entry point for neighbors to become a part of GMIA.

GMIA is hard at work advocating with the County and other regional and governmental agencies. Currently, we are addressing concerns about a broad spectrum of issues that affect the character and quality of our area. Here are just a few:

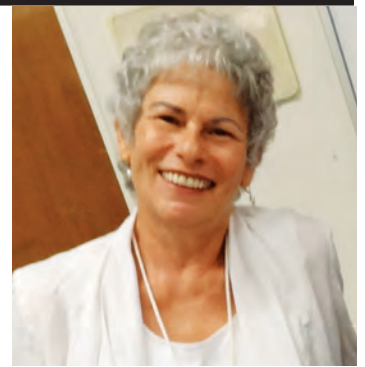
- ◆ Improvement for the intersections at Fuerte/Avocado, Fuerte/Calavo, and Fuerte/Puebla
- ◆ A solution for disruptive vacation home rentals
- ◆ Upcoming elections for the County Board of Supervisors whose sphere of influence impacts our district
- ◆ Securing a new Casa de Oro library facility
- ◆ Working with the Casa de Oro Alliance to promote redevelopment of the business district
- ◆ Working with the Valle de Oro Planning Group to improve roads
- ◆ Maintaining the Park & Ride at I-8/Fuerte and the triangle monument sign
- ◆ Oversight of Helix Water District rate issues

Our role is far-reaching and we rely on you, our members, to keep us informed about issues and concerns. We welcome your input and invite you to contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com or give me a call at 619-440-1607. We want to know how best to serve you.

Thank you for your membership. 



PS: Hope to see you at our popular family-friendly Walk Up Mt. Helix to Welcome the New Year on January 6th.

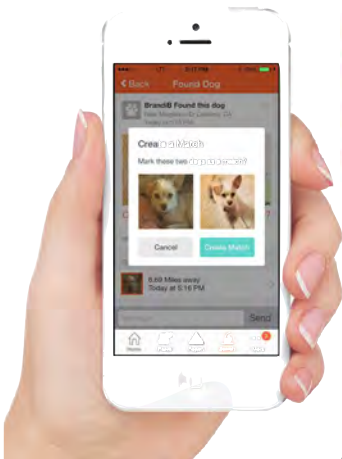




We Want To Hear About Crumbling Roads

Our Valle De Oro Planning Group has asked GMIA to help prepare a list of neighborhood roads that need repair. The list will be finalized in January and presented to the County. We need your help.

Please email us with names of streets that are in bad shape, including cross streets. The County has a budget and timeline, so we can't promise any quick solutions, but we'll do our best to get them on the list. Your input could make a positive impact for all of us who drive in the community. Email us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com, or call Susan Nichols at 619-440-1607. Thanks! 🌱



Get the Finding Rover App

County Animal Services has joined forces with Finding Rover to use the facial recognition app to reunite lost dogs with their owners.

Animal Control Officers use it out in the field and if there's a match, take the dog directly home and avoid a trip to the shelter which reduces stress to the dog and owner, avoids shelter overcrowding and saves the taxpayer money.

So how do you use it? First, download the app on to your smart phone. Use an old photo or take a new snapshot of your dog, put in your information and your pet is registered in case it gets lost. If you happen to find a lost 'Rover' you snap its photo and look for matches. 🌱



COMMUNITY FORUM

Know the Facts,
Be Empowered!

What: Community Forum
Disaster Preparedness

When: Wednesday, February 21st. Doors open at 7:00pm. Program at 7:15

Where: Murdock Elementary School multi-purpose room, 4354 Conrad, La Mesa, CA 91941

Mark your calendar and join us. This free event is open to all in the community. At our Forum you will:

- ◆ Learn how to minimize the impact of natural disasters for your property and family
- ◆ Acquire emergency skills that can come in handy anytime
- ◆ Understand the services that local government and other agencies can provide
- ◆ Find out how you can help our community during a disaster

Questions? Contact Wendy Tinsley Becker, GMIA Community Forum Chair at 619-302-0425.

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. We offer our online newsletter in full color!

Also, please recycle this newsletter by giving it to a neighbor. Thanks.



Estrella Park Update

Earlier this year, Supervisor Jacob successfully secured new funding for parks in our unincorporated region. Thanks to her efforts, the wheels are finally in motion to improve the undeveloped Estrella Park in Casa de Oro following decades of delay.

Two community meetings were held by County parks staff to gather input from the community about the proposed plan. Consensus is to create a natural setting with a winding path, drought tolerant plantings, and trees for shade. Other amenities under consideration include play equipment, a fitness course, limited parking at the north entrance, benches that don't permit lying down, and low level path lighting. While some participants were concerned that the park might attract illegal activities, County staff advised they will partner with the Sheriff's Crime Prevention unit to create an environmental design to discourage such problems.

Next steps will be a completed plan to be presented by County staff to our Valle de Oro Planning Group; the project will then go before the County Board of Supervisors to vote for approval. Once approved a one-year timeline is anticipated for completion. A big thank you to Valle de Oro Planning Group members Lori Myers and Josann Feathers who devoted many hours to bringing this park to fruition, and to all our community members who provided input at the meetings. 🌱

Casa de Oro Alliance

The Casa de Oro Alliance continues to do great work to bring about needed change in the business district on Campo Road. Their request for an urban planner to re-envision the corridor was supported by Supervisor Jacob and approved for \$50,000 funding by the County Board of Supervisors. The County hired Michael Baker & Associates to gather information and prepare a plan for revitalization; their work is ongoing. Thank you to GMIA Board member Tom Huffman who has stepped up to represent our organization at the Alliance. To learn more about the Alliance, follow them at: www.facebook.com/CasadeOroAlliance. 🌱

Casa de Oro Library

Many of us have been frustrated by the long delay in getting a new library in Casa de Oro. We know that the lack of available real estate is a major contributing factor. Our current library is located in a strip mall and has renewed their lease for three years. Our goal is to have a new freestanding library—double the size of the current location—ready to move into when the current lease term expires.

To keep this project on the front burner, GMIA has brought together a collaborative leadership Library Focus Group. Members include Casa de Oro head librarian Allyson O'Brien, Casa de Oro Alliance Chairperson Bob Yarris, GMIA President Susan Nichols and community member Chris Quinn. The Group met recently to share information and determine how best to keep the County focused on this project.

We've contacted Supervisor Jacob, and she is convening a January meeting at her office with County General Services (responsible for acquiring a suitable site), County Library Services, and our Library Focus Group. Look for our next edition to provide an update.

We know that a new library will be an important community asset and we welcome your input. Please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. 🌱

Are You Receiving Our Email Blasts? If Not, Do You Want To?

We send our GMIA's monthly community e-update to our members who've given us their email addresses. If you use gmail, please check the "social" messages for our latest news. We've been told the gmail system routes our messages to that location. If you are not receiving our eblasts and would like to, contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.



Wild Parrots of East County

There is no mistaking the sound of raucous parrots swooping into treetops as they forage in our neighborhood for tasty nuts and fruits. They herald their arrival with a cacophony of noisy squawks. Parrots are very social and use their calls to communicate with each other, signal danger from birds of prey, and proclaim their coming and going.

Thought to have originally been escaped pets, Red Crowned Amazon Parrots or wild green parrots thrive in our region with abundant landscaping to provide food and cover. They always travel in flocks and currently number about thirty. Just over one foot in length, their vivid green feathers, green cheeks and red foreheads are easy to spot. Grab your binoculars and you will also see they have blue and red feathers under their wings and yellow tail feathers.

Well habituated, breeding takes place between March and May. Couples live together in the nest, often in a palm tree, and care for two to five eggs. The chicks are born in 25-31 days.

Transplanted from tropical regions, the parrots have found an inviting home here in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Just like you and I, these clever birds recognize what a great place it is we live in. 🌱



Little Libraries Abound

Every installation is a unique creation to shelter books and share the love of reading. Some are designed to look like schoolhouses, some made from recycled cupboards, and there is even a repurposed out-house. Look for these unique Little Free Libraries tucked throughout our neighborhood. The “give a book, take a book” movement began in 2009 when first Little Free Library was built by a Wisconsin resident as a tribute to his mother, a former school teacher who loved reading. There are now more than 60,000 Little Free Libraries in more than 62 countries.

Check out the latest LFL pictured here, located in the front yard of the home of Steve and Marty Ornish at 4705 Mayapan.

If you would like to find out more, check out www.littlefreelibraries.org. If you have a Little Free Library, please email us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com and we will share it with our members. Here are more LFLs in our community:

10320 Challenge Blvd.
19733 Itzama Road
4622 Grandview Terrace
4424 Nabal Drive
10615 Snyder Road
10805 Melva Road
4837 New Ranch Road
9243 Lovell Lane
334 Horizon Hills Drive

Meet Your Board of Directors

by Pat Ryan



Pam Coe

"I have always been drawn to the open and semi-rural feel of Mt. Helix with the large lots and mature landscape, combined with the proximity to city amenities," says Pam Coe, our newest board member who joined the board in September 2017. "I've lived in the area for 36 years and my husband for 43 years. We remember when Avocado Boulevard was a two-lane

road, and vacant lots and horses were a common sight!" She "loves the outdoors- camping, bicycling, walking our great neighborhood." Pam retired in 2015 after a 38-year mortgage servicing career and brings accounting, operations, and project experience to the Board. "I started as a volunteer in March 2016, assisting the treasurer with technical support and data entry." She is active on the Administration and Membership committees and is primarily responsible for the vital task of membership database updates and financial reports. Pam notes, "As a new board member gaining exposure to GMIA's many endeavors, I look forward to future involvement with community events and improvement projects." Pam believes "eventual underground utilities and fiber optic improvements would be welcome enhancements to support our modern lifestyles. Older neighborhoods sometimes miss out on the latest technology until upgrades come to the area." 🌱



Larry Nichols

As Treasurer for eight years, Larry brings an extensive business and management background to GMIA. A 30-year Mt. Helix resident, he has an appreciation for just how unique our semi-rural area is so close to a major metropolitan hub. Larry notes, "the importance of GMIA's role to actively maintain essential aspects of our environment." Early in his career,

Larry served as a naval intelligence officer. Following military service, he forged a vocation in finance specializing in managing mid-size corporations. Now retired, Larry is an avid gardener, community volunteer, and grandfather. Giving back to the community has also involved a term on the Bond Oversight Board for the local high school district and a one year term with the Valle de Oro Planning Group. His focus for GMIA is to provide citizen oversight of critical water district issues that impact the character of our community, to work on community improvement projects to promote safety and beautification, and to steward our financial resources using best practices for our nonprofit. Thanks to his leadership, we have a lighted, clean and landscaped Park & Ride at I-8/Fuerte, and a well-maintained monument sign at the Fuerte/Grossmont entrance to our community. You will always find him working at our registration desk for all our GMIA events. 🌱

Short Term Vacation Rentals on Mount Helix

by Mark Schuppert, Valle de Oro Planning Group

Like many desirable communities, the GMIA neighborhood has attracted "Airbnb" and "VRBO" (Vacation Rentals by Owners) businesses. These operations and others like them provide brokering services for homeowners to rent out part or all of their homes to vacationers and overnight guests. While this practice is currently legal, there are many communities that are fighting the practice or attempting to regulate it to minimize the negative impacts to the adjacent homeowners and the residential community character. Within the Grossmont-Mt. Helix neighborhood there have been multiple complaints associated with these types of operations such as illicit drug activities in public areas, excessive noise into morning hours, and litter left on properties and the streets.

The primary issue tends to be the right to operate your home as a business versus the rights of adjacent property owners to have normal enjoyment of their homes. Presently, there are no ordinances specifically addressing this topic and the only recourse an affected neighbor has is to call the police when noise violations or other

similarly enforceable infractions occur. However, code enforcement is ineffective due to the transient nature of the guests and a more effective solution is needed.

GMIA President Susan Nichols addressed the Valle de Oro Planning Group in November and requested the Group's involvement to study the issue. The Planning Group has created a subcommittee led by Planning Group member Charles Kossman to assess the subject. The subcommittee will formulate our findings and provide recommendations to Supervisor Jacob's office and County Planning Department Services. We will keep you updated on this process.





Family Fun: Halloween Harvest

Question: What do you get when you:

- ◆ mix hundreds of adorable kids and their parents outfitted in their finest Halloween costumes
- ◆ add a great group of vendors hosting games and prizes
- ◆ enlist a battalion of enthusiastic volunteers
- ◆ present a great rockin' band, and
- ◆ supply a gorgeous location along with perfect weather?

Answer: You get our hugely successful first-time October 29th Halloween Harvest Festival.

This new family friendly event is a part of our GMIA outreach to younger families in our community and was the brainstorm of GMIA Board member Krista Bishop Powers. Krista and co-chair Caroline Harrod of our partner organization, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, organized an amazing afternoon of fun for everyone in our community. They both deserved Wonder Woman costumes.

Many thanks to the following vendors who graciously provided games, treats and their time: Christian Brothers, Dixieline, Facepainting by Fun4kidset, The Hills Restaurant, Heritage of the Americas Museum, Jiu Jitsu Foundation, McGrath YMCA, Menchies La Mesa Springs, Move Fitness & Dance, Wagner's School of Music, Lenny and the Lounge Lizards, and Young Actors Theatre.

A huge shout out to Foothills Christian Church for donating the use of their shuttles. Thanks to all our GMIA board members and volunteers whose smiles and hard work made the day so special. Please visit our facebook page for more photos and save the date for next year, Sunday Oct 28th 2018.

What's Next?

As we enter a new year of gratitude for our families, we would like to find things for us to enjoy together and get to know each other. We have opportunities in our area for park visits, hikes, restaurant outings, craft meetups, and more.

Krista would love to hear ideas from YOU!!! What type of get-togethers would you like to have? Please send an email to krista@businessofinfluence.com or text/call at 619.985.1445. In the meantime, check out our facebook page for upcoming events: <https://www.facebook.com/GrossmontMtHelixImprovementAssociation/> 🌱



Photos by Pat Ryan and Mike Atkinson

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.

We Love Volunteers

A decade ago, GMIA featured just two annual events – our Art & Garden Tour and our Annual Dinner Meeting. In response to your requests, we have evolved a calendar of seven activities:

- ◆ Walk Up Mt. Helix
- ◆ Community Forum
- ◆ Spring Art & Garden Tour
- ◆ Succulent Swap
- ◆ Annual Dinner Meeting
- ◆ Family Meet Up & Pizza Party
- ◆ Halloween Harvest Festival

That's a lot of events that require a lot of volunteers! Please consider stepping up and lending a hand. Your help is a true gift to our community.

GMIA is immediately looking for members to help us with:

- ◆ Walk Up Mt. Helix, January 6th – day of event support. Contact Sue Creveling, GMIA Volunteer Coordinator at 619-971-2712 or screv@yahoo.com.
- ◆ Park & Ride Clean Up – 3rd Saturday every month, 9:00 am. Contact Tom O'Steen, GMIA Green Team Coordinator at tosteen1@hotmail.com.
- ◆ Community Forum, February 21st, planning logistics and day of event support. Contact Wendy Tinsley Becker, GMIA Forum Chair at 619-302-0425.
- ◆ Art & Garden Tour, April 22nd, day of event support. Contact Sue Creveling, GMIA Volunteer Coordinator at 619-971-2712 or screv@yahoo.com.

CALENDAR

