



# viewpoints

Summer 2012

Volume 42 Issue 4



## In This Issue:

Cell Antenna &  
Planning Group  
Updates...  
See page 3

Water-Wise Tips...  
See page 5

Jet Noise...  
See page 6

Tour & Meeting  
Photos...  
See page 7



## Helix Water Implements Critical WATER EMERGENCY PLAN

by Dave Zimmerman

Ten months ago, on Thursday, September 8, 2011, all of San Diego County, Baja California, and parts of Orange County and Arizona lost electrical power. Everyone in the county enjoyed dismal commutes and perhaps a novel home camping experience with neighbors by candlelight. Along with the worries of losing freezer stock and missed wake-up alarms next morning was an alert to curtail water use.

Virtually all of the Grossmont-Mount Helix region had only the water in local reservoir tanks until power was restored. One can only imagine what our neighborhood would have faced if a brush fire had broken out at the same time. Water and electric power in our area are inextricably linked, as they are elsewhere in the county and state. Electric pumps are needed to maintain water pressure, not only for



See **WATER** on page 6

## Are You Current?

**Please Look At Your Mailing Label On This Newsletter – It May Be Time to Renew Your Membership.** Please check the mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2013 or later, your dues are paid in full (thank you!)

For many members, now is the time to renew. Membership runs from July 1 to June 30 of the following calendar year. Please help us preserve and enhance the character and quality of our region, plus enjoy these benefits:

- Complimentary admission to our Art & Garden Tour

- Subscription to Viewpoints, our informative quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to GMIA events

Annual membership is just \$18. You may renew online using PayPal 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.

When neighbors come together as a community, we can influence the proceedings of government, developers and other external forces that affect the quality of our lives. That's why your membership in GMIA makes a difference. Thank you for your support. ▲

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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440-1607

Dan Mitrovich, 1st Vice President

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440-1607

Kay Bickley, Secretary  
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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.*

Editor: Susan Nichols

Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,  
Coyote Press Graphic  
Communications

Printing: Best Printing  
Casa de Oro

**www.gmia.net**

## Message from the President

**L**inking neighbors together to build community is one of GMIA's areas of focus. When we join together we can shape, guide and participate in the future of our neighborhood. Here are four easy ways you can help our community right now:

**1. Walk around your block.** Summer is the perfect time to get to know your neighbors. The long days and mild weather of summer encourage us to spend more time outside. Stroll your street and get to know those who live in your area. Take a moment to chat with neighbors, including youngsters, when the opportunity arises.

**2. Meet the kids who live on your block and greet them by name.** This is one of the simplest steps an adult can take; yet it can make a profound difference. Even those without children should know to whom the various children in the neighborhood belong. In this way, each adult is better able to help in an emergency and is better prepared to discuss problems immediately as they arise.

**3. Make a list of the names and phone numbers of every neighbor on your block.** Unless you know neighbors' names and numbers, you can't call them about a concern or let them know about a neighborhood issue, or invite them for a potluck!

**4. Encourage your neighbors to join GMIA.** As this issue of our newsletter highlights, GMIA is doing important work to preserve and enhance our area as well as foster pride in our community. We welcome you to participate as members and as volunteers.

These four simple suggestions may seem like small actions, but they have incalculable power. When we get to know our fellow residents, take steps to ensure that children in our neighborhood are valued, and establish good communication with neighbors, we safeguard our wonderful community. That is what GMIA is all about!

## Thank You Donors!

GMIA wishes to thank the following members who have donated \$25 or more during the last quarter to support our organization and its programs: ▲

Bob & Holly Yarris

Frank & Cathy Lubak

John & Teresa Fistere

Mark Durazo & Rob Moore

Tom & Kate Handley

E.H. Mackay

Julie Jessop

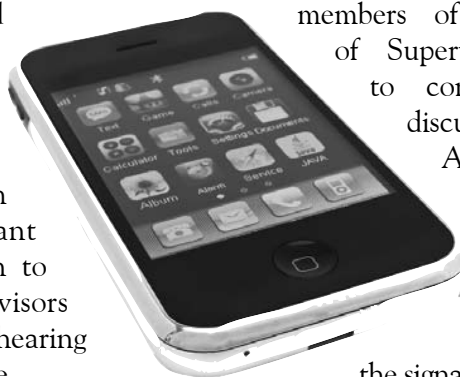
Robert & Suzanne Levonian

## UPDATE: Cell Antennas Invasion

**N**ext G has proposed ten cell antenna sites on Mt Helix. The Valle de Oro Planning Group opposed the project to the County Planning Department. However, the County Planning Department (DPLU) recommended its approval to the Planning Commission. GMIA and the Valle de Oro Planning Group were at the hearing and adamantly opposed the approval which resulted in denial of the project at the Planning Commission level. The applicant appealed that decision to the Board of Supervisors who placed the final hearing on their June 27th slate.

Representatives of GMIA and the Valle de Oro Planning Group attended this hearing to rigorously oppose this project. GMIA's primary concern is that the antennas and their supporting electrical boxes will be attached to existing or newly constructed utility poles and will contribute additional blight to the already busy-looking poles and

wires located along our streets and in our front yards. Supervisor Jacob expressed her support for our position, and pointed out that a cell antenna project has already been approved for the top of Mt. Helix. However, because the DPLU could not verify if the already approved project would provide area-wide coverage, the remaining four



members of the Board of Supervisors voted to continue their discussion to an August meeting pending further review to better understand the signal coverage the approved summit site will provide.

Note: GMIA and the Valle de Oro Planning Group did not previously oppose installation of the faux rock and tree antennas on top of Mt Helix. Our understanding was that the installation atop the Mt. Helix summit would eliminate a need for additional antennas along our highly

## HOW IT WORKS

**How are controversial land use projects that impact our community decided upon?** Here is the process that is usually followed:

1. Review by a Community Planning Group (Valle de Oro Planning Group in our area)
2. Recommendation by the Community Planning Group to the Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU or County Planning)
3. Recommendation by the DPLU to the Planning Commission
4. The Planning Commission's ruling is final unless the decision is appealed by the applicant, the Community Planning Group, or other interested parties. If appealed, the hearing proceeds to the Board of Supervisors who has the final say.

visible streets or in our yards. We fear that the approval of Next G's proposal will open the door for other numerous companies to add even more utility blight in our community. If precedent is set to allow this development, we are concerned that many more antennas and boxes may clutter our roadways in the near future. ▲

## UPDATE: Fate of Planning Groups

**T**he County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to retain the San Diego County's Community Planning Groups, but with several modifications. A new requirement for planning group members to receive regulatory compliance education was well received; however, the new and very restrictive term limits for planning group leadership was not.

Supervisor Jacob initiated a new rule which limits the tenure of planning group chairpersons to two, one-year

consecutive terms. Although a member could serve as chair again, the terms must be interrupted by a new chairperson's tenure. While there are strong opinions regarding the merits of term limits, GMIA is concerned that such a very short period of leadership will limit the effectiveness of our planning groups.

To provide effective leadership, the chair of a planning group must have strong knowledge of the area's development trends and history of local land use issues; knowledge of projects

in the planning and pre-planning stages; knowledge of general plan and zoning guidelines; knowledge of the Department of Planning and Land Use processes, and an understanding of other area regulators such as LAFCO. The chairperson must also have relationships and access to the various agency contacts and leaders. We believe the time and effort needed to develop this knowledge will be undermined by the short tenure imposed with this new regulation. ▲



## Trees of Mt. Helix

*Yucca gloriosa* – Spanish Dagger

by Jeff Rule

This article is part of a continuing series about interesting trees within the GMIA area. Members are encouraged to share their favorite or special tree with others through these articles.

The yucca tree featured is located in the streetscape of GMIA members, John and Becky McMullen. Many of you may remember this tree which we admired when the McMullen's garden was on our 2002 Art & Garden Tour. The tree was most likely planted in 1949 when the house was built. The McMullens have lived in the La Cuesta drive neighborhood for over the past 37 years. What makes this yucca tree special to the homeowners is its unique wild branching form, and how the base of the trunk has grown over and devoured a rock retaining wall. From my observation, I think John feeds it rocks. The yucca tree is a large specie with a swollen base and numerous heavy trunks and stems. Mature plants can grow to 15' high and wide; leaves are 1-2 feet long and sharply pointed. With age, yucca trees will become quite large and therefore difficult to remove.

If you have a tree that you would like to share with fellow members, please call me, Jeffrey Rule (Director) at (619) 466-0362, and I will schedule a site visit. Thank you for your interest. ▲

## Casa de Oro Library Receives National Award

by Kay Bickley

Congratulations to our neighborhood Casa de Oro library, who (along with the other 32 San Diego County branches), will receive the prestigious 2012 "Library of the Year" award from the Library Journal magazine. Amanda Heller, Casa de Oro Library Branch Manager, shared some of the outstanding programs that have made their library so successful:



1. Health programs including cooking classes, adult fitness including yoga and Zumba, weight management with health screenings, and application assistance with Medicare.
2. After-school activities to encourage academic achievement. The popular Multiplication League for 2nd and 3rd graders increased test results 34% with some students receiving perfect scores at the end of the session.
3. Story time for toddlers and preschool children including bilingual stories.
4. Classes for the public such as learning how to use a computer, and community outreach with Headstart
5. Home/mortgage foreclosure protection clinics with lawyers and realtors volunteering to help people save their homes.

In response to lean economic times, our library has implemented several automated services including the handy self-serve Express Checkout to enable them to do more with less staff. Other cost-saving innovations include permitting library customers to return a book to any county library, where it will remain until checked out or requested by another branch. Best of all, our library is a member of a consortium of California libraries that share books, so patrons can check out books from a vast collection otherwise not affordable by a single branch.

The Casa de Oro library is located at 9805 Campo Road (in the Big 5 shopping center). Check out their collection of books, movies, CDs and audio books. While you are there, pick up a copy of their new summer activity calendar. The Friends of the Casa de Oro Library welcome your donation of gently used books. Sales of donated books help to fund many programs that serve our community. For more information or for library hours, go to [www.sdcl.org](http://www.sdcl.org) and click on the Casa de Oro branch. ▲



## Prepare for Fire Season the Right Way

**R**etired firefighter and GMIA Director Mike Valley provided this important information for our members. Thanks Mike!

Temperatures are rising. As we head into summer and fire season, clearing dry vegetation on large lots will be a priority for some Grossmont-Mt. Helix homeowners. Here's how to do it the right way:

- Do clearance before 10 a.m. – not in the heat of the day, or when the wind is blowing.
- Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawns. NEVER use lawn mowers in dry vegetation. Use a weed trimmer to cut down dry weeds and grass.
- Remove rocks in the area before you begin operating any equipment. A rock hidden in grass or weeds is enough to start a fire when struck by a metal blade. ▲

## WATER-WISE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX HOMEOWNER Efficient Irrigation Sprinklers

by Jeffrey Rule

**H**ere's a conservation tip to save water and have healthier plant growth: retrofit your old sprinkler system with new nozzles featuring improved technology.

Commonly referred to as "rotator head" sprinklers, multi-trajectory rotating stream nozzles (that a mouthful!) work more efficiently by delivering multiple streams of water at a slow, steady rate. Please note that due to the lower application rates of the multiple rotating streams nozzles will require that you double the running times of the irrigation system as compared to conventional spray head nozzle. This slower application rate allows water to gently soak in the soil and achieves an even distribution throughout the area being irrigated. Increased efficiency results in 30% less water use when compared to traditional sprays. Plus, it significantly reduces wasteful runoff.

Rotator head nozzles can be retrofitted onto any conventional spray



head body or shrub adapter. A retrofit can solve both low pressure and poor coverage problems. When installing a new system, rotator head nozzles are a great choice as they provide great design flexibility with immense range of spray patterns, from 4' strip to 30' radius.

This article is based upon information provided by Hunter Industries MP Rotator Nozzles. Toro and Rainbird also make similar type nozzles. For more information, please see the web link below.

[www.hunterindustries.com/product/nozzles/mp-rotator](http://www.hunterindustries.com/product/nozzles/mp-rotator)

## Local Farmers' Market

**C**heck out our new Farmers' Market at Cuyamaca College every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Farm fresh eggs, locally grown fruits and vegetables, fresh fish, artisan baked goods, and even grass fed beef and are among the offerings.

Come to shop and stay for lunch. Food vendors at the Farmers' Market serve wood-fired pizza, crepes, Brazilian snacks, fish tacos, green smoothies, cheesesteaks, and yummy desserts. Plus, start your morning at the Farmers' Market with a FREE yoga class from 9:00 -10:00 a.m. The class is designed for all ages and all skill levels. Here's a great opportunity to jumpstart your summer with exercise and eating healthy.

Cuyamaca Community College is located at 900 Rancho San Diego Parkway off of Jamacha Road. While you are there, enjoy the magnificent Water Conservation Garden and convenient nursery featuring many drought tolerant plants well suited for our neighborhood.

Thanks to GMIA Director Sue Creveling who did the research for this article. We appreciate the update. ▲





## Jetliners Over Mt. Helix: Is There a Curfew?

by Pat Ryan

A concern about increased jetliner flights over Mt. Helix, especially after 11:30 pm, prompted a GMIA member to ask us to investigate. A previous issue of Viewpoints addressed the issue of General Aviation flights and noise, but what about all those commercial jetliners flying over our area on their flight path to Lindbergh Field, some of them well past 11:30 pm?

To address this concern, we contacted Steven Cummings, Noise Mitigation Specialist, at San Diego International Airport. "You're not the only person that has called me about this issue," he said. "The flight pattern has stayed the same since the 1970's. Aircraft noise tends to travel farther when we have good weather. When there is less moisture in the air it allows the noise to travel further. When the weather is foggy or overcast, the moisture dampens the noise, which restricts the distance the sound would normally travel. Lately we have been experiencing very inconsistent weather, which gives the perception that flight patterns have changed or there is an influx of aircraft."

In response to our question about flights coming over past 11:30 pm, he said, "The curfew period (for departing flights) at San Diego International starts at 11:30 p.m. and ends at 6:30 a.m. for all commercial aircraft. The aircraft that you are inquiring about are arrivals, which are permitted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The aircraft that are arriving at night are generally the Air Cargo flights (FedEx, UPS, DHL). But there are all different kinds of aircraft and airlines that operate at night."

It may have come as a surprise to many of our members that the curfew applied only to departures. The FAA requires that our airport be operational 24/7, so there are no restrictions on arrivals. Those late arriving flights are probably charter flights or cargo planes. Unfortunately, they still wake us up when they fly over Mt. Helix after midnight. ▲

For more information, visit the San Diego Airport web site at [www.san.org](http://www.san.org). The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Noise Complaint/Information Hotline number is 619-400-2799 or email [airnoise@san.org](mailto:airnoise@san.org)

WATER from page 1

providing drinking water but also for preventing water contamination and combating potential emergencies such as fighting fires. Helix Water District (HWD) lost power at all sites except the Water Treatment Plant, Los Coches Pump Station, Dictionary Hill Pump Station, and the Flume Control Valve, the only sites then equipped with stationary back-up generators with automatic start and transfer capabilities.

Thanks to portable generators being deployed to various pump stations, power being restored earlier than anticipated, and no coincident emergency such as a wildfire, system pressures were maintained and no one lost access to potable water. At the time, HWD's portable generator fleet consisted of seven generators, two of which were dedicated to maintaining emergency operations and business centers. The remaining five generators that supported the distribution system demands would have been hard pressed if the situation had not been relieved as it was.

HWD has recognized the need for additional portable and stationary generators. On November 16, Mark Weston, General Manager, presented Emergency Power Needs Assessment to the HWD Board of Directors. Among the many sound recommendations were the purchase of six additional stationary back-up generators with automatic start and transfer capabilities, two in the Grossmont-Mount Helix area. At this point, one generator has been installed at a critical pump station facility, portable generator connections have been augmented at ten locations, and four additional smaller portable generators, to power control and communications systems, have been purchased. Budgeted projects for the upcoming 2012-13 fiscal year include installing fixed back-up generators at two more remote pump station facilities, and augmenting portable generator connections at four remaining pump station facilities.

Thanks in part to the alarms raised by the power outage last year, HWD has greatly improved its disaster preparedness, but still depends to a significant degree on labor and mobility to maintain our water supply. GMIA is encouraged by the water district's plans and progress, and looks forward to their completing the critical improvements as soon as possible. ▲

## Annual Meeting 2012

Our 2012 Annual Meeting once again was held at the Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. Members gathered to “Meet & Mingle” and enjoy substantial appetizers and wine. After a brief business meeting, members were invited to tour the Garden. Our own GMIA member Kay McGrath, who works at the Garden, graciously



led numerous personal tours throughout the evening. Kudos to our committee who organized this special night: GMIA Directors Kay Bickley (Chair), Allison Henderson, Tom O'Steen, Sue Creveling, Pat Ryan and member Marty Ornish. Also, we extend our appreciation to board members and spouses who helped with set up and take down for the day of the event. ▲

## Art & Garden Tour 2012

Spring was a busy time of year for our GMIA members. We enjoyed a beautiful day at our annual Art & Garden Tour. Thank you to Vince & Kay McGrath, Tom & Karen Mooney, Ramon & Gloria Ross, and Bob & Holly Yarris who shared their gorgeous landscapes, generously welcoming nearly 400 guests to view their gardens. We tip our hats to GMIA Directors who made this event possible: Art & Garden Tour Curator Jeff Rule, Volunteer Coordinator

Sue Creveling, Garden Tour Writer Pat Ryan, and Committee Member Don Newcom. A huge thank you and special note of appreciation to GMIA members who responded to our request for volunteers and stepped up to help us with the event: Nancy Acevedo, Donna Andrasani, Steve & Jennifer Blough, Randy & Pamela Burn, Mary Annette Hall, Jan Mitrovich, Paulette Newcom and Melissa & Jerry Stokely. ▲





*Check renewal date please!*  


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GMIA is a 70+ 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.



## Orchid Talk

**T**he mysteries of orchid cultivation were revealed to us by Tom Biggart, owner of Granite Hills Orchids. Tom brought stunning plants from his vast personal collection, demonstrated how to divide overgrown plants, as well as dispensed information and advice on every aspect of orchid culture. Thank you to GMIA Director Dagmar Miller for organizing this event, to the Casa de Oro branch library for providing use of their community room, and to Tom for sharing his love of orchids with us. ▲

## "State of the Community"

*Mark your calendar and plan to join us for our State of the Community Forum on September 24th.*

GMIA will host a panel of speakers to address issues that relate to our unique area. This is a great opportunity to find out the latest from our elected representatives, county service providers, and other stakeholders who influence our region. Some of our featured speakers include Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Barry Jantz of the Grossmont Hospital District, Lemon Grove Sheriff Captain Pete Callewaert, and Dr. Noori Barka, businessman and active community volunteer.

We encourage members to ask the speakers questions about local concerns and get immediate answers, so have your questions ready! The event is free and open to everyone in the community. Please plan on attending and invite your neighbors.

**What:** "State of the Community" Forum

**When:** Monday, September 24th, 6:30 pm

**Where:** Murdock Elementary School  
4354 Conrad Drive

