



viewpoints

DECEMBER 2019

Volume 50 Issue 1

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



Welcome the New Year at the 12th Annual Walk to the Top!

Saturday, January 4, 10 a.m. | Meet at the fire station at 10105 Vivera Drive

Join us on Saturday, January 4 for one of our most popular activities - the 12th annual Walk to the Top to welcome the New Year.

This event has grown each year as word spreads about the family and dog-friendly walk. It starts at the fire station at 10105 Vivera Dr., with a walking distance of 2/3 mile each way. A kids' zone will be available with child-friendly games and activities.

Stroll up Mt. Helix Drive behind our big yellow banner with friends and neighbors! At the top, complimentary refreshments, including coffee, tea, water, breakfast treats and fresh fruit will be provided by GMIA. The Mt. Helix Park Foundation, our

co-sponsor, provides the magnificent location and volunteer assistance. You can also meet other local nonprofit partners sharing information about what they are doing to benefit our community.

Don't miss this opportunity to join old friends, meet more of your neighbors, and enjoy the celebration of our great community. Children and well-behaved dogs are welcome at this free event. If you have questions, contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

If you would like to volunteer to assist with day-of-the-event tasks, please contact Co-director Pat Ryan at patrice46@gmail.com or (619) 248-1619. We can use help with set-up, refreshments, picking up supplies, guides for the walk, and clean-up. 🌱



Candidate Forum January 29



GMIA is sponsoring a forum for the candidates for county supervisor. Former State Senator Joel Anderson (left), Poway Mayor Steve Vaus (right), Manuel Rodriguez, Brian Sesko and Kenya Taylor have been invited. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 29 to meet the candidates and the forum will begin at 6 p.m. at Murdock Elementary School, 4353 Conrad Dr., La Mesa. The forum will be facilitated by the League for Women Voters and is co-sponsored by *East County Magazine*.

The candidates are running to succeed County Supervisor Dianne Jacob, who is leaving office after 28 years because of term limits. Candidates for other offices will also be invited to attend for a meet and greet following the forum at 8 p.m. including the 71st and 79th State Assembly District and Superior Court Judges.

Your GMIA board is hosting this important community forum to enable our members to hear directly from the candidates. We hope you will join us to learn about their credentials and positions regarding issues of importance to our region. Our goal is to help members make an informed decision in the best interest of our community. Your vote matters. 🌱



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Officers

Kathleen Hedberg, President
kchedberg@cox.net, (619) 660-7487
Dave Zimmerman, First Vice President
Pat Ryan, Second Vice President
(619) 248-1619
Pam Coe, Treasurer/Membership
Dania Barroso-Conde, Secretary
Susan Nichols, Past President

Directors

Peter Camana	Jim Marshall
Kay Bickley	Larry Nichols
Leslie Gardner	John Richardson
Paul Geldbach	Mike Valley
Tom Huffman	Marybeth Wilson
Anne Krueger	Holly Yarris

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: Anne Krueger
Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,
Coyote Press Graphic
Communications

www.gmia.net

Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com

MISSION

GMIA is an 81-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

We are so lucky this time of year! Seeing our neighborhood houses decorated and lit up is a beautiful sight. And it is so nice to see something new, like the JOY sign reminding us to enjoy the place where we live. We are truly fortunate to live here.

GMIA has been busy commenting and keeping you notified of proposed projects including the Cottonwood golf course sand mine operation, Skyline Church expansion, and the 94/125 interchange that may impact our community. With 2020 right around the corner and the Primary Election on Tuesday, March 3rd, we are planning a Community County Supervisor Forum on January 29, 2020. We have invited all District 2 candidates for a panel discussion. We have been fortunate for 28 years to have County Supervisor Dianne Jacob represent District 2, but due to term limits her time is coming to an end.

The role of our Supervisor is critical to our unincorporated region. We don't have a mayor or city council and instead are governed by decisions made by the Board of Supervisors. That is why the role of the District 2 Supervisor is vital to the well-being of our community. We need to make sure we elect the best County Supervisor for our area. Please mark your calendar so you can meet the candidates and ask questions.

We look forward to seeing you on our Walk-Up Mt. Helix on Saturday, January 4, 2020, at 10am. Join us at the top to meet with neighbors and enjoy coffee and snacks. We will also have various community organizations' information tables to check out.

Your Board has been diligently working on new ways to increase our membership, and although we are over 1,000 member households strong, we want to make sure that everyone knows who we are and how to be part of all the good things we do for our community. Thank you for your membership and please share this newsletter with a neighbor. Happy Holidays! 🌱



Thank You Donors!

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

Dieter, Susan and Dayle Fischer
Cindy Rambis and Gary King

Two Major Projects Planned for GMIA Area

Two proposed planning projects that will have a major impact on our area are being considered by the county.



Cottonwood Golf Course Sand Mining Project

A public hearing was held in November on a developer's proposal to turn unused courses on the Cottonwood Golf Course into a sand mine.

Developer Michael Schlesinger purchased the Cottonwood Golf Course on Willow Glen Drive with the intention of turning it into a sand mine for 10 to 12 years with a potential profit of \$40 million. According to the county Planning and Development Services department, sand mining would occur on about 214 of the golf course's 251 acres, with 4.8 million cubic yards of material to be extracted and processed.

The project calls for sand excavation and processing to happen from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Trucking operations during the week would run from 4 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Material sales and transportation would go from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

GMIA has sent a letter to the county Planning Department expressing concerns about the project, including the hundreds of daily truck trips that will occur on our surface streets and highways. More information is available on stopcottonwoodsandmine.com, a website created by project opponents. ▲



Skyline Church Senior Retirement Center

Another project being considered is a request by Skyline Church to rezone their land to build a 232-unit senior retirement center.

While some members of GMIA may belong to Skyline Church, GMIA cannot support the project because it does not conform to the General Plan. The Valle de Oro planning group voted 12-2 in September 2018 to oppose the proposal.

The proposed senior retirement center would have three wings with 75 independent living units and 147 assisted living units. The two-story building would include a lobby, offices, clinic services, exercise rooms, a commercial kitchen and dining halls. The center would also include five detached duplex buildings, a pool, gym, a playground, walking trails, and 139 parking spaces.

When the church was built on Campo Road and Via Mercado, church leaders promised in a 1996 letter that the land on the site would be preserved as open space. Skyline Church first proposed building a senior facility in 2006, claiming no agreement existed to protect the land. They decided not to follow through at that time, but are now bringing the project up again. ▲



Update on Estrella Park *Construction To Begin Soon*

by Tom Huffman

The County of San Diego will soon begin construction of Estrella Neighborhood Park on a 6.67-acre designated park site located south of Estrella Drive, just east of Conrad Drive. The development of a neighborhood park on this property has been on the County's radar for decades.

The project is a low-impact design that respects constraints such as a cultural resources site, wetland vegetation, and adjacent neighbors. The main part of the park site is located in the approximate center of the property. There will be two trails from the north and two from the south that lead to the heart of the park.

Design features include mounding topography, native and/or low water use landscaping, retention of existing trees, rock climbing wall, rope bridge, stump climber, small amphitheater, bridge, picnic tables and boardwalk. Drip irrigation will be powered by solar panel panels.

The project, which will likely be developed in phases due to funding constraints, represents a significant investment by the County in our community. Interested parties may contact Judy Tjiong-Pietrzak at the County's Park and Recreation Department at 858-966-1340, or by visiting the County Park and Recreation Department web site. ▲



Call for Garden Tour Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help the annual Art and Garden Tour be another success! This popular even for GMIA members will be held on Sunday, March 29th.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Pat Ryan at patrice46@gmail.com or at (619) 248-1619. About 40 volunteers are needed. We are looking for a volunteer coordinator to manage volunteers on the day of the event.

As a special benefit, volunteers are invited to our pre-Tour and reception on Saturday, March 28 from 3-7:30 p.m. Garden Tour duty hours are usually for 2 hours between 11:30 and 4:30 on March 29. ▲

Casa de Oro Alliance Updates

This grassroots organization on our southern GMIA border is hard at work reducing blight along the business corridor. Here are their latest achievements on Campo Road. They have:

- ◆ Secured a commitment from MTS to install new covered bus stop benches
- ◆ Obtained a commitment from the county to exchange all garbage pails for larger containers
- ◆ Worked closely with the county code enforcement department to remove all unapproved signs
- ◆ Met monthly to clean up Campo Road as well as conducted semiannual community cleanups with Monte Vista High School students

Look for street/sidewalk improvements coming soon to the intersection of Kenwood and Campo Road. Working with the County of San Diego to create an upgraded community gateway, the Alliance, with the support of Supervisor Dianne Jacob, is committed to renewing this neighborhood. Thanks to all who are working on this effort. ▲

BOARD PROFILE

JIM MARSHALL

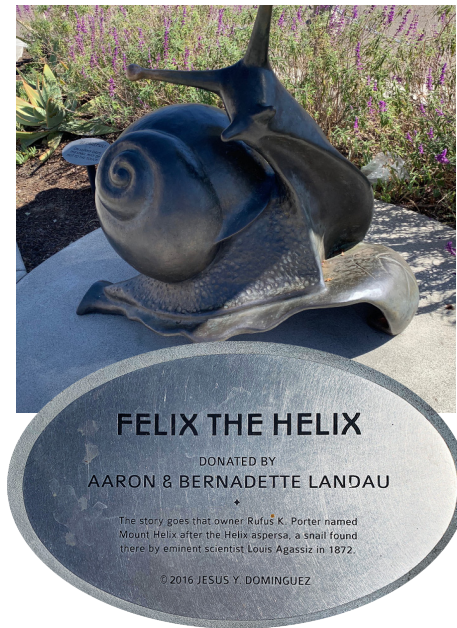
As a San Diego native, born at Mercy Hospital, I spent my early life living in North Clairemont. I always remembered visiting family friends who lived on Mt. Helix, which seemed so far away from where we lived at the time. Flash forward some 35+ years, and my partner and I find Mt. Helix to have all the benefits of semi-rural living, and it turns out... it's not so far away from all the things we enjoy. We moved here in 2012 and since that time value the large lots, the friendly neighbors, and the overall "feel" of a community with character and beauty. It's also very close to San Diego State University.

I've been a faculty member and Professor at San Diego State University for almost 20 years. My expertise is in the area of program evaluation—and how we can use data to improve programs, typically education/training programs, and the organizations that offer them. Over the years I've had the pleasure of working with many organizations, but have a special affinity informal learning programs in zoos, aquariums, and museums. I regularly consult for San Diego Zoo Global, as well as organizations that include the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Fish & Wildlife Service, Audubon Society, and many of our local school districts and colleges.

Our connection to GMIA began when a neighbor passed along a recent newsletter and said, "This organization is great—and can you believe it is only \$18 to join?" Since then, GMIA has: expanded our chicken keeping knowledge through a chicken keeping class; led us to incredible gardens on the annual garden tour that have inspired our own landscaping enhancements; helped us learn about and take action regarding our water rates; and, provided many opportunities for us to meet neighbors all in the spirit of enjoying and enhancing our community.

I joined the Board of Directors in 2018. Since that time, I've served on the nominating committee and chaired our recently formed "signage" subcommittee. GMIA has accomplished so much for our region over its rich history, and it is a pleasure to be involved as we chart the path to our future.

I still purposely receive the printed newsletter and have passed along quite a few to new neighbors who have joined our community over the years. One hope I have is that, together, we can help make GMIA less of a "best kept secret" by sharing GMIA's work and increasing our membership. 🌱



How Mount Helix Got Its Name

Did you know that Mount Helix was named after a snail?

According to San Diego County Place Names A to Z, the name results from an August 1872 visit to San Diego County by the eminent Swiss-born scientist Louis Agassiz, who came to the area aboard the research vessel Hassler. He made a trip into the Spring Valley area, where he collected specimens of *Helix aspersa*, a snail never recorded before in the region. According to one version, Rufus K. Porter gave the hill the snail name in Agassiz' honor. Another version, by Porter's daughter, Rufina Porter Crosby, gave the credit to her father. As she wrote: "In traveling over the mountain one day, he picked up some snail shells, and in Latin, *Helix* means snails - thus the name."

A statue honoring the Mount Helix snail is located at the intersection of Allison Avenue, La Mesa Boulevard, and 4th Avenue in La Mesa. Titled "Felix the Helix," the nameplate reads "The story goes that owner Rufus K. Porter named Mount Helix after the *Helix aspersa*, a snail found there by eminent scientist Louis Agassiz in 1872." 🌱



An Interview with Sheriff's Captain Rich Williams

by Anne Krueger

Rich Williams is the new captain of the Rancho San Diego sheriff's station command, which covers 150 square miles and a population of almost 200,000. Captain Williams' command is responsible for our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community, along with the cities of Imperial Beach and Lemon Grove and the unincorporated area from the international border north to Mt. Helix and east to the Cleveland National Forest.

Williams has been with the Sheriff's Department for 27 years, and he was promoted to captain in 2019 after working as a homicide lieutenant for about a year and a half. He's spent his entire law enforcement career at the Sheriff's Department.

Although the crime rate is low in the GMIA area, Williams said the Sheriff's Department gets numerous calls about homeless people. Dealing with those calls can be challenging, Williams said, noting that simply being homeless is not a crime.


"We tend to favor outreach and education and treatment options before we make an arrest. We are constantly balancing outreach with the need to arrest when there's a criminal violation," he said.

How GMIA members can help the Sheriff's Department

Williams encouraged residents to always lock their cars and homes. He also encouraged residents to call the Sheriff's Department any time they see something suspicious. The 911 number should be used for a crime in progress or life-threatening emergencies, while the non-emergency number, 858-565-5200, can be used to make reports if something looks suspicious.

"Whenever you see something suspicious, call us," Williams said. "Those calls are powerful stuff for us because no one knows better than a local resident what's normal and what's not. If something is suspicious to you, if your gut tells you it's suspicious, you're probably right."

He said sheriff's deputies can even use information such as a partial license plate or a vehicle description.

"It empowers us to help you solve a problem that we share. We can't be everywhere at once," he said. "We want those calls." 



Captain Rich Williams



Neighborhood Watch

Would you like to start a Neighborhood Watch program on your street but don't know how?

Sheriff's Captain Rich Williams encourages homeowners to call the Sheriff's Crime Prevention Unit for help.

Just find a space and gather together your neighbors, and a representative from the Sheriff's Department will facilitate the conversation.

Contact Crime Prevention Specialist Nancy Ortiz at (619) 660-7009 to set up your meeting.



Mosher Park The “Field of Dreams”

by Marybeth Wilson

In 1948, Mt. Helix resident Claude Mosher realized that children needed a safe place to play in our then-rural community. He located a three-acre flat parcel of land on Russell Road near Fuerte Drive, and the owner, H.H. Howell, offered to sell the land for \$500 an acre. Residents supported Mosher’s vision of a park, and even when Howell raised the price to \$600 and then \$750 an acre, they were willing to pay the price. When Mosher presented the check, Howell tore it in half, saying he wanted to see if Mosher was serious about doing something for others.

Mosher gathered children aged 8 to 18 in the area, and put them to work clearing brush for the playground known as “The Fuerte Junior Country Club.” Over the years, the facilities were used for basketball, horse stables, a corral and riding ring, a 2,500-gallon reservoir, tennis courts, dancing, shuffle board, horseshoes, a soapbox derby track, dancing, a rifle range, Alpine luge, hunting lodges, carousel and archery. Children at the Junior Country Club learned how to work and play together, and even learned about the law through a local attorney who showed them how to conduct court.

Mosher’s blueprint for neighborhood recreation center called for letting children do the work, but not without adult supervision and encouragement. A nonprofit corporation was formed and each family contributed \$100 in cash, time or materials.

A Little League baseball team was organized in 1952. It was officially chartered in 1956 by the Cajon de Oro Little

League and just finished its 63rd season. In 1968, a horsemanship rehabilitation and therapy program was created at the property, duplicating a program that a Mt. Helix resident, Mrs. Leth, had visited in England. Over 60 children visited each Saturday for a 30-minute horse ride. The horse ring was replaced in 2017 with a junior baseball field for 6-8 year olds.

In 1999, one acre was sold when the cash balance for the club had dropped below \$100. The property is now owned by the Fuerte Recreation Council and the Cajon de Oro Little League now owns and maintains the field at \$40,000 a year. Volunteers donate their time to maintain the facility. The mission Mosher envisioned of bringing the community together is still going strong. 🏔️



The Grossmont Healthcare District is the landlord for Sharp Grossmont Hospital, overseeing a lease with Sharp HealthCare on behalf of East County taxpayers. In 2006, voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition G, a \$260 million bond. The district recently announced that it has wrapped up construction improvements at the La Mesa hospital that were financed by the bond.

Those improvements include:

- ◆ Completion of the hospital’s Emergency and Critical Care Center
- ◆ Expansion of advanced rapid-response cardiac medical care
- ◆ Earthquake safety measures and improved disaster response
- ◆ Implementation of state-of-the art medical technologies

One standout project is a new \$46 million Central Energy Plant, which was a San Diego Taxpayers Association Golden Award finalist in the public-private partnership category. The natural-gas operated plant, which opened in 2016, was designed to meet future capacity needs of the hospital.

GMIA thanks the Grossmont Healthcare District for allowing the use of its boardroom for Board of Directors meetings. For more information about the Grossmont Healthcare District, go to grossmonthealthcare.org.



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

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
San Diego, CA
Permit No. 17


Please check your mailing label on this newsletter to make sure your membership is still current. You'll find the expiration date of your membership on the mailing label. You will not receive an invoice to renew your membership, so be sure it's up to date.

Your membership support makes a difference so that GMIA can advocate for the community. Members are encouraged to renew for multiple years. One year's annual dues are \$18 per household; \$36 for two years; or \$54 for three years.

Please remit your dues to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943 or renew online at www.gmia.net. If you have questions, please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

Sponsor a Neighbor for a GMIA Membership

You know your neighbors would benefit from a membership to GMIA as much as you do. Consider sponsoring a neighbor with a membership for just \$18 a year. Your gift will bring a neighbor this informative newsletter, email blasts about community concerns and events, invitations to community events, plus support our mission to preserve and enhance our unique semi-rural neighborhood.

Go to gmia.net to fill out a membership form, or check out the information above. Our organization is strong because of the support of our members. 

CALENDAR

Jan 4, 2020

Walk Up
Mt. Helix

Jan 29, 2020

County Supervisor
Candidate Forum

Sun., Mar. 29

Art & Garden
Tour