



viewpoints

SPRING 2020

Volume 50 Issue 2

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

Celebrate Our Art & Garden Tour

– A 50-YEAR TRADITION –

Sunday, March 29 | 12 – 5 pm

You are invited to attend GMIA's premier Art & Garden Tour event on March 29. We hope you will join us for our most popular event. It exemplifies the essence of our beautiful community: lush mature gardens, quiet streets, and generous neighbors.

Most of this year's gardens are one-plus acre properties boasting orchards, vegetable gardens, ingenious use of massive boulders for terraces and landings, appealing hardscape, use of colorful rocks and mulches, and even a formal English garden. Also featured are dramatic views in all directions, a Master Gardener with expert knowl-

edge of succulent and vegetable gardening, palms galore, and a former front lawn transformed into a sandstone patio. Exciting ideas await!

As always, our Art & Garden Tour is free to members whose dues are paid current (6/30/20). Your mailing label will show your renewal date. This is a family-friendly event and well-behaved children are welcome. No pets, please. While it is not our intention to open our event to the general public, we will accommodate nonmember guests for a \$15 donation per person. Enjoy your day in the gardens! ▲

In the event of heavy rain, the Garden Tour will be delayed until Sunday, April 5. Watch for an email alert.

The Original GMIA Succulent Swap

Saturday, May 2, 10 a.m.-noon | San Miguel Fire Station 21 at 10105 Vivera Dr.

GMIA Members – early entry 10 a.m. | Nonmembers 11 a.m.

The annual Succulent Swap is moving to the San Miguel Fire Station 21 at 10105 Vivera Dr. A special thank you to the Becker-Trout family for 5 years of hosting the Succulent Swap. Their beautiful Garden was a true inspiration to our community!

The event is free to everyone and is an opportunity to swap cuttings (or give away your extras), discover new varieties, learn more about GMIA and mingle with fellow succulent lovers. Make sure your GMIA membership is current so you can come early for the

best selection of succulents! If you're not a member, you can sign up at the event. Complimentary coffee, water and light snacks will be provided. Children are welcome, but please leave your pets at home.

The word "succulent" comes from the Latin word *sucus*, meaning juice, or sap. In botany, succulents are plants having some parts that are more than normally thickened and fleshy, usually to retain water in arid climates or soil conditions. Succulents are hardy, thrive on limited water, and are great plants to have as part of your landscaping! ▲



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
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First Vice President

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(619) 318-5260

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Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

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

www.gmia.net

Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com2

MISSION

GMIA is an 82-year-old non-profit 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

The start of 2020 has already been a banner year for GMIA. We had a great turnout for our Walk Up Mt. Helix on Saturday, January 4 and an even bigger turnout at our Community County Supervisor Candidate Forum on January 29! We had a standing-room only crowd of over 200 community members to hear all four candidates. GMIA partnered with the East County Community Connection and recorded the event on Facebook Live. You can find the recording posted on the GMIA Facebook Page. Please go to our GMIA Facebook Page, like us and share the video event or news articles with your Facebook friends.

The forum was an important event because the role of County Supervisor is critical to our unincorporated region. The unincorporated area does not have a city council and is governed by decisions made by the Board of Supervisors, which can have a tremendous impact. County supervisors now have term limits of two four-year terms for office. We will no longer have a County Supervisor overseeing our area for 28 years, like our good friend, County Supervisor Dianne Jacob. The large attendance at the forum sent a clear message to the candidates that our community is involved and cares!

Recently, GMIA became aware of a new charter school, Liberty Charter School, to be built near the intersection of Chase Avenue and Jamacha Boulevard. GMIA reviewed the preliminary plans and sent a letter to the county stating the concerns of added traffic on Chase Avenue and safety issues. In addition, GMIA attended the Board of Supervisors Board Meeting to share our concern about changing the zoning plan for the Skyline Church Retirement Community Expansion and the potential precedent it may set for future developments and the safety concerns of crossing Via Mercado. However, even with concerns presented and opposition of the Valle de Oro Community Planning Committee, the Board voted to support the project due to the extreme need for housing and elderly care in our community. Although we may not win every battle, we do point out our concerns and it is noted by the County. The County did add to their approval the conditions that safety crossing concerns will be addressed.

Our GMIA Board has been working hard planning our beautiful Annual Art and Garden tour for March 29. This tour is complimentary to our members. Please see the articles in this newsletter for more information on the five beautiful gardens that we will be showcasing.

Thank you so much for your engagement and membership and please share and forward this newsletter to a neighbor and encourage them to join. Thank you for your support. ▲



Thank You Donors!

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

Mark & Terry Austerlitz

Stan & Penny Boney

Ron & Mary Alice Brady

Diana Fisher

Jim & Brenda Richmond

Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association

Art & Garden Tour 2020

Sunday, March 29 | Noon - 5 p.m.

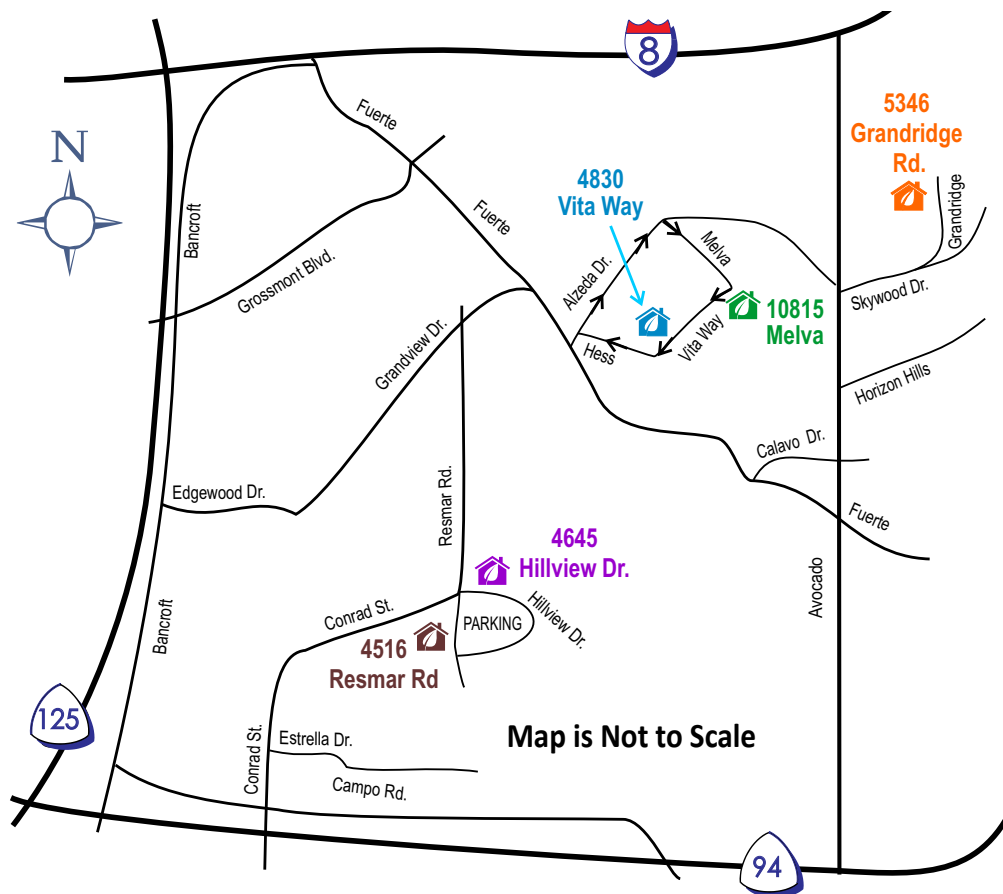
Thank you to our Art & Garden Tour hosts for generously offering their five beautiful gardens to visit this year. For over 50 years, our unique GMIA Garden Tour has featured remarkable gardens transformed by each owner's vision and hard work. Be ready to enjoy dramatic views and great landscaping ideas from this year's large properties.

Thank you also to our fine artists whose work will be on display for purchase and enjoyment. Be prepared! Wear sturdy comfortable shoes, as some gardens have slopes, stairs and unsure footing. Children who are respectful and under control are welcome. No pets please. To ensure a safe event, it is important to follow route directions, and heed the directional signs, traffic barricades, and parking signs required by the county.

Tour produced by Director Co-chairs Pat Ryan and Kay Bickley. Garden descriptions and photography by Pat Ryan. Artist coordination by Kay Bickley. Volunteer coordination by Director Leslie Gardner. Logistics by Director Paul Geldbach. Design and Layout by Victoria Vinton, www.coyotepressgraphics.com.



www.gmia.net



The Garden of Joris Hitt } 4516 Resmar Rd.

Note: Park on south end of the Hillview loop. Use caution crossing the street.

Spectacular views, ingenious use of native Mt. Helix stone, inviting terraces and landings, an historic brick walkway, extensive use of drought-tolerant plantings, dramatic pergolas for entertaining and relaxing, and a bocce ball court are featured in this Tuscan inspired "Tree House." Formerly a 1200-square-foot 1948 red farm house owned by the Woida family, the owners undertook extensive remodeling and expansion after purchasing this one-acre property in 2007. Old farmhouse bricks were salvaged to pave the "Woida Walkway," a charming path under the white floribunda rose-covered arbor. A large Chinese elm tree at the entry shades a BBQ and bar area. Local native stones were veneered and applied to the walls of the new second-story guest wing. The steep slope was terraced with massive boulders to provide space for the pool and covered entertainment area below. Grevilleas, rock roses and rosemary cascade over the walls. Enjoy the colorful "Yellow Bells" tacoma, westringia and "Silver Sheen" pittosporum sprinkled throughout as you explore this amazing view-filled garden.

Artist: Elle Arnot, watercolorist, plein air painter. Contact: elle.arnot@gmail.com



The Garden of Joe & Linda Morse } 4645 Hillview Drive

Note: Please park on the north end of Hillview Drive.

A San Diego County Water Authority class inspired the owners to remove the front lawn and three liquid ambers from their 1963 ranch-style home, purchased in 2002. They created a permeable sand-stone patio, surrounded with waterwise plantings in the warm color palette of oranges, yellows, and bronze. Framed by three Caribbean copper trees, the varied seasonal colors of graptoveria 'Fred Ives,' golden dew drops bush, acacia, leucadendron, ripple jade, aeoniums, and firecracker plant enhance the warm tones. Master Gardener Linda recommends the mirror bush (*Coprosma repens*), a hardy plant that thrives in poor soil. Habitats for bees, butterflies and birds abound. The bountiful vegetable garden up the hill features boxes protected by an ingenious system of netting and hoops, planted with a seasonal rotation of vegetables, all started from seed: cauliflower, kohlrabi, strawberries, carrots, snow peas, onions, leeks, spinach and beets. All varieties of citrus, and stone fruit trees cluster close by. "Circle of Life" farming using a chipper, compost bins, and no chemicals, is practiced here.

Artist: Thomas Green, vertical & horizontal hanging planters. Contact: tgreen411@yahoo.com



The Garden of Jay & Kathleen Rains } 4830 Vita Way

Note: Approach off Alzada onto Melva. Park on east side of Vita only—one way traffic please.

Two acres of magnificent landscaping, mature sycamores, sweet gums, podocarpus, expansive lawns, outlined by neatly trimmed boxwood hedges and white roses, and a massive central fountain surrounded by thousands of pavers, are featured in this appealing 1951 property, purchased by the owners in 1988. Designed and created by the owners, the gardens have been continually expanded and developed. Sandstone steps through the lawn lead to the English formal garden on the left as you enter past an edging of pittosporum, ivy and raphiolepis. A citrus grove terraces up the southwest slope and shares space with two massive stone vegetable boxes. The "Charleston Garden," inspired by the city Kathleen loves in South Carolina, forms a shady formal garden on the west side, featuring boxwood hedges, Canary palms, olive trees, roses and pink crape myrtles. Pass the vegetable garden by the guest cottage, which leads to the quiet sunny back patio entertainment area, with a recently added native stone fireplace. Drip irrigation supplied by a well waters this charming property.

Artist: Marie Knox, succulent and floral painter. Contact: marieknox@gmail.com



Garden of Michael & Julie Shaw } 10815 Melva

Note: Enter from Alzada. Park on Vita. Exit on Hess.

This two-acre property evokes that "out in the country" feel, featuring a large orchard, two vegetable gardens, California pepper trees, an abundance of palms, a big red horse barn and a rambling lawn for outdoor use. The owners have been designing and planting their 1955 property for the past 18 years, extensively grading the slope into useable areas with massive boulders to create many levels for gardens and outdoor living. Steps lead up to a unique butterfly-shaped swimming pool and a spacious covered patio. A path below leads down past sago palms, fishtail and pinto palms, toward the lawn, shaded by an appealing locust tree. Enormous stone steps open to a lovely coral tree outside the barn, now-turned-workshop, with a nearby fenced in "kitchen cutting garden" and a large vegetable garden growing seasonal crops. Above the barn and gardens is an orchard filled with fruit trees: avocados, Mandarin oranges, Meyer lemon, grapefruit, plum, guava, peaches, pear and Mexican limes.

Artist: Frank Tosatto, wrought ironwork, outdoor art. Contact: sdtosatto@cox.net



The Garden of Lee & Sarah Rogers } 5346 Grandridge Rd.

Note: Use caution on the moderately steep winding terraced paths and uneven footing.

Last seen on our 2009 tour, this unique 1 ¼ acre hillside location, with amazing views from Mt. Helix to Cowles Mountain, was developed in the 1970's and purchased by the owners in 2002.

"Bucket loads" of gravel, colorful mulches, and rocks, including boulders and trees, were moved to develop accessible paths and landings created with over 50 railroad ties used throughout this steep hillside. "Rock rivers" alleviate some major drainage issues and stabilize the slope. Ten more years of growth on a dozen palms enhance the view: queen, king, Mexican fan, pinto and Canary. Many intriguing elephant's foot palms are scattered amid a variety of specimen cacti and succulents. A colorful Talavera pottery collection fills the sunny entry courtyard. Two huge specimen *euphorbia ammok variegata* in large pots frame the entrance to the back garden with stunning views from a patio deck and pergola, complete with Talavera animals. A captivating dolphin fountain graces an inviting pool and paths lead to the garden below.

Artist: Linda Comer, succulent door wreaths. Contact: linda.comer71@gmail.com





Walk to the Top

More than 100 people joined together in the 12th annual Walk to the Top on January 4, strolling the 2/3 mile to the top of Mt. Helix. At the top, refreshments were offered and music played, along with information from area nonprofits and agencies. Thanks to the Mt. Helix Park Foundation for providing the location and to all of the volunteers who helped make the event a fun day for everyone. 🏔️

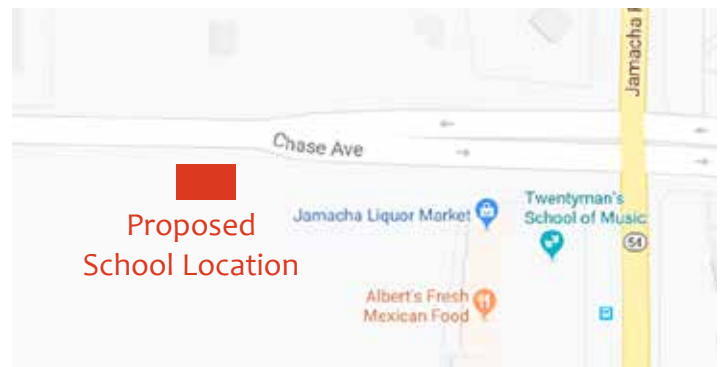


Proposed Charter High School Raises Traffic Concerns

GMIA has expressed concerns about the traffic impacts of a proposed charter high school that would be built on Chase Avenue just east of Jamacha Road. The Liberty Charter High School would have 450 students and 33 faculty and staff members located in a 48,000-square-foot building with 22 classrooms, along with a gymnasium, sports field and 161 parking spaces.

The entrance to the school would be off Chase Avenue, a two-lane road already designated as an F Level of Service for its traffic congestion. According to the school's traffic study, it would generate 585 new daily trips, including 117 trips during the morning peak-hour traffic, 99 trips in the afternoon, and 59 trips during the evening commute hours. To mitigate the traffic impacts, the school is proposing to widen Chase Avenue to provide a second eastbound lane and to provide space to accommodate a westbound turn lane. A payment would also be made to the county's Transportation Impact Fee program.

In a letter to the County Planning and Development Services, GMIA supported the recommendation of the Valle de Oro Planning Group to have the school undergo a full Environmental Impact Report. GMIA is concerned about 1) traffic congestion on Chase Avenue 2) Increased traffic on surface streets and 3) safety concerns about pedestrians crossing Chase Avenue due to the increased traffic. 🏔️



Join the "Green Machine"

Help keep our Park & Ride clean! Join the crew of volunteers who meet at the Park & Ride at Fuerte Drive and Severin Drive the third Saturday of every month for litter removal and light weeding. Trash bags, litter tongs and other items will be provided. Please RSVP to John Richardson at jbrichardson51@gmail.com if you'd like to volunteer. If you'd like to get a monthly email reminder about the event, contact Gretchen Morrison at gkmusc@cox.net.

Board Member Susan Nichols

As avid gardeners, my husband, Larry, and I spent many weeks looking for a home some 32 years ago. My number one criterion for real estate was “the bird song test.” When we drove to a prospective property, I only wanted to hear the birds when we turned off the car engine. We were immensely lucky to find our peaceful Mt. Helix home with its large lot and quiet neighborhood. As the saying goes, the rest is history.



I grew up on a busy Los Angeles street where few people knew their neighbors. Because of this, I knew I wanted my growing family to experience a warmer, caring community. As a member of GMIA, I was able to help shape our region in a way that was important to me: welcoming and neighborly in the best sense of the word.

With a background in event planning for nonprofits, I was initially recruited to serve on the Board of GMIA to direct the popular Art & Garden Tour. After 3 years in that role, I was elected president and served in that capacity for a decade. The opportunity to bring people together to build community was a dream come true and as a result, I've been lucky to have made many friends who share similar values and a love of our wonderful area. Although I didn't have any experience in political and governmental agency activism, along the way I recognized the critical importance of advocacy. Building relationships with County staff and others who could influence our region was my way of helping get things done.

Today, I am spending more time in the garden, traveling, making art, and enjoying family and friends. As past president, it is a pleasure to see the new leadership and extremely capable Board working together to keep our neighborhood special. I feel rich to count them as my friends. 🌱

County Supervisor Candidate Forum

The four candidates for the District 2 County Supervisor seat discussed a wide range of topics at a January 29 forum hosted by GMIA. The candidates – former state Senator Joel Anderson, Poway Mayor Steve Vaus, Marriage and Family Therapist Kendra Taylor, and Brian Sesko, a broker and general contractor – will be on the ballot in the March 3 election. They are running to succeed Dianne Jacob, who is leaving office after 28 years because of term limits.

More than 200 people packed the room at Murdock Elementary School where the forum was held. The forum, facilitated by the League for Women Voters, included questions about a variety of issues, including homelessness, the county budget, and campaign donations.

After the forum, attendees had the opportunity to meet candidates for Superior Court judge and two Assembly seats. 🌱



What Are They Saying?

FROM THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE AT
RANCHO SAN DIEGO

If you hear the Sheriff's Helicopter in your area and are having a hard time hearing what they are saying, you can call the non-emergency line anytime (858) 565-5200.

For your safety, anytime you hear announcements, stay inside your house or business.

Help us keep East County communities safe. If you see something suspicious, please give us a call. Your call will remain anonymous.



How Grossmont Got its Name

Grossmont was developed by Ed Fletcher, along with theatrical promoter William B. Gross, after the two men met by chance at Yellowstone National Park. Gross visited Fletcher and his family in their Lemon Grove home around 1903 and said he was looking for a place to retire. Fletcher showed him several hundred acres on a hill covered with boulders east of La Mesa. The two friends split the \$11,500 cost of the property.

Fletcher got the idea to develop property as an artists' colony using Gross' name. Fletcher attracted residents who included Ernestine Schumann-Heink, a famous German contralto and one of the most popular singers in the world; Carrie Jacobs Bond, author of "The End of a Perfect Day" and "Just A-Wearying for You," and other authors, singers, and poets.

The terrain was difficult and Fletcher's detractors called the area "Fletcher's Folly." Those who ridiculed the project were amazed when the first narrow road, El Granito Avenue, was completed in 1913. Houses sold with a starting price of \$2,500 per acre.

Bond wrote a poem about Grossmont:

*The wild birds chant their carols
The flowers bloom galore
Out in God's lovely garden
How could I ask for more?*

Sources: *San Diego County Place Names, A to Z*; Richard Crawford, *San Diego Union-Tribune*

Photo: William Gross and Ernestine Schumann-Heink at her Grossmont Home c1915. Image courtesy La Mesa Historical Society.



Enjoy a summer evening with your friends and neighbors at GMIA's Annual Dinner on Sunday, June 7, 5:30 – 8 p.m.

Our casual barbecue buffet will once again take place at the gorgeous Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College. Supervisor Dianne Jacob will be on hand to talk with us and answer your questions about what's going on in our neighborhood and around East County.

The dinner, which also includes Ballast Point beer, wine and soft drinks, is \$15 per GMIA member. Please be sure to invite your neighbors and encourage them to become GMIA members. Your membership renewal date is located above your address on the back page of this newsletter.

Note: reservations are required. Our Annual Meeting is designed for GMIA members, but nonmembers may attend for \$20 per person.

Reserve online at www.gmia.net. Go to "Events" to submit payment. See you there! ▲

Grossmont Center Mall Walkers Fitness Program

Regular exercise is the key to a healthy lifestyle and walking is one of the best ways to keep fit. The Grossmont Mall Walkers is a free fitness program for adults sponsored by the Sharp Grossmont Senior Resource Center in cooperation with Grossmont Center.

Malls are some of the best places to walk, because they're convenient, pedestrian-friendly and accessible to people of all fitness levels. Group members are free to walk during the days and times that are most convenient for them. You can also take advantage of special programs and planned social events throughout the year.

Every Saturday, the program offers free exercise classes at 8 and 9 a.m. inside the Grossmont Center Food Court. An instructor will lead you through gentle exercises that can improve your balance and increase your strength.

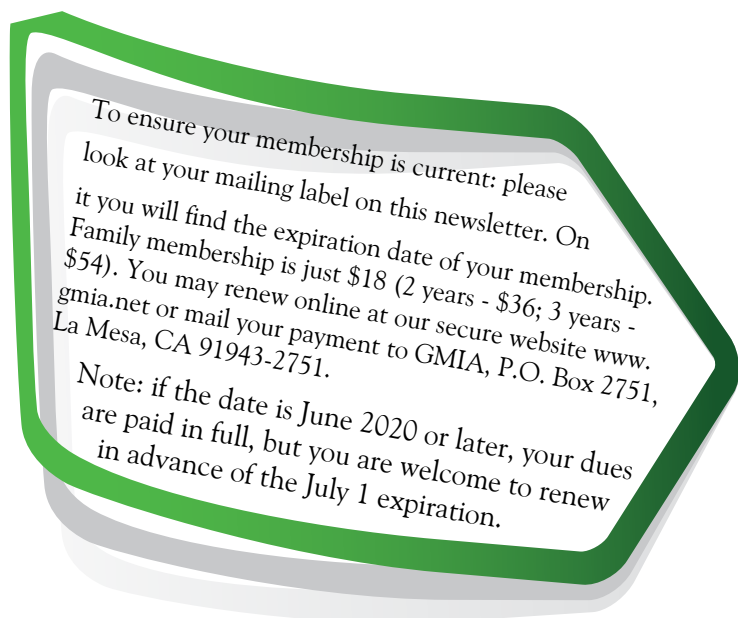
Advance registration is not required and you don't need to be a part of Sharp HealthCare to participate.

If you have a question, please contact the Sharp Grossmont Senior Resource Center at (619) 740-4214. ▲



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We Love Our Volunteers!

Volunteers are needed to help make the Garden Tour a success! As a special incentive, you will be invited to our VIP Pre-Event Tour and Reception for volunteers, artists, and garden owners hosted by our GMIA Board of Directors on March 28 (the day before our public event.) Volunteers assist with day of event registration, setup, parking logistics and more. A two-hour commitment is required. Contact Leslie Gardner at lesliemg@icloud.com. Please include "GMIA Volunteer" in your subject line. Call (703)786-5195 for questions. Thank you!

Is Your Membership Current?

To ensure your membership is current: Please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the expiration date for your membership. An annual family membership is just \$18. 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 2020 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.



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