



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

New Look for the 13th Annual Walk to the Top

by Patricia Ryan

Our popular annual Walk to the Top is a great time of year for our community to welcome in the new year, enjoying our area's spectacular weather! This year it is not possible for our members to gather together in our usual fashion assembled behind our great yellow banner with our eager pets accompanying us. Instead, we would like to invite you to take an independent walk to the top of Mt. Helix by January 17, 2021.

To add to the adventure, we have designed a Scavenger Hunt for the whole family to locate interesting Mt. Helix features along the way. Bring your activity sheet, found on page 3 of this newsletter, and join the adventure! Walk from the fire station to the top of Mt. Helix any time between now and January 17. Take a photo of your group at the top, plus a photo of your completed Scavenger Hunt Activity Sheet and email them to yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. Be sure to identify your participants. With your permission, we will publish some of the photos in the next Viewpoints news-

SCAVENGER



letter, on the GMIA Facebook page and on our website. Even if you don't find all the items, you will be automatically entered into a drawing for a free year of GMIA membership just by submitting your photos. Answers to the quiz questions can be found on the GMIA website at gmia.net.

Our New Year's walk has traditionally been a dog-friendly event. Some of them have joined our annual walk for many years. Take a catchy photo of them posing somewhere along the route and send that too. One lucky dog owner will be chosen in the "Top Dog Photo" contest to win four tickets to visit the Midway Museum, courtesy of Mike Valley, longtime GMIA Board member.

Although we will miss the excitement of over 200 of our GMIA members making the trek together, we trust you will enjoy this year's version of the Walk to the Top and find the Scavenger Hunt a rewarding holiday activity for the whole family. Watch out for traffic and stay safe! 🏔️

Plans proceed for Grossmont-Mt. Helix Gateway Sign

The County of San Diego has approved a grant for up to \$59,874 to construct a gateway monument sign at the intersection of Fuerte Drive and Avocado Boulevard. The preliminary design by Integrated Signs closely reflects the character of our community and incorporates rockwork like that in historic Mt. Helix Park.

The grant funds will be administered by GMIA, which will keep track of expenses and report back to the county. The county permit process will start in early December and construction of the sign is expected to begin in early to mid-2021.





GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
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 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

Hello 2021! I know most of us are all looking forward to saying goodbye to 2020 and hoping for better days in 2021. What a wild ride we have all been on. Thankfully we are a country and community that is resilient and able to handle change and adapt well. Thank you to those who have helped each other in these Covid-19 times.

We always like to kick off the New Year with our Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix. Due to our current COVID-19 restrictions, we've created a unique and fun-filled experience for our members. Check out the Scavenger Hunt article and enjoy an educational walk up Mt. Helix.

It was great seeing some of you on our first ever virtual annual meeting on October 8. We were fortunate to have County Supervisor Dianne Jacob join us one last time before the end of her term. We are thankful for all the great work she has done for our community these past 28 years. You can go to our website and see the PowerPoint and video we made to thank County Supervisor Dianne Jacob. We look forward to welcoming new County Supervisor Joel Anderson when he takes office.

Congratulations to the GMIA endorsed candidates: Dan McMillan and Joel Scalzitti will retain their seats on the Helix Water District Board and Mark Robak will retain his seat on the Otay Water District Board. Thank you to GMIA members in getting the word out and helping with their campaign. Their dedication to these important community services is admirable and we appreciate their time to ensure safe water and sewer service delivery reliably and at the lowest possible cost to the GMIA area (note: only portions of GMIA service area receive these services).

Work is continuing on our new community gateway monument. The Monument design has been completed and we received funding through the County Neighborhood Reinvestment Program. The Monument will welcome people to Grossmont-Mt. Helix and will be located at the intersection of Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive. We will keep you informed when an unveiling and ribbon cutting event is scheduled.

We have a newsletter full of information on what is happening around our community, along with many requests for volunteers. We appreciate those who are able to step up and help. We must help each other to keep our community safe and beautiful.

Thank you so much for your engagement and membership. Please share this newsletter with a neighbor and encourage them to join. We are stronger in numbers! Thank you for your ongoing support.

Kathleen Hedberg, PE, MPH



Thank You Donors!

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

Brett Clapham
Rhonda James
Gary and Cindy Rambis King
Lisa Conley and Monty Mance

Bob Johnson and Tracey Stotz
Edward Suhay
Stephen and Bonnie Turner
Mable L. Wigfall

Walk to the top of Mt. Helix from the fire station any time until January 17th. Follow the direction of traffic. Please stay to the side of the road and watch for vehicles. Have fun!

SCAVENGER HUNT



YOUR ANSWERS

- 1 What is the address on the white fire station mailbox?
- 2 What color is the T-Rex on the boulders in front of the fire station?
Fun Fact: Tyrannosaurus rex lived 67 million years ago. It was 40 feet long!
- 3 Continue walking straight up Mt. Helix Drive. Look way up to the left. How many giant metal wagon wheels can you count?
- 4 Can you find something patriotic near the metal wagon wheels?
- 5 Find the owl guarding the hen house. What color is the hen house?
- 6 Keep looking to the left and find the image of a duck on a low rock wall with an important message. What is this message?
- 7 What color is the house that's on really high stilts?
- 8 Stop at the driveway of 4775. Look way down below. What kind of antlers do you see?
- 9 How many date palms do you see inside the walls of the historic Vila Rosa? Fun fact: Named "Phoenix canariensis", they grow to 80 feet tall with 100 fronds!
- 10 Walk right on Alto Drive for about 100 feet. Can you find the creatures carved out of tree trunks? Look for the giraffes. Name three other carved animals you see.
- 11 Walk back to the main route. What is the tallest vehicle that can be driven up Mt. Helix Drive?
- 12 In 1860, mail was delivered to California by relays of horse-mounted riders called the Pony Express. What reminder of that time do you see? (Hint: It's blue.)

- 13 Stop at a massive outcropping of granite boulders on the right, look up and find a tower-shaped rock that is really a **FAKE ROCK**! What is it covering up?
- 14 How many yellow posts do you pass before arriving at the entrance gates to Mt. Helix Park?
- 15 What year was Mt. Helix Park established?
- 16 Look to the left when you reach the stop sign at the entrance gates and find the house with the copper roof. What is on the weather vane?
- 17 Find the round house. How many stories does it have?
Fun fact: The round house is the only structure in the world we know of that is a fully functional rotating structure in which all the utilities rotate, too.
- 18 What two dates are etched into the cement on top of the stone wall in front of the round house?
- 19 To whom is Mt. Helix Nature Park dedicated?
- 20 What are you not permitted to fly from the top of Mt. Helix?
- 21 At the very back of the stage (East), find a sign with all the mountain peaks you can see from Mt. Helix. What peak is the highest and how high is it?
- 22 What is the name of the trail that loops the cross? It's 0.3 miles long and provides many views.
- 23 What color are the flowers (bracts) that surround the cross?
Fun Fact: A Helix Water District water storage tank is buried below the summit. Water is pumped up to it and then flows to the homes below.

We hope you enjoyed the GMIA 13th Annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix to ring in the New Year! Happy 2021 from GMIA! Take a photo of your group somewhere at the top to enter the drawing for a free one-year GMIA membership.

Enter a photo of your dog in the "Top Dog" Contest to win 4 tickets to the Midway Museum.

*Please send both your photo(s) at the top and a photo of your completed Scavenger Hunt sheet to: yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com by January 17, 2021.

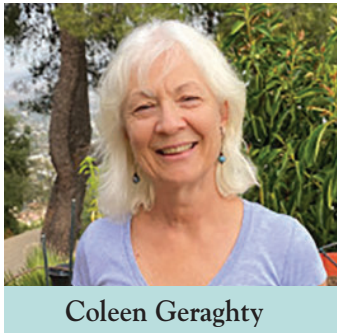
Name(s):

*By submitting your photo, you give GMIA permission to publish it in Viewpoints, on the GMIA social media pages, or on the GMIA website, gmia.net.

Board Member Profile

El Cajon has been home since January 2001, when I returned to the U.S. from Sydney, Australia with my husband, Gary, and our two children. Before Sydney (and before children), Gary and I worked for more than a decade in Europe and Asia as journalists for various international newspapers and wire services. We also traveled extensively, especially during our five years stationed in Hong Kong.

When we decided to settle down at last, we looked for a U.S. city that could offer an “Aussie” lifestyle, and San Diego complied. Our 3.8-acre contemporary style home on Mt. Merritt has views of the sunrise and sunset, of which we never tire. After the move and a few not-terribly-successful months of home schooling, Luke and Kathryn happily enrolled at Fuerte Elementary School and I joined the Department of Marketing and Communication at San Diego State University. In addition to overseeing 360 Magazine, with a circulation



Coleen Geraghty

of 60,000, I worked on branding, marketing and otherwise supporting SDSU’s first comprehensive fundraising campaign, which raised \$815 million.

Now retired, Gary and I are giving our acreage some much-needed TLC by planting succulents and other vegetation that thrives in East County. Coincidentally, this is similar to the flora we came to know and love while living in Sydney. It will take a few more years of hard work, but one day our property may be ready for inclusion in the garden tour.

In the meantime, I’ll be chairing GMIA’s Publicity and Marketing Committee to help raise awareness of our vital role in championing this special neighborhood of San Diego. I also intend to contribute ideas and articles to Viewpoints. As a new board member, I look forward to working with the dedicated women and men who have already burnished GMIA’s reputation as both a resource and advocate for our community. 🌱

Holly Yarris



Due to a printing error, the names of the two board members profiled in the Fall issue were not included with their photos in the print version. We thank Holly and Kathleen for their service to the community!

Kathleen Moen



Community Volunteers Advise County on Land Use Issues

by Alyssa Burley, Chairperson, Valle de Oro Community Planning Group

Have you ever wondered who approves a new sign at your favorite local shop? How does one go about getting a stop sign added to a busy neighborhood intersection? Who are those people slowly driving down your street making notes about the quality of the road surface? It’s the Valle de Oro Community Planning Group.

The planning group is a county-sponsored board of elected community members who provide recommendations to the County of San Diego on land use issues within its planning area.

The Valle de Oro planning area (<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/docs/GP/35-VDO.pdf>) roughly spans 19 square miles from the east side of Bancroft Drive in La Mesa to just east of Willow Glen Road in El Cajon. It is bordered by the City of El Cajon to the north and Highway 94 to the south. The plan-

ning area encompasses the neighborhoods of Mount Helix, Casa de Oro, Rancho San Diego and Vista Grande.

The board consists of 15 registered voters who live within the area boundaries. They are elected to serve four-year terms and occasionally can be appointed by the Board of Supervisors when a seat becomes vacant. The board meets once a month, when they vote to recommend approval or denial of building project variances, major use permits, and other land use issues.

Project recommendations are based on the established guidelines found in the Valle de Oro Community Plan (https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/docs/CP/Valle_de_Oro_CP2.pdf). This 68-page document outlines community character, land use, housing, mobility, public services/facilities/improvements, conservation, recreation, scenic highways, energy, public safety and noise. If you ever need a permit from the County or are thinking about building a project in the

area, review the community plan first to ensure your project follows its guidelines. It is the guiding document the planning group refers to when making recommendations to the County.

The planning group meetings are open to the public and take place the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. Prior to the pandemic, the group met at the Otay Water District Headquarters in Spring Valley; however, due to the County’s health order, the planning group meets virtually, until further notice. Meeting information can be found on the meeting agenda posted online on the County’s website (<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/vdo.html>) or at the Lony Brewer Park bulletin board located at 10925 Fury Lane in El Cajon.

To stay up to date on the projects the planning group is reviewing, check the monthly agendas posted online or in the community. The public is always welcome and encouraged to comment on projects. 🌱

GMIA member Bob Wade: *Music is his Life*

From the time when he was growing up in Casa de Oro, music has always been a part of Bob Wade's life. Although he's had other jobs, he realized that music is his passion and now performs solo gigs and with a band all over San Diego County.

"Music is the language that everybody relates to," said Wade, a Mt. Helix resident and GMIA member. "It makes people happy and it makes people respond. I enjoy that."

Wade said he began playing guitar when he was 10 years old and quickly advanced in his lessons, writing songs and performing with bluegrass and folk groups.

"When a kid picks up a guitar and learns a song to play, they're just searching for an identity that makes them cool," he said. "It's a way to fit in."

He worked for a while as a mechanic at Caterpillar Tractor, but when he got laid off, he seized the opportunity to play bass in a band that performed at a '50s rock and



roll revival. He later worked for 12 years as a teacher in the Cajon Valley Unified School District, but when he got an offer in 2013 to play his guitar all summer at the San Diego Zoo, he quit the teaching job and became a full-time musician.

He plays classic rock and folk songs—from the Beatles to Tom Petty or the Eagles—in his solo acoustic guitar performances. He also plays bass with the Stand Up Guys, a band that plays classic rock music at numerous venues around the county. Check out his upcoming performances on his Bob-WadeGuitar Facebook page.

Wade said he's played a variety of venues, from restaurants to country clubs, along with private shows at weddings, birthday parties, and funerals. He said he can't imagine ever having a life without music.

"There's a fulfilling artistic release to playing—a sort of catharsis," Wade said. "I don't know how not to do this. It's part of me." ▲

Do you know of a neighbor with an interesting story for Viewpoints? Let us know at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.



Nominations Open for the GMIA Curb Appeal Award

Many of the homes in our community have beautiful front yards that show pride in our area and add value to the neighborhood. We invite you to nominate a candidate (you or a neighbor) for the GMIA Curb Appeal Award. This award recognizes front yards that display outstanding maintenance, distinctive design, and landscaping appropriate for the climate. The winner will be featured in Viewpoints, receive a free year's membership to GMIA, and will be recognized at the 2021 Annual Dinner.

Help us recognize homeowners who are making our community a beautiful place to live. Nominations can be submitted by going to the GMIA website at gmia.net/curb-appeal-award. ▲



Go Slower Campaign

With fewer cars on the road because of the pandemic, homeowners on Fuerte Road have noticed more speeders on the road. They have expressed interest in putting up "Slow Down In Our Neighborhood" signs.

The www.GoSlower.org website says the "Go Slower" campaigns are designed to lower the speed of traffic within neighborhoods by asking drivers to make a conscientious effort to slow down. This campaign is a bottoms-up, grassroots effort to ask drivers to voluntarily slow down. It's about getting people to participate to lower the speed of traffic in our neighborhood. We can get discounts on bulk signs and implement the sign campaign. It starts with us. Anyone interested in joining the Go Slower Campaign should contact Kathleen Hedberg at kchedberg@cox.net. ▲

Park & Ride CleanUp Volunteers Needed

Help to keep our community clean and attractive by volunteering in the monthly clean-up of the Park & Ride lot on the south side of Interstate 8 at Severin and Fuerte Drives.

GMIA has contracted with Caltrans to care for this lot. It's important to keep it clean because it's at a prominent entrance to the community, and it also is less inviting to crime in our area.

GMIA volunteers meet at the lot every third Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. The cleanup takes about 30 to 45 minutes. All are welcome and a brief training will be provided for first-time volunteers. Wear your mask and gloves, but trash tongs and litter bags will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, contact John Richardson at jbrichardson51@gmail.com or Pete Camana at pete.camana@viasat.com.



Construction of Chicken Ranch Project Begins



Ten years ago, the Viewpoints newsletter had the headline "Supervisors Approve Chicken Ranch Development over Community's Objections."* No one is more aware of this than Art Patoff, who sent GMIA its first letter to the editor. Construction on the project, Fuerte Ranch, at Fuerte Drive and Damon Lane has now begun. Shea Homes is building 37 homes on ½ acre lots, and if you live on the east side of Avocado, you can probably hear the earthmovers and see the large plywood walls surrounding the project.

Initially, some issues arose with the entry to Damon Lane County Park because with the new walls, parking was taken away and people were congregating on private property. However, after a few weeks of challenges, Shea Homes constructed a pathway entrance to the Park. Please park your cars on Fuerte Farms Road west of Damon Lane. Some people have been parking and entering Damon Lane Park through the Belvedere community. Please do not park your cars in this community, as limited street parking is available. For the safety of our neighbors and to avoid disruption to their yards, please always have your dog on a leash when walking them and always pick up after them.

* You can read the entire article in the Summer 2010 Newsletter posted on our website, www.GMIA.net. 🌱



Adopt A Highway Volunteers Wanted

Trash continues to build up on Highway 94, as well as its on- and off-ramps, and the county doesn't have the resources to keep up. The Adopt a Highway program allows our community to get involved and help keep our highway free of debris. To participate, we need about 15 volunteers who are willing to pick up trash once a month for about 5-8 hours. CalTrans provides all the needed supplies and will train the leads (who will in turn train the group).

While we can request a particular stretch of the highway, it is subject to approval by CalTrans. We will initially ask for the 2-mile stretch between Avocado Boulevard and Bancroft Drive. The clean-ups would likely begin in early 2021, after the request is approved by CalTrans. If you would like to participate, please contact GMIA Member Jennifer Bergovoy at bergovoy@cox.net.



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La Mesa CA 91943-2751

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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. Family 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 in the attached envelope to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

Note: if the date is June 2021 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.



Take College Classes From Your Living Room

Because of the pandemic, most courses at Grossmont and Cuyamaca colleges are being offered online. This is a great chance to learn something new without having to leave home! The courses offered range from Art Appreciation to language courses to Yoga. Classes are just \$46 a unit, with most classes offered at three units.

Go to www.gcccd.edu/now for links to both colleges. You can check out which courses have space available on the Open Sections page. Click on one of the Apply & Enroll buttons to begin the registration process. The spring semester begins February 1, and registration is open until then. 🏞️

CALENDAR

Sat., Dec. 19

**Park & Ride
Cleanup**

Sat., Jan. 16

**Park & Ride
Cleanup**

Sun., Jan. 17

**Walk to the Top
Deadline**

Wed., March 31

**Curb Appeal Nom.
Deadline**