

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

## A Picnic in the Park

### GMIA's Annual Meeting on August 15

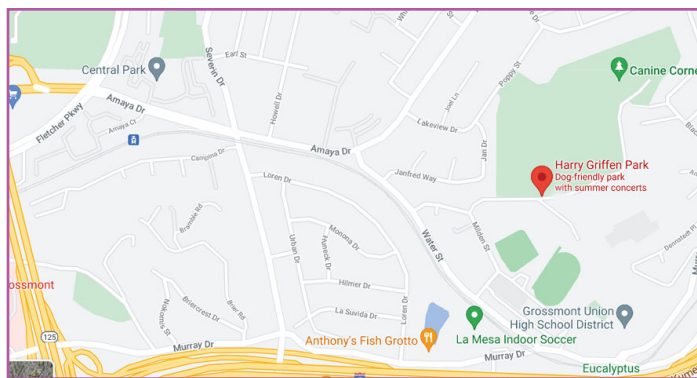
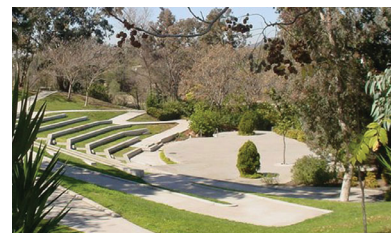
Join us as we celebrate a return to gathering in person at our GMIA Annual Meeting on Sunday, August 15 at 5:30 p.m. at the Harry Griffen Park amphitheater in La Mesa. Bring your own picnic supper and blanket or chairs to the amphitheater. GMIA will provide delicious, complimentary Mahalo Shave Ice (yum!) for all of our members in good standing. Enjoy great live music, both before and after our program, by popular country and rock'n roll band The Tradesmen at our all new, family-friendly event.

Our program will begin at 6 p.m featuring comments by State Senator Brian Jones. Bob Yarris, president of the Casa de Oro Alliance, will be honored with our Al Platt Award for Community Service, and winners of the GMIA Gardens Rock! Photo Contest and Curb Appeal Award will be recognized.

Please note, the City of La Mesa (operator of Harry Griffen Park) requires us to advise that, to keep everyone safe:

- No glass, smoking or alcohol is permitted
- No bikes or skateboarding in the amphitheater
- Dogs must be on leash

Register today at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net). Please RSVP by August 8. 🌱



## Residents Successfully Contest Local Placement of Sexually Violent Predators

**W**hen state officials proposed placing two sexually violent predators in the Mt. Helix area, GMIA joined with neighborhood residents to take action. GMIA members contacted state and county officials, led protest rallies, signed petitions and appealed to the two Superior Court judges tasked with deciding whether the men would be placed in a group home in Horizon Hills.

The efforts paid off. Both judges ruled that a family-friendly Mt. Helix neighborhood was not the appropriate place for sexually violent predators. State Sen. Brian Jones recognized the community activists, awarding certificates to those who had led the fight against the placement.

Thank you to all who contributed to this effort to ensure that our neighborhoods remain safe for residents and their children! 🌱





GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX  
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

### Officers

Kathleen Hedberg, President  
(619) 660-7487

Dave Zimmerman,  
First Vice President

Pat Ryan, Second Vice President  
(619) 248-1619

Pam Coe, Treasurer/Membership  
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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 GMIA Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you and serve our community as GMIA president. Yes, after two-plus years, I am ready to pass on the president's hat. It has been a blessing to be able to represent our area. I feel so honored to be president of GMIA, which was founded in 1938 and is one of the oldest and most recognized community improvement associations in California.

We are such a strong community and a force to be reckoned with too! As District Attorney Summer Stephan said to me the other day, we are a vocal group.

Just when we were set to tackle our speeding challenges on Fuerte Drive, and beginning to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we were hit by a bolt of lightning, and it struck twice. Suddenly we learned of plans to place two sexually violent predators together in a house on Horizon Hills Drive.

We had only weeks to act—to unite, plan and communicate our concerns to the community. Many residents responded, joined our protests, wrote letters and showed up at the virtual San Diego County Superior Court hearings. We succeeded in getting the attention of the news media and our elected officials. In the end, we persuaded two judges that our family-friendly community is not the right location for sexually violent predators to be housed.

So I say THANK YOU for showing me that you all love this community as much as I do.

I also want to applaud those who sent in beautiful pictures of their gardens for our 2021 virtual garden tour, GMIA Gardens Rock! You will see the winning images in these pages. Please go to our website, GMIA.net, to view all the submissions. They are beautiful, and many of the gardens are water-wise!

I am looking forward to seeing you at our Annual Member Meeting on August 15 at Harry Griffen Park in La Mesa. We anticipate a great in-person celebration with GMIA hosting the dessert and providing music from the Tradesmen! It will be my pleasure to introduce our new GMIA President, Anne Krueger, who is scheduled to take the helm on September 1. Thank you for being the best neighbors and the best community I have ever lived in. I could not have succeeded without the most supportive and knowledgeable board ever. Thank you to Past President Susan Nichols for her guidance and to my co-captain Dave Zimmerman, who put together the board meeting agendas and kept the meetings running on time. I also want to thank my wonderful loving husband Jon Hedberg, who is always by my side (and almost always carrying something, I am sure)!

Kathleen Hedberg, PE, MPH



## Thank You Donors!

Special thanks to these members who donated \$25 or greater in excess of their dues.

Ruel & Carol Bench | Timothy & Kate Dzierzek | Charles & Marcia Kossman  
Patricia Ludwick | Sarah & Lee Rogers | Richard & Sally Sweet | Linda Trent  
John Castell and Jim Brega | Leo & Adrienne Culp | John Grasberger & Eva B. Goode  
Julia Holladay & Kirk Hulett | Kathy Nutting | Danny & Lauri Riley  
David & Jocelyn Zimmerman



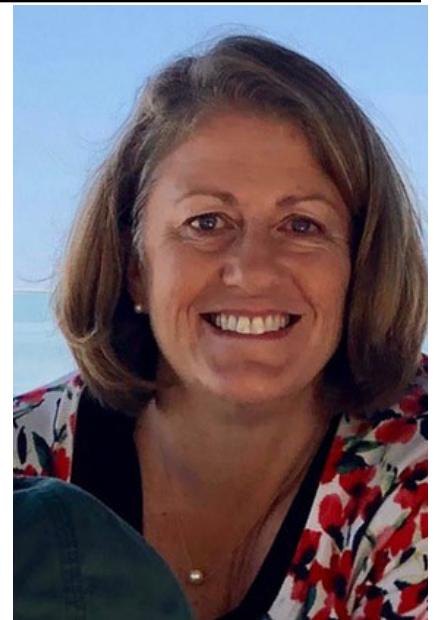
## BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: Leslie Gardner

I moved to Mt. Helix when I was nine months old, and while we moved often for my father's naval career, we always came home to Mt. Helix. The park at the top has always been special to me. From childhood Girl Scout events, to running the steps to prepare for high school basketball and years later to get ready to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro (I have a love-hate relationship with those steps!), to walks with my dog to enjoy the view, it's a treat to have this treasure so close by.

I purchased my own home in Mt. Helix about five years ago and have enjoyed being back in the neighborhood. I am lucky to live on such a friendly street where my neighbors know each other, kids play in the street, we share eggs and produce, and we walk our dogs together so often they know exactly who to hit up for the best treats.

My professional life has included teaching English in Japan, public policy work at a Washington, D.C. think tank, and serving as a trial attorney at the Department of Justice. After about 15 years in D.C. and Northern Virginia, I returned home to San Diego to serve as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. (I serve on the GMIA board in my personal capacity, and my work with GMIA is not intended to reflect the views of the United States Department of Justice.) Outside of work, I enjoy trips to Dog Beach, travelling, hiking, Navy football, pretending I'm the Cake Boss, and working in my garden.

I joined the board in 2018 and have enjoyed being a part of all that GMIA has to offer. I've learned that GMIA does so much more than host wonderful garden tours and succulent swaps. A lot of people are working very hard behind the scenes to preserve and enhance our community. In addition to many events, our board focuses on traffic and safety concerns, policy changes that will impact our area, proposed construction developments, staying informed about candidates and propositions for local elections, and so much more. One of my goals while serving on the board is to increase member involvement, so you might be hearing from me as I recruit volunteers for events or other committees! ▲



## Group Homes in Mt. Helix

Numerous group homes are operating in the Mt. Helix area, and some are located in close proximity. The group homes can serve a variety of purposes, ranging from sober living homes to homes for the disabled or those who have recently been paroled from prison.

In our quest for more information about group homes, GMIA board members met with Assemblyman Randy Voepel to discuss possible legislation. Voepel's staff responded to questions raised by GMIA about group homes. Below is a summary of their responses.

### *Are there limits to the number of group homes in a neighborhood?*

The California Department of Social Services can deny an application for a group home if the new facility would result in an overconcentration. Overconcentration is defined as facilities that are separated by less than 300 feet of another licensed residential care facility. State legislation requires congregated living facilities to be separated by 300 feet to 1,000 feet, depending on the type of group home. For a group home to bypass those zoning laws, special permission must be granted by the city or county.



### *Are neighbors entitled to be notified of a group home initiating operation?*

Neighbors are not entitled to know that a group home is moving into their neighborhood.

### *Do neighbors have any recourse if they protest the establishment of a new group home?*

Do not protest the location of a pending group home. Serious fines, imprisonment, and lawsuits can result. However, neighbors can raise concerns with their elected representatives about a group home, such as high demand for parking.

The first step should be to call the local government or the Department of Social Services to verify that the group home is licensed and legally permitted to exist. The second step would be to verify local laws regarding short-term rentals. A third option would be to contact law enforcement regarding any signs of a nuisance, defined as "something that interferes with the use of property that is irritating, offensive, obstructive, or dangerous." Law enforcement could use the reports to help build a case against a group home. ▲



# GMIA Gardens ROCK!

## INNOVATIVE 2021 VIRTUAL GARDEN TOUR A SPECTACULAR SUCCESS

by Pat Ryan

Thanks to more than 40 GMIA members who shared amazing photos of their properties, this year's garden tour was a true reflection of the extraordinary gardening talent right here in our own Mt. Helix backyards. What a bonus to see so many more than the usual five gardens without ever leaving home! In appreciation, the winners in our five categories were awarded a gift certificate from Hunter's Nursery in Lemon Grove. Our thanks go to everyone who supported this project.

Our iMovie, featuring over 100 garden photos, will premiere on the gmia.net. website and become a part of GMIA garden tour history. Watch for an eblast invitation with a link to the premiere showing.

Thanks to these committee members who produced this new GMIA member participation event: Pat Ryan, Chair, Pam Coe, Dania Barroso-Conde, Adam Conde, Coleen Geraghty, Kathleen Hedberg, Tom Huffman, Anne Krueger, and Holly Yarris.

### Blooming Gardens



**Richard & Nancy Fassett**

### Drought Tolerant Gardens



**Stephen & Sherry Saltzman**



**Joe & Linda Morse (left)**  
HONORABLE MENTION

**Larry & Sharon Klein (below)**  
HONORABLE MENTION



**Mike & Jane Pisor (left)**  
HONORABLE MENTION

**Tere Trout & Jonathan Becker (below)**  
HONORABLE MENTION





## Garden Architecture, Art, Design & Hardscape



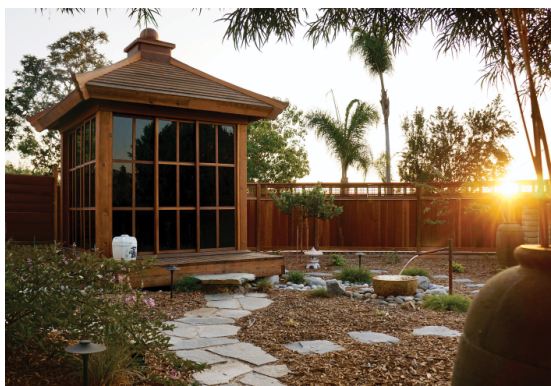
**Rick & Gwen DeHaven**



**John Castell & Jim Brega**  
HONORABLE MENTION



**Helen Adams**  
HONORABLE MENTION



**BETH JACOBSON & PAUL FITCH**  
HONORABLE MENTION

## Farmer's Market



**Charles & Patti Turkle**

## PRESIDENT'S AWARD

### Rock Star Garden!



**Leo & Bev Papas**

President Kathleen Hedberg commented: "This garden can be enjoyed 24 hours a day, with the use of solar lights and fairy colorful lights with a beautiful rock walkway leading to the gathering area. I love the use of the rock walls to guide the way!"



## An Eagle Has Landed

**G**MIA members Steven and Larisa Rotsart of La Mesa have the unusual distinction of raising three Eagle Scouts, and their daughter, Rasma, is a member of the inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts in the United States.

Rasma, now 15, joined the Girl Scouts of America in second grade and worked through the years to earn recognition for service and leadership. During her middle school years, she became lead cadet, winning a bronze award. She was also the first female patrol leader of her troop and the second female to become senior patrol leader.

That was about as high a scouting honor as she could achieve until February 2019, when the Boy Scouts of America became Scouts BSA and announced it would allow girls the opportunity and experience of becoming Eagle Scouts. Rasma and her troop of 10 girls were overjoyed.

“We were so excited to go through together,” she said.

Achieving Eagle Scout rank is a rigorous process. A candidate must earn at least 21 merit badges for competence in areas from first aid to business, demonstrate leadership, and complete a service project. A mere 6 percent of Scouts nationwide make it to the top.

In February 2021, Rasma was one of only 17 girls in San Diego County and 1,000 nationwide to be inducted as an Eagle Scout.

For her service project, she designed and built a 12-foot by 10-foot community kiosk at the site of the fire station on Mt. Helix after consulting with the Mt. Helix Park Foundation Board and the foundation’s executive director, Krista Powers.

John Mead, who built the kiosk at the top of Mt. Helix in 2005, shared his blueprint with Rasma, and La Mesa Lumber donated



*Eagle Scout Rasma Rotsart*

the wood and other supplies for her project. Rasma’s fellow troop members weren’t able to help with the physical construction because of the pandemic, but they supplied moral support.

“The park is special to my family,” Rasma said. “Both my brothers worked with the foundation on their Eagle Scout projects, and my family and I love to help out at the park’s many community events.”

“I was honored when Rasma chose the Park for her Eagle Scout efforts,” Powers said. “She selected a tough and labor-intensive construction project. COVID made it even more difficult because she could not have the help of other Scouts. Rasma took the challenge with a smile, a great attitude, and never gave up.” ▲

## Making Avocado Boulevard Safer for Pedestrians

**C**irculate San Diego promoted a walking tour of Avocado Boulevard in June, posting fun-fact signs along several routes on the boulevard and in the surrounding neighborhood. The walking routes were developed as an initial effort to call attention to the need for physical changes along Avocado Boulevard to create a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling alongside vehicle drivers.

Circulate San Diego sought ideas in a survey on how Avocado Boulevard can be improved for greater pedestrian safety. The number one suggestion was adding sidewalks. Many respondents also suggested taking steps to reduce speeding traffic on Avocado Boulevard. The information will be communicated to county officials. ▲

## Get a Rebate For Your Mulch From the Helix Water District

**H**elix Water District customers are now eligible for a rebate of \$25 per cubic yard, up to \$100, for the purchase and installation of plant-based mulch.

Using mulch is encouraged because it helps landscapes thrive and makes plants more water-efficient. Using mulch in your landscape helps your soil retain water, reducing evaporation and damage from the sun. Mulch can also reduce erosion, add nutrients to your soil, prevent weeds and create a tidy appearance.

To receive the rebate, go to [hwd.com/mulch-rebate](http://hwd.com/mulch-rebate) for instructions and to obtain a Mulch Rebate Application. If you have questions, contact [conserve@helixwater.org](mailto:conserve@helixwater.org) or call 619-667-6226. ▲

## CURB APPEAL WINNER

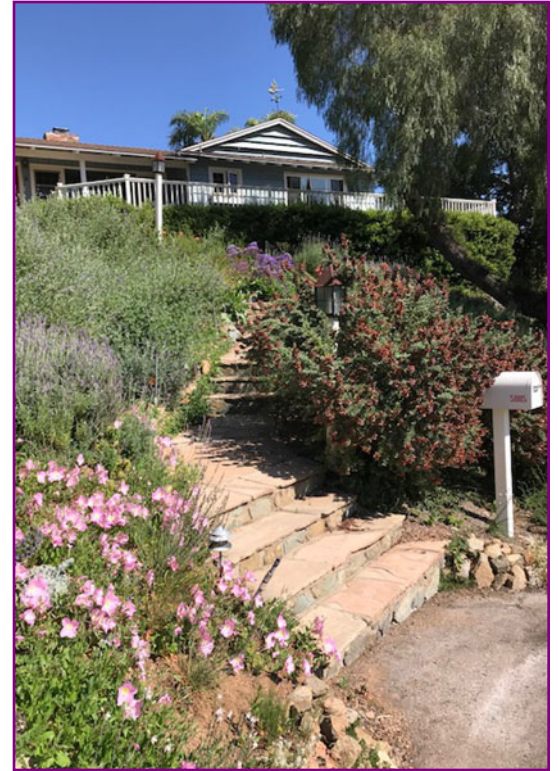
### Marcy Thornton

**T**he winner of the Curb Appeal Award is Marcy Thornton. A resident of Mesa Terrace, Marcy will receive a free year of GMIA membership. Here is her story.

*We bought our home in 1990. I grew up in Mt. Helix and was so happy to be back after living in Los Angeles. My Grandma and mom were avid gardeners, so I grew up around that love. With the drought and climate change, I wanted to create a garden that was responsible, but I also love the cottage garden look. I love wildlife in my garden, so I plant many plants that are friendly for birds, butterflies and bees.*

*In an effort to make our hillside lot usable, my husband built stairs in the backyard. We also built several decks, and terraces with rock walls constructed almost entirely from rocks on the property. My planting projects have included lots of sages, lavender, grasses, grevillea, rosemary, wisteria, and olive trees.*

*I've also incorporated lots of succulents and agave, which my friends and I share with each other. I have planted a small area in tribute to my Grandma with the annuals she loved. I'm hoping to put in some raised beds for vegetables, but for now I have pots with herbs in the patio. My garden brings me so much joy! It's definitely my favorite place to be when I'm at home. 🌱*



## The Weld Family Serving their Community

by Susan Nichols

**A**s As GMIA member Emily Weld says, "Mt. Helix is an inspiring community with people who make things happen. Inspired by seeing neighborhood walkers pick up trash, and after participating in a monthly GMIA Park & Ride cleanup on the eastbound side of the I-8 freeway, the Weld family adopted the neglected Park & Ride at Murray Drive on the westbound side of I-8 in 2020.

Emily and her husband, Andy, who have lived in the Mt. Helix community for five years, were granted a permit by Caltrans for monthly trash pickup and a second permit for weed abatement as needed. Initially the family spent quite a bit of time tidying the overgrown area, including spreading two truckloads of mulch they had



delivered to the site. Family, friends, and good Samaritans pitched in to spread the material to help keep future weeds at bay. "Now that the lot is more under control, monthly upkeep is very doable," Emily said.

The Welds value motivating their kids to serve the community and to love their neighbors. "Kids learn by modeling what their parents do," said Emily, who noted that both her parents and Andy's modeled service as well. The Weld family of six raise service dogs for Canine Companions for Independence, assist at their church and school, and prepare and deliver a bi-weekly meal to those people living in their cars in a "safe-space" designated lot.

Please honk and say thanks when you spot them at the Park & Ride – or lend a welcome hand. 🌱



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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](http://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 2022 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

## GMIA Survey Results Are In

Since 1938, GMIA has worked with county and regional government entities to help resolve issues that impact our community. Recently, we sent members a survey designed to determine their primary areas of interest and concerns relative to GMIA's mission. Seventy-one households responded, and here's what they told us.

- More than 85 percent of respondents ranked "preserving our semi-rural environment" as a primary concern. Related issues such as "upholding single-family housing zoning" and "maintaining community character" also ranked high.
- To a second question, asking members to prioritize the initiatives they most care about, "crime prevention" was the leading answer. The remaining responses were spread almost equally across six different categories: planning and land use; traffic control; water rates; road maintenance, fire safety and quiet skies.
- The majority of respondents said they support GMIA as a vehicle "to protect our unique region from development and special interest groups" and "to ensure our community voice is heard by elected representatives." Others value GMIA primarily as a resource "to promote conservation and low-water landscaping."

Thanks to all those who returned the survey. 🌱

## CALENDAR

