



viewpoints

FALL 2021

Volume 51 Issue 4

New Hosts for the Succulent Swap

A new date and new hosts but the same lovely venue! The Succulent Swap is one of GMIA's most popular events. It's free to all, but members are allowed early access, so renew your membership if it has lapsed or rejoin when you arrive!

With the 2020 swap canceled due to the pandemic, we are especially excited to welcome you this year. Susan Nichols and her team of GMIA volunteers organizing this event will provide coffee, water and light snacks. The Succulent Swap is an opportu-

Saturday, Oct. 23

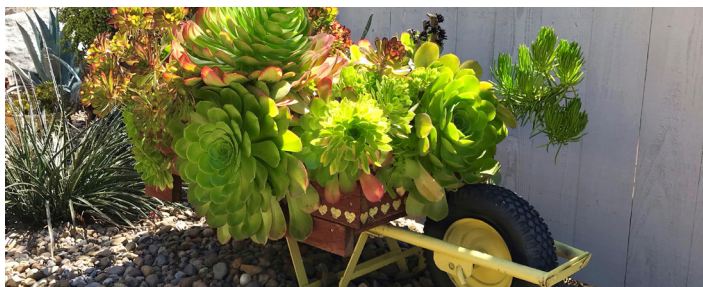
10 a.m. – 12 noon

10805 Melva Road,
La Mesa

VIP entry for
GMIA members @10 a.m.
(Non-members @11 a.m.)

nity to discover new varieties, learn more about GMIA and enjoy the magnificent two-acre gardens at 10805 Melva Road. Wendy and Ron Caragher are the current owners of the property, where many previous swaps have taken place. Bring your own cuttings or plants to share, but don't worry if you're short on supplies. Our generous participants always bring more than enough to share. You might want to bring bags or boxes to transport the plants home.

We extend our warmest thanks to the Caraghers for hosting the Succulent Swap. 🌱



Reduce Speed Ahead

Our Slow Down campaign is working! Neighbors responded positively, and drivers reduced their speed after GMIA volunteers posted the cleverly designed Slow Down signs along West Fuerte, Horizon Hills and Grandview Drives.

Interested in putting the signs up on your street? The three-step process is simple: identify a neighborhood liaison to coordinate distribution; ask for homeowners permission to erect signs on their property; and remove the signs after seven days. Regarding requests to purchase the signs, we are not ready to sell them yet, but we'll keep you informed.

Thanks to GMIA member Alice Qualls for her fabulous design work and to Kathleen Hedberg, past board president, for spearheading this effort. Contact Kathleen at kchedberg@cox.net for more information and to add your street to the list. 🌱





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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www.gmia.net

Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com

MISSION

GMIA is an 83-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

I can still vividly remember the first time I ever heard about the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association. It was around 2 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2009. I was a reporter for the San Diego Union-Tribune, and I was covering a proposed new rate structure by the Helix Water District. Mark Schuppert, a GMIA board member, spoke against the plan. He gave a reasoned, well-researched argument, and the Helix board members listened intently to what he had to say.

I didn't live in East County then, but I remember being extremely impressed that a volunteer organization existed to advocate on behalf of its community. I promised myself that I would join GMIA if I ever lived in the Mt. Helix area. (By the way, the Helix Water District later changed its rate structure to a new plan that GMIA favored.)

Fast forward three years to July 2012. I had left the Union-Tribune, secured a job as the communications director for the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, and married. My husband and I found a house in the Mt. Helix community that we loved and was an easy commute to work. Soon after we moved in, I signed us up as GMIA members.

In the summer of 2019, I heard from Kathleen Hedberg, then-GMIA president, and a Helix Water District board member who I knew from my time as a reporter. She invited me to join the GMIA board and use my journalism skills as editor of the group's newsletter, Viewpoints. It was an easy sell.

I've been incredibly proud of the work GMIA has done since I've been a member. GMIA hosted a forum for county supervisor candidates, and the room was packed with voters. GMIA joined with my neighbors on Horizon Hills Drive to successfully fight the insane plan to house two sexual predators in our community. We found ways during the pandemic to keep alive the popular Walk to the Top and Garden Tour events.

As GMIA's new president, I'm looking forward to continuing GMIA's advocacy efforts and community events. We have a hard-working board of dedicated volunteers who care deeply about our community. If you are interested in becoming more involved in GMIA's activities, please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. GMIA can be an even stronger organization with your support. 🌱

Anne Krueger

Thank You Donors!

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

Chris & Michele Billand / Jan Townsend & Richard Harms / Randi Larsson /
Jim & Linda Michael / Leo & Bev Papas / William Ziegler & Laura Berend /
Charles & June Jenke / Julia de Jessop / Joanne Ling / Eric Ayaso & James Marshall/
Robert & Holly Yarris / Sara Cummings / Paul & Sandy Golden /
Jon & Kathleen Hedberg / Chris & Betsy Quinn



Bob Yarris Applauded for Community Service

A decade ago, GMIA created the Al Platt Memorial Award for Service in remembrance of Al, a longtime leader in our community. Our award recognizes those who, like Al, go above and beyond to make our neighborhood a better place.

Bob Yarris, recipient of the 2021 Al Platt Award is an exemplary member of our community, where he has lived for 42 years.

In 1992, Bob was elected to the Grossmont Healthcare District Board. He served for 16 years, while also serving on the Grossmont Hospital Board of Directors.

He helped negotiate the lease terms for the hospital and its assets to Sharp Healthcare, ensuring the facility remained open in our community.

Bob was also appointed to the First Five Commission tasked with promoting early childhood education and well-being. He served on the board of the Challenge Center advocating for



the disabled and also spent 15 years as a member of the La Mesa Lions Club.

For the past seven years, as a founding member and president of the Casa de Oro Alliance, Bob has led the slow but steady transformation of the Campo Road area.

Initially the group sought to address high-risk businesses there, but seeing a greater need, the Alliance has expanded its focus to re-envision the blighted neighborhood.

Many GMIA members know from personal experience how frustrating it can

be to work with cumbersome, slow-moving governmental agencies.

But Bob has remained tireless, and he won't take no for an answer when it comes to improving the community. He has fought hard, and our community is fortunate to have him as a partner. ▲

News from Casa de Oro

An upgrade to the Casa de Oro Gateway—at the corner of Kenwood Drive and Campo Road—is in the works to include a new “Welcome to Casa de Oro” sign.

A grant to the Casa de Oro Alliance from San Diego County will finance the sign as well as the placement of large planters at 15 high-profile locations and creative banners for the light poles along Campo Road.

Working with the Rancho San Diego Sheriff's station, the Alliance has also succeeded in closing all illegal marijuana dispensaries in the Casa de Oro neighborhood.

Enjoy Autumn at the Water Conservation Garden

The Water Conservation Garden's Fall Festival is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The free event in Rancho San Diego will feature plants to purchase plus outdoor demonstrations on water harvesting, tree planting and hillside horticulture. In addition, the garden has openings available in November for one-on-one landscape design consultations with professional designers. The 45-minute consultation is \$70 for members and \$85 for non-members.

For more information, visit:

thegarden.org/seasonal-workshops ▲

Be Water Wise

A recent report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Drought Taskforce, reviewing the 2020-21 season, said the six southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah) recorded the lowest total precipitation and near-highest temperatures since 1895.

Please follow these Helix Water District guidelines to reduce the amount of water used for irrigation:

- Water on schedule
- Use the most efficient sprinkler
- Prevent water runoff
- Regulate water pressure

More info: hwd.com/how-to-water



State Senator Brian Jones and former GMIA president Kathleen Hedberg



Tracey Stotz and Claudia Erickson

GMIA's Annual Meeting

Flavored by great weather, members gathered at the Harry Griffen Park amphitheater in L... meeting since 2019.

State Senator Brian Jones addressed the crowd, Alliance president, Bob Yarris, with the AI Pla

Families in attendance enjoyed the music of th... men, and the flavors of Mahalo Shave Ice for d

This could be the beginning of a beautiful trad



Steve and Sherry



Marcy Thornton (right) and her



ing was a Huge Success!

ed with chairs, blankets and picnic dinners at
a Mesa. It was GMIA's first in-person annual

and the GMIA board presented Casa de Oro
tt Award for Service to our Community.

e classic rock and country band, The Trades-
dessert.

ition.



y Saltzman



mom, Karolyn Malmin



Families enjoying the GMIA picnic



Donna Andrisani and Bob Witmond

Board Member Profile

Mike Valley holds the distinction of being the longest serving member of GMIA's current board. He joined in 2003 after a 40-year career with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Mike was still in high school when he began interning with CAL FIRE and rose in the ranks to battalion chief, responsible for the area stretching from Lakeside to the state's border with Mexico and as far east as Dulzura. He is an accredited teacher of fire operations and an expert in logistics—the skill of setting up a base and ordering food and supplies during firefighting operations.

Before he retired in 1998, Mike fought the 1970 Laguna Fire, the largest recorded in California prior to 2003, and a 50,000-acre blaze in the NorCal lava beds. Returning to help CAL FIRE battle the 2003 Cedar Fire, Mike commanded operations from Gillespie Field and met then-President George H.W. Bush, who flew in to meet with affected homeowners.

Born in Racine, Wisconsin, Mike came to California as a child with his mother, grandmother and four siblings. His mom purchased a ranch in Dehesa, and Mike attended Dehesa Elementary School, then a 2-room schoolhouse. He has been a lifelong resident of San Diego, minus the three years CAL FIRE asked him to serve as battalion chief in Orange County. Mike is GMIA's liaison with San Miguel Fire for the annual



Mike and Shirley Valley

Walk to the Top. He has attended nearly every GMIA Garden Tour and Annual Meeting since 2003 and is a regular at GMIA's monthly cleanup (see page 7), in addition to staging his own personal trash pickup along Morningstar Road every few weeks.

Volunteering comes naturally to Mike. Alongside his work for GMIA, he has been a member of the Kiwanis since 1974 and served three terms as president of the Lake Murray chapter.

What's the motivation for this decades-long commitment to community service? "Improving the county is interesting and important work," he said. 🌱

Save the Date for our Walk to the Top

Saturday, January 8th, 2022 • 10:00 a.m.
Meet at the Fire Station at 10105 Vivera Drive

Join us for one of GMIA's most popular—the 14th annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix. This favorite family-and dog-friendly walk returns to welcome in 2022! Stroll up and down Mt. Helix Drive (2/3 mile each way) behind our big yellow banner with friends and neighbors. At the top, enjoy complimentary refreshments provided by GMIA. Cosponsor Mt. Helix Park Foundation provides our magnificent location and volunteer assistance.

The walk is also an opportunity to meet other local nonprofit partners and learn what they are doing to benefit our community. Those interested in volunteering to make this event a success, contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. 🌱



Keeping it Clean—Meet the Litter Patrol

Driving or walking through our neighborhood, you're likely to notice the proliferation of trash that litters our otherwise beautiful community. Although GMIA would like to see governmental agencies solve this problem, their limited staff and resources are not able to meet the need. But there's good news: lots of folks are lending a hand on an ongoing basis to clean up the debris.

GMIA wants to recognize some of these considerate neighbors. We encourage everyone to maintain our beautiful semi-rural region by bringing a trash bag and pick-up stick on your next walk. Combine your exercise with civic pride.

- GMIA member Jon Hedberg walks Saturday and Sunday mornings from Explorer Road to Damon Lane Park to Fury Lane and then up Avocado Boulevard. He has a bag and trash picker and fills it up three times on his route. Many people are thanking him as they walk or drive past. He recently came across a suspicious driver in the neighborhood – and did double duty as an emissary for Neighborhood Watch!
- Earlier this year, a Nextdoor post by Fred Peace complaining about trash and asking for “reasonable suggestions on how to spruce up Del Rio Road” sparked a response from former GMIA president Kathleen Hedberg. “If everyone did a little, it will add up,” she said. Fred and Nextdoor neighbors have since organized Clean Up Del Rio Road.
- Kiwanis Rancho San Diego sponsors a regular walk along SR94 eastbound from Avocado Avenue to the Campo Road Junction on the fourth Saturday of each month starting at 7 a.m. from Smart & Final. They also pick up litter on the west side of the route, and on the second Saturday of each month, they clean the walking trail behind the McGrath YMCA.
- The Casa de Oro Alliance does a monthly cleanup along the business district on Campo Road on the first Saturday of the month starting at 8 a.m. Volunteers are rewarded with a clean community plus donuts and coffee. Info: casadeoroalliance.org
- GMIA members participate in a monthly cleanup at the Park & Ride at the junction of Fuerte Road and I-8 eastbound on the third Saturday of each month beginning at 9 a.m. This volunteer effort to keep our “front porch” clean is now in its eighth year. Info: gmia.net
- The Weld family, loyal GMIA members, has adopted the Park & Ride at Severin Drive and /I-8 westbound. They vigilantly remove litter and weeds as a service to our community. (See GMIA Viewpoints Summer 2021)
- The Mt. Helix Park Foundation credits a host of volunteers who clean up trash daily and patrol for litter each morning on Mt. Helix Drive. In addition, young missionaries from Just Serve spend two hours every Friday helping with litter and maintenance at the park. “Mount Helix Drive and the park would be a mess without them!!” said Krista Bishop Powers, executive director of the MHPF. Info: mthelixpark.org



WANT TO JOIN THE NEW FITNESS TREND THAT'S GOOD FOR BOTH YOU AND THE PLANET? “PLOGGING” IS A TERM COINED FROM THE ENGLISH PHRASE JOGGING AND PLOCKA UPP, A SWEDISH TERM THAT MEANS PICKING UP. SO DON YOUR EXERCISE GEAR, GRAB A TRASH BAG AND PICK-UP STICK AND GIVE IT A TRY.

We know our members care. Help us maintain this wonderful neighborhood, and let us know of your efforts to tidy our community. We'd love to hear from you. 🌱



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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 2022 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

From the Rancho Helix de Oro Fire Safe Council

The Defensible Space Assistance Program (DSAP) was created to help low-income seniors and physically disabled persons adhere to defensible space regulations. If you are physically and financially unable to maintain the state-mandated 100 feet of defensible space around your home, the DSAP may be available to you.

DSAP can provide the following services performed by professional contractors who are bonded and insured:

- Brush and tree trimming/thinning
- Raking of dead leaves and pine needles
- Chipping of removed vegetation (with chips left onsite)
- Onsite education about effective defensible space
- Initial one-day defensible space clean up

Visit firesafesdcounty.org and check the Programs tab to see if you qualify.

CALENDAR

