



viewpoints

SPRING 2022

Volume 52 Issue 2

Welcome Back to the Art & Garden Tour

Sunday, April 24 ~ Noon - 4 p.m.

GMIA is excited to welcome back one of our most popular events—the 53rd Annual Art and Garden Tour! Please join us on Sunday, April 24th, to enjoy and be inspired by four remarkable gardens. We appreciate the vision, hard work and creativity of these garden owners and thank them for sharing their gardens with our members. Thanks also to second vice president Pat Ryan for coordinating this complex event.

For this self-guided tour, you may begin at any garden using the map on page 4. This year, two gardens feature parking at the same convenient location. The other two gardens offer easy parking on nearby streets. Please be aware: 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. Refer to the map for specific entry and exit points and parking areas.

Please be prepared! Wear sturdy comfortable shoes as some gardens have slopes, stairs and unstable footing and require walking from the parking area.

Our Art & Garden Tour is free to members whose \$18 per household dues are up to date (as of April 20, 2022). Check your mailing label for your renewal date. You may renew your membership on the day of the tour with a check or cash. Although the Garden Tour is not open to the public, we will allow non-member guests for a donation of \$15 per person or \$18 per household.

This is a family-friendly event, and well-behaved children are welcome. However, participating gardens cannot accommodate strollers or any pets. Thanks also to Second Vice President Pat Ryan for coordinating this complex event.

*Enjoy your day
in the gardens!*

Record Attendance for 2022 Walk to the Top



Maybe it was relief from the worst of Covid. Maybe it was the beauty of the day. Whatever the reason, there was record attendance of 218 at the annual Walk to the Top on January 8. Participants trekked up Mt. Helix with family, friends and pets. Christian DeMent, pastor of La Mesa First United Methodist, brought the congregation's entire youth group.

Grand Marshals Paloma Conde and Greta Geldbach, both children of GMIA members, hoisted the GMIA banner to lead the way from the fire station to the Mt. Helix amphitheater, where many community partners staffed information booths. They included the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, Casa de Oro Alliance, Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (RSVP), Helix Water District, La Mesa Historical Society, The Animal Pad, Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates, and Peter Pan Junior Theater.

Kudos to GMIA second vice president Pat Ryan and board member Lidia Chang, who coordinated this year's event and to all the volunteers who helped make it a success. 🌱



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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(619) 252-2295

First Vice President
Vacant

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

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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: Coleen Geraghty
Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,
Coyote Press Graphic
Communications

www.gmia.net

Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com

MISSION

GMIA is an 84-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 GMIA Board of Directors recently held a strategic retreat to remind us of what the organization is doing well and to determine the key areas in which we can do better. Board members agreed on the things we do well:

- Coordinates well-organized and well-attended events, such as the upcoming Garden Tour
- Keeps the best interests of the community at heart in our work as an advocacy group
- Excels at keeping the community informed through the Viewpoints newsletter and email alerts about upcoming issues
- Maintains good relationships among the board members, who work well together.

The board also agreed on areas for improvement. A big area is marketing. Although GMIA has been representing residents in our community for decades, many people still don't know about the organization and the important work we are doing.

We also want to encourage more community members to volunteer with GMIA and we want to better use the dedicated volunteers we already have. Events like the Garden Tour and the Succulent Swap would not be possible without the participation of volunteers. We appreciate our volunteers who step up and are willing to do whatever is necessary to help make an event successful.

At our retreat, we discussed engaging more volunteers in more meaningful and permanent ways. Every event we put on takes months of planning. For the Garden Tour, for example, we have to select gardens whose owners are willing to open their yards to visitors, secure permits from the county, take photos and write descriptions of the gardens for Viewpoints, line up volunteers to staff each home on the day of the tour, and countless other details. (A special shout-out to GMIA 2nd Vice President Pat Ryan, who is once again leading the organization of the Garden Tour.).

What if we had volunteers to help with the process? We could improve our popular events and volunteers could have the satisfaction of knowing they served their community.

If you would like to volunteer for GMIA, send an email to yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com and let us know of your interest. If you have a special talent or area of expertise, please mention that. We're looking for volunteers to help with all of the issues and events that GMIA supports.

I hope you are able to take the Garden Tour on April 24. When you do, be sure to say "thank you" to the volunteers who help put on this signature event! 🌱



Anne Krueger

Thank You Donors!

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

Donna Wallace	Bob and Kimberly Bardin	Richard and Susan Stewart
Laura Saterbak		Jeff and Shelia Krueger
Robert and Holly Yarris		



Supervisor Nathan Fletcher (right) visiting the Casa de Oro Library in February

Fletcher Pledges Support for New Casa de Oro Library

County Board of Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher has pledged to support construction of a new library for the Casa de Oro community. Fletcher, whose district now includes Casa de Oro, toured the existing library space on Campo Road in early February at the invitation of the Friends of the Casa de Oro Library.

The library is slated to be built within a 12-acre spot near the Spring Valley Academy on Conrad Drive off Campo Road. The location is next to an AYSO soccer field and Little League field. A teen center and/or Boys & Girls Club are also being considered for the site.

Friends of the Casa de Oro Library, led by new president Susan Nichols, has scheduled a fundraiser for Sunday, May 1, to increase membership and support for the library. Proceeds will finance books, equipment and programs that the annual

budget cannot cover. Tickets begin at \$25 and include individual annual membership. Contact Nichols at 858-775-1607 or nichols.susan.lamesa@gmail.com

“The first libraries were founded 5,000 years ago to house clay tablets recording transactions and local events,” Nichols said. “We’ve come a long way! Modern libraries offer e-books, audio books and videos as well as print books and periodicals. They provide access to computers and internet service, special programs for library patrons and nourishing meals for underserved children.

“A new library in Casa de Oro is fundamental to the revitalization of the community, she added.”

In 2014, GMIA formally asked the county to consider a new free-standing library in Casa de Oro to serve as a focal point for the Mt. Helix community and serve the schools within walking distance—Murdock Elementary, Spring Valley Middle, Monte Vista High and Santa Sofia.

Since then, the Friends of the Casa de Oro Library has been working with the Casa de Oro Alliance—both nonprofit groups—to expedite the construction. At a mere 6,300

square feet, the footprint of the current library is dwarfed by others in the area. Rancho San Diego’s library is 20,000 sq. ft.; El Cajon’s is 30,000 and La Mesa’s is 10,000.

Before she retired, Supervisor Dianne Jacob successfully lobbied the

County Board of Supervisors for funds to construct a new 15,000-square-foot structure in Casa de Oro. Fletcher has now promised to revitalize the \$22-million project as the library celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

Membership in Friends of the Casa de Oro Library is \$5 for students, \$10 for individuals/families, \$25 for businesses/associations, and \$100 for patrons. Cash or checks can be deposited in the secure library lockbox or mailed to: Friends of the Casa de Oro Library, 9805 Campo Road, #180, Spring Valley, CA 91977. 🌱

FUNDRAISER FOR THE CASA DE ORO LIBRARY

Marvelous Midafternoon Tea Party

Sunday, May 1, 2-5 p.m.

Tickets: \$25, includes membership

VIP Tickets: \$100

(Includes private reception with Dianne Jacob)

Contact: nichols.susan.lamesa@gmail.com

2022 MAP

Art & Garden Tour



The Garden of Sarah & Lee Rogers

5346 Grandridge Road Note: Park on Grandridge.

This unique 1.25 acre hillside location, seen on our 2009 tour, was developed in the 1970s and purchased by the Rogers in 2002. With amazing views from Mt. Helix to Cowles Mountain as a backdrop, unusual cacti and succulent specimens are showcased by pathways and landings built of stones and railroad ties filled with colorful mulches, all brought in by "the bucket load" by the owners. "Rock rivers" alleviate some major drainage issues and stabilize the slope. Intriguing elephant's foot palms are scattered throughout. An inviting poolside pergola, captivating dolphin fountain and remarkable Talavera pottery collection are featured in this unique owner-created garden.



The Garden of Joris Hitt 4516 Resmar Road



Note: Park on south end of the Hillview Drive loop. Use caution crossing the street. **NO PARKING ON RESMAR.**

Spectacular 350 degree views, ingenious use of native Mt. Helix stone, inviting terraces and landings, extensive use of drought-tolerant plants, and dramatic pergolas and arbors provide myriad areas for entertaining in this Tuscan-inspired “treehouse.” After purchasing the property in 2007, the owner undertook extensive remodeling and expansion. Bricks from the original 1948 “Woida” farmhouse form a charming path under the white floribunda rose-covered arbor. Massive boulders support terraces filled with rock roses, rosemary, and grevillea, cascading down the steep slope to the inviting pool and landscaping below. “Yellow Bells” tacoma, westringia and “Silver Sheen” pittosporum are sprinkled throughout this amazing garden.



The Garden of Susan & Larry Nichols 10282 Vista de la Cruz



Note: Enter only at Vista de la Cruz from Grandview and park only on the right side. **NO ENTRY FROM RESMAR.**

Awash with color and charm, this immaculate property, showcased several times in the past, still delights the senses and features many new additions. One hundred fifty-three mosaic and glass stepping stones, created by Susan, form a delightful path encircling the cottage garden. A vegetable garden, fruit tree orchard, bird sanctuary and extensive variety of blooming annuals, succulents and perennials are featured. Kurapia, a drought-tolerant groundcover, has filled in a former lawn area. Three distinct entertainment areas, including an inviting gazebo, skirt the saltwater pool. Fronting their home, the Nichols have created a model conservation garden using 30 varieties of drought tolerant plants.



The Garden of Emily & Andrew Weld 4821 Resmar Road



Note: Enter only from Vista de la Cruz and park only on the right side. **NO ENTRY FROM RESMAR—EXIT ONLY.**

A sweeping circular paver driveway, bordered by pines and newly planted flora, forms the inviting entry to this property, purchased by the Welds just five years ago. With a stunning view of Mt. Helix in the front, the interesting side gate leads to a multi-terraced wonderland. An expanded patio, newly planted slope of colorful salvias and other drought tolerant plantings, and repurposed fountain of succulents, highlight the large sunny entertainment and play areas. Timber and decomposed granite steps lead through pines and carrot wood trees to the pool above. Paths continue up to a large level park-like recreation area for the kids, a barn and a chicken coop.



GMIA Keeps Community Informed About Safe Parking Issue

GMIA has been leading the efforts to ensure the community is informed and involved with a proposal by San Diego County to use a closed Park and Ride at Avocado Boulevard and State Route 94 as a safe parking spot for the homeless.

The Park and Ride is one of four locations in East County under possible consideration to provide facilities for the homeless. Currently, safe parking lots for the homeless in San Diego are open only during the evenings to provide a safe place to park for those who are living out of their vehicles.

The GMIA board asked county officials to hold a public webinar for the Mt. Helix area, similar to webinars that had been held at the other locations in Spring Valley and Lakeside.

On Jan. 19, Omar Passons, director of the county's Office of Homeless Solutions, led a webinar for the Mt. Helix community. However, it was marred by technical difficulties, so a second webinar was held on Jan. 26. More than 150 people attended both webinars, and many residents expressed concern that the Avocado Blvd. lot was not a good loca-



tion for safe parking because of its proximity to a residential neighborhood and a preschool.

Passons says the Avocado Blvd. location is part of a preliminary evaluation, and not a firm proposal for a safe parking site. "The county has not proposed to place anything there, but rather is engaging this community input, evaluating a range of locations—including several raised by people who attended one or both of

your sessions—and understanding the alignment of need with the many other constraints that exist," he wrote in an email to GMIA.

He said the county is processing the community feedback and there is no specific update for this or the other potential sites for homeless facilities being reviewed in East County. He vowed that the county will engage GMIA before any steps are taken so the community can continue to be involved. GMIA will keep the community posted on any developments regarding the site.

GMIA opposes the proposal for safe parking at the site based on the information currently available. The board is open to learning more and helping to find another site for safe parking. ▲

In Memoriam: Dave Zimmerman

GMIA is saddened to report the passing in January of recently retired board member David McGilvery Zimmerman. He was 70 years old.

Dave joined the board in 2010, and provided stability during a time of transition. As first vice president, he helped steer our monthly meetings and kept us to a strict schedule. His 11-year service to GMIA was a labor of love.

"Working for the community is paramount for me," Dave said in a 2020 profile in Viewpoints. "It's such a wonderful group of people on the board. I've never



seen a board that is as proactive and all-supportive as this one."

Dave and his wife, Jocelyn, bought their Mt. Helix home in 1983. They met while he was renting a room in La Jolla—where she was the landlord—and they were married for more than 40 years.

A retired engineer at Raytheon Technologies, Dave earned his undergraduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his master's

from UC San Diego. In addition to serving on the GMIA board, he was a member of the Valle de Oro Community Planning Group. ▲



Tips from a Master Gardener

by Sharon Reeve

We live in a very special and unique place on planet Earth— Sunset Gardening Zone 23. If you love gardening, La Mesa/Mount Helix is the place to be for growing a wide array of subtropical plants according to the Sunset Western Garden Book. This is the reference of choice for information about the climate zones and plants for California gardens.

Zone 23 occupies a narrow strip of land about 10 miles wide, running slightly inland from the coast as far south as Baja and as far north as Santa Barbara. This ribbon of ideal climate is generally safe from freezing temperatures and the hot summer days that can occur further inland, making it ideal for growing a wide range of plants.

Unlike the USDA Hardiness Zones that look only at winter lows, the Sunset Gardening Zones consider total climate factors, such as the amount of rainfall, wind, length of the growing season, humidity, and summer high temperatures. This gives a more complete idea about what plants can thrive in our region.

Because our temperatures are mild, we can grow outdoor orchids, cactus, fruit trees, citrus trees, nut trees, perennials, annuals, bromeliads, proteas, and other exotic plants. We are limited in terms of the fruit trees we can grow, as many of them require a substantial amount of cold in order to bear fruit, but plant breeders have created fruit trees that flower and fruit on very little winter chill, so problem solved!

The inland heat in our region lets us grow tomatoes, pomegranates and grapefruit— plants that would languish on the coast. Our soil tends to be alkaline or neutral pH, which suits plants like herbs and most California natives, which are adapted to the sandy granite loam soils that make up a large portion of the state. These soils tend to be low in organic material and nutrients. If ease of gardening is a goal, natives fill that role very easily. Local natives generally only need irrigation to get established and little, if any, irrigation after the first year.

In future columns, I look forward to sharing more about the plants that grow well in our region and hints on how to nurture them.

Sharon Reeve is a UCCE Master Gardener since 1998. She worked as a consulting horticulturist for Monrovia Nurseries and as a landscape designer for BrightView Landscapes in San Diego. Sharon has earned a BS in horticulture, a BA in landscape architecture, and an MS in ecology. She enjoys studying, growing, and blogging about plants in her La Mesa garden. Her design business, ReWild, specializes in drought-tolerant, native wildlife gardens. ▲

New Supervisor for the Majority of GMIA Members

Redistricting in San Diego has altered the geographical areas allocated to each of the county's five district supervisors. With the new boundaries, the majority of GMIA households are now in District 4, represented by Nathan Fletcher, chair of the Board of Supervisors. District 4 generally includes the cities of Lemon Grove and La Mesa, parts of the City of San Diego and portions of the unincorporated communities, including Casa De Oro-Mount Helix, Rancho San Diego, Spring Valley and El Cajon.

A small number of GMIA households continue to be represented by Joel Anderson, supervisor of District 2. To see the new district boundaries, visit sandiegocounty.gov/general/bos.html

GMIA board members met via Zoom with staff from Fletcher's office on Friday, Jan 21, to discuss our mission and priorities, describe the semi-rural character of our community and express our hope for a mutually beneficial working relationship.

Fletcher was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2019 after serving in the California State Assembly. ▲



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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.

Save the Date

July 30, 2022

2022 GMIA Annual Meeting

AT THE

Water Conservation Garden

GUEST SPEAKER

Supervisor Nathan Fletcher
District 4

CALENDAR

