



viewpoints

WINTER 2022-23

Volume 53 Issue 1

Walk to the Top January 7, 2023 *It's a walk. It's a parade. It's a fun event.*



Have you ever been on a big walk with a marching band? It's a great way to start your New Year's get-healthy resolution.

Enjoy and indulge your holiday merry-making, then join your family, friends, neighbors, and dogs in the 15th annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix, starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, January 7, 2023, at the San Miguel Fire Station, 10105 Vivera Dr.

The family-friendly, dog-friendly walk, which is less than two miles up and back, will be led by a giant banner and music from the Grossmont High School Marching Band.

As a reward for getting to the top, there will be free snacks, drinks, doggie treats and of course—that view. A live band will entertain and many community organizations will share how they contribute to our special neighborhood.

Among the participating local groups are: Casa de Oro Alliance, Friends of the Casa de Oro Library, La Mesa Historical Society, San Miguel Fire District (with their shiny fire truck), Rancho Helix del Oro Fire Safe Council, Helix Water District, Senior Gleaners, The Animal Pad and Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates.

GMIA hosts this event with our extraordinary volunteers and the Mt. Helix Park Foundation. Board members Lidia Chang and Linda Miller are co-chairs. Want to help? Please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

We expect more than 200 people to march up the hill, so bring the dogs, bring the kids, find your friends and come along, to be part of a Mt. Helix parade. 🏔️

Nominations Open for the GMIA Curb Appeal Award

An attractive front yard shows pride in our community, and real estate agents say that a beautiful yard adds value to a neighborhood. We invite you to nominate a candidate (yourself or a neighbor) for the GMIA Curb Appeal Award.

This award recognizes front yards that display outstanding maintenance, distinctive design, and landscaping appropriate for our climate. The winner will be featured in our newsletter, recognized at our 2023 Annual Dinner, and receive a free year's paid membership to GMIA.

Help us shine the spotlight on homeowners who are making our community a beautiful place to live! Nominations can be submitted on the GMIA website at gmia.net/curb-appeal-award.



Learn how
Senate Bill 9
will affect our
community.
See page 5.



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Officers

Anne Krueger, President
619-252-2295

Joan Camana, First Vice President
858-449-9796

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.

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

It's a joyful time of year for our community, when houses are lit up for the holidays and family and friends come together to celebrate. This year is particularly joyful, as we edge out of the pandemic and resume normal activities.

GMIA's Succulent Swap and Share was a smashing success, with neighbors trading their succulents and enjoying the beautiful gardens at this year's venue—the home of Wendy and Ron Caragher. Thanks to everyone who came out, and special thanks to those who brought succulents to share.

Our next event, the Walk to the Top, will be held Saturday, January 7, 2023. This is a family-friendly opportunity to enjoy the walk up Mt. Helix along with your friends and neighbors. It's always fun to hike up the hill as a group, then enjoy a bite to eat and listen to some music at the Mt. Helix Park. The GMIA board is planning to make the walk even more special this time. Join us and see what we have in store.

I think 2023 will be an exciting year for GMIA. We've begun planning for next year's Art and Garden Tour in April, which will be bigger and better than it has been in several years.

We're also looking forward to finally constructing the Mt. Helix welcome sign at the corner of Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Road. The project has been more complex than we anticipated, but is finally falling into place. Thanks to County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher and former County Supervisor Dianne Jacob for providing support and funding for the sign.

As always, GMIA is closely following issues that affect our community. We're exploring the impacts of SB9 to see if we can mitigate the effects of homeowners deciding to split their lot and add more housing. We are also continuing to work with the state and local legislators who represent our community.

Thanks for your support of GMIA, and have a wonderful holiday season. I hope to see you January 7 for the Walk to the Top! 🏔️

Anne Krueger



Thank You Donors!

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

Jim and Geri Bollman

Gary and Cindy Rambis King

Harris and Angela Steinberg

Patricia Geroche

Sue Ellen Benson A Consummate Volunteer

by Linda Miller

Sue Ellen Benson can't abide sitting still. In fact, if she is sitting without a craft in her hands, she has to twiddle her thumbs.

Many of you know Sue Ellen from her numerous volunteer activities. She has worked with GMIA as well as the Water Conservation Garden, Casa de Oro Alliance and Friends of the Library, the League of Women Voters, and so many other organizations there isn't room to list them all.

"I like to know how things work," she said recently. "I love to learn something new, and I love to work with people. I'm a people person."

Sue Ellen and her husband, Jackson Benson, met at Orange Coast College where he was a teacher, and she was a student. She went on to get her teaching credential at San Diego State University, while Jackson earned a Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles. A retired literature professor at SDSU, he is the author of biographies on John Steinbeck and Wallace Stegner.

Sue Ellen taught Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) at middle schools.

When she retired in 1995, she didn't leave teaching behind. She held each office in her teacher fraternity and has volunteered to give tours and workshops for teachers at the Museum of Us (formerly the Museum of Man) and the Junipero Serra Museum.

"I like the sharing and teaching of information," she said. "I like planning. I like to have a project and complete it."

With retirement, Sue Ellen has more time for her crafts, classes and volunteer work. She is proficient in quilting, basket-weaving, crochet, paper-making, gourd art, calligraphy, and more.

Once she has learned these crafts, she often volunteers to teach classes on her latest art obsession.

"I'm not an artist: I'm a crafter," she claims, but if you saw some of her finished projects, you would have to disagree.

Sue Ellen is especially fond of the GMIA Art and Garden Tour, which is scheduled for April 23, 2023. Look for her at future GMIA events. She will be the one moving around doing things, or if not, she will be twiddling her thumbs. 🌱



Volunteering is Easy and Rewarding

GMIA is run by a board of 18 volunteers, but we rely on non-board-member volunteers to help us stage events like the Art and Garden Tour and Succulent Swap.

We also welcome volunteers to join our committees and standing committees, become more involved in the "workings" of GMIA, and provide input on a monthly basis. You'll be part of a group of neighbors who truly care about our community and have lots of ideas to share.

We hope you'll join us. Please email our volunteer coordinator, Leslie Gardener, at gmiavolunteer@gmail.com to get involved.

Calling Local Artists and Musicians!

GMIA is looking for local artists and musicians to participate in our Art and Garden Tour, scheduled for April 23, 2023. We plan to have five gardens open during next year's event; each one can feature at least one artist or musician.

This is a volunteer gig, but it's a good opportunity to showcase your talents, subject to GMIA board approval.

Contact Teri Buehler (teribuehler13@gmail.com) for more information. 🌱



Board Member Profile: Linda Miller

In the late '80s my husband and I searched for an old home we could afford in the Hillcrest/ Normal Heights area. Our best find was a tiny two-bedroom, one-bath fixer-upper. With two children, and a limited budget, that didn't seem like a good idea.

Then someone said, "Try La Mesa, they have beautiful old homes out there." We did, and it's true. The La Mesa area is a fabulous place. We moved into a 1929 three-bedroom, two-bath house in an area above the Mariposa Bridge.

We lived in that wonderful house for 16 years and it was a great place to raise our kids. While there, my idea of weekend entertainment was to "go aspiring" on Mt. Helix. I really, really hoped we could live there someday.

Then in 2004, a lot of good things came together, and we were able to buy a 1949 house on the west side of Mt. Helix. "Oh boy," we laughingly told ourselves, "We made it!"

I still love our Mt. Helix house, even though it has needed more maintenance than we expected. Of course, that's true of most old houses. It's a labor of love.

To pay for our houses over the years, my husband has labored as an attorney, and I had a few different jobs with the County of San Diego before I retired. I started out in Ed Miller's Office of the District Attorney as a spokesperson. I

moved to County Health and Human Services, and then to County Communications, the department that oversees public information about all county services. I love being in the middle of the action, and when you work for the county, there are always plenty of big things going on.

It turns out that GMIA too, has a lot of big things going on. I enjoy being on the board of an organization whose efforts are multi-pronged and diverse.

The board and numerous volunteers are always on the lookout for ways to improve our area including traffic calming efforts, supporting bountiful gardens, working to prevent sexually violent predators from moving here, and planning events that bring us together with our neighbors. We plan these events to celebrate our wonderful community and to encourage its safety and beauty.

I'm honored to be a part of an organization that does so much for our neighborhood. If community goals like that move you, please consider joining our friendly volunteers. You can contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. See you soon! ▲



Linda and her husband Paul



Happy to Share

About 200 GMIA members, guests and volunteers gathered at the Melva Road home of Wendy and Ron Caragher in September for the annual Succulent Swap and Share.

On offer were dozens of varieties of succulents and cacti, including some flowering beauties. Thanks to the Caraghers and to volunteers Krista and Larry Powers, Christine Leefeldt, Greta Geldbach, Adam, Paloma and Santiago Conde and to GMIA Emeritus President Susan Nichols, who organized the event. ▲

Update on Senate Bill 9

GMIA has Concerns About New Construction

by Anne Krueger, GMIA President

Senate Bill 9, which seeks to expand housing construction in residential zones, is now in effect in San Diego County and across California. GMIA has concerns about the potential effects of SB 9 and board members will be meeting with county officials to discuss its impacts on our community.

Most, but not all, of GMIA's service area comes under SB 9. To see San Diego County's SB 9 map, go to sandiegocounty.gov and search for SB 9. Some sections of the county, such as the Rancho Santa Fe area, are exempt from SB 9 because they have been designated as an historic district.

The law allows homeowners in areas covered by SB 9 to build a second unit on their property or split their lot. To qualify for a second unit under the law, the property must: 1) be in a single-family zone in an urbanized area or urban cluster, 2) provide at least one off-street parking space per unit, and 3) be rented for at least 31 days (no short-term rentals). In addition, the owner must occupy one of the units for at least three years.

A lot split under SB 9 has the following requirements:

- Each new parcel must be at least 40% of the original parcel's size.
- Each new parcel must be at least 1,200 square feet.
- The parcel cannot already have been subdivided under SB9.
- The parcel cannot be split if an adjacent parcel owned by the same owner was split under SB9.
- The lot split must be processed by the county with the approval of a tentative parcel map.

GMIA is concerned about what SB9 could mean for our community. Our concerns about increased density in our community include its effect on fire safety, open space and traffic. We will keep you updated. ▲



News From Our Neighborhood

A Mt. Helix Welcome

GMIA is proud to announce that construction is beginning on a welcome sign to be located at the intersection of Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive. GMIA received a Neighborhood Reinvestment Program grant from the County of San Diego, and has worked closely with former Supervisor Dianne Jacobs' and Supervisor Nathan Fletcher's offices to make this project happen.

The sign is intended to welcome residents and visitors to the wonderful community of Mount Helix. It will have a rock wall base that reflects the historic rock walls located throughout Mount Helix.

A HUB for Pickleball

The largest pickleball facility in San Diego opens this month in our neighborhood. Located on the site of the former Mt. Helix Tennis Club in Spring Valley, The HUB features 26 permanent pickleball courts including two grandstand courts with a capacity to seat 400. An inaugural tournament is scheduled for Jan. 13-16, 2023.

Partners Pat Rolfes and Ted Angelo envision The HUB as a branded series of host sites for western regional pickleball competitions. Each member-based facility will feature play courts, challenge courts, leagues for all ages, clinics and coaching, a commercial kitchen and a dining area serving wine and beer. Non-members will pay a drop-in fee for access.

Estrella Park Improvements

The County of San Diego Park and Recreation Department and the County Public Works Department will begin a second phase of improvements at Estrella Park. The project is primarily a water quality improvement project that includes underground trash capture devices and bio-filtration basins. Additional amenities, such as enhanced trails, landscaping, and parking, are part of the project.

The county will be advertising for bids soon, and construction is expected to begin in early 2023. GMIA members are encouraged to visit Estrella Park and enjoy this unique kid-friendly space in our community.

TIPS FROM A MASTER GARDENER

Fall Bloomers for Your Garden

by Sharon Reeve

It is always a relief for me when the cooler temperatures arrive, bringing the promise of rain. This is also the season for some plants to shine with peak bloom. There are several fall bloomers that thrive in my garden and can tolerate light frost.

Senna splendida 'Golden Wonder' is a lovely small tree or, without pruning, a large shrub. The flowers of this plant are showy and long-lasting, growing to at least three inches across in a rich buttery yellow. While its main bloom period is in the fall, *senna splendida* puts out blooms intermittently all year. These plants are hosts for Sulphur Butterflies. The caterpillars are green and yellow and hard to find, as they blend in with the foliage, but there are never enough to do any noticeable damage to the foliage. This plant was difficult to get established, but is now tough and drought tolerant. Full sun and well-draining soil are requirements for good growth.

If you only have shade and want to attract hummingbirds, don't despair! *Odontonema strictum* will bloom in fairly dense shade and produce even more flowers in good sun. This plant grows to about six feet tall and is a strongly upright plant. In the fall, large spikes of brilliant red form in the leaf axils and ends of branches. The flowers do not bloom all at once and will open from the bottom up over a long period of time. Even after the flowers drop off the spike structure left behind is bright red and showy. This plant looks tropical, but it is surprisingly drought-tolerant and easy to grow. Cut it back after bloom for more branches and more flowers. They say hummingbirds can see red a mile away and I do not doubt it with this plant!

Why *Dombeya burgessiae* 'Seminole' isn't grown more frequently in San Diego is a mystery to me. It is one of the easiest, most rewarding plants in my garden. A robust grower that blooms from an early age, it is smothered in pink bouquets at this time of year. The leaves are large, slightly fuzzy and a grey-green color. This plant wants to be eight feet tall and wide, so I chop it to the ground after it blooms to keep it around five feet. While other plants languish and droop in the summer heat, this one stays healthy and strong with minimal water. It takes full sun to part shade and can be propagated by layering low-growing branches.

In San Diego, the cooler months can be bloom-filled if gardeners take the time to seek out certain plants. My personal goal is to have plants in bloom all year round in Zone 10. 🌱

Sharon Reeve is a UCCE Master Gardener since 1998. She has earned a BS in horticulture, a BA in landscape architecture, and a MS in ecology. Sharon enjoys studying, growing, and blogging about plants in her La Mesa garden. Her design business, ReWild, specializes in drought-tolerant, native wildlife gardens.



Senna Flowers



Odontonema strictum

News from the Casa de Oro Alliance

by Lisa Stewart, President 2022-2023

In January, San Diego County Supervisors will be voting on the Casa de Oro Specific Plan. The Alliance website (www.casadeoroalliance.org) will feature the latest news and updates about the vote. We would appreciate the support of GMIA members when the county asks for community input prior to the vote.

The Alliance is working on ways to bring "community" back to the Casa de Oro community. Ideas include activities that support local businesses such as a restaurant week, businesses decorating their storefronts for different holidays or seasons, and "meet ups" at Estrella Park. If you have ideas, we would love to hear them.

The Alliance is looking forward to participating in the 2023 GMIA Walk to the Top event. Be sure to stop by our table and introduce yourself. As a 6+ year member of GMIA myself, I'm looking forward to seeing you there! And if you have any questions or comments for us, please contact PresidentCDOA@gmail.com 📧



In October, the Alliance partnered with I Love a Clean San Diego to clean up San Juan Street and Kenora Drive.



What's New at Our Library?

by Susan Nichols, President
Friends of the Casa de Oro Library

“Love the Library,” our exclusive Friends of the Casa de Oro Library member appreciation event, will take place in February to celebrate Valentine's Day. Invitations for this special celebration are in the works.

Our nonprofit organization promotes and raises funds to support library programs and equipment beyond the scope of the San Diego County budget. To be a part of this effort, get the latest info about the new library, and receive invitations to member events, we invite you to join the Friends of the Casa de Oro Library today at www.casadeorolibrary.org.

Whether you are looking for activities for toddlers, children, 'tweens, teens or adults, check out the Casa de Oro Library located at 9805 Campo Road, next to the post office. All programs are free of charge.

Kids will delight in the interactive Storytime with Jan & Dave on Thursday, December 15, 11:00-12:00. This beloved duo blend music, costuming, and theater for a literary treat. For 2023 Storytime programs, contact the library at 619-463-3236 or online at sdcl.org.

In the upcoming year, the Friends of the Casa de Oro Library will fund free programs such as yoga classes, art classes, and other special activities. Learn more at www.casadeorolibrary.org. 📧

Regularly Scheduled Programs Include


- Play hour early learning birth to 5 years
- Tweens and Teens video game hour
- Teen crafternoon (instruction and supplies provided)
- Game night (board games)
- STEAM team

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 \$20 (2 years - \$40; 3 years - \$60). 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 2023 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

What to Do With Those Food Scraps

Are you complying with California SB 1383, which mandates tossing organic material into your green waste bins? The law is part of an effort to redirect organic waste from landfills back to the soil as compost or mulch.

In San Diego, you can discard food scraps (including meat, grains and prepared food) and food-soiled paper along with your lawn trash. Wrap the food scraps in paper or newspaper, not in plastic or wax paper. For more information, visit the Dept. of Public Works site at sandiego.gov 



CALENDAR

