

GMIA viewpoints

WINTER 2023

Volume 54 Issue 1

WALK to the TOP

Saturday, January 6, 2024

10 a.m.

Enjoy a fun walk with your family, friends and neighbors



Organizations participating in the Walk to the Top are:

Mount Helix Park Foundation

Senior Gleaners

Helix Water District

Casa de Oro Alliance

Casa de Oro Friends of the Library

La Mesa Historical Society

San Diego County Sheriff's RSVP

Animal Pad

NEW THIS YEAR:

The Water Conservation Garden

San Diego Gas & Electric

EDCO Disposal



What better way to start 2024 than with a Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix? Join about 300 of your neighbors Jan. 6 at the San Miguel Fire station at 10105 Vivera Dr. There is plenty of free parking across from the fire station.

The Grossmont High School Marching Band will lead us off at 10 a.m. by playing energetic music to get our feet moving. Bring the kids, the dogs, your friends and follow the huge GMIA banner up the hill. Everyone can be part of the parade!

What happens when you finish the walk that is less than one mile? On top, there are food and drinks donated by local businesses, a live band, free doggie treats, and local organizations sharing important information for our community. SDG&E will be giving out free tree saplings and offering advice on keeping it alive in the right location by using composting and water conservation. If you have taken this walk before, you will be surprised to find new organizations at the top.

And of course – you'll enjoy that amazing view!

GMIA hosts this event in partnership with the Mt. Helix Park Foundation and lots of volunteers. We are grateful to all our volunteers. Want to be one of them? Please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

So, go ahead and indulge in holiday merrymaking. You'll work it off with a Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix! 🏔️



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Gwen DeHaven	Mike Valley
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Kathleen Hedberg	Holly Yarris
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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 85-year-old nonprofit 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

For GMIA, our strength is in our numbers. When we contact government officials, it's powerful to say that GMIA represents about 1,000 households in the Mt. Helix community. That gets their attention.

As a community organization that's been representing the Mt. Helix area since 1938, GMIA is well known and well regarded. One of our primary goals is to keep residents informed about issues that could adversely affect our community. We were pleased to partner with the Casa de Oro Alliance to host the Fourth District Supervisor Candidate Forum held at Cuyamaca College. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and hear the candidates' views so they could make an informed decision when they cast their vote.

The other way that GMIA enhances our community is to hold events that bring people together. The Succulent Swap and Share was a great way for our members to find new plants for their gardens at no cost.

Thanks to all our board members and volunteers who make events like these a success. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Susan and Larry Nichols for leading efforts on the Succulent Swap and Share. Board members Kathleen Hedberg, Holly Yarris and Leslie Gardner led the efforts on the candidate forum along with Lisa Stewart, president of the Casa de Oro Alliance.

In January, GMIA will once again host the Walk to the Top on Saturday, January 6. It's a wonderful way to start off the new year with your friends and neighbors, enjoy some refreshments once you've made the climb, and learn a bit from the vendors at the event.

We are able to do this because of the support of our members. I urge you to talk to your neighbors about GMIA and let them know they can become members for just \$20 a year. Tell them about the many things that GMIA does to enrich our community. By spreading the word about GMIA, you are helping to make us even stronger.

Please let us know if you would like to volunteer in planning an event or on the day of any of our upcoming events. You can reach us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. Thank you for your support of GMIA! 🌱

Anne Krueger



Thank You Donors!

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

Charles and Andrea Airy

Gary and Cindy Rambis King

John Grasberger and Eva B. Goode

Myra Zimmerman

New County Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe

Monica Montgomery Steppe will soon become the new county supervisor for most of the GMIA community. She will also be the first Black woman county supervisor. She is replacing Nathan Fletcher, who resigned last spring.

Montgomery Steppe was featured along with her opponent at the candidate forum hosted by GMIA and the League of Women Voters last October at Cuyamaca College.

"I have an independent voice," she said at the forum. "Our critical issues are homelessness and housing. I will put our community first."

"Home ownership is very important. We can craft legislation to open home ownership," she said. Referring to our area, she said she wanted to maintain our semi-rural community, and in urban areas, we will have to increase density.

Montgomery Steppe is a Democrat, but she said she has worked for other elected people on both sides of the aisle.

"I'm a fighter and I will fight for you," said. ▲



Monica Montgomery Steppe (center) with supporters

A New Way to Experience the GMIA Garden Tour

Mark your calendar for Sunday, April 28, when GMIA will hold its annual Garden Tour. Five beautiful gardens have been selected for visitors to enjoy.

This year, we would like to offer a VIP shuttle van for those who don't want to drive on their own to each location. Visitors would park at the lot by the Vivera Avenue fire



station, and the van would drive them to each garden on the tour. The cost is \$50 per seat. Water and snacks will be included.

We will hire the van if enough people express interest. If you are interested, email us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. No payment is required now. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the garden tour! ▲



About 125 people visited, strolled, and asked questions of Master Gardner Sharon Reeve at the GMIA Annual Succulent Swap and Share last October. It's a fruitful event where GMIA members take home or donate succulent cuttings. (Have you priced succulents lately?)

This is an amazing deal, and so much fun to drink the donated coffee (thank you Gladly's Coffee) while you peruse and plan your next succulent garden spot. Plus, the event takes place at the beautiful Mt. Helix home of Wendy and Ron Caragher. (Have you seen their cows?)

Next fall, if you're trimming your succulents, remember to save them for the Succulent Swap and Share. You must be a member to visit the free Swap, which is another great deal at \$20 per year per household. Look for the Viewpoints notices and road banners next October. See you there! 🌱



GMIA Board Member: Jay Steiger

Jay Steiger is grateful. He's grateful for the East County neighborhood he grew up in. He's grateful for all the people who give back to our community. He's grateful for all that has been given to him. He's a strong believer in the saying, "To whom much is given, much is expected."

And he proves it daily. Jay is or has been on almost every East County committee you can name. He's been president, director or vice chair, or just a participant on Casa de Oro Alliance, PTAs for Murdock Elementary and La Mesa/Spring Valley School District, Grossmont Union High School District, Valle de Oro Planning Group, two Citizens' Bond Oversight committees, La Mesa Arts Foundation, and a soccer coach.

We are fortunate to say he is now a GMIA board member. He has been volunteering with us since 2017.

Jay is a middle school teacher in the Poway district. He teaches social studies and English and is the advisor to the Associated



Student Body. A graduate of Monte Vista High School, UC San Diego, and San Diego State University, he raised two boys, now in their 20s, as a single parent. He says he is "completely native" to our community.

You may have seen Jay in his younger years when he worked at the La Mesa Trader Joe's market or at the McDonalds in the Rancho San Diego Village shopping center. He also worked in tech and insurance before he settled on teaching as his profession.

One adage he stresses to his students is that leadership is action. And he is very active!

Jay says school boards have become politicized, and we need to get back to our focus on the kids. We need to help our students become adults and answer the question, "What kind of world do you want?" So he made the tough decision to run for the Grossmont Union High School District Board in 2024.

"A strong school makes a strong community," he said. 🏔️

Update on the Casa de Oro Library

by Susan Nichols

Good things take time, great things take a little longer. Our new Casa de Oro Library is in the works with an updated timeline of Spring 2025 for groundbreaking and opening in Fall 2026. We wish we could wave a magic wand to speed up the process!

The County of San Diego is out to bid for a design/builder for the 12,000 square foot, free-standing building to be located at 9610 Campo Road (across from The Hub pickleball courts). The new library is being built to Zero Net Energy standards. This means the library's solar panels will produce the electricity needed to operate the branch.

Add your input about what you would like to see at the new library. Check out the survey hosted by the County at sdcl.org/newcasabranch. In addition, once the design/builder is selected, we will host community meetings to gather feedback on the facility.

A huge thank you to our donors who attended our November 12 Art on a Sunday Afternoon event. More than \$7,000 was raised to fund programs for children, teens and adults at our

library. We would like to hear your suggestions for program ideas. Please connect with us at www.casadeorolibrary.org. To view current programs, go to www.sdcl.org, click "events" "Casa de Oro." 🏔️

Features Included in the Library Design

- Community room of 2,000 square feet with after-hours access for community events
- Teen area with study rooms
- Children's area with early literacy play equipment
- Public computers plus laptops for checkout
- High speed internet access and Wi-Fi throughout the branch
- Designated parking lot

ECHO Chamber Music Series at Cuyamaca College

The ECHO Chamber Music Series, now in its fifth season, brings world-renowned classical musicians to the Cuyamaca College campus.

This season runs through May 30. Performances are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Samuel M. Ciccati Performing Arts Center at Cuyamaca College, 900 Rancho San Diego Parkway, El Cajon. Single concert tickets are \$35 and can be purchased at www.echochamber.org.

The 2023-24 East County Harmonics Organization (ECHO) Chamber Music Series is supported by classical music patron and founding sponsor Sam B. Ersan. .

In addition to bringing classical chamber music to East County, proceeds from ticket sales will be used to provide scholarships for at least 10 aspiring musicians at Cuyamaca College. 🏔️



New Dog Park at Lonnie Brewer County Park

The County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department has begun construction on a new off-leash dog park located at Lonnie Brewer County Park, which is a five acre neighborhood park on Fury Lane.

The project includes three off-leash fenced areas to separate large dogs and small dogs. The third additional fenced



area would allow for both large and small dogs and would be used as a temporary area when one of the off-leash compartments are closed for maintenance.

The project also includes an accessible walkway, ramp from Fury Lane, seating, a drinking fountain with pet bowl, and shade trees. For more information, contact Parks project manager Aaron Leon at 858-287-1580. 🏔️



Go Slow Campaign

GMIA has implemented a “Go Slow” Campaign to remind members of our community to slow down in our neighborhoods. GMIA has 20 signs that have several catchy phrases and they are posted for one week at a time. This short amount of time has proven to be very effective.

If you would like the “Go Slow” campaign on a street in your neighborhood please contact GMIA at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com We will post the signs and take them down in a week. Neighbors must agree to have a sign posted on their property. 🏔️



Gardening in Nirvana

by Sharon Reeve

As luck would have it, we live in one of the finest gardening climates in the world. The dreaded hard freeze that threatens the beautiful garden, turning lovely flowers into mush overnight, is rarely a factor here. It gets hot, but not too hot, as the Pacific Ocean mediates our climate so it is pleasant, yet hot enough to sweeten citrus. It gets cold, but not too cold, so we can grow so many wonderful and exotic subtropical plants and fruit. This mild and perfect climate for avocados and citrus makes us the envy of gardeners everywhere.

It is amazing that we can have blooming flowers 365 days a year! A big reason I live here is because I can enjoy flowers and hummingbirds in my garden every day of the year! Spectacular weather, temperate climate, and plentiful sunshine throughout our seasons allow us to grow a huge variety of colorful succulents and year-round produce from our gardens.

Colorful bougainvillea draped over walls, pots of colorful flowers, and magnificent coral trees loaded with flowers means our winters are never dreary and grey. There is much to love about gardening in Mount Helix! Pretty much anything you want to grow can be grown here. Do you want peaches, cherries, and apples? There are low-chill selections that make it possible. Try your hand at growing unique California native plants. Water makes tropical gardens possible and low-water brings cactus and succulent gardens to life.

Mount Helix is truly nirvana for the gardener lucky enough to live here. 🌱

Sharon Reeve has been a UCCE Master Gardener since 1998. Sharon earned bachelor's degrees in horticulture and landscape architecture and a master's degree in ecology. Her design business, ReWild, specializes in drought-tolerant, native wildlife gardens.



One of Sharon's Epiphyllums



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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 \$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 2024 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

Go Green and Get Viewpoints Online

Getting Viewpoints online will save printing and postage costs for GMIA. The online version is exactly the same as the printed version that is mailed. If you would like to get Viewpoints online, email us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

Sat., Jan 6, 2024

Walk to the Top

Sat., Jan 13, 2024

**Cleanup 9 am PARK N
RIDE - I8/ Severin Dr.**

Sun., April 24, 2024

GMIA Garden Tour