



# viewpoints

FALL 2024

Volume 54 Issue 4

## Join Your Neighbors at the Succulent Swap & Share on October 5 *You Had Me at Aloe!*



**B**e sure to visit GMIA's annual Succulent Swap & Share on Saturday, October 5 from 10 a.m. to noon. Ron and Wendy Caragher, gracious hosts for the fourth time, will welcome us to their beautiful gardens at their home at 10805 Melva Road.

Trim your yard and bring your succulent cuttings (no fire sticks please) and check out the variety of succulents being offered to swap. Have a cup of Gladly Coffee with your green-thumbed neighbors and learn more about GMIA.

Shop the Swap is a new feature being offered this year. It's a pottery pop-up featuring unique planters by local artist PK Pottery. Planters will range from \$5 to \$20, and PK Pottery is donating a portion of their sales to GMIA. After selecting a handmade container, head over to the new potting station and create your own mini succulent garden.

The Succulent Swap & Share is a members-only event, free to all GMIA families. Memberships are available for \$20 per household per year. Invite your friends to join GMIA so they can share in the fun. 🌱

## New Freeway Lanes Coming

**R**esidents who use the State Route 125/94 interchange near Spring Street will be happy to learn there is an improvement in the works, CalTrans Project Manager Michael Lubin said at an August informational meeting.

Phase 1, which should be completed by winter 2025/26, will ease congestion on SR 125 by adding a lane on the southbound and northbound freeway, plus one more lane to eastbound SR 94. During this phase, Caltrans will remove and replace the Mariposa Street bridge and the new bridge will be striped for easier use by bicyclists, pedestrians and handicapped people. CalTrans will also add sound and retaining walls near those routes. This part of the project is expected to cost around \$117 million.

Phase 2 should start June 2028 and be completed by 2034 for a cost of about \$123 million. This project will include the building of a freeway-to-freeway connector from southbound SR 125 to eastbound 94, and the construction of more sound and retaining walls.

For more details and locations of the new lanes and sound walls, please go to <https://dot.ca.gov> and click on CalTrans Near Me and then District 11. 🌱





GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX  
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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*This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.*

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### MISSION

GMIA is an 86-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.



## Susan and Larry Nichols

If you wanted to list all the community organizations Larry and Susan Nichols have worked on, you might need a dozen pages.

They have lived in their Mt. Helix home for 36 years and have donated many, many hours to improve our neighborhoods, including years on the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association Board of Directors.

Thanks to all their work, they were honored with the GMIA Al Platt Award for Service to the Community at GMIA's annual dinner in June.

Larry was on the board for years, including eight years as the treasurer. Susan was also on the board and served as president for 10 years.

"I know the kind of community I want to live in, and it is my responsibility to make it so," said Susan recently while sitting in her backyard adorned with low-water plants and beautiful garden art of her own making. "There is a lot of need out there."

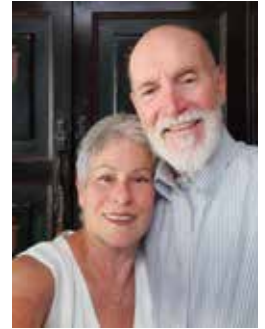
Larry met Susan when he was her accountant and tax preparer. He managed medical practices, including doctors at Rady's Children's Hospital. Larry had gone to Ohio State University, and later to the University of Toledo, where he received his master's in finance. He was a lieutenant in the Navy serving as the executive officer on a landing ship.

Susan received a degree in dance from UC Riverside and then got a master's degree in dance and art from San Diego State University. She was involved in the boating industry before she became a stay-at-home mom. She returned to work as a fundraiser and event planner for the Children's Museum and other non-profits.

Susan's latest project is to help develop a new, bigger library in the Casa de Oro neighborhood. As president of the Friends of the Library, she lobbied former San Diego County Supervisor Dianne Jacob and now works with County library administration to accomplish the goal. The exciting news is that construction begins January 2025.

She is a one-woman ambassador for the new library and often speaks to community groups to let them know what's coming. When asked how many hours per week she spends on community projects, Susan ponders the question and can't come up with an answer.

"I have a big appetite for work," she laughs. 🏔️



## Thank You Donors!

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

Nanacy Acevedo	Vaughn and Judi Jeffery
Dean and Judith Allen	Henry Jordan and Daniel Lamb
Cathie Burdick	Jeffrey and Joann Knox
Leo and Adrienne Culp	Paul and Janet Pehau
Zita Gardner	Sandra and David Polster
Julie Fitzgerald and Edward Jentz III	Claudia Powell and D. Lynn Reeves
David and Diana Geerdes	Jerry and Agnes Smith
Andrea and Frank Goiochea	

## Casa de Oro Library Annual Meeting October 15

You are invited to the October 15, 2024 Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Casa de Oro Library from 5:00 -6:30 in our library located at 9805 Campo Road.

The final design for our new library will be presented by County staff. GMIA initiated advocacy for a new facility in 2015, and the Casa de Oro Alliance and Friends of the Library picked up the ball and ran with it for the next decade. It took a long time and a lot of effort, but at last, groundbreaking will begin early next year and completion is due in 2026.

The state-of-the-art library will be located across the street from The Hub pickleball courts. The County purchased the old Pho Grill which will be demolished to provide an entrance for the new freestanding building positioned on land leased from the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District.

The Friends of the Casa de Oro Library Annual Meeting will also highlight the many programs for children, teens and adults that the group sponsored this year. Current and future volunteer opportunities will be featured.

Learn more at [www.casadeorolibrary.org](http://www.casadeorolibrary.org). 📌



## Mt. Helix Vintners

Do you grow grapes or make wine on your property? Maybe you have an interest but need some guidance on how to get started? Consider signing up to get on the Mt. Helix Wine Growers email list. We are a loosely organized group that meets once or twice a year to share our wine and our wine-making stories. We also encourage email questions to the group, because if someone has an issue or question, someone else can probably help!

If you would like to get on our email list, contact Guy and Laurie Halgren at [Lwhalgren@gmail.com](mailto:Lwhalgren@gmail.com). 📌

## Thanks to GMIA Annual Dinner Raffle Donors

GMIA's Annual Dinner featured a speech by District 4 Supervisor Monica Montgomery-Steppe, who promised to work closely with GMIA and other community organizations. A raffle raised almost \$1,000 for GMIA. Thanks to the donors who contributed to make the raffle a success.

- Alpine Angie License Plate Planter • Animal Pad
- Beast Pets, Casa de Oro • Michelle Brister Aesthetics
- Birch Aquarium • Joanne Vargas Corona at Corva Studio
- Dirty Birds San Diego • Helix Water District
- ECHO Concert Series at Cuyamaca College
- Padre Dam Municipal Water District • Pottery by Paula Kacsit
- Dena Mattox Live Theatre • Major Catering
- San Diego Museum of Art • Topsy Custom Cookies • USS Midway

## Planning Group Looking for New Members To Make a Community Difference

Our community is constantly changing, with new businesses, new developments, and growth. Want to have a voice? Take a seat on the San Diego County Valle de Oro Planning Group. The group meets the first Tuesday of every month, 7 p.m., at the Rancho San Diego Library.

The board has 15 seats, and all members must be a registered voter who lives in the area. Members are elected for four-year terms and two seats are now vacant. Planning group members review the most critical projects in our area. Participation helps ensure that development meets the needs of residents, balances growth with sustainability, and preserves local character.

For more information, contact Kathleen Hedberg at 619.994.6900 or at [KathleenHedberg07@gmail.com](mailto:KathleenHedberg07@gmail.com). 📌



## MT. HELIX MAYOR?

## Politics Has Gone to the Dogs!

In a twist that could only happen in a dog-friendly community, Mt. Helix is looking to elect its first canine mayor this fall. The Mt. Helix community will make headlines for a unique political choice. Arf!

Catalina Spahn, director of fundraising for The Animal Pad said, "We are thrilled to announce the inaugural Dog Mayor Election of Mt. Helix. All proceeds from the election and accompanying activities will benefit our beloved local dog adoption agency, The Animal Pad."

For more information visit [theanimalpad.org](http://theanimalpad.org) and learn how to enter your furry family member. 📌

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](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 2025 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.



Photo by Michael Koeppe

## See You at the Top!

**A**s we gear up for the New Year, don't miss out on the annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix. It's happening on Saturday, January 4, and it's the perfect way to kick off 2025.

This family- and dog-friendly event begins at San Miguel Fire Station 21 on Vivera Drive and goes .65 miles up to the top. Besides sharing the breathtaking view with neighbors, you'll find refreshments to keep you fueled, a raffle drawing, and local organizations sharing valuable information for our community.

Mark your calendars, lace up those sneakers, and let's make this New Year's tradition one for the books. 🏔️

## CALENDAR

