

# FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 16 WINTER 2021



Mt. HELIX PARK  
FOUNDATION

*Dedicated to Preserving  
Mt. Helix Nature Theatre and Park*

heART of  
Rock 'N Roll  
Livestream  
Amid COVID Crisis

PARK Serves  
as a Safe  
Space During  
Unprecedented  
Times

Volunteers Tip  
the Scales for  
ECOLOGY

RECYCLING: Next Step In  
Park's Commitment To  
SUSTAINABILITY

PARK HOURS

VISIT THE PARK WEBSITE FOR UPDATES REGARDING PARK HOURS

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION



# Team Helix

MT. HELIX PARK VOLUNTEERS  
HABITAT - EVENTS - LEADERSHIP



Join Us Today

## VOLUNTEER

- Habitat Restoration
- Events
- Fundraising
- Membership Support
- Construction
- Community Relations
- Marketing
- AND MORE!

[MtHelixPark.org/volunteer](http://MtHelixPark.org/volunteer)

## Memberships Start at Just \$35

- Event & Monthly Happenings Email
  - Mt. Helix Park Swag at Events
  - From the Top biannual magazine
  - Invitations to all events plus "Members Only" exclusive events and discounts
  - Special recognition opportunities for
- Business Members** Email: [K Powers@MtHelixPark.org](mailto:K Powers@MtHelixPark.org)

[MtHelixPark.org/member](http://MtHelixPark.org/member)

## Come volunteer with our Habitat Restoration Team

The first Saturday of each month at 9 a.m.

RSVP to [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org) or (619) 741-4363.



[SMILE.AMAZON.COM](http://SMILE.AMAZON.COM)

**Support Mt Helix Park Foundation by shopping at AmazonSmile.**

When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate to Mt Helix Park Foundation. Support us every time you shop.

## MT. HELIX PARK

*From the Top* is a bi-annual publication of Mt. Helix Park.

To contact the Editor call 619-741-4363 or email [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org). © Copyright 2020 Mt. Helix Park

### EDITOR

Peggy Junker

### COPY EDITORS

Alice Smith, Ammy Provancha

### WRITERS

Norm Hapke, Peggy Junker,  
Ed Piffard, Krista Powers

### PHOTOGRAPHERS

Gary Junker, Gary Severt

### COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Gary Junker

### GRAPHIC DESIGN / LAYOUT

Victoria Vinton, Coyote Press Graphics  
Krista Powers

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Krista Powers

### ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Peggy Junker

Bring in your used ink cartridges and we will recycle them with profits going directly to Mt. Helix Park. Drop them in our mail box (located behind the stage) anytime or stop by the under-stage office Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Norm Hapke, PRESIDENT  
Sharon Bullard, VP DEVELOPMENT  
Helgi Gudmundson, VP OPERATIONS  
Chris Kilrain, CFO  
Celina Laframboise, SECRETARY  
Robert Ball, PAST PRESIDENT

Ron Brady      Keith Meeker  
Steve Clay      Andy Phemister  
Sarah Gehman      Alice Smith  
Caroline Harrod      Don Teemsma  
Jason Kardos      Wes Troy

like us on facebook



[www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org)





*Krista Powers*

EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

## From the Executive Director

The summer of 2020 was different. The amphitheater, normally bustling with community events and programming, was much quieter. Parties for members were put on hold, weddings were postponed or shrunk in size, and if you ran into a neighbor it was as if you had not seen each other in years.

2020 has been a year like no other. One of the things I've noticed is it has made me appreciate and take note of the little things. I might have sobbed when we had to shut the Park to visitors in April and reopen with limited hours. At the same time, we witnessed a transformative healing to the Park's natural environment because of the absence of heavy foot traffic. For a bit, the critters had this wonderland all to themselves. In addition, essential volunteers were able to redo fencing, put up signage, repair habitats, and more.

2020 has forced us all to slow down, hug our family tighter, and appreciate the beautiful community in which we live. It has forced us to put one foot in front of the other each day and search out the nuggets of joy. We have all been chal-

lenged and forever affected, and I believe we must find gratitude to emotionally survive. I am thankful that we have this magical place. I find comfort in calling it God's mountain because that is truly what I feel as I walk amongst the native plants, the lizards, the butterflies, and the boulders shaped and etched by nature's artists. Sometimes I feel transported into a living painting filled with the vivid colors of sunrise or sunset, hawks soaring in the sky, lizards doing their push ups, and butterflies dancing about. The smells of the native habitat are nature's way of relaxing us. I am tempted to grab some coastal sage for a sniff, taste a lemonade berry, and bask in the warm, immune boosting sun. Mt. Helix Park brings us a place to reflect, a place to escape to, and a place to mentally, emotionally, and physically heal.

In this season of giving, fellowship and thankfulness, we look forward to seeing you at the Park, whether alone, with family, in small socially distanced groups, themed evenings or at our fundraisers. We're counting on everyone who is aware of the restorative powers of this special place to help us—as we face our next challenge—to raise funds for the necessary restoration of the nearly 100 year-old Cross, the collapsing rock wall, and deteriorated road leading to it. ■



*Norm Hapke*

PRESIDENT  
Mt. Helix Park  
Foundation

## From the Foundation President

**PAY IT FORWARD** It is common in the philanthropic community to hear the phrase "give back." What it refers to is the ability and desire of charitable individuals to give back to their communities and to support underserved populations, who need philanthropic attention. For a long time, I accepted this phrase with some skepticism because it implied that somehow those of us who gave were returning something we had previously received.

A movie made in 2000 called *Pay It Forward* fostered in me a new way of thinking about philanthropy. Its message was that those of us who feel truly blessed want to extend that blessing to our fellow citizens, not pay something back.

A perfect example of this is Bill Gates. His operating systems and his company have enriched the world in a dramatic fashion, which has empowered and streamlined much of the work we do. He has not taken but given an incredible gift to all of his employees and to society as a whole with his business. Now, through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

he is paying forward the blessings he has received from his business success to fund health, education and poverty relief programs both in the United States and throughout the world.

Another example closer to home: At the beginning of the last century two families with ties to San Diego purchased and bequeathed our lovely Park to the community. Not harboring a sense of guilt, they wanted successor generations to feel the blessings they felt. Their progeny live throughout the country, and while very few of them have the opportunity to enjoy our Park, they are among our major donors. Take someone like our own Alice Smith, a great granddaughter of the original philanthropists. She lives in two distant states and very seldom visits the Park. Yet every year she is one of our major donors and cheerleaders as she is dedicated to keeping those blessings alive and paying them forward to successive generations.

As my fellow board members and I plan for the Park's future, I am struck by how appropriate the phrase "pay it forward" is, as we are focused primarily on our mission to maintain and enhance the experience for present and future generations. It is a worthy calling. ■



## Volunteers Tip the Scales for Park Ecology

by Ed Piffard, Mt. Helix Park Foundation Horticultural Advisor

The summer of 2020 was unusually long, dry, and often very hot. This would be a real test of the survivability of the new plants that the Habitat Restoration Committee members and its volunteers recently planted. Over quite a few seasons now the Park staff along with these priceless volunteers have been busy revegetating the areas trampled by visitors who refuse to stay on the path, removing the weeds that grow from a seemingly endless seed bank in the soil, and introducing species of plants that were once native to the site and the surrounding hills.

When this project began, the Park was already suffering the effects of a prolonged drought. An ever increasing number of visitors multiplied the plants' stresses. In addition, every open piece of earth sprouted thousands of weeds, the tall wild mustard being the worst among them. These weeds not only robbed the soil of moisture and nutrients but were also destroying the vital network of root fungi upon which the perennial wild plants depend. Aerial photographs demonstrated a steady decline in the Park's vegetation. Even large trees began to die. Something needed to be done, drought or not.

The first fall plantings had mixed success, not just from the aforementioned challenges, but because there was no way to care for them through their first season when they required additional water and weeding. The idea to split the Park into sections and recruit volunteers to adopt these sections as their own responsibility was a game changer, even with the variability in the individual volunteer's effort. Soon tactical fences were

erected as well to block straying visitors until the painfully slow growing plants could get established. Dedicated volunteers were summoned for special workdays to remove mustard and other pests. Every year there were fewer weeds, more plants and other signs the fences were actually working.

Slowly, new areas are being adopted, and dozens of new species are being added. Soon mountain lilacs will be blooming again on the mountain, along with a host of plants that attract hummingbirds, native bees, hoverflies, and butterflies. This year we will even try planting manzanita.

In the areas where volunteers have been busy, the percentage of weeds has drastically declined. Even annual wildflowers are becoming established in some areas where once there were none. While there are many deaths among new plantings in their first year, we have to remember that wild plants aren't pieces of furniture. They don't always like where you put them. As planting success is often a numbers game, our newfound ability to buy plants at wholesale prices for restoration helps immensely.

In walking the Park a short time ago with other committee members and Park staff in order to plan this winter's restoration, I was struck by how much has improved in the Park's habitat over the past few years. It was even obvious in the nadir of an extreme season. In some areas where the volunteers are most diligent, I could see what will soon grow into a spectacular display this coming spring. If you want to be part of this transformation, please consider volunteering for work days or, even better, adopting your own section of the Park. The feeling you will get from the results is almost indescribable. ■



*Plot 10 with Mustard Infestation June 2015*



*Plot 10 rid of Mustard in 2016, one year after adopted*



*Plot 14 adopted Feb 10, 2016*



*Plot 14 April 4, 2019*



# Eagle Scout Creates Interactive Sign Experience

by Peggy Junker

New signs soon to be installed throughout the Park will help visitors identify featured California native plant species. A project that has been on the Habitat Restoration Committee's wish list for some time has been picked up by Eagle Scout hopeful Chris Woods who began working on the creation of 22 plant signs and informational webpages for Mt. Helix Park in August. Once complete, this 17-year-old Helix Charter High School senior will have helped create an experience for Park-goers that will allow them to scan plant identifier signs throughout the Park's native habitat. Barcodes on each sign will pull up photos and details from the Mt. Helix Park website including the plant's Latin name and characteristics such as flowering season and growing conditions. Most commonly used by nurseries, the Latin genus and species names will enable enthusiasts wanting to select these plants for their personal landscapes to find the exact same plant they see in the Park.

Woods chose the Park after his scout leader shared that he had had "good experiences" working with representatives during past Eagle Scout projects. After discovering this project had been started but was not progressing due to lack of volunteer time, Woods decided it was a good fit.

Hoping to unveil the signs and webpages early 2021, Woods says he wants to complete his Eagle Scout requirements before

leaving to join the Marines in 2021 as part of the Delayed Entry Program (DEP).

A focused young man, he says his entry into the Marines is part of his plan which he hopes will ultimately lead him to a career in law enforcement.

A fourth generation La Mesa resident, Woods says he and his family have a long history with the Park.

"I've been coming here ever since I can remember," he recalls, adding that his brother first introduced him at a very young age.

The partnership is a win-win. Woods' signs are another way the Park hopes to encourage visitors to plant California native plants which sustain local wildlife and contribute to this very specific and important ecosystem. In turn, Woods' successful completion of this important project will help him achieve his goal of becoming an Eagle Scout. ■



*Eagle Scout Chris Woods prepares webpages*

## RECYCLING

# Next Step in Park's Commitment to Sustainability

by Peggy Junker

Continuing its commitment to keeping the Park clean and green, the Mt. Helix Park Board of Directors approved the purchase of 4 trash/recycling bins this spring. Delivered in October, board member Caroline Harrod says she hopes the additions will encourage visitors to "pitch in."

With the recent increase in outdoor activity, the Park has seen a higher-than-average rate of use, and, sadly, an increase in litter. Hoping to encourage visitors to do their part, Harrod, who spearheaded the purchase, says the project is something she and other Park officials have been considering for some time.

"The Park has never had a recycling system," notes Harrod. "Sometimes we have as many as 300 cars visiting the park in one day. Unfortunately, a number of them leave trash and debris behind. If you go hiking in Yosemite or the Grand



*MHP boardmember Caroline Harrod with New Park Trash-Recycling Bins*



*Helgi Gudmundson, Jason Kardos and Don Teemsam assemble new bins*

Canyon, they ask that you leave no trace. I think that's what we are endeavoring to do. Have people come up to the Park, but leave no trace."

With the new equipment came the need for a long overdue recycling system, adding the obvious next step to the Park's trajectory into sustainability. According to Harrod, "Now we can do our part to recycle responsibly, with the help of EDCO, who has always been in a partnership with us."

Harrod says supporting local businesses is important and she is pleased that the board was able to find "Outdoor Design Studio, Inc." in Murrieta to manufacture the custom bins which are now located at the north entrance of the Yawkey trail, in the Parking area and near the cross. She says she feels the community entrusts the board to maintain a high standard for the Park, and the new trash/recycling system is an important piece of the puzzle. "You really want to know that you are going to a place that is clean and safe for your family." ■



# San Diego Children's Choir Able to Continue Rehearsals at Mt. Helix Park

by Peggy Junker

A call from the San Diego Children's Choir Executive Director in July gave Park representatives the opportunity to help a fellow non-profit during an unprecedented time in either organization's history. Displaced due to COVID 19 restrictions and unable to conduct rehearsals in the usual indoor venues, program coordinators for the SDCC were able to find space for two of their classes right here at Mt. Helix Park. Adhering to strict safety guidelines, the Early Years Group and Apprentice Choir, SDCC's after school music education classes for Pre-K to 5th grade students, have been meeting once a week on the stage of the amphitheater, raising their collective voices and filling the historic steps with a sound that has been sorely missed in 2020.

Serving nearly 1,500 children and adolescents, SDCC added East County classes for the first time this year, just as the effects of the health crisis began to set in. Typically occurring in multipurpose rooms and fellowship halls, teacher/conductor Margie Orem says the Park has been a windfall for the roughly 20 children who now practice in the Park.

"In March we started having our rehearsals online," began Orem, adding that around the same time, the group decided to begin researching venue options.

"We were all driving around," she recalls. "We had created a spreadsheet with all the possible locations we could go to—it was anxious," she remembers.

Determined to give their choirs a chance to perform, she says that in addition to completing their season virtually, the SDCC held its winter concert via Zoom—in June. It didn't take long for coordinators to ramp up their search for a venue that had the space to allow their students to remain distanced and safe.

Within a month of their first sessions at the Park on August 24, Orem and fellow instructor Emma Schopler found creative ways to incorporate Hula Hoops and amphitheater steps to space the young singers.

Orem, who says she loves hearing the children's voices bouncing off the stone steps, says the views and the surroundings in general have had a positive effect on her singers.

"It's one thing to go up there and walk around," notes Orem. "It's a whole different thing to go up there and sing." With only their eyes showing, Orem says she can see her students looking out at the vistas. "I think it is inspiring," she adds. Echoing Orem's sentiments, Schopler remarked that the Park is now one of her favorite places to rehearse.

Grateful for the partnership with the Park, Orem points out that without it, these kids would not have the option to move forward in an organization that is celebrating its 30 years in existence.

Hopeful to bring the SDCC back to the Park for a public performance once concerts and gatherings have resumed, Park officials say the ability to help this important civic non-profit has been an honor. Meanwhile, rehearsals in the Park will continue in the spring with enrollment opening soon. Visit [sdccchoir.org](http://sdccchoir.org) to learn more. ■



*San Diego Children's Choir photographs by Gary Junker*

## ZOOM Classes Foster Engagement

by Peggy Junker

The fluctuation of rules governing public gatherings has produced an on-again-off-again atmosphere, but Helix Yoga instructors, Rose Polak Walters and Jessi Garrett, have navigated the chaos in true “namaste” fashion sending their classrooms to the virtual world as things shut down, then back to the Park when County mandates allow them to do so.

Developing their Zoom platform, the two have successfully maintained daily class schedules, preserving some semblance of a routine for their students, sometimes notifying them daily as the venue changes.

“More than ever, I feel so grateful for the yoga community we’ve created at the Park, and it’s been wonderful to stay connected through our Zoom yoga sessions. Being able to see each other’s faces—to say hi and practice together—has been a huge comfort and

See ZOOM on page 12



*Phil Lambert broadcasts live from his mobile device*



*San Diego Astronomy Assn's Dave Decker and Mt Helix Park board member Caroline Harrod prepare for Zoom class*

*Dave Decker and Gary J. Hawkins host a livestream Astronomy Night*



*Helix Yoga's Rose Polak Walters conducts a live, socially distanced class and broadcasts it virtually*

## Food Bank Deficits Prompt Community Spirit

by Peggy Junker

Local leaders and volunteer coordinators were happy to hear that Mt. Helix Park would be available as a drop-off spot for San Diego Food Bank contributions as the need for assistance throughout the City grew.

On August 22, more than a dozen volunteers, masked, socially distanced and hands sanitized, collected cans, boxes, bags and jars of food from drive-by donors. Within a couple of hours ten, 200-pound barrels were filled with food items which were delivered later in the day to the local Food Bank facility.

Mt. Helix Park Foundation board member, Don Teemsma, works with Just Serve Volunteers who helped facilitate the event. Teemsma, who has toured the food bank facility, said the organization's system is impressive and efficient, supplying food assistance to 350,000 people every month. He noted food banks are under added pressures as they try to keep up with an increased demand brought on by the current health crisis and economic downturn.

For information on how you can coordinate a food-drive, visit the San Diego Food Bank website at [sandiegofoodbank.org](http://sandiegofoodbank.org). ■







# heART of Rock N' Roll

## Mt Helix Park's Annual Gala Fundraiser Goes Virtual

by Peggy Junker

Meeting the challenges of 2020 head-on, event coordinators for the annual gala fundraiser took this year's celebration online, broadcasting the "Party on the Hill" via YouTube and raising critical funds for the operation of our historic non-profit, despite the looming pandemic.

With the help of locally owned McFarlane Productions and broadcast live from the Mt. Helix Park amphitheater, this year's program drew more than \$40,000 in pledges, announced as part of the "Fundraising Frenzy" portion of the evening.

More than \$25,000 in donations and proceeds were raised, proof that even amid the current COVID 19 crisis Park supporters are determined to keep the gates of this 12-acre Nature Park open, and its beauty preserved for the benefit of the public.

In its 13th year, the "heART" normally brings in about half of the Park's operating budget, and although that was not the case in 2020, Park management are grateful for every dollar given in these difficult times and hope to make up the shortfall with individual memberships and several smaller events.

"We know many are struggling," commented Executive Director Krista Powers, "so our underwriters became crucial in making the event free to watch."

With continually fluctuating COVID restrictions, the heART Steering Committee had to adjust the scope of the gala almost daily. "Our goal was to bring joy, laughter, and fun into people's homes during this dark season," explained Powers.

Viewership would ultimately reach 585 with the community showing its support for the beloved Park, buying auction items, pledging donations, and purchasing roughly 100 VIP tickets. While anyone could watch the heART of Rock N' Roll online for free, those who purchased VIP tickets received hand-delivered dinners, gift bags complete with customized Park "swag," and drink mixers to enjoy the night of the show. Simultaneously, sale of VIP tickets allowed the Park to provide needed support to some of the local vendors who have donated their services in previous years.

Infusing energy into the event, veteran heART musical group Good Mojo Band played its signature classic rock and roll sets throughout the program and provided songs for the virtual "Name That Tune" game played via the live chat.

Local notables, Steve Rotsart (local realtor and past Mt Helix Park board member) and Charles Tyler (Steele Canyon Athletic Director) kept the ball rolling for the 2-hour event with a signature drink "Mix-off" competition, "Fundraising Frenzy" and a "Name That Tune" contest.

Sprinkled throughout the livestream program were pre-recorded clips featuring board members, staff, local historian James Newland and even a guest-spot from one of the Park's heritage family members, Eric Fletcher.

To watch the heART of Rock N' Roll livestream event, visit the Park website at [www.mthelixpark/news-media.org](http://www.mthelixpark/news-media.org). ■



MCs Charles Tyler & Stephen Rotsart



Krista Powers, Executive Director



Norm Hapke, Board President



The Good Mojo Band



Foundation's First President, Robert Ball





# We Would Like to Thank Those Who Made This Event Possible

## Sponsors and Underwriters

Ron and MaryAlice  
BRADY

Norm and Valerie  
HAPKE



Jenal Engineering Corp.  
Alan and Jennifer  
WESTERMEYER

Joe and Alice  
SMITH

Roger and Alice  
CASPER

## VIP Participating Restaurants and Beverage Sponsors



## Our Restaurant, Vendor, Beverage, and Business In-Kind Donors

A+ College Counseling  
Annie's Nails  
Anthony's Fish Grotto  
Ballast Point Brewery  
Baskin Robins  
Bolt Brewery  
Brew Coffee Spot  
The Brigantine  
California Credit Union  
Casa de Oro Eyecare & Dr. John Flemming  
Casa de Pico  
City Tacos

D'Amato's Pizza  
Enchancery Jewelers  
Helix Brewing Co.  
Helix Soap Co.  
Highland Valley Vineyards  
Hooley's Irish Pub  
Johnny B's Burgers & Brew  
Kamikaze Wood Works  
La Jolla Etching  
La Jolla Shores Hotel & Restaurant  
La Mesa Lumber  
Le Caramel

Mary's Donuts  
Menchie's  
San Pasqual Winery  
Robert Hall Winery  
Skrewball Whiskey  
Southern  
St. Petersburg Vodka  
Think Your T-Shirt  
Terra American Bistro  
The Lunch Box  
Trevi Hills Winery

*We hope you will join us in supporting our local businesses!*

## Volunteers and Individual In-Kind Donors

Mike & Stacey Atkinson  
Bob & Kimberly Bardin  
John Bedlion  
Reem Boccia  
Donna Bloomer  
Scott & Jamie French  
The Gehman/Hughes Family  
John Grasberger  
Valerie Hapke  
Larry & Sandy Jackman  
Trishia Jane

Alexandria Junker  
Just Serve Volunteers  
Dianne McCann  
Sarah Lewis  
Mcfarlane Promotions  
Chris Nair  
James Newland  
Anice Plikaytis  
Lawrence Powers  
Ed Piffard  
Ammy Provancha

Emmy Uotani  
Mike & Mary Qualls  
Chris & Betsy Quinn  
The Rotsart Family  
Ruth Simpson  
Susan Schalin  
Sprites of East County  
Ed Suhay  
Jeff Swiney  
Charles Tyler

## A Special Thanks To the Mt. Helix Park Board for Their Efforts, Volunteer Time and Donations

Bob Ball  
Ron Brady  
Sharon Bullard  
Steve Clay  
Sarah Gehman  
Helgi Gudmundson  
Norm Hapke  
Caroline Harrod

Jason Kardos  
Christopher Kilrain  
Celina Laframboise  
Keith Meeker  
Andy Phemister  
Alice Smith  
Don Teemsma  
Wes Troy

# Welcome New Foundation Board Member Wes Troy

by Peggy Junker

The Mt. Helix Park Foundation Board welcomes Wes Troy, La Mesa Lumber's general manager, as its newest director. Troy, who was elected to the 15-member board in October, has a strong connection to the community. He is the great-grandson of Fletcher Olson, who joined the historic downtown La Mesa business in 1945.

After having worked in the hospitality industry for the past 10 years, Troy, a native of Sacramento, relocated from his most recent home in Carlsbad, to run the family business in La Mesa.

"When Mom (who is now semi-retired) asked me to take over. I jumped on it," said Troy. "I was excited to be part of the business again and in La Mesa, which I think is one of the undiscovered treasures of San Diego."

In 2019 Troy's company worked with Harvest Construction representatives and Park board member Caroline Harrod to design and install a long-needed pumphouse roof that would both add to the aesthetics of the Park and mitigate vandalism. Troy's enthusiasm and generous support for this project made



Board Member Wes Troy

him an ideal choice to serve on the Mt. Helix Park Foundation board.

Although he has never lived in La Mesa until now, Troy says he has spent time here over the years working at the lumberyard and visiting his family. Now he looks forward to laying down roots here.

Troy, who also serves on the La Mesa Village Association, said his civic involvement gives him the opportunity to discover "what makes La Mesa tick," adding that his connection to the Park, as a historic symbol of the community, makes his service on the board that much more interesting.

Viewing his time here as part of a 20-year plan, Troy says he is looking forward to the opportunity to positively affect the community and to work with and learn from the Park's other board members.

An avid runner, he says he is enjoying his new digs near the lumberyard and is happy to be within walking distance of work. If you see him and his dog "Bootsy" out for a stroll – be sure and wave. ■



## Astronomy Night

San Diego Astronomy Association members Dave Decker and Gary J. Hawkins hosted a livestream Astronomy Night. Typically drawing several hundred to the Park, this year's event was virtual and broadcast via YouTube. Eventually viewed more than 3,500 times, the duo showed its audience the late summer constellations using a high-powered telescope feed. "Even when we are again able to share the sky in person, we believe these virtual programs will play a huge role in astronomy sharing and teaching," said Decker. To view the Mt. Helix Park event, visit the Park's Astronomy Night page at [mthelixpark.org/astronomy-night](http://mthelixpark.org/astronomy-night).

## Wildfire Walkthrough

Rancho Helix de Oro Fire Safe Council representative, Kathleen Hedberg, and Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary Manager, Phil Lambert, spoke to Mt. Helix Park staff and volunteers about safety protocol and California native habitat.

Lambert gave the Park an "A" and applauded the Park's Habitat Restoration Team for its removal of invasive weeds that provide fuel for brush fires and for its restoration efforts in general.





# Top 5 Ways To Have a Yard Full of Butterflies

by Krista Powers, Executive Director

**Plant NATIVE plants.** Although hard to find at many nurseries, they can be sought out from the Native Plant Society, Native West Nursery, Moosa Creek Nursery, and several others listed below. This is the number one way you can support a healthy ecosystem in your yard. The best planting season is now for natives! Best part, beyond supporting our food supply, is that native plants, once established, don't need much, if any, water. Even apartment dwellers can put out a window box of native plants.

**Make a safe water feature** for butterflies. Take a frisbee, put some water in it with a few river rocks in the middle and viola, you have a place for the butterflies to perch while they drink. Amazon also sells solar water fountains, just make sure to always have somewhere for bees and butterflies to perch safely.

**Stop using poison.** Find natural remedies to deter pests. Don't use pesticides, rat poison, etc. If nonnative invasive plants or weeds are the issue, like fountain grass, tobacco plant, mustard, thistle, the best solution is to dig out the root of the weed. If that is not a possibility, kitchen or cleaning vinegar sprayed directly on the root will usually kill the plant. For the more difficult weeds and invasives, a higher potency of vinegar found on Amazon will work. We use anywhere from 30% to as high as 75% on difficult invasives at the Park, but you have to be careful not to change the PH of the soil.

**Keep birds well fed.** Butterflies can be a good source of protein for baby birds in the nest, so if you have a bird feeder, add mealworms or other protein sources to your usual seed mix during nesting season.

**Educate before you pull.** Is that really a weed or a baby native plant? Download the FREE iNaturalist app. This AMAZING mighty app can help you identify almost anything.

Sobering Truth: Every square mile of land that has lost the existence of native plants is the pollinator equivalent of leveling Manhattan. Since we are the ones who removed the pollinator habitats, leading to our pollinator extinction crisis, it is now up to us to do our part to plant native plants and replace vegetation with native plants when we can.



## GET YOUR SEEDS

Mt. Helix Park Members, stop by the Park Office and grab a packet full of California poppy seeds. Not a member? Memberships start at just \$35 per household and help us keep the Park safe and supportive for the people and the pollinators. Not ready to join? Seed packets can be purchased for \$5 each.

## FUN FACTS

Pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds are responsible for 75 percent of our food supply.

Most insects are specialists. Take the Hermès Cooper Butterfly, driven to near extinction as the spiny red berry bush disappears from San Diego's landscape because they will ONLY lay eggs on that plant. Or the fact that fig trees can only be pollinated by a specific species of wasp while birds and other animals help distribute the seeds.

Every living thing has an important place in our planet's web of life.

## IT'S PLANTING SEASON FOR NATIVES

Important resources and places to buy native plants:

- Native West Nursery (Wholesale with some public sales) – 619.423.2284
- California Native Plant Society - San Diego Chapter – CNPSSDT.org
- City Farmers Nursery – 619.284.6358
- Coastal Sage Gardening – 619.223-5229
- Evergreen Nursery (Call ahead to find out what natives are in stock) 858. 481.0622
- BEST SELECTION - Moose Creek Nursery – 760.749.3216
- Tree of Life Nursery – 949.728.0685
- Rancho Valhalla Nursery (call ahead to find out what natives are in stock) – 619.590.1025

*Want someone to plan out a perfect native plant garden to attract pollinators? We are blessed to have one of the top experts in our Mt. Helix community! Call Ed Piffard, native plant landscaping design consulting services - 619.379.6802*



## MT. HELIX PARK FOUNDATION

4901 Mt. Helix Drive  
La Mesa, CA 91941

Please visit [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org) and from the home page select "Contact Us" to send your email to be included in the electronic magazine distribution. Park members will continue to receive a mailed hardcopy of the magazine.

like us on facebook



## Make a Gift: Become a Friend of the Park!

### Become a Park Member

Please consider becoming a "Friend of the Park" member by making a tax deductible donation in the enclosed envelope. Your donation helps ensure Mt. Helix Park remains an oasis of beauty in our community by supporting on-going operations and free public programs.



ZOOM from page 7

bright spot during this weird time," professed Walters.

Like Walters and Garrett, Zumba instructor Lucy Loca has vacillated between online and in-person classes since the spring, but was able to grow her program, adding a kid's class this fall.

Similar Zoom classrooms have taken to the Park, which also served as a backdrop for naturalist Phil Lambert of the Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, who took school-age kids on a virtual nature walk along the Park's ¼ mile Yawkey Trail to talk about the California native habitat, and San Diego Astronomy Association's Dave Decker who conducted a virtual lesson for

Helix High School students.

Collectively, these professionals show their resilience and a willingness to learn and adjust in order to keep their audiences engaged.

To learn more about ongoing classes at Mt. Helix Park: for Helix Yoga classes, visit [www.helixyoga.com](http://www.helixyoga.com) or email at [helixyogainfo@gmail.com](mailto:helixyogainfo@gmail.com); for Loca's weekend Zumba classes, visit her Facebook page @ Zumba with Lucy Loca, email [funbyLucy@gmail.com](mailto:funbyLucy@gmail.com) or call 951-375-6428. ■

Visit [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org) for a list of 2021 events.

## Thank You To Our Business Members

