

Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 4 FALL/WINTER 2014-2015



MT. HELIX PARK
FOUNDATION

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

**heART of
Mt. Helix
RECAP**

**Volunteer Spotlight
Ron & Mary Alice Brady**

**Fire Resistant
Landscaping**

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION

Art in the Park

This shy artist was happy to share his work during the fall "Art in The Park" children's camp. For other examples of artwork, or for information on upcoming Art Smarts camps, visit either the Mt. Helix Park or Art Smarts, Inc. Facebook pages.



MT. HELIX PARK

From the Top is a semi-annual publication of Mt. Helix Park. To contact the Editor call 619-741-4363 or email tstotz@mthelixpark.org.

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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, Wednesday or Friday from 9 am until noon.





Tracey Stotz
Executive Director

From the Executive Director

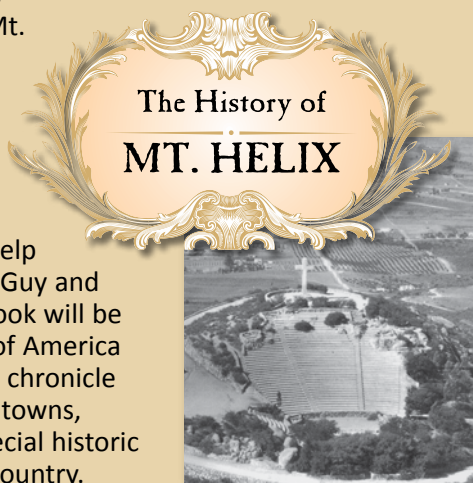
It is amazing that such a small charity (our operating expenses in 2013 were approximately \$115,000) is able to accomplish so much. We maintain and enhance a 12-acre park and amphitheater, provide programming such as the free December 14 Christmas Caroling, out-source daily security guard patrols to help keep our Park safe for guests and neighbors, offer weddings and memorial services, and are constantly striving to make Mt. Helix Park an attractive place for visitors who come up to enjoy the view.

Sometimes though, circumstances beyond our control have an impact. The drought is one of those. Several years of little rain have affected some of our trees and slopes. We are doing our best with limited irrigation, engaging more volunteer waterers and adding as many soaker lines as we can. Due to the drought, we also have more dry ground cover and bare spots than usual. An early November work party will be installing some erosion control materials to help keep our slopes in place should we get heavy rains this year. The trees are crying for lots of rain and we hope it is coming. If it does we will be ready!

Nearly everything we do is possible only because of the committed group of volunteers who believe in Mt. Helix Park. I have said it before and will say it again. We are only as good as our volunteer core and, happily, our volunteer core stands strong. As we come to the end of the year and are working on both short and long term planning I am thankful for all the amazing people who give their time and talents to the Park. From our Board of Directors to our heART committee, Garden Party, work day volunteers and others, we annually accumulate thousands of volunteer hours. I will add each of you to the list of things I have to be thankful for this Thanksgiving Day. Your time and talents are appreciated. One talent we don't seem to have is the ability to make it rain. That will be on the top of my Christmas wish list. Perhaps I should visit with the volunteer Santa at our caroling event! ■

History Book on Mt. Helix

The history of the Mt. Helix area has been chosen as the subject of an upcoming book being written by Historian Jim Newland with the help of Tracey Stotz, Jim Guy and John Mead. The book will be part of the Images of America series whose tomes chronicle the history of small towns, downtowns and special historic regions across the country. Each title features more than 200 vintage images, capturing often forgotten bygone times and bringing to life the people, places and events that defined a community. If you have any old photographs you would like to share please contact Tracey Stotz at tstotz@mthelixpark.org.



Mt. Helix Original Art Tee

Keep a piece of the hill close to your heart with a Mt. Helix Park graphic t-shirt designed by local watercolorist Chuck McPherson and printed by Think Your T-shirt. Think Your T-shirt is donating 100 percent of the price of the first 50 shirts sold.

A portion of every t-shirt sold after that will also benefit Mt. Helix Park. Mugs are available too. These make great Christmas gifts! Order at http://thinkyourtshirt.com/Mt_Helix_Park_Foundation.



7th Annual heART of Mt. Helix Sets FUNdraising Record

"It is great to see the hard work of our dedicated committee pay off," said Board President Mark Allan to the heART of Mt. Helix committee members at a recent gathering. "You all give a lot of time, and everyone is so talented. We thank you for making the heART an event everyone looks forward to attending." Allan went on to applaud the event's fundraising success as well. This year it netted more than \$100,000 thanks to so many generous underwriters and donors and the hard work of the Underwriting Committee chaired by Kathy White. This total was over budget which will allow the Board to address some small enhancements and repair projects.

Event Co-chairs Susan Conklin and Dianne McCann (seen at right) and their industrious committee spent seven months crafting an event that was as fun as it was financially successful. "I really enjoyed the Flash Mob," said Performing Arts Chair Nicole Roberts. Jazzercise El Cajon recruited a cadre of talent to show up at the event and spontaneously dance a choreographed routine to *Happy*. The performance wasn't part of the written program which made for a great surprise that night.

Tantalizing tastings by Anthonys, Brigantine, Cali Comfort, Dream Dinners, Frank's Pizza, Grove Pastry, Haritna, Hooley's, Mardi Gras Café, The Hills and Terra American Bistro were another event highlight. Mark August 15, 2015 on your calendar for the eighth annual event. "I am not sure how we can make next year even better," exclaimed McCann with a grin, "but we are already thinking about it!"



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T 2014



Major Sean Carroll *Home Town Hero*

The heART of Mt. Helix committee established its Home Town Hero award in recognition of an individual or individuals who have made the Mt. Helix community a better place. Past recipients include the Park founding families, the founding Park Foundation Board members, the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA), Retired Supervisor George Bailey and all supporters of Mt. Helix Park. This year the committee honored Major Sean Carroll (seen at left with Exec. Dir. Tracey Stotz and Board President Mark Allan.

Major Carroll was a student at Emerald Middle School when he made a significant contribution to Mt. Helix. Tasked with writing a school history paper, he chose Mt. Helix Park because he thought it would be an easily researched project. Serendipitously, this was at the time the Park was engaged in a lawsuit over the memorial cross. As Carroll began digging, he became aware of the lawsuit and he was drawn to want to help preserve the memorial cross and its unique history. His passion lead him to compile more than just a history paper. He developed a notebook complete with first person interviews with key Park supporters such as Ed Fletcher, Jr. and a plethora of research on the historic role of Mt. Helix Park. Carroll then channeled his efforts into petitioning the State of California to grant the Park Historical Registry status. This effort resulted in the Park being designated a State of California Point of Historical Interest which, in turn, helped in the fight to save the memorial cross. Carroll states clearly that he was just part of a larger team that was working on this effort but let's not forget he was just in middle school at the time. We hope he got an A on the paper!

Today, Major Carroll continues to give back. He currently serves in the Marine Corps and is stationed at Headquarters United States Pacific Command in Hawaii. He has been deployed overseas in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Carroll is married and has three adorable daughters. We applaud Carroll and his commitment to service as our 2014 Home Town Hero.



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making your landscape fire resistant

Images of wildfires strike fear and a sense of helplessness in all of us, particularly those with property adjacent to canyons and wilderness areas. While Mt. Helix is hardly considered the outback, there is no doubt that many of the lots here have plant-life and density of the landscape which can be both appealing and risky.

Firefighters and landscapers agree that fire in the wilderness is part of the natural cycle and is actually necessary for some plants to propagate; however, close to homes and cities fire is another story. With the increase in man-made fires in 2003, 2007 and again in 2014, San Diego County has endured an unnatural increase in fire incidents in the past decade.

Landscape designers in San Diego County are quickly becoming savvy with regard to plants and fire-safety. Many, such as Greg Rubin, owner of California's Own Native Landscape Design and a 2014 guest speaker at Mt. Helix Park, focus on the use of fire-resistant plants and California native plants in particular, to bolster a property's fire resistance while helping to establish healthy native habitats that ultimately require less water than traditional ornamental varieties.

Ed Piffard, longtime friend and understudy of Rubin's, has become the Park's "Plant Aficionado," providing advice during recent slope restoration efforts as well as leadership to the Mt. Helix Garden Party. Piffard highlights native plants as both fire and drought resistant.

"The issue of fire is very important as people have built homes and structures well inside undeveloped areas that have a fire ecology," states Piffard. "This shouldn't militate against the use of native plants as they can be used in a fire resistant manner. Because it is a fire ecology this means that many plants have evolved defenses against flames."

A few species he notes which are particularly fire resistant, thus making them a good choice for our area, are live oaks and sumac (Rhus and baccharis genus which are evergreen). He adds that all members of the atriplex genus (also known as salt bushes) are good candidates and points out that they concentrate salt in their leaves making them very hard to burn.

According to Piffard, the key to a fire safe landscape is the elimination of non-native weeds, particularly the grasses. "They are the kindling for wildfires and without them fires often couldn't start. It is important to reduce 'vertical acceleration' of flames by trimming out any deadwood

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Mt. Helix Residents Ron & Mary Alice Brady

We started with our family of origin, then added our orbital family (including our company family), and now we are able to give to our community family as well,” said Ron Brady. Brady and his wife, Mary Alice, are generous donors to Mt. Helix Park but their philanthropic efforts extend over a much larger area.

In the news was their \$3 million pledge to the Boys and Girls Club of La Mesa to renovate the Teen Center and build the Brady Family Clubhouse. Gifts and volunteer time have gone to the Grossmont Hospital Foundation, Children’s Hospital, the East County Y, Walden Family Services and Vista Hill. “We came from nothing and are fortunate to have been successful in business so we want to provide opportunities for others to be successful as well,” said Ron.

Their business success came from the Brady Companies, a variety of companies involved in construction and development. “At one point in time,” Mary Alice shares proudly as she looks toward Ron,” virtually every high-rise in San Diego was a Brady sub-contracted job.” However, it isn’t the City of San Diego but East County where the couple, with eight children in their blended family, wants to focus most of their energies.



“I am semi-retired,” adds Ron, “but I currently spend about four hours a day volunteering to help the charities we care about.” Most of this time is spent on “building relationships that can further these charitable endeavors” but Ron can also be found strolling through Mt. Helix Park picking up trash. “It is very disrespectful and unappreciative of people to leave trash in the Park,” he exclaims with a frown. “People don’t realize what a wonderful gift we have been given by the Yawkey and Fletcher families.”

Both husband and wife are very connected to the area. Mary Alice went to Grossmont High and Ron went to

Helix High School. They raised their children and forged their businesses locally. Mary Alice’s oldest daughter was married in Mt. Helix Park. The list of connections runs deep and when you talk to them it is apparent they care about ensuring future generations find the same opportunities and sense of place they have found here.

“When it comes to Mt. Helix Park we want to make sure it remains the treasured jewel it is today,” said Ron. “We want our grandchildren and their grandchildren to enjoy it, which is why we give and encourage others to do the same.” They put this philosophy to work during the live auction at the recent heART of Mt. Helix event. There they issued a challenge to the audience to raise \$10,000 which they would match. Donor hands went up and suddenly pledges of \$10,000 were committed so the Bradys offered an additional \$5000 if attendees would donate yet another \$5000. After the dust cleared, approximately \$55,000 was pledged to the Park! This is exactly what the Bradys like to do—support valued causes and encourage others to do so. In this case the beneficiary was Mt. Helix Park but truth to tell you never know where—in East County—you might find them leaving their mark.

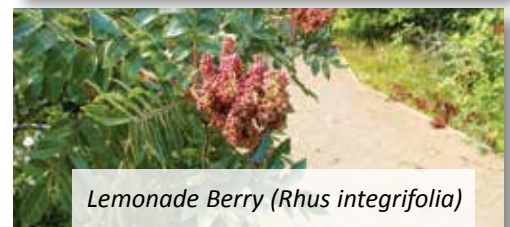
from mature shrubs and trees. At the end of summer, dormant woody perennials can be cut to the ground with the exception of sages which require more gentle pruning.”

The County of San Diego has published a list of recommended fire-safety plants on its website. Listed are many California natives. Noteworthy are several trees that dot the Park landscape, among them are the evergreens: Oak, Toyon, Sugarbush and Lemonade Berry (stop by the Park office and we will be happy to show you one of these plants growing in the Park).

For more information on how to create a fire resistant landscape, visit the San Miguel Fire Department website at smgfire.org. How To Create A Defensible Space outlines how to manage your property for the best fire defense. ■



Toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia)



Lemonade Berry (Rhus integrifolia)



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Make an Yeard-End Gift: Become a Friend of the Park



Please consider making a donation to Mt. Helix Park in the enclosed envelope. If you appreciate having this wonderful facility in San Diego, we hope you will make a tax deductible donation today. Donations of all amounts are appreciated and will support on-going operations and programs.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, December 14, 6:30 pm – 8 pm Annual Sing-along Christmas Caroling



Bring the family to this free event guaranteed to get you in the holiday spirit. Gina Seashore, known as “That Music Lady” and her group of musicians will lead the sing-along. Shuttles will run from the San Miguel Fire Station at 10105 Vivera Drive (at the corner of Mt. Helix Drive) beginning at 6:15 pm. Dress warmly, bring a flashlight and a canned good for the local food pantry. Complimentary baked goods will be provided by the SPRITES. Free hot cocoa and coffee will be available. Oh, and there will also be a raffle!

Saturday, December 20, 3:30 pm – 5 pm Winter Solstice Eve Drumming Celebration

Join other drummers as we say goodbye to the past year and welcome lighter and longer days with drumming, dance and storytelling. Bring your frame or hand drums, percussion instruments, and a poem of joyfulness to share. (Water and a seat cushion also recommended.) Relax, renew, laugh, celebrate! No drumming experience needed. The event will be facilitated by Gina Seashore

along with several local artists. Parking and a shuttle will be available at the fire station at 10105 Vivera Drive at Mt. Helix Drive between 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm. The event is free and family oriented.

January 1, 2015 New Year's Prayer Service

For details check Park website, mthelixpark.org, as they become available.



January 3, 2014, 10 am GMIA Co-sponsored Neighborhood Walk

Meet your neighbors at the San Miguel Fire Station for an invigorating walk up to the amphitheater. GMIA will be hosting coffee at the top.