

Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

# FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 7 SPRING/SUMMER 2016



**MT. HELIX PARK  
FOUNDATION**

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

**heART Ticket  
CONTEST!**

**Weddings  
at the Top**

**ADOPT-A-PLOT**

**Mt. Helix  
HISTORY**

**Volunteer  
Spotlight**

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION



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### 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 [nroberts@mthelixpark.org](mailto:nroberts@mthelixpark.org).

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The Mt. Helix Park Foundation welcomes new board director Ron Brady. Ron and his wife Mary Alice, who live on Mt. Helix, keep very busy in our community supporting Mt. Helix Park and other East County charitable organizations: the Boys & Girls Club of East County, East County YMCA, Friends of Vista Hill and Grossmont Hospital. Ron's commitment to serve on the board includes sharing his extensive knowledge of construction and planning from many years serving as CEO of Brady Companies. Welcome aboard!



Douglas Sherburne and Nicole Roberts

## From the Executive Director

What I enjoy most about my job is listening to the stories from Park visitors about their most memorable times spent at Mt. Helix Park. Words I read or hear always evoke strong emotions of joy. You will have many opportunities to make your own memories this year at the Park. We have many fun and exciting events planned which you will read about in this issue. I would like to say a special thank you to local resident Douglas Sherburne who graciously agreed to write an essay about his personal favorite memory. I am delighted to share it with all of you...



I worked my way up the rugged concrete steps. I carried a small flashlight in order not to stumble as I followed a route along the south boundary of the amphitheater. At the top, I was greeted by my buddy Dave who shouted, "Okay Sherburne, we're done, back to the cave." It was 2 a.m., and we had finished a two hour shift patrolling the Park and standing watch at the cross. It was Easter Morning, 1955.

When the San Diego County Council for the Boy Scouts of America was contacted requesting volunteers to patrol Mt. Helix Park the eve of Easter Sunday, they responded with, "Troop 46 out in El Cajon. Talk to them." There were eight of us, two adult leaders and six scouts, who all said, "We'll do it."

We were told to check in at four o'clock Saturday afternoon and bring warm clothing, a sleeping bag with a thick pad, a flashlight and snacks (believe me, no one brought a pad that was too thick). The chain and lock was removed from the iron gate and we set up our headquarters in the cave.

The stage, located at the foot of the Amphitheater, was cleverly constructed of reinforced concrete on top of, and spanning the space between a number of large granite boulders. A concrete floor was poured below and a partial wall with doorways constructed; the result was two large rooms with natural rock walls ... "the Cave."

As the early dawn light began to play out from behind the mountains to the east, I joined my sister and parents seated in the amphitheater. Then bright rays began to appear direct from the sun rising above those same mountains...it was a glorious morning. It was a morning for devotion, and a day to be remembered.

*Douglas Sherburne*

Editor's Note: Visit us in the Park office located behind and under the amphitheater stage to receive a tour of "Douglas' cave." Park office hours are 9 a.m. to noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

## Win 2 Tickets to the heART of Mt. Helix

Sharpen your #2 pencil; it's quiz time! Readers who answer all ten true and false questions correctly will be entered into a drawing for two general admission tickets to the Foundation's 9th annual heART of Mt. Helix benefit event taking place from 5:30 to 10 pm on Saturday, August 13th at Mt. Helix Park. This is the Foundation's premier fundraiser and the community's most cherished summer event. The drawing will take place on May 1st and the winner will be notified by phone.

*Note: One entry per person. Invitations to the 9th annual heART of Mt. Helix will be mailed to all quiz participants. Quiz answers are contained in the articles in this issue of From the Top ...*

### Park Quiz

T F

- ☐ ☐ Dave King has been volunteering in the Park since 2015.
- ☐ ☐ Adopt-a-plot parcels are still available for adoption.
- ☐ ☐ The name of the organization hosting the native plant tour is California State Parks.
- ☐ ☐ Art in the Park camp will teach children the techniques of woodworking.
- ☐ ☐ Mt. Helix Park is available for wedding rentals.
- ☐ ☐ The Park offers an annual membership program called Friends of the Park.
- ☐ ☐ Claudia and Neal Hicks are owners of a car wash business.
- ☐ ☐ Mt. Helix Drive road improvements and rock wall construction by New Deal program workers took place in the 1950s.
- ☐ ☐ Christ Lutheran Church will host this year's Easter Sunrise Service.
- ☐ ☐ Attendees are encouraged to bring a picnic dinner to the Star Party Astronomy event.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Best Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cut out and mail in the enclosed envelope.  
Entries must be postmarked by April 15th, 2016.



by James D. Newland, La Mesa Historical Society

## Mt. Helix's "New Deal"

As Easter Sunrise worshippers prepared to attend the 10th anniversary of the Mt. Helix Nature Theater's hosting of the annual community event in spring 1935, they and event promoters had additional reasons to celebrate—reasons we may take for granted today. Over the summers of 1933 and 1934 workers funded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal work programs had made significant improvements to the theatre and park. Part of the Roosevelt Administration's efforts to put the unemployed to work in combating the Great Depression, the federally-funded work resulted in the widening of the narrow, uneven and precipitous original road, along with the addition of new retaining walls, over 11,000 linear feet of cobble-stone gutters, 7,000 linear feet of rock guardrail walls and the construction of the grade separation overpass that eliminated the original, dangerous intersection for the one-way loop road.

Over the years, in a typical mistake that many make when thinking about Depression-era work programs, many have assumed that the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had completed this work. CCC camps and crews mainly worked on projects in National and State Parks and National Forests, but most public works improvements done for local jurisdictions was completed by other "alphabet-soup named" New Deal agencies. The work done at Mt. Helix is part of the latter. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) was the agency that hired local unemployed men to undertake the road improvements at Mt. Helix in the summer of 1933—the first year of the program. The following year, the CWA was reorganized into the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA). In 1934 locally hired SERA workers completed the overpass and masonry work that we all appreciate and enjoy the benefits of today.



Save the Date  
Nov. 5, 2016

La Mesa Historical  
Society Home Tour

Featuring homes in and around the Mt. Helix community.

# 2016 Calendar of Events

*All events take place at Mt. Helix Park*

## Art in the Park: Children's Art Camp

March 28 – April 1, 9:00 a.m. to Noon

\$150 per week, per child, includes supplies

Penny Quirk, local artist and owner of Art Smarts, Inc., will guide young artists in the use of pastel and watercolor mediums for a one-of-a-kind experience atop Mt. Helix. To enroll your child before the March 25th deadline, or for more information about Art Smarts, Inc., visit [www.ArtSmarts.net](http://www.ArtSmarts.net) or call (619) 944-3323 or (619) 995-1186. ■

## 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Easter Sunrise Services

Sun. March 27, 6:30 a.m. | Shuttle begins at 5:30 a.m.

Hosted by Christ Lutheran Church. Come experience a spectacular sunrise and share this year's Easter celebration with friends and neighbors at the Mt. Helix Park amphitheater. Parking will be available in both lots on Vivera Drive near the San Miguel fire station. Attendees may walk or shuttle up to the Park starting at 5:30 a.m. ■

## California Native Plant Tour

Saturday, April 2, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. | \$25/person

Hosted by the California Native Plant Society. The Garden Native Tour will provide visitors with a unique Mt. Helix experience. Docents will be available to answer questions and discuss the native plants that grow in the Park and interpretive signage and informative materials will enhance the experience. Other tour sites on this tour include everything from small front yards in the Rolando neighborhood to 2.5-acre spreads in rural Jamul. The cost is \$25 for adults and free for children. For more information, or to purchase tickets visit <http://gardennative.org>. ■

## Star Gazing Astronomy Night

Sat. April 30, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Free Event Hosted by Mt. Helix Park Foundation

Take advantage of the first of three opportunities this year to experience Mt. Helix Park under the stars. The San Diego Astronomy Association will be on site with their powerful telescopes to interpret the night sky. Bring a picnic dinner and enjoy a spectacular sunset prior to star gazing. Attendees are welcome to bring their own telescopes as well. Shuttles will run from the lower lots on Vivera Drive starting at 6 p.m. ■

## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual heART of Mt. Helix

Sat. August 13, 5:30 to 10:00 p.m.

\$75/General Admission | \$125/VIP Reserved Table

Save the date for the most cherished summer party on the hill. Enjoy tastings from local restaurants, live music and art, fine wines and craft beer, dancing under the stars to the Mighty Untouchables, and bidding on all your favorite auction items. Delight in a spectacular evening while supporting the Foundation's mission to keep the park clean, safe and open to the public. Purchase your tickets online beginning June 15th at [www.MtHelixPark.com](http://www.MtHelixPark.com) or call the Park office to have an event invitation mailed to your home or business ■

## 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Sing-Along

Sun. December 11, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Free Event Hosted by Mt. Helix Park Foundation

Sounds of the season will emanate from the Mt. Helix Park Amphitheatre during the annual Sing-along Christmas Caroling. Free hot coffee and cocoa will be available and SPRITES (a local mother-daughter philanthropic group) will provide free baked goods. Santa will be visiting from the North Pole. Shuttles will run from the lower parking lots on Vivera Drive starting at 3 p.m. ■

## Become a "Friend of the Park"

Become a Friend of the Park and be a part of the legacy that was established in 1925.

The preservation and enhancement of Mt. Helix Park is an opportunity for Southern California residents to come together and ensure that the Nature Theater and Park continues to be a source of pride for the community and a place for future generations to come for enjoyment, meditation and inspiration.

The Park is run by a non-profit public benefit organization and receives no government funding. It is basically a private park open to the public 365 days a year.

This means that annually thousands of people enjoy the beauty of the Park thanks to the support of generous



individuals and corporations like you.

Every dollar we raise goes directly into the Park budget. Donations fund everything from the landscape maintenance and electric bills to infrastructure improvements and daily security patrols.

Your support is crucial and appreciated. With your help, the Park will continue to remain an oasis of beauty and a valued community resource.

Please look over the Annual Fund Giving Levels in the enclosed envelope and become a "Friend of the Park" today by making a tax deductible gift.

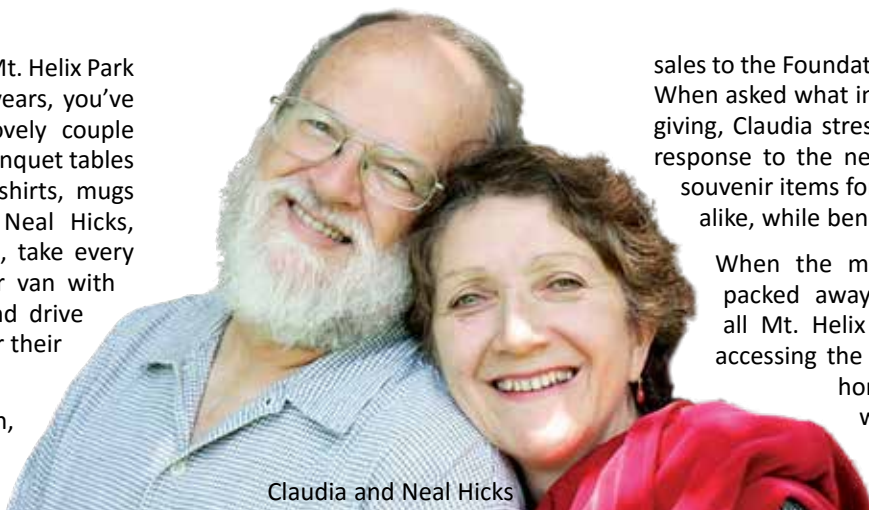
## Behind the Merchandise Table

by Nicole Roberts

If you have attended a Mt. Helix Park event in the last few years, you've probably noticed a lovely couple smiling at you from behind banquet tables covered with a display of t-shirts, mugs and blankets. Claudia and Neal Hicks, owners of Think Your T-Shirt, take every opportunity to load up their van with tables, tubs, and carpets, and drive up to the Park to fundraise for their favorite non-profit.

It wasn't that long ago, though, that Claudia left the house every morning to her job as an insurance manager, and Neal, a U.S. Navy veteran, to an office where he worked as a technical writer, among other things. When asked why they chose to begin a printing business, Claudia told me, "We became printers of garments, mugs, and other items as an outlet of artistic expression." They achieve this expression through graphic images of enhanced photographs they have taken and manipulated using Photoshop. Designs for Mt. Helix Park printed products depict flora and fauna found in the Park and in the surrounding Mt. Helix community.

The official term for this type of garment printing is DTG (Direct to Garment) and should not to be confused with screen printing. The equipment the Hicks purchased was the first of its kind to be delivered to the U.S., west of Florida. Claudia



Claudia and Neal Hicks



remembers her home full of design engineers from Japan and the U.S., there to ensure the equipment worked properly. Not only did the Hicks want the best equipment available but they felt it was important to go green. Their printers use Oeko-Tex® certified inks that meet the human-ecological requirements established for baby articles. The most endearing part of this story is the fact that the Hicks have donated their time and gross

sales to the Foundation for over two years. When asked what inspires their charitable giving, Claudia stressed, "It was a natural response to the need for Mt. Helix Park souvenir items for visitors and residents alike, while benefitting the Park."

When the merchandise display is packed away, buyers can browse all Mt. Helix inspired products by accessing the online store from the home page of the Park's website. Buyers have the option to have their merchandise shipped or picked up at the Park office. The couple's drive for quality and outstanding customer service has brought them a lot of repeat business.

When Claudia was asked about her and her husband's future business goals, she replied, "We love what we

do. Printing Mt. Helix Park inspired images on items is very rewarding to us. We are a blank canvas, a small local business." ■

*Customers may also use the website to create their own one-of-a-kind designs.*

*Editor's note: For other products and custom work, visit [thinkyourtshirt.com](http://thinkyourtshirt.com), call 619 670-7289 or e-mail [thinkyourtshirtorders@live.com](mailto:thinkyourtshirtorders@live.com).*

## Volunteer Dave King



If you hang around Mt. Helix Park long enough, you find some real gems, stories and situations that will renew your sometimes faltering faith in mankind and the human spirit. In this issue we salute former Navy veteran, Dave King. El Cajon resident and San Diego native Dave King says he has been visiting Mt. Helix Park almost daily for twenty years picking up trash and working in the Park. Unknown to current staff, he does his part quietly, with no recognition and without being asked. Recently Park staffer, Peggy Junker, learned from another volunteer about King and his efforts. Junker decided to meet King during one of his routine visits and discovered that he has been helping out at the Park since the early 1980's. He calls the work he does in the Park "therapy" and adds that while making his rounds he has found everything, including – literally – a kitchen sink.

To all of the Dave Kings out there whom we may never know about, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation staff and its Board of Directors thank you for all you do to keep the "Crown Jewel of East County" beautiful.

# Adopt-A-Plot Program

## Steps Up Restoration Efforts



*Whitney Dueñez at work on her plot.*

Answering a horticultural “call to arms,” 15 volunteers attended recent training sessions for the Mt. Helix Park’s Adopt-A-Plot program. Park-certified and working on their own schedules, they have managed to turn the tide on the invasive weed problems that threaten to overrun the Park’s natural habitat. The first wave of participants has adopted almost a quarter of the restoration area. Many parcels, however, remain open for adoption.

Launched in November of 2015, the program was established in response to the Mt. Helix Garden Party’s efforts to step up habitat restoration. As it turned out, the overwhelming number of invasive weeds, such as mustard, horehound, feather grass and London rocket, to name a few, were making this impossible. Many of these weeds, experts warn, attack native plants by emitting chemicals that kill them at the root level.

Adopt-A-Plot volunteer, Whitney Dueñez, has experience both eradicating invasive weeds and working with native plant species. Dueñez, who also volunteers at the Water Conservation Garden, has taken on two large plots within the Park, one on a northerly slope and one on a southerly slope, each with different plant potential.

Dueñez says she noticed the weed problem on a visit last summer, even before reading about the Adopt-A-Plot program, “It made my heart hurt,” recalled Dueñez, who lived in the back country for almost thirty years and has extensive experience trying to eradicate black mustard and other invasive weeds. “It took a number of years to get it under control,” she noted. “When I saw the article about the weed abatement program in the Park’s magazine, I thought it was a fabulous idea and wanted to participate.”

Dueñez and the other Adopt-A-Plot volunteers have already made a visible difference in the Park, some eradicating up to 90% of the weed plants on their plots. The process, however, is far from complete since local plant experts say the weeds must be removed continually until the cycle is broken which can take a minimum of three years.

Their efforts will be showcased in the upcoming California Native Plant Society’s April 2, Garden Native Tour which, along with Mt. Helix Park includes 20 other gardens in East County. For information on how you can adopt a plot, contact Peggy Junker at (619) 741-4363 or [pjunker@mtelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mtelixpark.org). For Garden Native Tour tickets and information, visit <http://gardennative.org/>. ■



*Approaching the weed-battle from another angle, more than a dozen Garden party and Adopt-A-Plot volunteers met in early February to plant more than 185 native plants along the Yawkey Trail. Addition of these “good” plants helps to minimize the surface area for new weeds to establish.*



**MT. HELIX PARK FOUNDATION**

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Contact us at [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org) if you are receiving duplicate newsletters or would like to receive email updates on Park events.

**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.



# the heART of mt helix 2016

## Save the Date!

Saturday, August 13th

9th annual heART of Mt. Helix

Food, Wine, Music, Art, Fabulous Auction Items, Featuring The Mighty Untouchables



**Tickets go on sale June 15, 2016**