Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 12  FALL/WINTER 2018

Dedicated to Preserving
Mt. Helix Nature Theatre & Park

11th annual
heART of Mt. Helix

Volunteer
Spotlight

Volunteer
SEARCH

BUTTERFLIES
in the PARK

Mt. Helix Park
Foundation

Dedicated to Preserving
Mt. Helix Nature Theatre & Park

PARK HOURS
Sept 1 - Oct 31: 5:30 AM to 7:00 PM  |  Nov 1 - Feb 28: 5:30 AM to 5:30 PM
March 1 - May 31: 5:30 AM to 8:00 PM  |  June 1 - Aug 31: 5:30 AM to 8:30 PM

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION
Make a difference!

Our members, volunteers, and donors allow us to serve the community and keep the Park open for all to enjoy.

The Mt Helix Park Foundation does not receive government funding.

Family Memberships start at just $35

Becoming a Park member not only gives you invitations to wonderful events at the Park but also ensures it is here for the next generation.

MtHelixPark.org
From the Executive Director

Nicole Roberts
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Mt. Helix Park Foundation

The most satisfying aspect of my job—even better than the location of my office located at Mt. Helix Park, the short 5-mile commute to work, and even the guarantee of a parking spot—is the positive work environment that is defined by a diverse group of volunteers whom I have the privilege of serving.

This may be the typical culture within a non-profit organization; however, there is something extra special about our volunteers who consist of the board of directors, committee members, adopters of park plots, bi-weekly maintenance workers, event staff, and the countless nameless neighbors who habitually pick up litter on their daily walks. In my opinion, the devotion of our volunteers is directly related to reasons for our Park being tagged the “The Crown Jewel of East County.”

Just recently I was posed the question of, "why this title?" The reflection that ensued was enlightening, as I had never really tried to articulate this before. I feel the answers are as diverse as the individuals whose lives have been touched in some way by a visit to Mt. Helix Park. For me, I think as a reference to a “Crown Jewel,” the Park is characterized as a rare and precious commodity for the purity of its natural state. Also, like a “Crown Jewel,” the Park is a priceless gem for the unique ways it uplifts our spirits, calms our worries, provides a natural gym to increase our health and wellness, and brings together our members of our community.

In the same way crown jewels are passed down from leader to leader, so has the Park. Now in the hands of the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, the Park is looking better than ever. The Foundation volunteers work tirelessly to keep this gem maintained, protected, and also accessible to all. As you read through this issue, you will get a glimpse into our work and the opportunities we create to share our jewels with all of you. The Park was given as a gift to you, and me, and all of mankind to enjoy free of charge. It’s a special place that, in my mind, forever qualifies it as “The Crown Jewel of East County.”

From the Foundation President

Norm Hapke
PRESIDENT
Mt. Helix Park Foundation

As a serving board member, I was selected recently by my fellow board members to become president of the Mt. Helix Park Foundation. This is both an honor and duty, and I am grateful to the board members who work diligently for the Park and the many volunteers who bring to the Park their love and service. I will do my best to ensure that our efforts will keep the Park clean, safe, and beautiful for the residents of East County.

See more about Norm Hapke on page 7.

Help Wanted!
Mt. Helix Park Facilities Volunteer

Mt. Helix Park is looking for an individual to help provide support for the facilities maintenance of Mt. Helix Park. Ideally, this would be a retired individual who, under direction of the Vice President of Facilities, assists in the day-to-day maintenance of the Park. General Duties:

- Masonry repairs of rock walls
- Asphalt road patching and sealing
- Hand watering of plants as required
- Minor repairs to electrical wiring and understanding circuit breakers functioning, repair of office lighting equipment
- Trail maintenance
- Maintenance of irrigation systems
- Painting of park facilities
- Maintenance of the main gates and programming of gates controller

Approximate period of work would be 10 to 20 hours per week. If you are interested and/or would like more information on this volunteer position, please contact Executive Director Nicole Roberts at nroberts@mthelix-park.org or 619-741-4363.
Ask anyone what they liked about the annual heART of Mt. Helix event and chances are you’ll get a different answer every time. But there is no doubt that one of the top three components making this “party on the hill” stand out is the food. Whether it’s sliders from the Hills, Thai Chicken Lollipops from Terra, dessert from Mary’s Donuts, or the pastries from Café Carmel Bakery, this event showcases some of the area’s top fare.

Without a doubt the entertainment also ranks among the most popular reasons for ensuring the evening’s success. Guests were abuzz over this year’s 5-piece Good Mojo Band. Playing at Mt. Helix Park for the first time, they rocked audiences at the top of the hill with a memorable, high-energy classic-rock repertoire. Closing the evening for the fifth year were the ever-popular and utterly danceable Mighty Untouchables. Also performing throughout the evening were the talented Marissa Grace (vocalist), Ben Read (pianist) and a surprise performance by the Choral Club’s Mink Pack.

Event Co-chair, Dianne McCann, says that one of the things that makes the heART event so successful is that they keep it fresh. “We always have something different and unique,” she explains, giving this year’s performance by the California Rhythm Project as a primary example. Featuring seven tap dancers on the main stage, these entertainers “were from another era,” describes McCann. “It was a moment out of time. It took you back to Frank Sinatra, classics and tuxedos. It was Broadway play-esque right here on the hill,” she added.
Board member and local resident, Ron Brady, praised not only the food and music, but also this year’s auctioneer, Zack Krone of California Coast. The auctioneer’s role is crucial as the heART event is one of this non-profit Park’s primary avenues for revenue, and Zack Krone dazzled the crowd into bidding with his high energy, quick wit, and playful demeanor.

And of course – the volunteers. “I think for a complicated venue, the committee does an outstanding job,” he says of the all-volunteer crew that coordinates this event each year.

It goes without saying that the heART would not be what it is without the “ART.” Local artists provided not only live demos, and pieces from their collections, but winning juried art as well.

“It hits me as a magical place to be,” remarks McCann of this very special venue. “When we’re up at the top by the cross, and you can see the sun setting, the music playing…I don’t think it gets better than that.”

The heART of Mt. Helix is the primary gala/fundraiser benefiting Mt. Helix Park, a 501(c)(3) non-profit park. This year’s heART raised roughly $90,000. Expressing her appreciation, Executive Director Nicole Roberts stated, “I give credit to our generous community of businesses and individuals for all that we accomplish during this event. The money raised ultimately enhances the lives of thousands of visitors who enjoy Mt. Helix Park on an annual basis.”

This event occurs the second week in August each year. For information on next year’s heART of Mt. Helix event, or to volunteer, visit www.mthelixpark.org or call the Park office at (619) 741-4363.
2018 heART of Mt. Helix Sponsors

Your generous donation of time, talents, goods, services, and financial support contributed to a net revenue of $90,000 that benefits thousands of people who visit Mt. Helix Park on an annual basis. Your support ensures Mt. Helix Park remains well maintained and open free of charge every day of the year. Thank you for being a part of our success!

RESTAURANTS
Anthony’s Fish Grotto
Brew Spot Coffee
Brigantine
Cafe Carmel Bakery
Cali Comfort
Casa de Pico
D’Amatoss Pizza
Dream Dinners
Edible Arrangements
Hooleys
Mary’s Donuts
Menchie’s Frozen Yogurt
Pick Up Stix
Posh Nosh
Terra American Bistro
The Edge Mediterranean Grill
The Hills Local Pub

SPONSORS
Ron & Mary Alice Brady
The Late Jack & Mary Lentz
Norm & Valerie Hapke
Mark & Maria Allan
Eric & Babs Fletcher
McCann Family & Friends
Spring Valley Veterinary Clinic
Tracey Stotz, Broker/REALTOR
Enhancery Jewelers
Bank of Southern California
Jenal Engineering Corp.
Rancho Valhalla Nursery
O’s Printing
Planter Paradise
The Lunch Box
CBC Technical
Nainsook Framing + Art
Think Your T-Shirt
La Mesa Historical Society
Judy & Keith Meeker
Bob Blessing

BEVERAGE SPONSOR
Ballast Point Brewery
Helix Brewing Company
St. Petersburg Vodka
San Diego Distillery

MUSICIANS
Ben Read
California Rhythm Project Classic Tap!
Choral Club of San Diego - Mink Pack
Good Mojo Band
Marissa Grace
Mighty Untouchables

VOLUNTEER GROUPS
Miss El Cajon Pageant
Miss Santee and Miss Teen Santee Pageant
East County Transitional Living Center
SPRITES of East County
Boys to Men
Just Serve
Boy Scout Troup 319

ARTISTS (LIVE DEMO)
Sally Ault
Cayce Hanalei
Chuck McPherson
Roz Oserin
Penelope Quirk
Chris Witnik

GOLF CART DONOR
Anne Erdman

continued …
A special thanks to Susan Conklin for her original artwork used on the heART invitation and program.
Butterflies are Free to Fly on Mt. Helix

by Peggy Junker

Despite dwindling numbers and grim odds, the Hermes copper butterfly (Lycaena Hermes) did not make its way on to the list of endangered species, although it appears to still be under consideration. According to scientific maps delineating this rare species’ habitat, it is surrounding Mt. Helix Park.

Naturalist and Park plant aficionado, Ed Piffard, thinks this might be evidence that the elusive butterfly could be sniffling around this open space haven, and he is hoping that humans, who are contributing to the reduction of this insect’s habitat, might also have a hand in helping to improve its numbers.

As fate would have it, Mt. Helix Park is home to several groves of healthy Rhamnus crocea, or Spiny Redberry bush. This very same plant is the only known host to the larvae of these rare butterflies.

According to Piffard, the Cedar Fire in 2003 and the Witch Fire in 2007 that ravaged much of San Diego County also devastated the Hermes copper’s habitat. Scientific journals estimated that as much as 39 percent of all populations were destroyed.

“Redberry doesn’t recover all that well from fire,” explains Piffard of a plant with which he is very familiar. “I was so excited to find out that the Redberry was such a crucial plant because there is just so much of it on top of Mt. Helix,” he adds.

Although these slow growing species are currently thirsty from the long hot summer, they are expected to bounce back with seasonal rain. For the past couple of years Piffard has been instrumental in working with the Park’s Habitat Restoration Group to plant more of the Spiny Redberry. Getting new specimens to thrive, however, can be tricky.

“Because we have little irrigation, we have real trouble getting them established,” points out Piffard. Even with irrigation, he acknowledges that this variety can be fickle. However, Piffard and his team don’t give up easily and from 2014 to 2018 they planted roughly 20 Spiny Redberry with some success.

Flanked by a mix of custom homes and a natural wooded setting, Mt. Helix Park has several points in its favor when vying for a spot as home to the next Hermes copper population. This 12-acre open space Park offers a ready supply of mature Spiny Redberry bushes and is therefore prime real estate even from a butterfly standpoint.

“Most of the butterflies are hilltoppers,” states Piffard. “They go to the hilltops to breed,” he explains. But since most of the other local hills are covered in development, he believes the Park’s natural, open landscape will give it an even greater appeal.

“Mt. Helix has potential...maybe the Park can be a sort of a sanctuary,” says an optimistic Piffard. “Many of the local plants here are hosts,” he adds, pointing out the prevalence of native Buckwheat which provides nectar for the adult Hermes copper.

He says the Park is already home to a plethora of other local butterfly species such as the Acamen Blue, the Mulcins Admiral, Swallowtail and Monarch, to name a few. Anyone who has visited the Park recently can attest to the fact that the butterfly population is well represented in general.

Spend a few minutes sitting in the Park’s amphitheater, and you will likely witness the constant dance performed by butterflies there as they court one another. Hovering just above the steps, they parade their show of color until they are noticed. Stopping periodically in nearby groves of Lemonade Berry, Spiny Redberry, Buckwheat, Sugarbush and Black Sage, they stretch out their wings and then take flight again until they find a mate. Some drift so close to Park visitors they can hear the sound of their wings.

Piffard says he has personally never seen a Hermes copper in the Park. A small butterfly with a wingspan of between one and 1.25 inches, it is primarily brown with yellow highlights on both the wings and tail. Mature larvae are about 13 millimeters and are primarily bright green. They reportedly prefer host plants in canyons and on the north facing slopes surrounded by plants that provide nectar for the adults, such as native California Buckwheat, which is abundant in the Park.

Hopeful that a community effort could increase the odds of Hermes copper taking up residence on Mt. Helix, Piffard says he would like to see locals add Spiny Redberry to their landscapes as well as other host plants for the Hermes and other butterfly species.

For more information on butterfly friendly plants, visit the Park website at: www.mthelixpark.org.

From the top, photos by Hunter Hartmann: Behr’s Metalmark, Acmon Blue and Non-Hermes Copper. Watercolor closeup from painting by Chuck McPherson.
Every leader brings a unique skillset to the table that makes their governance effective. A seasoned director for two notable philanthropic organizations and newly elected board president, Norm Hapke, took the helm in April of this year as the third board president for the Mt. Helix Park Foundation. A resident of Mt. Helix since 1981, he and his wife, Valerie, are well-known movers and shakers both in the community of Mt. Helix and in the San Diego area.

Norm is no stranger to non-profit management, holding board positions on both the Jacobs Family Foundation, a philanthropic organization that supports under-invested neighborhoods in Southeast San Diego, as well as Project Concern International, a non-governmental organization which facilitates aid in over 16 countries. And although Norm has been a board member for the Park foundation since 2011, his new role has this former Marine officer at attention.

“I’ve found being president is a very active job,” says Norm, explaining that he focuses on coordinating the efforts of board members to carry out board policies and decisions in a transparent manner, as well as encouraging everyone to work together to achieve board directed goals and objectives.

To make his job even more interesting, he points out that this is no ordinary board. “Typically, boards are supervisory,” he notes. “But this board is a working board. Because there are few staff members, much of the work of the foundation falls to board members themselves,” he explains, adding that day-to-day maintenance and much of the Park’s programs are coordinated by board members and volunteers.

Norm’s fondness for the Park developed even before his role on the board, during numerous walks to the Park with his children.

“My son and I would hike from our house straight up to the cross,” he recalls. “We had adventures. It was a neat thing for our children to be around,” adding that he and his family have also been Park beneficiaries for many years.

Looking to the future, Norm identifies three distinct goals he has for the Park.

“We want to improve the physical part of the Park,” says Norm. “That is to say that we are trying to develop physical improvements that will enhance the experience of the Park for visitors,” he adds.

Norm says his second goal is to develop ways in which people can use the Park for fun, in a larger effort to involve more people in East County. Last, he says he would like to see the foundation work closely with other important local organizations, a gesture he believes is the key to a strong community.

Part of looking forward for Norm is looking back as he acknowledges the work of previous boards.

“We have a legacy from 1998 of people who did heroic things to make this park sustainable both legally and financially and their efforts have made a dramatic change in the Park for the people of East County,” Norm points out. “What I’m hoping to do is to build on those things.”

---

“Hermes Copper”
by Chuck McPherson, painted live at the 2018 heART of Mt. Helix

“Hermes Copper”
by Chuck McPherson, painted live at the 2018 heART of Mt. Helix

Now available on T-shirts and mugs

**Place your order today by calling**
**Think your T-Shirt at 1-619-670-7289**

*Merchandise proceeds benefit the Mt. Helix Park Foundation*

Special thanks to our merchandise printers, Claudia and Neal Hicks of Think your T-Shirt.

Short Sleeve T-Shirt $22
Large Mug $20

Additional apparel available upon request.
2ND ANNUAL
Halloween Harvest Family Festival
@ Mt Helix Park

SUNDAY
OCTOBER 28TH
2-5pm

GAMES & CRAFTS
LIVE MUSIC
FOOD TRUCKS
PRIZES 4 COSTUMES
FACE PAINT
AND MORE!

Presented by:
GMIA (Grossmont-Mt Helix Association)
&
MHP (Mt Helix Park Foundation)

Take the shuttle from Fire Station 21
10105 Vivera Dr

Live Music by: facebook.com/TheRespondersSD

More Info:
GMIA.net or MtHelixPark.org
A free traditional holiday gathering at Mt. Helix Park

**Saturday, December 15**

4:00 pm–7:00 pm

(Program begins at 6 pm)

Join us for our 28th annual Christmas sing-a-long atop Mt. Helix! Fun for the whole family with photos and visits with Santa, Christmas crafts and delicious treats with warm drinks. Join in singing with a community choir as the Nativity is reenacted. **We will be collecting gently used blankets for the needy in our community if you’d like to leave yours behind!**

**PARKING**

Parking and complimentary shuttle lots are located at the intersection of Vivera Dr. and Mt. Helix Dr. near the San Miguel fire station and at Grossmont High School. Shuttles will begin at 4 p.m. and run continuously throughout the event. The last shuttle ride down the mountain will be 7:45 p.m.