

Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

# FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 8 FALL/WINTER 2016



MT. HELIX PARK  
FOUNDATION

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

**heART Event  
ROCKS!**

**ADOPT-A-PLOT  
Birthday**

**JUST  
SERVE!**

**Weddings  
at the Top**

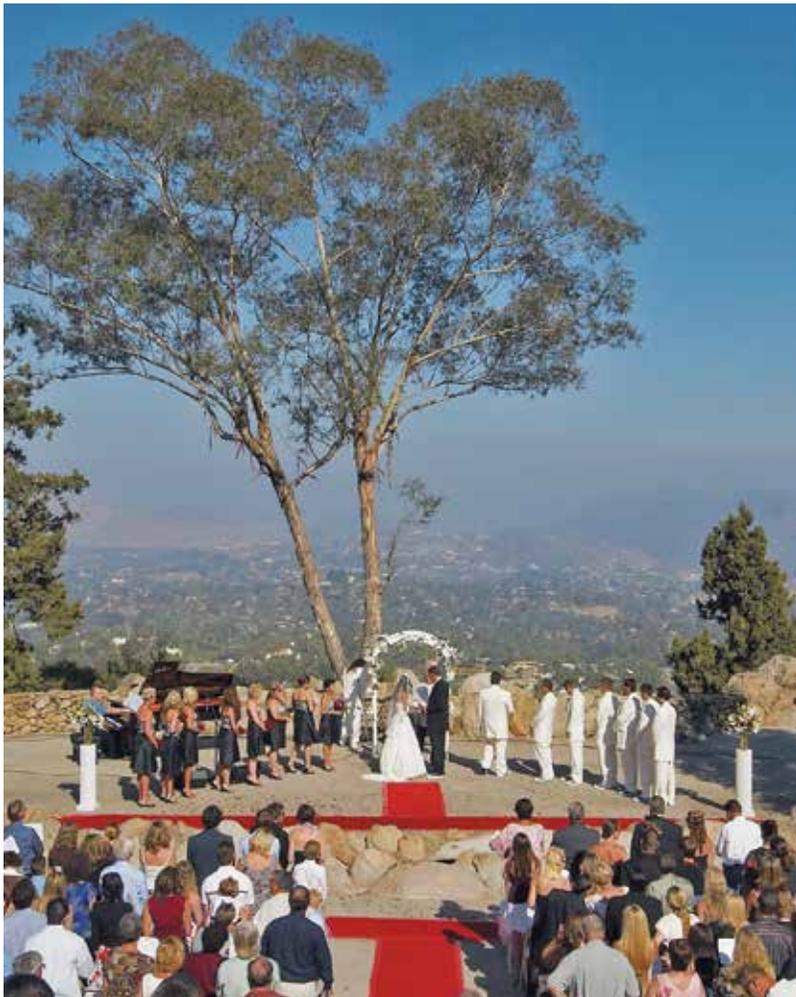
**Win \$500 Off**

**Volunteer  
Spotlight**

PARK HOURS

NOV 1 - FEB 28: 5:30 A.M. TO 6:00 PM | MARCH 1 - MAY 31: 5:30 A.M. TO 8:00 PM | JUNE 1 - AUG 31: 5:30 A.M. TO 8:30 P.M.

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION



# Win \$500 Off a Crown Jewel Wedding Package!

*Accommodates up to 200 Guests*

Create the day of your dreams with the ultimate wedding package: *The Crown Jewel*. The package includes use of Mt Helix Park for your wedding and reception, tables, chairs, aisle runner, wedding arch, professional shuttle service, Park staffing, and more.

There is no more spectacular venue for your wedding than atop Mt. Helix. With easy parking and a comfortable shuttle ride circling up the mountain, your guests will be treated to views of the Park's natural beauty, historic architecture, and breathtaking vistas of San Diego and beyond. At 1300 feet elevation, it's a glorious backdrop for a bride and groom's special day—one your family and friends will never forget. Enter now to win \$500 off the price of a Crown Jewel wedding package. Entry forms are available on the Park website at [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org) and are due by December 31, 2016.

In addition to weddings, Mt. Helix Park is available for memorials, religious services, non-profit events and fundraisers. Please contact us (619) 741-4363 for more information. ■

## 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, Joseph Ventura. Joseph and his wife Elsa have been Mt. Helix residents for 22 years. Mr. Ventura is a practicing certified public accountant and partner at Ventura Kuehn & Associates, Inc. specializing in taxation and business planning. He holds a masters in taxation degree. For the last five years he has served as a judge for La Jolla Concours d'Elegance and Motor Car Classic. He is an avid car enthusiast, restorer and collector. Mr. Ventura brings to the Foundation years of valuable professional experience. Welcome aboard!



Nicole Roberts

## From the Executive Director

If you attended this year's heART of Mt. Helix, I am sure you noticed the gorgeous succulent vertical gardens featured in the silent Auction. The largest garden was stored a few days after the event in the Park office awaiting pick up. The day the buyer stopped in, I was the only one there and concerned how the two of us were going to carry it out to her car because it weighed a ton! Well, it just so happened that the buyer parked off street near a car of nice young adults who needed a battery jump. Two of the young men were very strong and offered to carry the heavy garden to her trunk. In return, the buyer, who happened to be carrying a set of cables, helped with the battery jump. After everyone drove away, I sat and thought, "What are the chances ..."

In the case of Mt. Helix Park Foundation, this story illustrates how fortuity, generosity and perfect timing have resulted in opportunities to address the Foundation's needs. This issue of *From the Top* highlights how many recent goals were met thanks to individuals who crossed paths with us at just the right time. I am excited to share that because of these happy circumstances we now have a brand new website, a bi-weekly dedicated volunteer group to assist with graffiti abatement and other landscape maintenance needs, and many adopters of Park plots who have eradicated much of the mustard weed threatening our native plants in the Park. And thanks to so many generous people, businesses, and volunteers who participated in this year's heART of Mt. Helix event, we were able to meet our fundraising goal of \$100,000.

We could not be as successful without all of you. I thank you from the bottom of my heART!

*Nicole Roberts*  
Executive Director  
Mt. Helix Park Foundation

## Receive "From the Top" Electronically

In an effort to conserve resources, Mt. Helix Park's *From the Top* magazine will be circulated electronically to subscribers beginning in 2017. "The new distribution method via an email with a link to the magazine on the Park's website will not only save the Foundation thousands of dollars in printing and mailing fees, but provide readers a more interactive experience," states Executive Director Nicole Roberts. She goes on to say, "We also want to make it easier for people to connect with us."

Park members will continue to receive the benefit of a mailed hardcopy of the publication. Hardcopies will also be available in the Park office and in the Park kiosk, located in the picnic area on the east side of the entrance parking lot.

Please contact Assistant Executive Director Peggy Junker, by email or phone, to ensure your email address will be included in the electronic distribution of the next edition of *From the Top*. You may also mail us your email address using the enclosed reply envelope. Peggy Junker: [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org) or [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org). Park Office Phone: (619) 741-4363 ■

## 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.

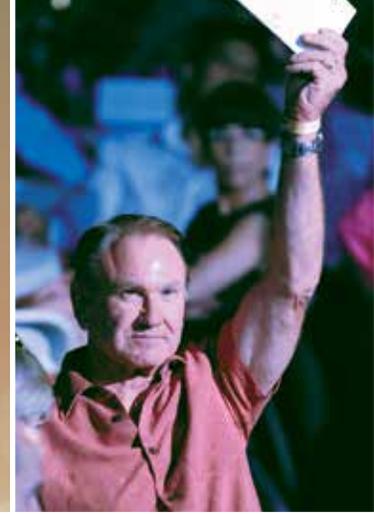
The Park is run by a non-profit public benefit organization and receives no government funding. It is basically a private park open to the public 365 days a year.

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.



the heART of

## heART Restaurants Connect with the Community

by Peggy Junker

Imagine sampling your way through some of the most popular local fare in East County, while listening to some of the area's top musical acts and viewing local artistic talent ---all ingredients that go into creating the Park's biggest annual event, the heART of Mt. Helix.

As the Park's primary fundraiser, the heART has evolved into one of the most awaited celebrations on Mt. Helix. This year's gala raised \$100,000, accounting for one third of the Park's annual operations budget.

In order to create a successful event each year, the Mt. Helix Park heART Committee invites some of La Mesa's most popular restaurants to serve their signature dishes to 500 Park guests, adding a critical piece of the pie to this "party on the hill."

Featuring 17 food service vendors, the 2016 heART introduced three additions to its culinary lineup: Souplantation, Posh Nosh and the Himalayan Cuisine restaurant.

Khem Kharel, a La Mesa resident since 1993 and owner of Himalayan Cuisine, brought two dishes, tikka masala and chicken chili, a Nepalese/Chinese dish. He says he saw many familiar faces, customers from the restaurant who had turned out for the heART, adding that his spot at the top and his experience in general "was amazing."

According to Restaurant Committee co-chair, Donna Bloomer, this is what she and the other organizers strive to achieve. "They like coming to this event because it's fun. It's beautiful and it's livelier than a lot of other events," she notes.

There is no doubt that this event serves to connect businesses and residents throughout the Mt. Helix and greater La Mesa communities, but Kharel says that was not his primary goal.

"I always wanted to do something with the Park," states Kharel. "I live in La Mesa. This is my neighborhood," he emphasizes.

While new restaurants bring fresh ideas and faces to the heART event, there are a few local favorites who return year after year. This year marked the Brigantine's 4th year as a participant. Always a crowd favorite, they have been serving La Mesa and Mt. Helix for 29 years according to Pat Walsh, Regional General Manager, and another long-time La Mesa resident. This year they featured fish tacos. Going a step further, the restaurant provided table cloths and Walsh himself helped to set up the event.

Like Kharel, Walsh says it's more about participating in their community than driving people to the restaurant. "It's giving back to the community for us," says Walsh who, incidentally, plays Santa Claus for the Park's annual Christmas caroling event. "The La Mesa community supports our restaurant; it's one of the things we can do to give back...it's the least we can do," he added.

Thank you sponsors  
this event a fi

### Underwriters

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# Auction Item Donors

of mt helix  
2016

and donors for making  
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## Culinary Arts

Menchie's Frozen Yogurt  
Starbucks Coffee  
The Hills Local Pub  
Terra American Bistro  
Himalayan Indian Cuisine  
Posh Nosh  
Soup Plantation  
Hacienda Casa Blanca  
Pick up Stix  
Brigantine  
Cali Comfort  
Frank's Pizza Joint  
Dream Dinners  
Hooleys  
Edible Arrangements  
Casa de Pico  
Anthony's Fish Grotto

## Beer & Spirits

Ballast Point  
Helix Brewing Company  
Henebery Celebrated Whiskey  
St. Petersburg Vodka  
Vom Fass

## Artists

Sally Ault  
Nora Clemens-Gallo  
Penelope Quirk  
Chuck McPherson  
Roz Oserin  
Terry Whyte

## Musicians

"Cowboy Jack" Johnson  
Helix Charter High School Pipe Band  
The Jamacha Project  
The Meh  
The Mighty Untouchables

## Join a Winning Team

We are currently seeking volunteers interested in joining the planning committee for the 10th annual heART of Mt. Helix fundraiser. Last year this premier fundraiser raised \$100,000 to help preserve, enhance and operate the Park. There are many opportunities to help based on your availability. We could use your expertise in a variety of areas including decorations, food and beverage, entertainment, volunteer recruitment, registration, publicity, day of event logistics, and graphic design. If you are interested in joining this fun group of volunteers and helping to plan one of the most important fundraising events for the Foundation which operates the Park, please call Executive Director, Nicole Roberts, at (619) 741-4363. We are looking forward to welcoming you to the team!

Act II  
Alaska Airlines  
Mark & Maria Allan  
Chris Anderson  
Aquarium of the Pacific  
Arizona Biltmore  
Sally Ault  
Ayres Hotels  
Babouch Moroccan Restaurant  
Robert & Debbie Ball  
Banbu Sushi  
Barona  
Bikes and Beyond  
Body Beautiful Car Wash  
Joan Bohnstedt  
Bradford Renaissance Portraits  
Amy & Lamar Brown  
California Ballet  
Canyon Ranch  
Carnegie Hall  
Nick Carter  
CBS: The Dr. Phil Show  
Continental Catering  
Ms. Lori Copeland  
Coronado Playhouse  
John and Leslie Cylke  
Del Mar Thoroughbred Club  
East County Family YMCA  
Cynthia Elisa  
Embassy Suites Santa Ana  
ERoma Skin Care and Day Spa  
Festival of the Arts of Laguna Beach  
Ficklin Vineyards  
Dr John C Fleming  
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Christina Fries-Miller  
Galardi Group  
Golden Artistry  
Golden Gate Hotel and Casino  
Grande Colonial Hotel &  
NINE-TEN Restaurant  
John Grasberger  
Grossmont Dermatology  
Helix High Charter School Pipe Band  
Claudia & Neal Hicks  
Karen Higdon  
Leah Higgins  
Hilton San Diego  
Himalayan Cuisine  
Amy & Tim Holscher  
Hotel Erwin  
Dr Curtis L Howard  
John Iannessa  
Indian Canyon Golf Resort  
Indian Hills Golf Club  
Intertwest Electric  
Jamacha Project  
Tracey Stotz  
Jack Johnson  
Al & Janet Johnstone  
Joybaked Artisan Bakery  
Jurupa Hills Country Club  
Ms. Kathy Mc Laughlin  
Larry Kennard  
KPBS  
Kristoff Cigars  
La Jolla Music Society  
La Mesa Holistic Massage Therapy  
Roberta Labistida  
Ladera Vineyards  
Lake Shastina Golf Resort  
Landmark Theater  
Lazy Dog Restaurants  
Legoland  
Mainly Mozart  
Marine Room Restaurant  
Mary's Donuts  
Matador Bowl  
Chuck McPherson  
Mingei International Museum  
Miracle Springs Resort & Spa  
Morongo Casino Resort and Spa, an enterprise of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians Tribal Government  
Mt. Helix Park Foundation  
Museum of Contemporary Art SD  
New Jersey Devils  
Colleen Olsen  
Opus One Winery  
Oriental Trading Company  
Roz Oserin  
OtterBox  
Parker's Lighthouse  
Pine Ridge Vineyards  
Pink's Famous Hot Dogs  
Patricia Polak  
Primm Valley Casino Resorts  
PRP Wine International  
Mary Qualls  
Chris Quinn  
Rosarito Beach Hotel  
Rubio's  
Kevin Sage  
San Diego Air & Space Museum  
San Diego Chargers  
San Diego Symphony  
San Diego Rep. Theater Co.  
San Diego Automotive Museum  
San Diego Zoo Global  
San Diego Ballet  
San Francisco Opera  
Kimberly Sant  
Santa Anita Park  
Sawdust Art Festival  
Grace Schlesier  
Scratch Gourmet  
Seaworld  
Silent Partners  
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Alice Smith  
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Spirit Cruises  
Spring Valley Veterinary Clinic  
Stampin' Up!  
Stanley Steemer  
Steele Canyon Golf Club  
Sycuan Golf Resort  
Tahoe Donner  
The Antigua Group  
The Fish Market  
The Habit Burger Grill  
The San Diego Museum of Art  
Tommy's World Famous Hamburgers  
USS Midway Museum  
VJB Vineyards & Cellars  
Warehouse Restaurant  
Hazel Waters  
Wendy's  
Wetzel's Pretzels  
Wheel Fun Rentals  
Wheel of Fortune  
Wines for Humanity  
Workout With Kirk



# Volunteer Kevin Collins

by Peggy Junker

If Mt. Helix Park were a video game it would have to be Minecraft. Like the resource-based game that took America by storm in 2011, Mt. Helix Park's key players must develop creative ways to build and sustain what has been here since 1925.

In walks Kevin Collins, 35, an 11-year veteran of Sony PlayStation, raised in La Mesa, with the skill set to help catapult the Park's technical systems into the millennium. As a project manager, Kevin has interfaced with teams comprised of management, creative and technical members. He knows how to bring all of these personalities together to identify and achieve a common goal.

Recruited by board member, Caroline Harrod, who knows Kevin through their church's sailing ministry, the two agreed he would be an asset to the Park's volunteer team. This proved to be the case when he met with Park staff in October of 2015 and they immediately recognized his ability to identify and triage the Park's technical shortcomings as well as create a plan of action that could address some critical issues. The initial project would be to create a new website.

"The website was very 1999," recalls Kevin. "We had to have an awesome team to get it done," he says of the web team that consisted of Park staff and board members as well as talent recruited from family members whose areas of expertise ranged from web designers to photographers. "None of us are experts," Kevin notes of the core team that ultimately built the website." He added that although the site, while up and running, is not 100 percent complete, "We tried to do the best we could. We have some good strong walls to build the website on and we will continue to improve it."

Since the website was launched in June of this year, Kevin has redirected his focus to upgrading the Park's email, Wi-Fi and printer capability in an effort to make operations within the Park office more efficient. Future volunteer projects will include working with the marketing committee to promote the Park as well as gathering feedback from online analytic resources that can help determine how the Park can best serve the community.

Taking time from his hectic schedule as not only a consultant for Sony, but as an independent financial advisor with Collins Financial, a husband to wife, Ashley, and a father to 2 year old son, Kaden (above with Kevin), has not been easy for Kevin, but he remains committed to ongoing projects.

Having lived in La Mesa since the age of four, he said he never realized until his recent involvement with the Park, what it takes to keep the Park gates open to the public. "It's a place I've gone to throughout my childhood," recalls Kevin. "I don't think people realize the cost and effort that go into running the Park, and yet anybody who is a San Diego native, especially from East County, knows about Mt. Helix Park. It's a great place to go contemplate your next step in life, or contemplate a tragedy and have some peace. We're in the middle of the city, involved in our busy lives and you can just go to that rock wall and sit and take the craziness of life away."



For information on how you can become a Mt. Helix Park volunteer, contact [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org) or call the Park office directly at (619) 741-4363.



## Connect with the Park via Our New Website!

Learn about current programs, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities.

Become a Park Member, send us a comment, **get involved!**

# Happy Birthday Adopt-A-Plot

by Peggy Junker

One year old this November, the Mt. Helix Park's Adopt-A-Plot program has turned the tables on the Park's battle against invasive weeds. Committed program volunteers have removed all visible signs of troublesome mustard and London rocket from the landscape. In addition, they have significantly reduced a few other invasive species. Predicted to take between 4 and 7 years, they are determined to make it happen much sooner, and their ambition may have reduced their timeline significantly.

"I think the amount of weeds will be dramatically less next year," commented Mt. Helix Park Foundation board member Ed Piffard, who also serves as the Mt. Helix Garden Party's plant expert. "Just a little bit of help from the hands of the volunteers makes a dramatic difference," he added.

The benefit of the removal of these weeds

has been an increase in the number of thriving native plants as well as "babies" seen sprouting up along the trail this past spring – both encouraging signs.

The upcoming rainy season and resulting growing season (typically starting in November and running until February or March) will be the litmus test for how far the project has progressed. Once the ground gets enough moisture, weed seeds that remain will sprout catching the attention of our avid gardeners. Members of the Mt. Helix Garden Party's advisory committee, which oversees the Adopt-A-Plot program, are hopeful that with more and more plots being adopted, fewer weeds will be allowed to remain to reseed another season.

For more information on how you, your family, or a group can adopt a plot, contact [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org) or call the office at (619) 741-4363. ■



*Above, 2015 visible signs of mustard infestation.*

*Below, 2016 full eradication thanks to Adopt-a-Plot.*



## Just Serve

by Peggy Junker

Helping to fill a void left by longtime volunteer Larry Kennard, Scott Herrod, DDS, and his team of "Just Serve" volunteers came on board as the Park's graffiti task force in 2015. Visiting the Park every other week, Dr. Herrod, along with team leaders Kathy Deane and Charles Thompson, coordinate the efforts of a group of ten to fifteen individuals looking for weekly hours of community service.

Nearly a year after joining forces with the Park, this team is still removing graffiti; however, their roles have expanded to include anything and everything that needs to be done, from watering newly restored habitat areas to trash pickup and weed abatement to preparing and setting up for some of the Park's major events, just to name a few.

Most of the volunteers join Dr. Herrod via the "Just Serve" website which is sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), commonly known as the Mormon Church. They include a few members of the Mormon faith, but many are simply drawn to the Park project because they are looking for a way to contribute to their community.

According to Dr. Herrod, a Bishop in the LDS church, when not working in the Park, they are participating in the "Keep



La Mesa Beautiful" campaign in other areas of the city.

Emphasizing their hope to include anyone who wants to help, he says that this is less about the church and more about giving back to the community he loves. As the "Just Serve" mission states, "We may not solve world hunger immediately, but we're convinced that by serving with each other in our local communities, we're paving the way for much broader changes. Our individual efforts don't need to be huge---a little bit of change here, a few hours there---but even small efforts quickly add up to make a real difference."

Longtime resident of Mt. Helix, Dr. Herrod has had a dental practice here for 28 years and has a deep appreciation for the area where he and his wife have raised their two children.

"We are honored to be a part of the community. We've lived here a long time. It's a wonderful, beautiful community and we want to keep it that way. We hope that more people will join us as we look for ways to give back to this great community," he says, adding that they have openings for both leadership and helper roles.

For more information about "Just Serve" and the "Keep La Mesa Beautiful" projects, visit their website at [www.justserve.org](http://www.justserve.org). ■



## MT. HELIX PARK FOUNDATION

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### 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.



## FALL / WINTER CALENDAR

**Sunday, Dec. 11, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

### 26th annual Sing-along Christmas Caroling

Enjoy a Mt. Helix tradition complete with Santa Claus, Christmas caroling, hot cocoa and cookies. This evening never fails to set the mood for the season as the entire community, friends and family raise their voices in song. Enjoy this local tradition! Free parking and shuttles will be available for this free community event. Check the website for details.



**Sat. Jan. 7, 10 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**GMIA Walk up Mt. Helix**

The perfect way to start 2017! Come celebrate the New Year with the Grossmont Mt. Helix Improvement Association's (GMIA) Walk Up Mt. Helix on Saturday, January 7th at 10:00 am. Walkers will gather at the Fire Station on Vivera and walk to the summit. At the amphitheater enjoy live music by Jan McBride Jazz, tasty refreshments, and the beauty of this unique community. This event is free, so start your year the best way possible with this fun and healthy outdoor activity.



**Sunday, April 16th, 6:30 to 9 a.m.**  
**92nd annual Easter Sunrise Service**

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 a.m.



**April 10 – 14**  
**Children's Art Camp**

Art Smarts, Inc. will host a half-day camp for children ages 5 to 12. Professional artist Penelope Quirk will incorporate the natural beauty of the Park into the lessons she develops. Registration will begin in the spring.



**Yoga in the Park**  
**Weekly, M-W-F, 9 to 10:15 am**

Lower Amphitheater Stage. Experience outdoor yoga at Mt. Helix Park with instructor Rose Polak-Walters. This drop-in class is designed for all levels of experience. Every day and every class is new, different and special. All you need to bring is a mat (or towel), water and an open-mind. Suggested donation \$10-15 or students are asked to join the Friends of the Park annual membership program.

