Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

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 p.m | March 1 - May 31: 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m | June 1 - Aug 31: 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
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 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.

Ed Piffard
Alice W. Smith
Don Teemsma
Joseph Ventura

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 account 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!
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 or 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.
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.
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
Holeys
Edible Arrangements
Casa de Pico
Anthony’s Fish Grotto

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!

Auction Item Donors

Act II
Alaska Airlines
Mark & Maria Allan
Chris Anderson
Aquarium of the Pacific
Arizona Biltmore
Sally Ault
Aires 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 Cykle
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
Eric & Babs Fletcher
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
Robert Labistida
Ladera Vineyards
Lake Shastina Golf Resort
Landmark Theater
Lazy Dog Restaurants
Legoland
Mainly Mozart
Marine Room Restaurant
Mary’s Donuts
Metador 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
Pricam 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 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
Sky Sailing, Inc.
Small Luxury Hotels of the World
Alice Smith
South Point Hotel Casino & Spa
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 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!
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.
Please visit www.mthelixpark.org and from the home page select “Contact Us” to send your email to be included in the electronic magazine distribution set to begin with the next issue.

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.