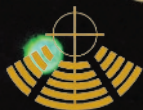


Mt. Helix Park's Magazine

# FROM THE TOP

ISSUE 6 FALL/WINTER 2015-16



MT. HELIX PARK  
FOUNDATION

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

**heART a  
ROARING  
GOOD TIME**

**Wedding  
at the Top**

**Volunteer  
Spotlight**

**CA Native Plant  
Society Tour**

NATURE | EVENTS | LOCAL HISTORY | PEOPLE | PRESERVATION





## New Beginnings

Congratulations to Lissa and Dan Vincelett who were married atop Mt. Helix Park on May 30, 2015. For wedding, memorial and non-profit event bookings, please contact Cynthia Bauer, special events coordinator, at (619) 741-4363.

### 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 Board of Directors welcomes new members Ed Piffard, Tracey Stotz and Don Teemsma. Ed Piffard's extensive knowledge of California native plants has been instrumental in the Park's ongoing habitat restoration. Tracey Stotz continues her commitment to the Park as the Board Secretary after serving as Executive Director for more than seven years and Don Teemsma, owner of Ideal Plumbing, has also joined forces with the board bringing his invaluable expertise to the table.



Nicole Roberts  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# From the Executive Director

I never tire of telling the story of one family gifting land to another family out of pure friendship. A gift that evolved into Mt. Helix Park.

Some ninety years ago the Fletcher Family gifted six acres of summit land to the Yawkey family so they could build a memorial for their beloved mother and a venue to host Easter sunrise services for the local community. The

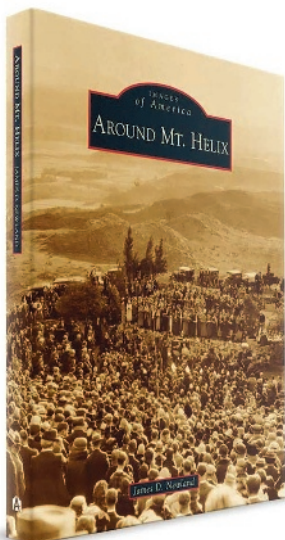
Yawkey family eventually gifted the Park to the County of San Diego to maintain and preserve for the perpetual use of all mankind.

When the County of San Diego could no longer be stewards of the park because it contains a religious symbol, community members came together to form a private non-profit foundation to continue the maintenance and preservation of Mt. Helix Park.

Many of you are familiar with this story or at least parts of it. But I think it's important to revisit it and reflect on so many selfless acts that have contributed to the Park's existence as we know it today. Sure the view is outstanding, the air is always fresh, visitors always look content and the children's laughter brings a special warmth to your heart, but I feel there is something more, something intangible we all feel about the park that is hard to put into words. I think it relates to the spirit that comes from the hearts of so many who worked and continue to work to keep the park open for all of our enjoyment.

Every time I cross through those majestic Park gates and head up the road to my office, I think about how blessed I am. I am deeply moved by the generosity of so many people today donating their time, expertise, and financial support with the appreciation of the vital role Mt. Helix Park plays in our community. It is a constant source of inspiration to me and I hope to all of you. ■

## Hot off the Press...



The Mt. Helix Park Foundation sponsored book about Mt. Helix and the unincorporated surrounding neighborhoods titled *"Images of America: Around Mt. Helix"* is on sale now. The Foundation partnered with La Mesa resident, author and historian James D. Newland to create this photographic history with evocative images they collected over the last 18 months from generous donors. Mr. Newland is also the president of the La Mesa Historical Society, a manager with California State Parks and a member of the La Mesa Planning Commission. He hopes this book will inspire appreciation and support for all those individuals, groups and institutions who, past and present, endeavored to develop, preserve, and enhance these communities and who were, in turn, inspired by the cultural vantages found from, and around, this extraordinary pinnacle known as Mt. Helix.

To purchase a book with proceeds benefitting the Park, please visit the Mt. Helix Park website, [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org). The book also makes for a perfect gift this holiday season. ■



## Looking for that Perfect Holiday Gift?

### Think: Mt. Helix Park Merchandise

T-shirts, mugs and blankets are available for purchase at the Mt. Helix Park online store. Claudia and Neal Hicks, owners of Think Your T-Shirt, design the printed graphics from photos of animals and plants that are found around the slopes of the Park. They offer quality merchandise and use environmentally friendly ink. Access the online store via [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org). Look for the link at the bottom of the homepage. All proceeds benefit the Mt. Helix Park Foundation.



## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual heART of Mt. Helix a Roaring Good Time

The sold out crowd said it all. More than 500 residents from the Mt. Helix Community radiating from all directions of San Diego County attended the 8th annual heART of Mt. Helix event on the evening of Saturday, Aug. 15. Raising almost \$95,000 for the Mt. Helix Park Foundation, this year's 1920's theme celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Park and Amphitheater with displays of antique cars, attendees dressed in period attire and a signature cocktail designed by The Snake Oil Cocktail Company titled "Prohibition."

Former Executive Director, Tracey Stotz, who now serves as secretary for the Mt. Helix Park Foundation board of directors attended for the first time as a guest. No longer responsible for being behind the scenes, she described her unique perspective recognizing the heART of Mt. Helix as a "hybrid" event that both benefits the Park and is fun to attend. "It's the best of both worlds," she points out. "It takes the best of a community event and combines it with a good cause. Something you'd want to attend even if it wasn't a charity fundraiser."

What it takes to construct this successful event is a committed crew of volunteers and hundreds of hours of planning and preparation, begun months in advance. The 25 dedicated men and women who comprised this year's heART of Mt. Helix Committee recruited 16 local restaurants and food vendors along with vodka, whiskey, beer and cocktail companies to give guests an outstanding variety of samplings. The same crew selected local artists and musicians to entertain the crowd and assembled more than 100 auction items for purchase that night. Volunteers then continued to work late into the night and during the following day on site wrapping up the event. Post-production work took several more weeks. .

"It was great that so many people were up and dancing and enjoying themselves," said heART Committee Co-chair Susan Conklin who marveled at the turnout despite triple digit temperatures earlier in the day. Conklin noted that the committee is already looking ahead to next year's event which is slated for Saturday, Aug. 13. "We are all really working together as a cohesive group to make next year just as successful, if not more successful."

## Help Wanted!

The Foundation is currently seeking planning committee members for "The heART of Mt. Helix," our 9th annual gala event. There are many opportunities: 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, please call Nicole Roberts, executive director, at (619) 741-4363. We welcome you to the team!





## Key Volunteer Position Opens Up After 8 Years

For 45 minutes each week, just a few hours each month, **Larry Kennard** performs a task within the Park that quite possibly saves the Foundation thousands of dollars each year in painting and repair costs – he removes graffiti.



According to Kennard, the simple act of promptly eliminating this visual pollution makes the Park a less appealing target for those who commit the crime. Now, after 8 years of “walking the Park with a purpose,” he says it’s time to pass the baton. Semi-retired, this active senior says the job is not difficult and he is willing to show the next volunteer the ropes.

A resident of Mt. Helix for 42 years, Kennard recalls being moved to volunteer for his current position after watching footage of the cross being built in the 1920’s. Seeing the craftsmen figure out a unique way to hoist wheelbarrows full of cement up the framework of the cross inspired him to be a part of preserving its legacy and beauty.

“I just felt we needed to do whatever we could to pass the Park on to future generations for their enjoyment.”

For information about how you can volunteer for this position, please contact the Park at (619) 741-4363 or email Peggy Junker at [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org). ■



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For a complete list of event donors visit [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org)

For information on sponsorship opportunities, please contact Nicole Roberts at 619-741-4363 or [nroberts@mthelixpark.org](mailto:nroberts@mthelixpark.org).

## CYT San Diego ...

... is seeking sponsors for their 2016 summer show at the Mt. Helix Park Amphitheater



Did you love Les Misérables? Mary Poppins? Do you want to see a similar quality, family-friendly musical on Mt. Helix next summer? If so, CYT San Diego needs your help! In order for them to afford the increasing costs of producing shows at our beautiful amphitheater, they need your financial support. Sponsorship opportunities are available at multiple levels. If you are interested in sponsoring the 2016 summer show, please contact Charlene Pryor, Director of Development, at [charlene@cytsandiego.org](mailto:charlene@cytsandiego.org) or at 619-588-0206 ext 326. ■



# Local Talent Focused on Mt. Helix Park

The impact of a photograph can far outweigh the words on a page. A poignant photo has the power to draw you in and give you a sense of the story without having to read a word.

Press releases, Facebook, websites, newsletters and promotional material, all require great photographs and Mt. Helix Park is fortunate to have a team of professional photographers who volunteer their time to cover everything from the heART of Mt. Helix event to photographs of plants along the Yawkey Trail.

The recent heART event drew four regular contributors who donated not only their photographs, but hours both capturing the event and then reviewing and processing photos. Theirs were among the photos that comprised the Cross Exhibition, a series of cross portraits displayed at the event.

Mt. Helix resident Angie Crompton is both a fine artist and photographer. Recruited this summer by the Park's Executive Director Nicole Roberts while photographing the "Jewel of East County," she lists the Park among her favorite places to photograph, meditate and pray. Crompton, who recently photographed the 2015 heART of Mt. Helix Committee, brings a "playful, disarming quality to her photoshoots," observed Roberts. "It really allows her subjects to relax."

Gary Severt can be found frequently photographing the Park. This San Diego native is always ready to lend a hand. A regular contributor to the Park newsletter and social media, Severt has also donated his time mending fences, moving equipment, setting up events and a long list of other projects he has taken on for the Park during his six years as a volunteer. Both a commercial and event photographer, he has built a portfolio of Park photographs that span his lifetime.

Award winning news photographer Gary Junker can be found photographing most major Park events. When office administrator, Peggy Junker, came on board almost six years ago, it didn't take long for the photo assignments to start flowing to her husband. No longer making a living behind the camera, Junker now takes photographs for pleasure providing regular coverage of Park events, wildlife, plants and many of the Park's promotional shots. Born in La Mesa and raised in the foothills of Mt. Helix, Junker has been visiting the Park since the 70's. His connection to the community and the Park made his decision to become involved with the Park "an easy choice," he said.

For Blair Golden, owner of Golden Eye Photography, the Park is the perfect backdrop. A Mt. Helix resident specializing in event and wedding photography, Golden has memorialized the Park as one of San Diego's premier wedding venues. Golden has what it takes to capture his subjects beautifully and the ability to produce high-quality albums and portraits. Golden is both the Park's go-to wedding photographer as well as a valuable volunteer resource.

To view photographs of the Park captured by each of these photographers, visit the Park website at [www.mthelixpark.org](http://www.mthelixpark.org) or visit their individual web pages listed at the right.



Photo by Angie Crompton taken with Nikon D800, using a Nikon 70-200mm F2.8 zoom lens and processed in Lightroom. [Photosjust4you.](http://Photosjust4you.com)



Photo by Gary Junker taken using Nikon D700, Nikkor 24mm f2.0 lens, ISO 250, exposure 20 seconds at f/16, Hoya R72 (Infrared) filter, converted to black and white in Photoshop CS5.  
[www.flickr.com/photos/gpa1001/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/gpa1001/)



Photo by Gary Severt taken with Nikon D7100, using Tamaron 18-270 lens, ISO 280 with an exposure of 1/25 at 5.6.  
[www.flickr.com/people/gary71390/](http://www.flickr.com/people/gary71390/)

Photo by Blair Golden taken with Nikon D610, Nikkor 20-70mm lens, ISO 125, focal length 4mm, shutter speed 1/125, aperture 2.8, using off camera flash at half power and an umbrella diffuser.  
[www.goldeneye-photography.com](http://www.goldeneye-photography.com)



## Weed Abatement Teams to Be Assembled

**W**hen California native plant expert and well-known local landscape designer Greg Rubin walked along the Park's Yawkey trail two years ago, his advice to Park staff and volunteers was to eliminate the invasive mustard weed that is present in the Park. Almost two years later, naturalist Phil Lambert of the San Diego Audubon Society echoed the same advice. Both pointed out that this weed, once established, has the potential to destroy native plants and thwart habitat restoration efforts.

The Mt. Helix Garden Party, a Park volunteer group under the direction of co-chairs Dianne McCann and board member Ed Piffard, are launching a community-wide weed abatement program to offer volunteers assigned areas of the Park to 'adopt' and care for on their own. Families, individuals and clubs are invited to attend a two-hour workshop designed to make them mini-experts at identifying mustard weed and learning the correct techniques for removing it. Instruction will also include information on how to navigate some of the Park's sensitive habitat. "Graduates" of the workshop will be issued cards that will identify them as Park volunteers trained specifically for the program. These cards will also contain photos of the mustard weed to help them identify it on the trail. Volunteers will be



assigned a 20 by 20 foot area for which they or their "team" will be responsible to weed at their leisure.

The program's inaugural 2-hour training workshop will take place from 9 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Park. Please register by contacting Peggy Junker, Park office administrator, at (619) 741-4363 or email [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org). Future workshops dates will be available on the Park website. "We are hoping that all of the people who enjoy visiting the Park will want to sign up for their very own plot to improve and nurture for years to come," said McCann who regularly volunteers her time for Park improvement projects. ■



## Concrete Steps Repair

**I**n the next few months, local engineering firm Christian Wheeler will be inspecting the Park amphitheater's concrete steps. Their report will help the Foundation prioritize needed repair work. To help with referencing spots requiring repair, the Foundation is completing a seat numbering project on the upper tier of the theater. The numbering project kicked off with volunteer support from SPRITES of East County. Mt. Helix Park is the designated charity for the 11th grade class of the SPRITES program. Special thanks to Trish Huffman, the group's coordinator, and all the volunteers for lending a hand to help prepare the steps for the upcoming inspection. If you are interested in supporting the concrete restoration project, please contact Executive Director Nicole Roberts at (619) 741-4363. ■



Lemonade berry, an example of a century-old California native plant on Park grounds

## Mt. Helix Park Selected for Upcoming Plant Tour

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has chosen Mt. Helix Park as one of its featured stops on the 2016 Garden Native Tour on Saturday, April 2nd from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Selected for its beautiful old growth and boulder-rich landscape, the Park is an example of a successful urban recreational setting that features more than 80% California native plants. The Garden Native Tour will provide visitors with a unique Mt. Helix Park experience through interpretive signage and informative materials. Docents will be available to answer questions and discuss the native plants that grow in the Park. To volunteer as a docent for the tour, please contact Peggy Junker at [pjunker@mthelixpark.org](mailto:pjunker@mthelixpark.org). Tour tickets will go on sale in February. The cost is \$25 for adults and free for children. For more information, ticket purchase, and to view gardens from past Garden Native tours, visit: [gardennative.org](http://gardennative.org).





## 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.

## FALL / WINTER CALENDAR



### Sunday, Dec. 13, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Annual Sing-Along Christmas Caroling

The holidays would not be complete without a trip up to Mt. Helix Park for a family friendly sing-along. This year, we are pleased to announce our musical talent from the West Coast Country Music Association (WCCMA) led by San Diego Chapter president, James Holland Cramer. Be sure to bring the kids as Santa will be visiting the Park and taking requests. Shuttle service begins at 6:15 p.m. from the north and south parking lots at the intersection of Vivera and Mt. Helix Drive. For more information on WCCMA, please visit <https://westcoastcma.wordpress.com/>.

### January 1, 2016 New Year Prayer Service

For details check the Park website, [mthelixpark.org](http://mthelixpark.org).

### Saturday, January 2, 2016, 10 - 11:30 a.m. GMIA Mt. Helix Walk

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

### March 28 to April 1 – 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.

