

# Resident Spearheads CLASP / see cover story



Carole Harter

## Up Close...

When **Carole Harter**, and her husband **Hal**, moved to the Gardens in 2008, she was already into her fourth year on the board of CLASP (Claremont After School Programs, Inc.). She had been instrumental in starting the organization in 2005, which evolved from two predecessor programs, to provide high-quality after-school programs for at-risk elementary school children in Claremont. Reflecting on her initial involvement, "I remember my friend (and Gardens resident) **Leonard Munter** saying, "Have I got a deal for you!" Carole laughs. "I didn't want to give up my travel time in retirement to take on the responsibility of managing one of the existing programs but I told him I'd take a look at it." The rest, as they say, is history. Serving as CLASP's first director and setting up and running the program was "exactly what I like to do," she says "It was fun – chaotic – but amazingly fun!" This summer, Carole finally retired from the board after 10 years of service. But don't count her out.

Just as she turned her move to the Gardens into an opportunity to recruit a new generation, literally, of tutors for the after-school program – drawing on the rich pool of retired educators who live here – she jumped at the opportunity to expand the Gardens' involvement with CLASP when new Gardens CEO **Maureen Beith** expressed an interest in learning more about the program. "She wanted to explore ways to bring CLASP to the Gardens campus," says Carole. This spring, as the two women kicked around ideas, considering how to match the Gardens' assets – lots of talented



Carole helps out a Gardens summer camper with an art project.

volunteers and a campus full of amenities – with CLASP's needs, Maureen had a brainstorm. "She said, 'How about a summer camp?'" says Carole.

The prospect of organizing a camp in a few short months, Carole admits, was daunting, and she wasn't sure what kind of reception the program would receive from residents. "The response was overwhelming!" she exclaims. Planning and orchestrating every detail of the new summer camp program, she acknowledges, required all kinds of talents, and many, many hours. "It's been a wild ride, but Gardens residents and staff," she says proudly, "stepped right up." With the experience still fresh in their minds, residents are already talking about expanding the camp program next year.

"I think what we've done is unique," she says. "I am not aware of any other retirement community in the world that is doing this." The reward has been seeing the enthusiastic response from the kids, but equally so the "shining eyes" of everyone who worked on the camp. "That has been the true gift," she says, reflecting on the remarkable people she has met at the Gardens and the friendships she has built.

"Living at the Gardens has been more than I could have ever expected," says Carole. Several years after moving in, her husband had health challenges that required him to move into the Gardens' Health Center (skilled nursing facility), and then to The Evergreen Villas, when that ground-breaking, residential-style skilled nursing alternative opened on the Gardens campus. "I cannot even dream of what it would be like if we weren't living here where this wonderful care is available and I'm surrounded by my friends. "Friends," she says, "who always have my back."

## Inside Out

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women who have come before," she is quick to point out, including some who have led other Philharmonic affiliates. "We try to not just take music to people. But to help them understand it and enjoy it as much as we do," says Sue. The group presents a Music Mobile program "The Magic of Music" to local third grade students, organizes community music education programs, and sends local students to symphonies for youth, among other programs. "When we go out with the Music Mobile, we have so much fun. The children get so excited and the teachers do, too." In addition to supporting the Music Mobile Program, the Foothill Philharmonic provides buses that transport Disney Hall "concert-goers" to the Friday and Sunday afternoon concerts.

Fun also is at the heart of the Claremont Older Women's Soccer group that resident **Gigi Fossum** has been part of since 1977. "We call ourselves the COWS," (Claremont Older Women's Soccer) she laughs. Besides being at least 26 years old and healthy enough to exercise, there are no requirements except having a good time. "I'm the last remaining original COW," says the 85-year-old. "I feel so lucky I'm still physically able to play. I don't do much," she admits, "except stand in the goal and pray the ball just hits my foot!" The younger women, who range in age from 30 to 60, she says, "take care of me." The point isn't winning or losing – in fact they don't keep score. Mostly they laugh, and build lifelong friendships.

"The beauty of the Gardens," says Stuart, "is that there are so many ways to connect to the community."



Resident Cathy Henley-Erickson has been a member of the Claremont Chorale since the early 70's.

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# The New Leaf

September 2015

First ever  
Gardens' Summer Camp

First ever

## Gardens' Summer Camp

For four glorious weeks this summer, the Gardens campus was buzzing with the unbridled energy of a whole new generation. Residence lounges were chock full of storybooks, and colorful swim "noodles" and beach balls filled the normally placid waters

of the swimming pool, as residents welcomed 17 six- to nine-year-olds to the Gardens first-ever summer day camp.

"I knew in my heart of hearts that this was going to work," says resident **Carole Harter**. She brought lots of experience, having served previously as director and board member of CLASP, an after-school enrichment program benefiting the same at-risk children she proposed to serve with the day camp program. But figuring out the myriad details and finding the right people to undertake each task, "required many hands making things work," according to **Debby Griffin**, who along with Carole and **Evelyn Diaz Brown**, evolved into a steering committee for the camp program.

"We did our recruiting on the best night of the week," Debby says, laughingly attributing the unexpected outpouring of volunteers – 90 in total! – to the Gardens' always popular weekly prime rib dinner. It may have been the best time to capture the attention of many residents, but

what sold them was the prospect of sharing their time and experience with the children. "Young kids bring energy, and Gardens residents have so much to offer, that matching the two groups together was what everyone was excited about," says Debby.

There was a job for everyone. "We tried hard to match the skills, and the time people were able to invest, to our needs," says Debby. Those roles included transportation, general logistics, class programming, and, of course, conducting the daily sessions in language arts, music, science and math, swimming and general enrichment projects. Team leaders were responsible for accompanying groups of campers throughout the day.

"We tried to plan for every 'what if,' but there is always some risk," says Carole. Like hosting young campers in the Gardens' dining room. "It could have been a disaster," she laughs, but it wasn't. "Our designated "Lunch Buddies" were the perfect hosts, and people kept telling me how much fun it's been to eat

with the kids." The feeling was obviously mutual, with campers reveling in the excitement of consuming curly fries and grilled cheese sandwiches on white table cloths with – and they say this

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## The Ups of Downsizing

See invitation on back page.

## The New Leaf

Mt. San Antonio Gardens is a nationally accredited Life Care senior community in Claremont and Pomona, California.

The New Leaf is a newsletter for friends and family of residents, board and staff, as well as individuals who have inquired about life at the Gardens.

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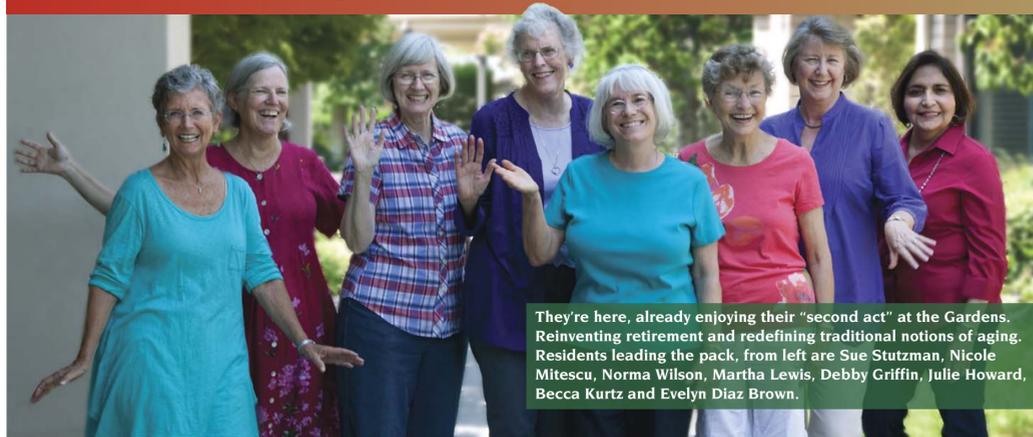
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10:00 a.m.  
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## The Baby Boomers are Here!



They're here, already enjoying their "second act" at the Gardens. Reinventing retirement and redefining traditional notions of aging. Residents leading the pack, from left are Sue Stutzman, Nicole Mitescu, Norma Wilson, Martha Lewis, Debby Griffin, Julie Howard, Becca Kurtz and Evelyn Diaz Brown.

Gloria Slosberg and Ed Babcock instructed the kids in birdwatching. Each camper got to use a pair of binoculars on a hunt for birds found around the Gardens campus.



A mourning dove was one of many birds spotted on campus.

## First ever Gardens' Summer Camp

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with the utmost affection – “the elderly.” No kids' tables at this camp!

“We figured out a lot of things as we went,” says Evelyn, who also served as a Team Leader. “Day one, for instance, we realized we needed plastic bags for wet swimming suits.”

The camp was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays for four weeks in July. Each day kicked off with a morning snack and always included time for a special project. One day the kids created their own bouquets to take home from the Gardens cutting garden. On another, they got a special chef's tour of the Gardens' kitchen for an up-close look at how those yummy cookies are baked.

During the music sessions, residents **Charlene Betts**, **Fran Gilfly** and **Marilyn White** kept the kids busy with singalongs, call-and-response games and musical demonstrations. The first day, Fran's granddaughter, Carin Gilfly, a professional opera singer, sang an aria for the children and shared fun facts about opera with them. “The kids were thrilled,” says Fran. They left the session warbling



Residents Julie Bensko and Carla Britton interact with a tableful of campers.

No kids' tables at this camp! Residents designated as “Lunch Buddies” had a blast eating with the kids.

musical scales, and serenaded the Gardens shuttle bus driver as she delivered them home that afternoon. With so many talented musicians among the residents, finding people to demonstrate instruments was easy. **John Nelson** played brass and **Georgia McManigal**, the violin. The most unusual, hands-down, was the alphorn – think Ricola commercials – played by resident **Paul Wild**. Residents **Kim Sutton**, **Barbara Miller**, **Carlynn Christian**, **Doug Betts**, **Gigi Fossum** and **Joan Wild** joined forces to shepherd the kids through their daily swim session, along with lifeguard Chelsea Cobos. “We had no idea what the kids' abilities were going to be,” says Kim, “so we were flying by the seat of our pants at the beginning.” They settled on a combination of learning and play, brushing up the kids' swimming skills and then letting them have good old-fashioned fun to burn off some energy.

“I have had so much fun,” says **Nicole Mitescu**, a former high school French teacher who helped resident scientist **Milt Wilson** conduct the science and math sessions. “Milt is sharing all this knowledge with them and they're lapping it up.” One day, the kids were buzzing about the wonders of prisms, the next eagerly waiting to see crystals form from a mixture of sugar and water. “Who knew that Milt, a former industrial and governmental chemist, would be such a natural with little kids and so willing to bring science to them,” marvels Carole.

Team Leader **Norma Wilson** helped create the curriculum for the language arts component of the camp with **Virginia Relf**. “We made a plan for day one, and then figured out how to proceed, once we met the children. The real challenge was not to make it like school. This is summer camp, so we wanted to make sure they had fun while they learned.” The objective was language enrichment, so time was spent reading to and with the children, and volunteers, like **Bill Vaskis**, a former high school teacher, stepped out of their

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Lifeguard Chelsea Cobos oversees the pool activities between the residents and camp children.

### Gardens' Summer Camp

comfort zones and into little chairs to play word games with the kids.

“I don't know when I've felt so alive,” says team leader **Marianna Ekelund**. “Spending time with the kids energizes me! I look forward to each day and don't want the camp to end.”

Beyond the scheduled activities, there were life lessons, unplanned but equally valuable, that the children absorbed during their time on campus interacting with and observing the residents. The appeal of the Gardens was not lost on the campers. “One of the kids told me he liked it here and wanted to live at the Gardens,” reports Lunch Buddy, and resident, **Denny Gambill**. “When I told him you had to be about 65 to move in, he asked how old I was. I said 80. The camper's response, ‘Wow you're almost dead!’”

The greatest satisfaction may have been the enthusiasm on the kids' faces, but the adults were just as excited. “The number of residents interested in volunteering for the program just kept growing as people saw how rewarding it was,” says **Judy Rascon**, a team leader. “We're all talking about next year already. It's invigorating. We want this to be a happy, positive experience for the children, and we're always thinking about what we can do better.”

With the inaugural summer day camp now concluded, what is Carole's number one measure of success? “Everyone has to have had fun, and I think that happened.”



Each day the camp had special meaning: One day, campers went from learning all about fish to feeding the many campus kol, followed by an art session where they each created their own colorful fish.



Residents Fran Gilfly, right and Marilyn White sing interactive camp songs with the kids while Charlene Betts plays piano (off camera).



## Inside Out

The very nature of the Gardens' residents ensures constant engagement with the local community.

Resident Gigi Fossum (above in white) has been part of the Claremont Older (age 26+) Women's Soccer group since 1977. Recently the group helped celebrate her birthday with team T-shirts depicting the #85 (her age!) on the back of each one.

For more than 54 years, Mt. San Antonio Gardens has been an integral part of the community. Growing and maturing with the surrounding neighborhood. Opening its doors to the community. Contributing the considerable talents, experience and passions of its residents to organizations and activities that make our local community so special. The interests and energy that



Georgia McManigal has played violin the Claremont Symphony for 53 years.

residents bring to the Gardens creates this porousness. And in turn, this continual interaction with the community – reaching out and inviting in – is one of the compelling reasons that people who want to remain engaged and challenged, learn and grow, and contribute to the quality of life in the surrounding community find the Gardens so appealing. For years community members have been welcomed to the Gardens campus for art exhibits, presentations, performances and special events hosted by residents. Intergenerational programs have brought local youngsters to the Gardens campus for tutoring, for learning and laughter as part of Adopt-a-Grandchild Day, and most recently for the inaugural four-week CLASP summer day camp program for local at-risk children, described elsewhere in this newsletter. At the other end of the age spectrum, and further behind the scenes, the Gardens kitchen has been ground-zero for the local Meals on Wheels program for more than 14 years. The staff produces about 700 nutritious meals per month for Claremont seniors. “The Gardens support is crucial,” says resident **Ethel Rogers**, who recently took the helm as president of the local program. “Without their help, we wouldn't be able to operate.” Her husband **Bob** serves as treasurer. “Funding is always a challenge,” he says. “The price of the meals the Gardens prepares hasn't gone up in years, which has enabled us to keep costs down.” Nearly a dozen other residents also volunteer for the program, packaging and delivering meals. One resident, **Marj Stoddard**, just retired after 40 years of service.

With a plethora of resident-organized activities and affinity groups on campus, it would be easy for residents to focus their energy inward. But the very nature of the Gardens' residents

ensures constant engagement with the local community. In the midst of the culturally rich Claremont community, it is not surprising that many residents devote their time and talents to the arts. **Georgia McManigal** has been playing violin in the Claremont Symphony Orchestra for 53 years. “We play wonderful music, and the symphony is the only all-volunteer symphony, to my knowledge, in California.” While the rehearsals are strenuous, the experience, she says, “is energizing, fulfilling and amazing.” As she has gradually built an audience from the Gardens, she says, “It is a thrill to see Gardens residents at the performances, enhancing their lives and enjoying the music year round.”

**Cathy Henley-Erickson** and **Stuart Oskamp** are equally well established as members of the Claremont Chorale. Stuart was almost an original charter member, having been part of the group for 46 years, and Cathy since the early 70s. Both also sing in the Gardens' own “Music Men” and “Garden Belles” choral groups. “I love singing in the Chorale,” says Cathy. “It is a joy and a privilege. It was so nice when I retired from work to have more time to do the things I love, like singing.” Stuart also found the move to the Gardens gave him more time to pursue his favorite avocation. Chorale members rehearse weekly during most of the year, and present three major performances annually.

Supporting the arts behind the footlights is equally important, and 16 current Gardens residents have done just that over the years as part of the Foothill Philharmonic Committee, which raises funds and awareness for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Resident **Sue Keavney** is the current president. “I'm riding on the shoulders of all these

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Ethel Rogers recently took the helm as president of the local “Meals on Wheels” program. Her husband Bob is treasurer.