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#### PRESIDENT'S PEN

As you no doubt figured out from the cover of this *Heights Life*, the Easter Bunny is on his way! He'll show up at The Park at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 9, in a big red fire truck driven by the La Habra Heights Fire Department. After



he greets all the assembled girls and boys, he'll pose for family photos and preside over the annual Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by the La Habra Heights Improvement Association (please see details in the ad on page 4).

Actually, we'll hold separate egg hunts for different age groups to make sure all the kids get a chance to grab plenty of colorful eggs. The event is free, but we ask that you donate one bag of individually wrapped candy per child so that our young hunters can score some sweet prizes! And, of course, the lucky ones who find *golden* eggs will receive very special rewards.

In addition to mad dashes for Easter eggs, we'll have pony rides, a petting zoo and face-painting—*all free*.

Our firefighters have also agreed to stick around so that kids can check out the interior of the firetruck—a great photo op for all you parents and grandparents, so be sure to bring your cameras.

Like all public events in La Habra Heights, our Easter Egg Hunt will be held in compliance with the latest public health guidelines from the Los Angeles County Health Department. We thank you for your cooperation.

#### Enter your best shots in our LHHIA Photo Contest

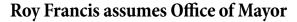
It's not too late to send us your photos of life in the Heights for our annual LHHIA Photo Contest (see details on page 4). The deadline for entries is April 30. You can enter up to three photos, preferably in high resolution (because plenty of these pictures are published in *Heights Life*, and we really need good-quality images for the best reproduction). First prize wins \$100, second prize \$50 and third prize \$25.

Email your digital entries to *heightslifeeditor@gmail.com*. You can also enter prints up to 8.5" x 11" by mailing them to LHHIA, P.O. Box 241, La Habra, CA 90631. Remember, you must be an LHHIA member to enter (please see "Become a member" on page 16).

—Lynn Kelley

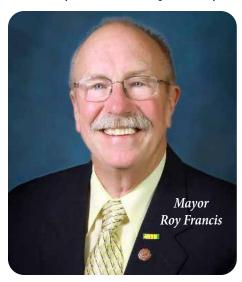
#### 

#### MAY@R'S CORNER





took place at the March 14 city council meeting. It is with gratitude and pleasure that I can say that Roy Francis is now mayor and will complete this year in that office. A



longtime Heights community leader, Roy brings to the office many years of experience and wisdom that few in our city possess. He has served on the city council and as mayor, and he is unquestionably committed to the welfare and continued growth of our unique rural community.

For the past 16 months, I have served as your mayor, and it has been quite a learning experience for me in numerous ways. I have had the opportunity to meet many residents of La Habra Heights that I didn't know, and I have attended various community and regional meetings from which I've learned a great deal. Above all, it has been a distinct gift to have participated in the enhancement of this extraordinary place in which we live. One enhancement for which I wasn't totally responsible but in which I was enthusiastically involved was



the much-needed acquisition and installation of our Heli-Hydrant™ water-supply system for helicopters fighting wildfires (see the February 2022 issue of *Heights Life*). I can't imagine anything else during my

term being more helpful to the Heights. It was great to have played a small part in bringing that project to fruition.

I look forward to the honor and pleasure of serving my next two-and-a-half years on the council. Public safety and fire safety will, of course, be ongoing concerns, and there will undoubtedly be other important tasks—and challenges—ahead that will require the work and dedication not only of the council but also of our residents.

As I walked to my new seat placement following Roy's selection as mayor, I thought how good the times are now that our city is starting to regain its momentum after all the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Moreover, to be able to turn the office of mayor over to someone who loves the community so deeply—and has the gifts to serve it—is a true joy.

Thankfully and sincerely, **Dennis Laherty** 

## Easter Egg Limit

#### Saturday, April 9 • 10 a.m. to noon at The Park

Easter Bunny photos • Egg hunts in age groups • Pony rides • Petting zoo • Face painting

Admission is free, but please donate one bag of individually wrapped candy per child.



## Annual LHHIA Photo Contest

Deadline for entries:

#### **April 30, 2022**

- To enter, you must be a member of La Habra Heights Improvement Association.
- Enter up to three photos as either highresolution digital files or prints.
- Email high-resolution digital entries to heightslifeeditor@gmail.com.
- Mail prints up to 8.5 x 11 inches to LHHIA, P.O. Box 241, La Habra, CA 90631.



**Send your shots!** 

First prize: \$100 Second prize: \$50

Third prize: \$25

- By entering, you agree to allow your images to be published or displayed, without any fee or other form of compensation, in *Heights Life*, on the LHHIA website and at La Habra Heights public events. Published photographs will include a photo credit.
- See Official Rules at Ihhia.com. By entering, you agree to abide by these rules.

#### **DONNA VERA JEROME** (1936-2022)

onna Vera Jerome, the first woman to hold the rank of Captain in the La Habra Heights Volunteer Fire Department, passed away on February 14, 2022, at the age of 85.

She was born Donna Vera Booker on August 17, 1936, in Huntington Park, California, to Vera Smith and Claude Booker.



Donna attended Downey High School and told stories of having to get tough there because her little sister Beverly was being bullied and needed defending. Although 5'-2" Donna was small in stature, her friends knew that she could turn into a formidable red-headed firecracker when provoked.



While in high school, Donna met Richard Jerome, and she was surprised to learn that he lived only a few blocks from her home. Richard made a point of walking past her house whenever possible, and he told his mother that Donna was the girl he was going

to marry—which, in fact, he did in 1953 when she was 17 and he was 19.

In the early days of their marriage, Donna would often ride shotgun with Richard as he drove trucks and began building a business that became Southwest Processors & Southwest Treatment in Vernon, California. The company specialized in treating and transporting non-hazardous liquid waste, which eventually kept Richard traveling up and down the California coast and even to other countries.

By the time Donna and Richard moved to La Habra Heights in August of 1965, they had three children: Jeffrey Curtis, Susan Lynn and Jonna Kay. The Heights was very different from their former suburban neighborhood. They had three acres of property and a 1920s ranch house that needed major restoration work.

Donna had some adventures getting used to rural living, including dealing with her allergies to the abundant flora. Animals were also an occasional challenge. Their nanny goat sometimes butted her, and when Jonna's pony had a baby, Donna had to become an impromptu equine midwife. On some days, Donna jokingly commented that in the Heights, there was sometimes "just too much nature!"

Richard was continually rescuing orphaned and injured animals. Over the years, the Jerome homestead hosted eight dogs, five horses, two ponies, two turtles, three goats, 25 guinea fowl, countless chickens and at least 30 cats—but Donna drew the line when Richard wanted to bring home a baby elephant.



As the Jerome children were growing up in their rural home, Richard joined the La Habra Heights Volunteer Fire Department in 1969 and became Fire Chief in 1973, serving in that position for 10 years. With his encouragement, Donna became a

dispatcher for the department, working from a radio unit installed in their living room. Her job was to alert local firefighters when emergencies were called in on the red "fire phone"—which could occur at any hour. A large shed in the front yard housed a fire truck.

After training in first aid, Donna expanded her role, becoming the first woman in the fire department to respond to medical rescue



From left: Los Angeles County Supervisor Pete Schabarum, Captain Donna Jerome and Fire Chief Richard Jerome pose with the first La Habra Heights Volunteer Fire Department rescue vehicle, which was donated by the Jerome family.

calls. Richard donated and retrofitted a Chevrolet Suburban that served as "Rescue No. 1," and Donna, now a fire department Captain, led the La Habra Heights rescue team. The Los Angeles Times ran a





Donna using emergency oxygen equipment.

feature story in which she was called "the Florence Nightingale" of the Heights, a role in which she justifiably took considerable pride. La Habra Heights Mayor Roy Francis, a veteran of the LHH Volunteer Fire Department, recalled: "Donna Jerome was great! I worked with her on the rescue team."

Richard and Donna traveled to England and took road trips all over the western United States, and they especially enjoyed spending time at their cabin in Wrightwood.

Donna loved her family, her friends, a good party, playing cards, collecting Native American artifacts, reading and chocolate chip cookies. She was also quite a dancer in her heyday.

Due to declining health, Donna was not as physically active in her later years, but she was stoic about it, often telling her family

members: "This too shall pass."

Richard passed away on November 2, 2020. After more than six decades of marriage, Donna missed him deeply until she also passed on Valentine's Day this year.

Donna is survived by her children: Jeff Jerome and his wife Carla, Susan Alfonso and her husband Armando, and Jonna Jerome and her husband Andy, and by nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



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## 'Wildfire remains the highest threat to our community,'-LHHFD Fire Marshall Robert Montaghami

By now you should have received your *Annual Brush Clearance Guide* from La Habra Heights Fire Department in the mail. (If you haven't received it, please visit *Ihhcity.org* or call 562-694-8283.) La Habra Heights is within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, which means that **fire prevention through brush clearance is critical** for the safety of our community. All Heights properties must be cleared of all weeds, rubbish, refuse, debris and combustible materials by **May 1, 2022**, and remain clear at all times thereafter. *No exceptions!* 

The Fire Department will inspect each property as often as necessary. If any property is found to be non-compliant, the City of La Habra Heights will assess inspection fees and/or abate the hazard. Should this occur, all costs, including inspection fees and abatement costs, will be the property owner's responsibility. A lien will be placed on the property for all outstanding fees and costs. The Annual Brush Clearance Guide provides details and tips about exactly what you must do to achieve compliance. Please do your part and help keep the Heights safe!



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hat all-too-common La Habra Heights plant contains both a valuable oil and a poison that's more toxic than cobra venom? *Answer:* Castor plants (*Ricinis communis*) that grow in wild profusion throughout our community—just look at the recent photo on the right taken near the intersection of West Road and Hacienda Road.

Most Heights residents regard castor plants as a recurring nuisance—fast-growing, sun-loving, woody weeds that can proliferate into a veritable forest if not controlled. In Africa, where these plants originated, they often grow into 50-foot-high trees.

But it may surprise you to learn that some horticulturalists consider these large plants desirable garden ornamentals and use them as quick-growing backdrops for other plants because of their bold foliage, which varies in color from blood red to deep maroon to dark, shiny green, depending on the point in the plant's life cycle.

The common term castor "beans" is actually a misnomer for seeds produced by this plant.

Unlike true bean plants (Leguminosae and Fabaceae), castor "beans" are anything

but edible—in fact, they're deadly poisonous. The castor plant is a spurge, a member of the *Euphorbiaceae* family, and spurges produce not only potentially lethal seeds but also free-flowing, toxic sap that can cause extremely painful irritation to skin and mucous membranes.

Yet these noxious plants have been actively cultivated for more than 4,000 years, because the seeds also produce a highly prized oil used in medicines, cosmetics, lubricants and waterproofing.

Ancient Egyptians were likely the first to harvest castor seeds. They devised a cooking process that inactivated the poison

and allowed them to extract the oil, which they burned in their lamps and mixed into salves, ointments and skin creams, a practice that's being continued today by modern manufacturers of cosmetics. They also mixed the oil with beer to produce a very effective laxative, and refined castor oil—dreaded by cringing children for generations—is still used for this purpose.

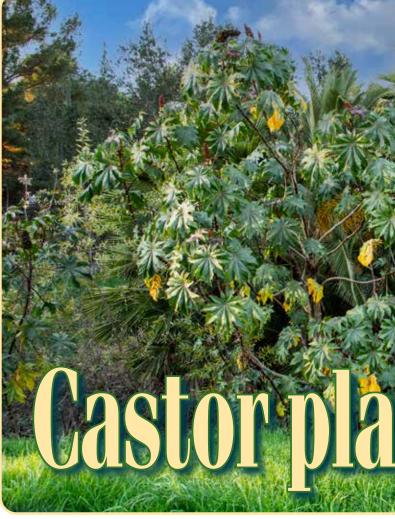
To produce castor oil today, castor seeds undergo a cold pressing and filtering process that removes all poisonous ingredients.

A highly successful commercial use of castor oil originated in 1909 in England when Charles Wakefield put it into a new automotive lubricant that he named Castrol. Today that internationally known trademark appears on a wide variety of

popular lubricants, some of which still contain castor oil, which has the unique and beneficial



ability to withstand not only extremely high heat but also severe cold.



However, if you're thinking about turning all those castor plants on your Heights property into a cash crop, just remember that harvesting the valuable seeds can be a very risky business. In India, Brazil and China, where castor plants are major crops, many workers have suffered harm or death from repeatedly handling these plants.

#### About ricin poisoning

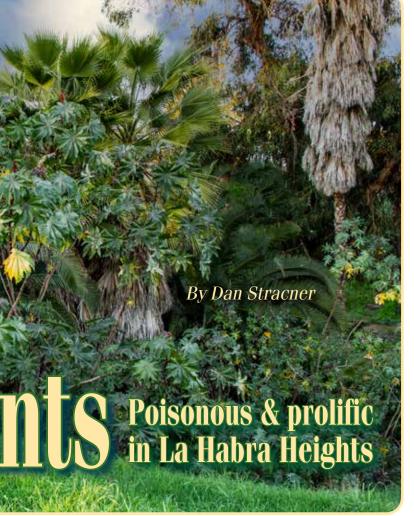
The entire castor plant, especially seeds, contains an extremely poisonous phytotoxin called ricin, which is 1,000 times more toxic to humans than cobra venom if it is inhaled, ingested or injected.

When inhaled, ricin causes coughing, chest tightness, edema of the lungs, blue skin and eventual failure of the lungs and entire circulatory system. When ingested, the poison causes severe diarrhea, nausea, internal bleeding and eventual failure of the liver, spleen and kidneys. When injected, the poison is at its most dangerous, mimicking a systemic, rampaging bacterial infection that rapidly shuts down virtually all bodily functions.

It only takes about 500 milligrams of ricin, the size of a single grain of table salt, to be fatal. Eight castor seeds contain enough ricin









to kill an adult. Once a lethal dose has been absorbed into the body, death usually follows within 36 to 72 hours—and there is no antidote for this powerful poison.

Although fatalities from eating castor seeds are quite rare, *do not* allow your small children anywhere near these plants!

#### Ricin as a weapon

The military has long regarded ricin as a possible biological weapon, and this deadly protein has sometimes been used intentionally by criminals and terrorists because it is so easy to isolate. Al Qaeda has experimented with ricin.

In 1978, a dissident Bulgarian journalist was murdered in London when a Communist agent fired a ricin-packed BB into his leg. In January 2003, British police raided a flat in London and arrested six Algerians who were charged with manufacturing ricin as part of a terrorist plot to attack passengers on the London Underground. Eleven months later, letters containing white ricin powder turned up in mail at the White House and the U.S. Senate, but no one was injured.

In February 2008, an unconscious man was found in a Las Vegas hotel room



and taken to the hospital. A subsequent search of his room revealed that he possessed both a large quantity of ricin and a terrorist textbook in which sections on ricin poisoning had been highlighted. He almost died and later ended up in prison, and the only victim of his poisoning plot was himself.

#### Ricin as a potential anti-cancer 'magic bullet'

The fact that the ricin protein can be isolated and manipulated has made it the subject of medical research into the possibility of turning it into an anti-cancer drug. Pharmaceutical researchers are currently experimenting with ways to link modified ricin with monoclonal (single-target) antibodies to destroy malignant cells without harming surrounding tissue.

#### How do you get rid of castor plants?

The La Habra Heights Fire Department has put castor plants on its "undesirables" list, so how do your get rid of these dangerous plants? The short answer is: With great difficulty! If you just mow them down, they'll come back quickly—and spread. Commercially available weed killers can kill them if applied repeatedly, but exposure to these products can also be harmful to humans and pets. Digging the plants up, roots and all, is probably the most effective solution, but you must take great care when you're close to these plants. Always wear heavy protective gloves and clothing.

Do not allow any part of the plant to touch your bare skin! Milky sap is under pressure in trunks and stems, and it runs out very easily when you squeeze or wound the plant. The sap contains a number of terpen esters that are extremely caustic and irritating to skin and especially to mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth. Many of these esters are up to 100,000 times stronger than capsaicin, the "hot" substance found in chili peppers, and some are even potentially carcinogenic.

If you get castor sap on your skin, wash it off immediately and thoroughly before it congeals and becomes insoluble in water; if it does congeal on your skin, remove it with milk or hand cream, and then thoroughly wash the area with soap and water.

Castor plants can be dangerous even when they appear to be dead—handle them with care! Don't burn the plants, because they produce irritating vapors (and besides, it's against fire regulations in La Habra Heights).

Given the inherent difficulties and dangers of dealing with castor plants, you'd likely be better off seeking professional help.



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PRIL SHOWERS? Our rainfall has been very low this year, and although it might still rain in April, it likely won't

be enough to give us much relief from our ongoing drought. We all need to conserve landscape water usage by setting timers to water overnight, checking for leaks and repairing any



leaky sprinklers, faucets and drip-lines.

#### Spring break projects

While the kids are home for spring break, send them outside to help in the garden! Kids can plant some Easter baskets with flowers, herbs and succulents as decorations or giveaways. The baskets don't need to be too large—try using a 4-inch pot with a mini-rose, blooming flower or herb. Cover the basket interior with plastic, place the pot inside and cover the top with moss or Easter "grass."



Save eggshells! Carefully crack each one so that three-quarters of the shell remains intact, then rinse well and let dry. Place shells in the bottom half of an egg carton and fill shells almost to their tops with potting soil. Using succulent cuttings, remove bottom leaves to create one-inch "stems" and place them in the eggshells. The shells can later be planted directly into larger pots or the ground.

#### Spring vegetables & herbs

Take out all your old and dead winter vegetables and plant asparagus, beets, beans, carrots, celery, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, leeks, late-season lettuce (provide some shade to prevent "bolting" in warmer weather), melons, okra, parsnips, peas, peppers, pumpkins, radishes, shallots, spinach, Swiss chard, early-season tomatoes and zucchini. Apply a good layer of mulch to help retain soil moisture and reduce weeds. The Easter Bunny and his relatives may want to nibble in your vegetable garden, so use fencing or netting to keep them out.

Garden centers should have an assortment of herbs in stock by now, including basils



galore—sow seeds or plant new varieties, including Italian, largeleaf, licorice, purple leaf, Thai and many more! Sow seeds of

borage, chives, cilantro, garlic chives, lemon balm and parsley. Plant ginger in an acidic soil mix and in a partially shaded area. Since mints are growing quickly now, make sure the roots haven't traveled out from the bottom of the pot; keep mints in containers and on a solid surface, not directly in the soil.

#### **Spring blooms**

Local nurseries are bursting with lots of blooming flowers, so plant yourself a rainbow of colors: ageratum, celosia, coreopsis, cosmos, bedding dahlia, dianthus, lobelia, marigolds, snapdragons, sunflowers and zinnia. Check to see what others are available.









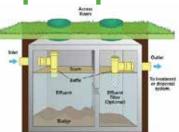




#### Spring gardening

Fertilize fruit and avocado trees, roses, lawns and landscape plants. Succulents and most California native plants won't need fertilizers. With the low rainfall earlier this year, deeply watering large trees and shrubs will keep them healthy. And, of course, brush clearance is a legal requirement in the Heights, and the Fire Department will soon be inspecting your property to make sure you're in compliance (see page 7 for details).

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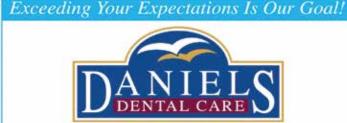
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n our June and July issues of *Heights Life*, we'll once again be celebrating graduates from La Habra Heights, including those graduating from 8th grade, high school, college and advanced-degree programs. We invite you to submit the following information to *heightslifeeditor@gmail.com*:

- Graduate's name
- School name
- Photograph of the graduate (a high-resolution image, please!)
- Brief paragraph about the graduate (honors, awards, achievements and memberships, including scholastic and athletic accomplishments)
- Next school the graduate will attend (if applicable) and career plans

Please submit your information and photo by May 10 for the June issue and by June 10 for the July issue. By submitting, you agree to allow your photo and information to appear in Heights Life and on the LHHIA website.



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#### **LHH Community Events**

Public meetings of the La Habra Heights City Council, the Planning Commission, the Roads Advisory Committee and the Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness Committee have now resumed at City Hall. All public events in La Habra

Heights will be held in compliance with the latest public health guidelines from Los Angeles County and the City of La Habra Heights.

Aprii 9	Easter Egg Hunt at the Park: 10 a.m. until noon
April 11	La Habra Heights City Council meeting: 6:30 p.m.

April 17 Happy Easter!

April 21 Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness meeting: 6 p.m.

April 27 Roads Advisory Committee meeting: 6:30 p.m.

April 30 Quarterly Clean-up at The Park: 8 a.m.

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#### **SAVE THESE DATES:**

May 8 Highland Riders horse show at The Park: 8:30 a.m.

**June 19** Highland Riders "double-judged" horse show at The Park: 8:30 a.m.

#### **Emergency & City Numbers**

EMERGENCY	911
CITY HALL: lhhcity.org	562-694-6302
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (INDUSTRY STATION)	626-330-3322
RANGER SERVICES	562-698-1446
FIRE DEPARTMENT (non-emergency)	562-694-8283
La Habra Heights County Water District	562-697-6769
Los Angeles County Animal Control	562-940-6898
FIDO COME HOME (report lost and found pets)	562-694-8090
REPUBLIC WASTE SERVICES	800-700-8610

#### La Habra Heights City Council

$Brian\ Bergman562-690-5047Briansbergman@hotmail.com$
Roy Francis562-697-0944royfrancis73@yahoo.com
CAREY KLINGFUS562-697-2561carey@AELinspector.com
Dennis Laherty714-401-0873Dennis.laherty@gmail.com
NORM ZEZULA562-697-9914normzezulaLhh@gmail.com

#### **Community Service Opportunities**

Boy Scout Troop 883 • Call Brian Freeman at 562-743-1973
Boy Scout Troop 1814 • 951-538-8377 or cookmaster251@yahoo.com
Boys and Girls Club • 562-694-1805 • ourchildrensfuture.org
Habitat Authority • habitatauthority.org/waystohelp
Meals on Wheels • 562-383-4221 • LaHabraMealsonWheels.org
VCC: The Gary Center • 562-264-6000 • vecthegarycenter.org

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La Habra Heights Improvement Association is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization (Tax ID# 95-2455456) that receives no funding from the City of La Habra Heights—so we rely on your annual dues and other donations to pay for our many community events and projects. Annual membership dues are:

- Regular: \$35
- Bronze: \$75
- Silver: \$100
- Gold: \$250
- Platinum: \$500+

Pay online at **www.lhhia.com** or mail your check (made payable to LHHIA) to: **LHHIA, P.O. Box 241, La Habra, CA 90631**.

P.O. Box 241 La Habra, CA 90631 PRESORTED STD U.S. POSTAGE PAID Santa Ana, CA Permit No. 4849



#### La Habra Heights Improvement Association

#### BOARD of DIRECTORS • lhhia.org

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Lynn Kelley, President (LHHIAPresident@gmail.com) and 'Halloween Co-Chairperson (lynnkelley91@gmail.com)5			
Rick Brooks, Vice President & Webmaster (plumeriafarmer@gmail.com	m)		
Romalyn Litchfield, Treasurer (romalynl@hotmail.com)	62-697-6264		
Susan Brooks, Secretary & 'Easter Egg Hunt' Chairperson (susanbrooks827@gmail.com)	714-222-5091		
<b>Pam McVicar</b> , Membership Chairperson (Memberlhhia@gmail.com) and Youth Employment Roster (youthlhhia@gmail.com)	14-504-3415		
Catherine Richert, 'Morning With Santa' Chairperson (catherinerichert@aol.com)	662-697-0962		
Carolyn Boehringer, Advertising Co-Chairperson3	10-849-4582		
Monica Gunns, Advertising Co-Chairperson7	14-412-2667		
Angela Owen, 'Halloween Haunt' Co-Chairperson			
(arowen3@yahoo.com)5	62-201-1119		
Stan Carroll, Director (gw1763@gmail.com)	62-697-1187		
Heights Life: heightslifeeditor@gmail.com			
Editors: Dan and Barbara Stracner	62-632-0691		
For information about advertising in Heights Life, visit lhhia.org or call:			
Advertising Co-Chairperson: Carolyn Boehringer	10-849-4582		
Advertising Co-Chairperson: Monica Gunns	14-412-2667		

#### Welcome Wagon: welcomewagonLHHIA@gmail.com

Chairperson: Vicki Cooke 562-694-4949



#### February 2022

Residence burglary: 1, Fraud: 2, Grand theft: 2, Identity theft: 1, Offenses against family: 1, Misdemeanor substance possession: 1, Disorderly conduct: 1, Vehicle & boating laws: 4, Non-criminal: 3.

**TOTAL INCIDENTS: 16** 



Advanced life-support calls: 14 (6 in LHH, 8 in LA County), Basic life-support calls: 14, Public assist: 2, Fire calls: 8, Traffic collisions: 2, Automatic aid into Los Angeles County: 12.

TOTAL INCIDENTS: 40