



# Alamos Heights Improvement Association

Creating Community Together

[www.ahia.info](http://www.ahia.info)

## 2021 Membership Drive Starts Today Your Membership Matters!

The Alamos Heights Improvement Association Membership Drive is on! We look forward to you joining us in 2021. Most of our events are free, making your membership, very important. The \$35 dues and the additional donations some of you make are deeply appreciated and help us with our goal of creating community together.

Our membership flyer and a return envelope are in this newsletter. You may also join with PayPal at [www.ahia.info/membership](http://www.ahia.info/membership). Please add the PayPal fees to the \$35 dues and remember to complete the online membership information.

## Lagoon Christmas Trees Lit with Glee....and a Santa Sighting

The annual Lagoon Christmas Tree lighting ceremony went off on Friday November 27<sup>th</sup>, but under a different presentation due to...well, you know.

Santa even had to follow a new protocol and toured the neighborhood on a decked-out sleigh with his elves in tow in a sporty golf cart to visit kids and parents alike throughout Alamos Heights. The cart had all the holiday trimmings and bringing up the rear was the candy cane caboose. Every street was visited and people couldn't get enough of the man in red and some were seen running to the next corner to catch a glimpse.

Santa happily accepted 65 letters from neighborhood kids and the event raised \$307 for Spark of Love. **If you missed the letter exchange, Santa mentioned you could still get in the action by going to 400 Terraine and dropping of your letter for express delivery to the jolly man.**



AHIA is grateful for the help from the Belmont Heights Community association, the Port of Long Beach, and of course the AHIA members

for their continuous support of fun events like this one. Wishing you and your loved ones a very merry and safe holiday!

# Magnolia Tree Replacement—It's Time



**Hi Neighbor, Are You Missing A Street Tree?**

If your street tree was removed or if you would like to add one, we will work with you and the city to plant trees suited to our neighborhood and climate.

Our recommendations are:  
 Arbutus 'Marina' - Marina Strawberry Tree  
 Lophostemon conferta- Brisbane Box Tree

Email us at: [trees@ahia.info](mailto:trees@ahia.info)  
 Contact us on the web: [www.ahia.info](http://www.ahia.info)

AHIA is leading an effort to replace the diseased parkway Magnolia trees in our neighborhood and plant trees in parkways where none exist today. We are working with a Southern California grower to receive wholesale pricing for 15 gallon specimens of our preferred trees. We recommend and prefer the Marina Strawberry Tree and the Brisbane Box Tree, both are pictured below.

You may also find more information about Tuliptree Scale at [www.ahia.info/magnolia-trees](http://www.ahia.info/magnolia-trees).

If you want a tree or to help with this project please contact us at [trees@ahia.info](mailto:trees@ahia.info) or contact us through our website [www.ahia.info](http://www.ahia.info).

If you plant a new tree you must to commit to watering the tree as it becomes established and continue to water it as it grows older. Let's plant trees.



**Marina Strawberry Tree —**  
**Arbutus 'Marina'**



**Brisbane Box Tree—**  
**Tristania (Lophostemon) Conferta**

## AHIA Board Elections Coming Soon!

All members who have provided their email address will receive an electronic ballot to vote for the 2021 slate of candidates for the AHIA Board of Directors. Please be on the look out for your ballot in your inbox.

## Did You Miss the 2020 Lagoon Tree Lighting?

COVID-19 kept us from hosting our Annual Colorado Lagoon Tree Lighting Ceremony. However the talented Charlotte Grenier captured the moment the trees were lit this year plus she added footage of Santa's Sleigh making its way through Alamitos Heights. Go to [www.ahia.info](http://www.ahia.info) to view this video. And while you're there watch the 2019 Grant White video. Both videos are wonderful alternatives to being there in person.



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# Wine Down Fridays in COVID-19 Era

By Richard Wherry

Socializing with friends and neighbors during COVID-19 has been difficult. Here in Alamitos Heights, one tradition my wife and I enjoyed was attending the AHIA neighborhood Wine Down Fridays. Walking over to a neighbor's house with a bottle of wine on a Friday evening allowed us to meet more neighbors in one year than we had in the previous 10 years we lived here!

This past August I was speaking to a friend who owns a small wine importing business called Inside the Cellar. My friend Bob Castellani specializes in providing fine wines to local restaurants like Michael's in Naples and Roe Seafood in Belmont Shore. I mentioned to Bob that I was missing our Wine Down Friday neighborhood events. Bob's suggestion was to help him make "lemonade out of lemons" as they say and to start hosting some virtual wine events for which he was willing to supply wine at "cost" from his warehouse. And that of course is just what we did.

We have now had four virtual wine events over Zoom for the Alamitos Heights neighborhood and I am happy to say they have all been a lot of fun. Bob has helped me host them and has opened up his considerable wine cellar to the neighborhood.

Our virtual events have been part meeting neighbors and part celebrating at home. But more than that, they have been a chance to learn something new and have Bob take us on a virtual wine trip around the world. So far, we have tried a delicious Rose from a 400-

year-old winery in Italy, a Bordeaux style Cabernet Sauvignon from a small lot in Napa Valley, and my new favorite Chardonnay from the Niagara region of Toronto of all places! And best of all, my wife and I are able to enjoy some great wines while the kids play on the PS4. So everyone is happy!

In addition to being fun, our virtual Wine Down Fridays are part of a much larger trend. According to The National Restaurant Association, an estimated "two-thirds of the US's restaurant workforce" have been laid off or furloughed during COVID-19. This is a difficult and sad time for many in the retail and wine industry which I do not take lightly because I have friends in these businesses. But at the same time, it does mean there are opportunities to be had as wineries, restaurants, distributors, and wine importers like my friend Bob look to offer their inventories to the public directly. In fact, online wine sales are up 121% year-on-year according to Wine.com and this means that wine consumers have an unprecedented opportunity to enjoy some great wines at great prices as the industry pivots to connect with consumers more directly.

On the one hand you could just buy wine from your local VONS, Ralphs, Trader Joe's, BevMo! or Total Wine and there would be nothing wrong with that. But these are established players with established volume commitments and pricing.



Richard, Celeste and their two sons, Julian and Marcel, at the Jaume Serra Winery in Penedes, Catalunya (Spain)

To really take advantage of the opportunities in wine today look instead to some of the new services that have sprung up like virtual sommelier Sippd.com or Drizly.com which are quickly moving to bridge the gap between great wine and wine lovers created as restaurants close during COVID-19.

And if you are lucky enough to live here in Alamitos Heights you need look no further than AHIA's virtual Wine Down Fridays sponsored by Inside the Cellar. Here you can access some phenomenal wines at wholesale prices, wine that before to today were only available at the best Zagat rated restaurants in LA.

What a great way to brighten your Friday evening and spend time with your neighbors!

## Holiday House Decorating Contest

AHIA will once again have a house holiday decorations contest. Prizes will be given for Most Traditional, Best Yard Display, Most Original, Most Humorous, and Best Use of Lights. Please have your house ready for judging by December 19th.



# A Tribute to Two Wonderful Neighbors .cont'd from page 4

**DAMIAN MEDINA**



**Damian and Erin Medina & Daughters**

Damian was born in San Antonio, TX. His father was serving in the Air Force and was stationed in

Turkey at the time. His mother flew back to San Antonio to give birth then back to Turkey they went where he spent the first 4 years of his life. His folks and two older brothers relocated to Arvada Colorado. Damian earned his degree from Durango College at Fort Lewis. He and Erin met in 1994, moved to San Francisco and married in 1997.

They eventually made their way south and moved to Alamitos Heights with their two daughters in 2007. Damian had been a stay-at-home-dad and possessed unwavering commitment to his family. He was extremely involved in their girls' skating activities, accompanying them all around the

country for their competitions. He was a gentle, quiet soul, yet was a competitor who had a true passion for running, biking, and anything physical. He had finished two Ironman triathlons in Arizona, as well as five marathons, including Los Angeles and New York. As such, he was affectionately known as the neighborhood Ironman. Damian was instrumental in many of the AHIA events, coordinating several of the tree planting events and is credited as being the brain behind AHIA's Fun Run as he coordinated them each year. Damian also served on the AHIA board for three years, two years as our treasurer.

## A Message From Our President

Dear Neighbors,

As this year like no others comes to an end, so does my position as President of AHIA's all-volunteer board. I look forward to continuing my involvement with this great group and I would encourage you to do the same. There are many ways to get involved with the committees that focus on your interests. Whether it be neighborhood beautification projects, safety or events, there is a place for everyone.

We have had fun finding creative ways to stay engaged during these challenging times by adapting our events like our Virtual Wine Down Fridays and the Santa Mobile. We also managed to safely hold our Toss It- Shred It- Recycle It Event in August and planting of the 6<sup>th</sup> street traffic circles. We are continuing our work toward replacing the diseased Magnolia trees, and Manila Median improvements.

Hopefully next year will bring back some of our fun traditions like our Annual Picnic and Tree Lighting as well as the front yard Wine Down Fridays. In the meantime-take care and I hope you feel as lucky as I do to live in this wonderful community.

This month we begin our 2021 Membership Drive. Please take a minute and join or renew with us for the coming year.

Have a Healthy Happy Holiday,  
Leslie Grenier

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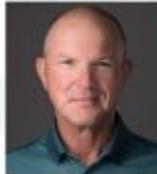
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## Ubuntu Café Brings an Oasis to Alamitos Heights



Step into Ubuntu café and you're immersed in an environment of soft music, sounds of waterfalls, and the chatter of happy customers. Stand at the upper level countertop area facing the parks and perhaps you'll hear "The Girl from Ipanema" playing on the crisp sound system. Enjoy the nice view of the East end of the Colorado Lagoon, and maybe the morning boot camp is just ending across the street adding a sense of normalcy to the day. Then the remarkable food arrives, a perfect cappuccino along with a gourmet breakfast Danish with poached spiced apples. Heaven is here despite current circumstances.

"We opened 7 days before COVID-19 hit," owner Fellippe Esteves said, "and we just powered through it." Together, Phillippe and his wife Dani run Ubuntu with their friendly staff. Phillippe said he wanted to persevere through the initial COVID-19 wave and just survive despite the initial heavy expenses hitting his desk. Ubuntu opened as planned and served 400 guests on its first day. Fortunately, the open-air design allowed Ubuntu to stay open for take-out. And now the design is perfect for continued operations as Long Beach restaurants re-opened.

Phillippe has significant experience as a restaurant consultant supporting new restaurants with management and operations expertise. It's abundantly clear that this isn't his first rodeo, and the food and ambience are a nice fit to the space and neighborhood. The construction is top notch and the design meets the space challenges perfectly, there is ample seating and the open-air feeling is certainly refreshing. They love what they do and it is evident with Dani's wonderful smile and friendliness.

What once was a corner that saw several restaurants come and go, Ubuntu is an Alamitos Heights oasis and appears to be here for good. In Portuguese, Ubuntu means "I am because we are". Phillippe and Dani are

from Brazil and have brought part of their homeland to our neighborhood, just when we needed them. It's important to know the staff are treated like partners and share in the Ubuntu's profits quarterly. Phillippe says it's critical that his team knows they have a stake in the business in order to be a success and to serve their guests with excellence and respect. The meaning of Ubuntu is fully embraced by the staff.

If you look closely, the restaurant's details are amazing. The table ware is cool and you'll find fresh flowers at every turn. There are unique bronze order number plaques adorning the tables to appreciate as you anxiously await your "Breakfast Sando" or another tantalizing item.

Ubuntu serves fresh organic farm to table dishes and delectable pastries. "My pastry chef worked at top New York restaurants, and he told me he would create his pastries for Ubuntu but the butter has to be from France for me to do it right," Phillippe said, adding, "We don't have a freezer!" Fresh food arrives daily from local vendors and you can taste the real thing — especially the buttery pastries. While talking to Phillippe, you can hear and see his passion to serve the best food to his Long Beach patrons.

When asked, Marvin a server, commented about how he liked working at Ubuntu. "It's great here, and it's all about the teamwork — we have each other's back, and nobody's bigger than the other," he said. On top of that he confided that Phillippe and Andi definitely convey the meaning of the word Ubuntu to the staff as a mantra to work together. "Our team is also culturally diverse, which also makes it very special," Marvin added.

Ubuntu is special, and in these days we could all use an escape and also support a local business at the same time. Ubuntu café is located at 335 Nieto Ave on the corner of Appian and Nieto and open daily for breakfast, lunch, and even a sunset happy hour until 7:00 with adult beverages and shareable plates. Check them out at [facebook.com/ubuntu-café](https://facebook.com/ubuntu-café) and on [instagram.com/ubuntulb](https://instagram.com/ubuntulb).



Phillippe and Dani Esteves



# Alamitos Heights Improvement Association 2021 Membership Drive

*Please renew or join now!*



## Your Membership Supports Our Community Events

- Neighborhood Tree & Planting Projects
- Easter Egg Hunt – March
- Alamitos Heights Community Yard Sale – May
- Annual Neighborhood Picnic – June
- Holiday Tree Lighting With Santa – November
- Colorado Lagoon Holiday Trees – Nov./ Dec./ Jan.
- Holiday House Decorating Contest – December
- Newsletter and Email Updates
- Community Meetings
- Toss, Shred, Recycle Event
- Wine Down Friday

Alamitos Heights Improvement Association was created in 1923 to build a stronger and safer community. You are important to continuing the tradition by joining or renewing your membership today.

We welcome your participation and ideas for improving our wonderful neighborhood in 2021 and beyond. For questions about joining, contact: [membership@ahia.info](mailto:membership@ahia.info)

Thank you for your support,  
Alamitos Heights Improvement Association Board

**Visit us at:**

[www.ahia.info](http://www.ahia.info)

[www.facebook.com/AlamitosHeightsImprovementAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/AlamitosHeightsImprovementAssociation)

### AHIA 2021 Membership Form

Payment Options:

- Mail a \$35 check to AHIA 6216 E. Pacific Coast Hwy #372, Long Beach CA, 90803
- Place a \$35 check in the mail slot at 505 Flint Avenue
- Send \$36.35 via  **PayPal** to [president@ahia.info](mailto:president@ahia.info) (the extra \$1.35 covers the PayPal fees)
- Use our membership form and payment link at [www.ahia.info/membership](http://www.ahia.info/membership) – don't forget the extra \$1.35

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my check for \$35. \_\_\_\_ Please accept my additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my AHIA Bi-Annual Newsletter sent to me via:

\_\_\_\_ e-mail my AHIA Newsletter and \_\_\_\_ Postal Mail a printed copy

\_\_\_\_ My contact information is the same as last year. \_\_\_\_ My contact information has changed

**Please Renew or Join The Alamitos Heights Improvement Association Now!**