

Scripps Ranch Civic Association Newsletter Spotlight

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Second generation San Diegan Judy Sheinbein credits her after-school activities at the College Area Jewish Center with starting her on a life of community service. Early on she wanted to make a difference and help others, but she could not have imagined how great an impact she would have.

A graduate of Crawford High School and San Diego State University, she earned degrees in speech therapy and psychology. She became a teacher of the deaf but found she wasn't suited for it. Changing jobs, she went into custom decorating for a department store, creating window treatments for some of the first homes in Scripps Ranch.

She moved to Scripps Ranch in 1982 when she married Fred Sheinbein, a Navy dentist. They were transferred to Fallon, NV, in 1983 but kept the Scripps Ranch house. They returned in 1986 with 3-year-old Aaron. They've been here ever since: on Canyon Lake Drive, Brooktree Terrace, Walnutdale St., Rue St. Lazare, and now on Twinleaf Drive.

It was when Aaron was having his bar mitzvah in 1996 that life took an unexpected turn. The family began to research its family tree, and Judy found she was becoming an expert at using the research tools at the San Diego County courthouse. She offered to help friends and relatives with their family research and soon began getting requests for help from others. She joined the San Diego Jewish Genealogy Society as a volunteer researcher when a woman asked her to help her find her biological family. Judy thought it "an interesting challenge" and was surprised that she was able to find the entire birth family within a few days.

An adoptee who had documented her search for her biological family on her website started receiving requests from other adoptees and forwarded them to Judy. She spent the next decade helping people through different networks. In 2008 Aaron helped his mother set up a website and database for California. Find My Family was born! The first year brought such a great response that the mother-son team set up a registry for each state. When they went national in 2009, registration increased by 250%. She might make the registry global.

"One in 15 people are affected by adoption," Judy says, though she feels it must be more. She has four in her own family. Some people find relatives themselves using the mutual match system in the adoption registry. Others rely on Judy's expertise. Of the thousands of cases she has worked on, only two have refused to give her information. "Most people, whether or not they want to be reunited, want to know or pass along their medical history."

One day she offered to find the birth family of a cousin she grew up with in San Diego. She found that his biological mother had married his father six months after she gave him up and then had two more children. His mother had passed away before the contact was made, but he has a close relationship with his new found brother and sister.

Judy continued her community involvement in Scripps Ranch. She volunteered at the old storefront library on Scripps Ranch Boulevard and helped move it to the new location. She worked in Aaron's schools and helped in the recovery effort after the 2003 wildfires.

Aaron is a 2001 Scripps Ranch High School graduate. As a teenager he helped Chuck Adkison in the formidable job of getting the heavy boxes of SRCA Newsletters delivered to the distributors each month. He built his first professional website in middle school, built SRHS's first website and alumni directory, and built the Find My Family national adoption registration website. He graduated from UCSD and received an MBA at Miramar University. He works as a webmaster for a San Diego company and does freelance website designing.

Fred retired from the Navy in 1999 and now volunteers as a computer consultant to seniors. Completing the Sheinbein family operational team, he also works on the Find My Family website.

It's an understatement to say the Sheinbeins have been happy in Scripps Ranch. "We truly love the wonderful sense of community here so much we moved all around the Ranch for the past 30 years and now live in our fifth house!" Judy says enthusiastically.

After 15 years reuniting adoptees and birth families Judy is still passionate about the work. The beneficiaries of her work refer to her as a "search angel." She is working on establishing an angel network of volunteers to add to the research staff. "It is very self-satisfying to be able to make a positive difference in people's lives. It is a life-changing experience for all involved in the search."

Findmyfamily.org is supported solely by donations and is using the funds to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more about this free service, visit [www.findmyfamily.org] or [http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Find-My-Family-Adoption-Reunion-Registry/1815943584].

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