

# A Tribute to Chana Mannen

## Don Diego Scholarship Foundation

### 1986-2022 Inaugural Executive Director



**S**ometimes, as the saying goes, the best man for the job is a woman.

In the case of Don Diego Scholarship Foundation (DDSF), that woman was a Mannen. Unflappable Chana Mannen.

Chana's efforts began during a challenging time, after actor Tom Hernandez, AKA the San Diego County Fair's longtime welcoming ambassador Don Diego, died unexpectedly a few days before 1984's Opening Day. It ends as we emerge from another challenging time, due to the pandemic.

Chana's DDSF connection is rooted decades earlier. She relates, "In 1970, I was a newlywed teacher moving to a new community in the middle of the school year. My husband Frank told me I could probably get a job at the Fair."

That summer job blossomed into a 52-year career. As she worked her way up to Deputy Manager, she notes, "I always looked for innovative ways to keep the Fair fresh and evolving."

Some of her innovations segued into our DDSF, including the popular Plant\*Grow\*Eat program that educates children about nutrition and agriculture. Thanks to Chana's coordination, Board support and largesse of individuals and organizations, DDSF bus sponsorship has enabled countless low-income elementary students to enjoy a fulfilling experience and fun day at the Fair.

Chana's involvement in another endeavor resulted in our namesake organization. She recounts, "I was Tom's supervisor in the early 1980s. We enjoyed a warm relationship." When the Fair board created a college scholarship fund in his name in 1986, Chana handled the program until she retired from the Fair in 2006, when she was appointed inaugural DDSF Executive Director.



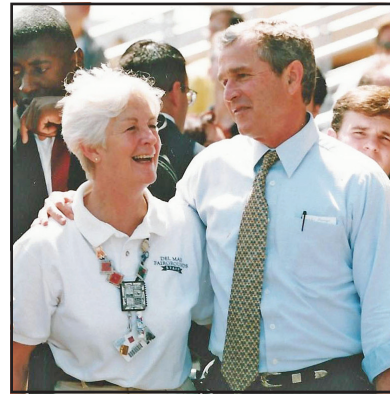
# Fair Fun & DDSF Delights



Chana gets her start at the Fair as Assistant Home Arts Coordinator in the early 1970s.



The "Goat Girls," aka Mannen daughters, at the Fair.



Chana shows then-Texas Governor (and future U.S. President) George W. Bush around the Fair.



Chana welcomes DDSF Plant\*Grow\*Eat sponsorship donors to the 2016 Fair.



Chana and Scholar Amy Wehner at the 2015 DDSF Gala.



Chana at the 2009 Gala with the "Father" of DDSF, Bob Spanjian, and his wife Betty.

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UP FRONT  
AMUSEMENT BUSINESS

FEBRUARY 16, 2004

IN MY OFFICE CHANA MANNEN

By Mary Wade Burnside

Chana Mannen's job really determines the decorative pattern in her office. The deputy general manager of the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif., takes care of the theme for the June 11-July 4 fair.

So herds of pigs, cows, sheep, Elvis pictures, and, for this year's "Seussentennial," a "Cat in the Hat" all have a home in her office.

"I have more eye candy than anybody else," Mannen said. "When the theme was 'Rabbits and Roses,' people brought me rabbits. I've got plush rabbits and glass rabbits.

"We've done pigs, and from when we did 'Beef at the Beach,' I have a big cow collection."

One year, the theme was "Sheila the Chartreuse Sheep," so that means green sheep.

"Luckily, it's a big office, so I can accommodate this."

Located in the original fair administration office, Mannen's office also sits on grounds that often can be seen as a filming location, most recently, in the MTV series "Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica."

The numerous windows in Mannen's office allow her to look out at a parking lot for part of the year, but, come April, an "incredible" flower and garden show sets up in the space.

"The metamorphosis is fun to watch and it's always different."

Like most people, Mannen also displays family photos in her office, including some of twin daughters, Peggy and Kate. That topic gave her something to talk about when Mannen took presidential candidate and father of twins George W. Bush on a tour of the grounds a few years ago.

Both sets of twins are fraternal and each named for a grandmother, and, like Bush's girls, one is blonde and one is brunette.

"We had a parents of twins discussion," Mannen said.

They also had their photograph taken, which gives Mannen another picture to show off in her office.

The television and stereo in Mannen's office come in handy for looking at videos, DVDs and listening to CDs of fair entrants.

But Mannen also uses the CD player to obtain some quiet. As opposed to listening to music, she prefers "white noise" CDs.

"If I have to write something, I close the door and put on music so I can't hear anything else."

**THE DOCTOR (SEUSS) IS IN** — Chana Mannen, deputy general manager of the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, hangs out with "The Cat in the Hat" in her fair theme-themed office.

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Chana was recognized at the 2018 DDSF Gala for her 30+ years of Foundation stewardship.



Chana presents DDSF scholarships to Sarah Drown, Katie Flinn and Kaitlyn McCallum at 2017 Ramona High awards night.



Chana and Scholar Victoria Navarro highlight DDSF college scholarship opportunities on 2019 KOCT's "Oceanside Spectrum."



# Building a Solid Foundation and a Lasting Legacy



**Amigo. Bricks. College scholarships.** Former teacher Chana Mannen was well-schooled in the ABCs of running a nonprofit. The primary mission: transforming today's outstanding students into tomorrow's exceptional leaders.

Now in DDSF's 36th year of providing college scholarships, more than 300 Scholar-Leaders have shared more than \$1 million in monetary awards propelling them to universities across the country and careers across the spectrum; from agriculture to healthcare to tech to teaching and much more.

*Dear Chana:*

*As a scholarship recipient 19 years ago and now a Board member for many years, it has been a pleasure working with you on both sides of DDSF. Thank you for your many years of work and passion. Your legacy will not be forgotten as you have laid the foundation for the future in so many ways.*

*Thank you,  
Alysha Stehly*



To ensure that our demonstrably successful scholarship program would continue beyond her tenure, Chana was instrumental in recently creating and soliciting membership in the our Endowed Named Scholarship program. Several Board members

and friends of DDSF have made sizable donations that fund scholarships in perpetuity.

Among them are Chana and Frank Mannen. They note, "We have both been employed by and involved with the Fair for decades. Our two daughters worked there as well. We consider it an honor and privilege to establish the \$10,000 Mannen Family Endowed Scholarship to help future Fair employees achieve their college and career goals."

Chana confirms that her long service with DDSF has been a labor of love: "Every year, when I meet the outstanding applicants, hear their inspirational and aspirational stories, and discover their passionate idealism, it renews my faith in humanity."

Each of us who has enjoyed working with Chana Mannen to build a better San Diego, one scholarship at a time, thanks her for her dedication to Don Diego Scholarship Foundation, the San Diego County Fair, and our wider community.

On behalf of all Board members and scholarship recipients throughout the years, we wish you: *Happy retirement, Chana!*

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