

SUE'S STORY

The Remarkable Journey of Sue Berghoff



THE
"Sue's Story"
PROJECT



Sue Berghoff has always been a "go getter." For years it was her habit to plan ahead, set goals, and work hard to achieve them. She rose through the ranks to win management positions at Intel and Cisco during the early days of Silicon Valley. For her second career, Sue accepted a teaching position in the English Department at San José State University. There was a perennial waiting list for the Business Communications course taught by "Professor B," as Sue was known. She was respected by students, who said she was tough but fair and really knew her stuff.

Sue and her husband Chuck raised three sons who now have careers and children of their own. Over the years Sue also found time to sing and dance in musical productions with the Sweet Adelines. After moving to Morgan Hill, Sue joined the local branch of AAUW. She believed in its mission and enjoyed meeting and volunteering with other women in the community.

Sue was looking forward to retirement when her life was upended. She was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia (LBD), a neurodegenerative disease that began to attack her brain, robbing her of cognitive abilities that are essential in everyday life. Even as Sue was coming to terms with her fate, she wanted to share her story with others. Last summer I offered to write a feature story in *GMH Today* magazine, and her enthusiasm was palpable.

Rather than withdraw from life, Sue had decided to make something positive from her diagnosis, and Chuck was all for it. Their mission was clear: to increase awareness and research funding to find a cure for LBD. When they mentioned plans to host an educational event in the fall with help from AAUW, I recruited my friends at 152 WEST to record the event footage to be used as an awareness-building tool. Sue was not only excited about the idea, but she wanted to do more, so we decided to go all-in and produce a documentary film.

We conducted 20 hours of on-camera interviews and spent six months in film editing and production to create a 35-minute documentary that would support Sue's mission. In April, SUE'S STORY made its debut at the Poppy Jasper International Film Festival, played to a full house, and won Audience Choice for Best Documentary. Drawn in by Sue's journey with Lewy Body Dementia, the audience lingered to talk with Sue and her guest speakers until it was time to go. That response inspired the Sue's Story Project, an Impact & Engagement project aimed at reaching a broader audience (thesuesstoryproject.com).

If you haven't seen SUE'S STORY, the next local screening is October 12th during the City of Morgan Hill's Senior Resource Fair at the Morgan Hill Community & Cultural Center. The Sue's Story Project is supported through the Lewy Body Dementia Awareness & Research Fund: Morgan Hill Community Foundation (www.morganhillcf.org).

Robin Shepherd
Writer, Co-Director & Producer

