



Patty Ann Vallance

August 20, 1957 - June 3, 2020

The Southern Arizona community lost one of its most energetic and beloved volunteers when Patty Vallance, 62, died June 3, 2020.

“We lost a one-of-a-kind force for good,” Stuart Mellan, former president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona, wrote on Facebook.

“She wore her Jewish identity proudly,” Mellan said, referencing the Star of David she wears in the photo at left, posing with Israeli and Tucson-area firefighters in 2016 as part of the Firefighters Beyond Borders program she helped create. “Patty Vallance was ‘all-in’ when it came to devoting herself to our community — and she did so with great creativity and will. When she would call me with ‘I have an idea’... I knew it was time to sit down and listen — because her ideas were never small!

“In our community she was the moving force behind:

- the Jewish Federation’s Make a Difference Day that for many years mobilized our Jewish community and partners such as the Tucson Police Department to take on projects annually. We won national recognition — received a grant from the Paul Newman Foundation and were on the cover of USA Today as a result of her leadership;
- the Jewish community response to Hurricane Katrina, where we took a lead in the Tucson community response;
- the 1st Rate 2nd Hand Thrift Store;
- her beloved Tucson Fire Foundation and its Endowment Fund, when she seeded (provided the initial funding) through our Federation — and established it at our Jewish Community Foundation. Numerous programs came out of this effort.

“Our Jewish Community Relations Council recognized her with the Margie Fenton Award

and the Federation gave her numerous awards,” Mellan said, “but truthfully she neither sought recognition, nor would any recognition, no matter how great, capture her greatness.

“They say that none of us are irreplaceable ... mostly I believe that to be true. But there will never be another Patty — and our world is so blessed for her presence on this planet.”

A petite dynamo, known for her high heels and ready smile, Vallance wrote a children’s book in 2012, “Born to Wear Blue,” with proceeds benefiting the Greater Tucson Fire Foundation, helping to provide firefighters with cancer screenings and confidential crisis and counseling services. More recently, she was the driving force behind Safe Shift Estate Sale/Resale, which also benefited the fire foundation.

“Patty Vallance of blessed memory had adopted ALL firefighters and their families with an amazing skill set,” said Mike McKendrick, chairman and founding trustee of the Greater Tucson Fire Foundation and a retired assistant chief with Tucson Fire Department.

Vallance was born in Marinette, Wisconsin, to George and Hazel Schmitt, and raised in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, graduating from Peshtigo High School. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

“She held a variety of jobs,” says her son, Zev, “but her last major involvement before becoming a professional volunteer and ball of energy she’ll be remembered for, was with theater.” She taught high school drama and was active in the theater scene in Placerville, California, where Zev and his sister, Noa, were born.

Wanting her children to connect with their Jewish heritage, Vallance drove 196 miles daily to take Zev and Noa to a Jewish day school in Sacramento, she told the AJP in 2014. The family moved to Tucson in 2000.

While serving as president of the board of the B’nai B’rith Strauss Manor on Pantano, an apartment complex for low-income seniors, Vallance shared her philosophy with the AJP. “Some days I just make soup and that’s enough,” she said. “Everybody has the ability to give. It’s not always about writing a check or volunteering for an organization ... it’s that quiet philanthropy that everybody does that keeps you right in the world. You look around and see what one thing you can do because you heard another person. It all goes back to ‘If not now, when? If not me, who?’”

Amid the shock of her sudden passing from post-surgical complications, accolades from

Tucson friends on Facebook include descriptions of Vallance as “a spitfire,” “a gift,” and “a treasure.”

“From the smallest simple need or request to the largest community cause, Patty Vallance took it on. She did not let obstacles stand in the way to move forward to help those in need. May her memory inspire us all,” said Beverly Sandock.

“A light has gone out. The world lost a Lamed Vavnick,” said Lori Riegel, using the Hebrew phrase for one of the 36 righteous souls who exist in every generation, according to Jewish mysticism.

“A huge loss to all those who knew her and benefited from her creativity, empathy, compassion, love, and desire to repair the world — Tikkun Olam. Her energy was infectious. She will be missed but will leave behind the concept that ‘if you build it they will come,’” Karen Faitelson said.

Due to COVID-19, funeral services on June 5 were for the family only, with Rabbi Billy Lewkowicz officiating. Vallance was honored with a ride on the Last Alarm Foundation fire truck — an honor she had arranged for a friend and fellow fire foundation supporter in January — and community members were invited to drive past before the funeral.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Greater Tucson Fire Foundation Endowment Fund held at the Jewish Community Foundation, <https://jcftucson.org/donate-1/> or 3718 E. River Road, #118, Tucson, AZ 85718; Memo: GTFF Endowment.

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Phyllis Braun, AJP Executive Editor.

Comments



“ Patty was my neighbor for several years and was always very kind and always doing for others. We will miss her at El Encanto!

Debbie Curley - June 13, 2020 at 05:35 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Patty Ann Vallance



Heidi Brent - June 07, 2020 at 11:29 PM



“ Sorry to hear about Patty's passing. She was a pistol, that was for sure. She was a close friend of my dad and came running to my side the morning he passed away in 2008. We worked together at Strauss Manor making the lives of our low income seniors better, as well as starting First Rate Second hand and getting the Jewish thrift store off the ground. She was strong willed and was a great friend.

MICHAEL STRAUSS - June 05, 2020 at 02:12 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Patty Ann Vallance.



June 05, 2020 at 07:05 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Patty Ann Vallance.



June 05, 2020 at 07:00 AM



“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Mike McKendrick - June 05, 2020 at 05:45 AM



“ Patty was the one that put the first firefighter delegation together with Firefighters Without Borders for our trip to Israel. She worked tirelessly to make the mission a success and shook the trees to find the money to fund it.

Inspired by Patty's dedication and volunteerism. Several of us came back and began teaching the lessons learned. This eventually evolved into a non-profit that recruited volunteers from public safety to teach free Stop the Bleed and active shooter response courses to schools, religious organizations, and other public safety agencies. The spark that ignited this volunteerism for me was Patty. It will never be known the lives that have been, or will be saved because Patty lit that fire.

What was lesser known, was just before our delegation was set to depart, my mother unexpectedly passed away. It was Patty that flew into action making memorial arrangements, cooking food, and setting up meal trains for my family during that extremely difficult time. She looked after my family during that trip, and continued to do so afterwards.

Many people think that firefighters are heroes, but there are people that stand behind those firefighters, outside of the spotlight, working tirelessly, who are real heroes. Patty was one of those heroes. Many people will never know the names of those firefighters who she helped through extremely challenging times, or the work she did behind the scenes, but rest assured she made a tremendous impact on the lives of many in the public safety community.

Patty your dedication and volunteerism has touched so many. It was a spark, that lit a fire, that will give light throughout this community for generations. My family and I will miss you deeply, and especially Noah who loved hearing the other story of Noa you loved to tell him. All of our love.....The Lytles

Mark Lytle - June 05, 2020 at 12:01 AM



“ Very sorry to hear of Patty's passing. She was a force to be reckoned with!! Thank you Patty.

Love, Nicky

Nicky - June 04, 2020 at 08:47 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Patty Ann Vallance



Sarah Barcelo - June 04, 2020 at 04:42 PM