



## Judy Bretschneider

May 24, 1954 - May 19, 2018

“There’s nothing like lifting hearts and spurring imaginations!”

Our much-loved executive director and founder, Judy George Bretschneider, died Saturday after a long, valiant battle against cancer. Miss Judy, as her dancers called her, was a native San Franciscan who in 1998, founded the Presidio Performing Arts Foundation. She was also the executive director of the Assyrian Arts Institute since 2016 and had a long history of activism in the Bay Area community. She sat on the Board of Governors of the National Association of Non-Profit Organizations and Executives, was a certified Non-Profit Consultant, development and Program Planner, and earned numerous awards from the Assyrian Aid Society and Stanislaus County for her efforts towards Assyrian cultural preservation. She also received Mayoral awards on behalf of San Francisco for her sustained commitment to youth development through the arts. In the 1980s and 1990s, Judy was a member of the California Heritage council, held board and committee positions with the Peninsula French-American School, Castilleja School, town School, San Francisco’s Human Relations Award in 1969 (presented by Mayor Joseph Alioto) for outstanding achievement in the field of human relations, as the creator of International Nations Day - a day to celebrate and learn about different ethnic groups within San Francisco. In recognition of her service, Judy received the 2006 Jefferson Award from the American Institute for Public Service, considered the Nobel Prize for community Service, initiated by

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. She held a Master's Degree in Developmental Psychology from San Francisco State University, and studied piano and music technique at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, earning a Minor in Music. While at Stanford, her groundbreaking work in the field of seniors' sexuality and behavior, earned her numerous national and international speaking engagements. She was a writer and researcher and her work was published in *Psychology Today*, amongst numerous other publications. For the last 20 years, Judy oversaw Presidio Dance Theatre and its foundation, doing community outreach and fundraising to support PDT's programs. She organized international performances for Youth Company members to Russia, Turkey, Hungary, France, Belgium, and Greece. In 2012, the US State Department presented PPAF with an award of excellence for Cultural Diplomacy through the Arts, for its performances in Hungary. All of these tours were matched with humanitarian and cultural projects. More than a dozen young dancers traveled with her last summer to Athens, Greece to perform at the historic Dora Stratou dance theater in Athens, Greece for UNESCO's 50th World Congress on Dance Research. Judy was especially proud of her two children, Sherene Melania, the Artistic Director and Principal Choreographer at Presidio Dance Theatre and Arthur Bretschneider, the founder and CEO of the tech company, Seniorly. She married her high school sweetheart, John Bretschneider, who she met as a young child in Sunday School. They were married 46 years, until her untimely passing. They started the Presidio Performing Arts Foundation as a family foundation. One of the highlights of her career was the original ballet she and Sherene produced in 2015; *The Little Lantern Ballet*, based on the story by the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani (1936 – 1972). "We loved it so much because of the story of collaboration and the power of people working together," Bretschneider said. "We thought children could grasp it as well as adults." Sherene wrote the libretto and created the choreography and Judy worked tirelessly to bring it to the stage. She will be greatly missed by her family, including her husband, John, and grandsons, Zane and August, her many friends, and the hundreds

of dancers she supported during her long career in the arts. “I had the kids draw pictures to thank our funders,” Bretschneider explained to a reporter many years ago. “We were having a little party. A little girl from the Bayview drew a cloud across the page, but above the cloud she drew a sun. Through the cloud were the rays. Then she drew herself under it and said, ‘This is how I feel when I dance.’ As a psychologist, I thought, this is exactly why I’m doing this and what I wanted to see. That, to me, was my greatest gift. I keep the picture on my desk.”

We have established the Judy Bretschneider Legacy Fund. If you are interested in contributing to the Presidio Performing Arts Foundation, in honor of Judy’s work, please contact us at [info@presidiodance.org](mailto:info@presidiodance.org), (415)561-3958 or send checks to PPAF, PO Box 29066, SF, CA 94129. Donation link coming soon. Many thanks in advance for your support and for ensuring that Judy’s work lives on!

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY 26. 11:00 AM - 11:45 AM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home  
425 North Soderquist Road  
Turlock, CA 95381  
(209) 632-9111  
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

## Graveside Service

MAY 26. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Memorial Park  
575 N Soderquist Rd  
Turlock, CA 95380-3749  
(209) 632-9111

## Memorial Service

JUN 2. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (PT)

St. John's Presbyterian Church  
25 Lake St.  
San Fransisco, CA 94118

# Tribute Wall



“ *Judy Bretschneider*

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *John, Arthur and Sherene, My deepest sympathies to all of you and to Julianne. You will be in my prayers during this most difficult time. She was a loving and good woman. I will always remember her and Johnny visiting Julianne and the rest of us in the dorms at USF. May your memories of her keep you all of you strong now and in the future. My best to all of the extended family as well. Renee C. Mendoza*

**Renee C. Mendoza** - May 24, 2018 at 01:06 PM



“ *Dear John, Arthur, Sherene, Please accept my deepest sympathy for the loss of your dear Judy. She was an incredible woman and will be missed by all who knew her. You are blessed to have a lifetime of memories to cherish. May her memory be a blessing for all. Regards, Alan & Beth Weiss, San Mateo CA*

**Alan Weiss** - May 24, 2018 at 09:46 AM