

Welcome to IWCF...New Member Shawn Shepherd

“There is a road, no simple highway
Between the dawn and the dark of night
And if you go no one may follow
That path is for your steps alone.”
Lyrics from Ripple, Grateful Dead

This seems a fitting way to begin the story of Shawn Shepherd who grew up on a 400-acre farm in the Amish country of Indiana. Immersed in agriculture at an early age, Shawn learned the meaning of hard work.



That work ethic propelled Shawn to begin attending college at the age of 14 and she has attended and worked for many universities in the intervening years. Young, adventurous, and perhaps a little crazy, Shawn and a group of college friends, dropped out of school, purchased a van, and went on the road following the Grateful Dead. Yes! Shawn is a Deadhead! After 160 concerts, Shawn returned to school (Indiana State University). She also attended The University of Vermont, Washington State University, and The University of New Mexico, obtaining various degrees and employment along the way. Shawn, like other IWCF members, is a life-long learner with a very high level of curiosity.

In her early professional life, Shawn briefly tried working in advertising. She realized quickly that a successful ad campaign was not bringing her any sense of accomplishment. Like the Peggy Lee song she asked, “Is that all there is?” Having grown up with a strong family background in community service, Shawn knew she had to have meaning and purpose in her life.

So, the question we ask everyone new to Boise is, what brought you to Boise? In 2006, Shawn was living in Phoenix, working on a national level for the American Lung Association. She loved her work but was not thrilled about living in Phoenix. Having developed a sophisticated sense of criteria for where she wanted to live: 1) fishing (Shawn goes fishing every year for two weeks with her father), 2) skiing opportunities, 3) desert environment, and 4) opportunities to wine and dine in good restaurants, Shawn began exploring the Western United States for such a place.

Shawn had what she refers to as a Chamber of Commerce Weekend in Boise. The Hyde Park Festival was going on as was the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and everyone was so friendly. She had a wonderful meal at Red Feather, and she knew she’d found the place! She moved here with the American Lung Association, which had an office locally, and worked on completing her dissertation in Adult Psychology and the Psychology of Creativity. She later became the Head of the Foothills School of Arts and Sciences.

Then Shawn's highway took a different and exciting turn. Having divorced when she was thirty, she'd been on that highway alone. She was happy. As she says, she loved her life, loved her job, and loved her dog, but she was ready for a relationship.

IWCF member Diane Myklegard asked her if she dated. Diane's brother Jeff was single after being widowed. Ironically, Shawn had been thinking about moving as she'd found the single life in Boise at the age of 50 to be challenging (we've made the national news on this one—how there just aren't that many single, available cowboys roaming the streets of Boise!). Diane and Jeff had many life experiences in common. He was now a retired rancher, having sold out his interest in spreads in Jordan Valley and Cascade. Jeff was ready to see the world, and Shawn was just the person to be his tour guide.

Jeff and Shawn moved as winter snowbirds to Palm Desert, CA where Shawn worked as a Director of Development for California State University-San Bernardino and The Living Desert. They decided they wanted to be back in Boise closer to family full-time. This year they will be hosting Christmas for the first time.

Meanwhile, Shawn's highway has gone full circle. Once again, she is working in the agriculture system as the National Director of Development for ReFED, a national nonprofit working to end food loss and waste across the U.S. food system. The single biggest waste in America is food. Based on national research, if you hosted a meal for ten on Thanksgiving, and purchased four shopping bags of food for this meal, one of those shopping bags would go to waste. Shawn is all too familiar with how difficult it is to bring change to agricultural systems, but that is just what she and her organization are doing. They are working with grocery store chains, restaurant associations—any organization in the food supply chain to find ways to minimize and eliminate food waste. In a time when 1 in 8 Americans are food insecure, this is an important highway for Shawn to travel.

Welcome to IWCF Shawn.