

# National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association

## Stephie Mendel Retires from the NSDA Board after Sixteen Years



Mary Bifaro with Stephie Mendel

At its 2019 Board Meeting, the NSDA regretfully accepted the resignation of Board Member, Stephie Mendel. Fortunately, Stephie will continue to support the NSDA and she remains committed to our important work.

Stephie joined the Board in 2003. She is a resident of the San Francisco Bay area and is a steadfast advocate for more research to discover a cure for SD. She said that she joined the Board because “she hoped to make a difference in promoting and funding research”. Stephie served as Leader of the North Bay support group. In 2015, she was a co-recipient of the Midge Kovacs Annual Awareness Award.

Stephie is a nationally published poet who has taught poetry and authored two books, *“March, before Spring”* and *“Bare Branches”*. Stephie has donated all profits from *“Bare Branches”* to the NSDA and there are two poems about living with SD in it. Her work has appeared in numerous anthologies and literary journals. She is also active in the local arts and theater communities.

In 2002, The Mendel Matching Grant was made possible by Stephie’s contribution. This was the start of the NSDA Challenge Fundraising Program which is the largest annual fundraising activity for the NSDA. In 2001, Stephie’s donation made the first SD-specific research study possible.

In 2007, NSDA started its current research grant program with Stephie’s financial support. In 2012, Stephie’s financial pledge allowed us to increase our research grants to the \$50k level. Stephie has done other fundraisers to support the NSDA, including a *Walk Across The Golden Gate Bridge* and multiple birthday fundraisers.

Stephie’s dedication and passion for the NSDA has helped us grow the organization and focus more efforts on SD research. In addition, Stephie’s family has generously supported the NSDA over the years. According to NSDA President, Charlie Reavis, “Stephie has an unfailing dedication to making a difference in the life of every person living with spasmodic dysphonia. In addition, she has a deep passion for our cause, commitment to our organization, and dedication to all aspects of our mission and vision.”

Let Stephie’s inspiring words speak for themselves. In her poem, “Invitation” which is included in the NSDA’s new publication, *‘Celebrating Our Voice’*, she states: “To enjoy life, I live by letting go of what is already slipping away. I’ve learned to live with SD as my partner. An acceptance of what I can only manage, not cure. It would be a lonely road without fellow travelers held together by the NSDA, that reaches out to soften our load until a cure can be found. Where would I be without them?”

**On behalf of the NSDA and all those living with SD and related voice conditions, thank you, Stephie!**



Charlie Reavis with Stephie Mendel and Kim Kuman