

# Tiburon mom, philanthropist, paves the way for diabetes research

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Last month, Chara Schreyer received the Greater Bay Area JDRF's Living and Giving Award, presented with great fanfare at the foundation's annual Hope Gala at the Ritz Carlton, San Francisco. The longtime Tiburon resident was celebrated for more than three decades of extraordinarily generous support of Type 1 diabetes research.

Schreyer's daughter Justine, who has Type 1, introduced her: "If any of us know my mom, we know that she is unconventional and doesn't take no for an answer. In fact, if you are like me, this is one of the things that you most love about her."

Type 1 strikes both children and adults suddenly when the pancreas stops making insulin, which is needed to convert food to energy for the body's use. Researchers believe the onset of Type 1 is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences, but unlike Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 95 percent of diabetes cases, the onset of Type 1 has nothing to do with diet or lifestyle.

Schreyer's daughter Justine was diagnosed with Type 1 in 1982, when she was 4 years old.

"Justine presented in a very typical way — she was losing weight and very thirsty," Schreyer says. "I'll never forget the day we got her diagnosis. It was Mother's Day."

Schreyer admits to feeling a moment of self-pity, but shrugged it off. "I've always been one to make lemonade from lemons," she says.

Schreyer, whose parents were both Holo-



Chara Schreyer in her Tiburon living room beneath a Frank Stella painting. Schreyer was awarded the JDRF's Living and Giving Award at a ceremony in San Francisco on May 21.

caust survivors, knows well the importance of strength, resilience and charity.

She immediately enrolled in a weeklong crash course in Type 1 at the University of California at San Francisco. The class explained the disease and taught Schreyer skills essential to help Justine maintain healthy blood-sugar levels with blood tests, insulin and a careful balance of diet and exercise.

"The first thing I learned is that if you have Type 1 diabetes, or are caring for some-

one with Type 1 diabetes, there's no time off. You must be vigilant and disciplined in order to stay healthy," Schreyer says.

Schreyer then reached out to the New York chapter of JDRF — formally known as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation — for support and to learn about the organization's efforts. She then began networking with other Northern California families affected by the disease. Later that same year, Schreyer was part of a small

## Learn more

For more information about the Greater Bay Area Chapter of JDRF, visit [jdrf.org/bayarea](http://jdrf.org/bayarea).

group that founded the foundation's Greater Bay Area Chapter.

In 1982, the foundation had only a few chapters and none on the West Coast. Today, there are 96 U.S. chapters and six international affiliates focused on fundraising and funding research to advance Type 1 therapies and finding a cure.

"JDRF is rather unusual in the nonprofit world," Schreyer says. "Only 18 percent of funds raised are used for operational costs. The rest goes to research."

Since its inception, the foundation has donated more than \$2 billion to research. In the early years, Schreyer helped the foundation with fundraisers, including awareness-raising walks and the Hope Gala, which remains the group's major annual fundraiser. Ardy Johnson, who chaired this year's Hope Gala, worked with Schreyer on the first walks and Hope Galas.

"What I admire most about Chara is her steadfast determination to help find a cure, which has been demonstrated over the past 30 years and will not only impact her daughter, but also my son and many, many others," Johnson says.

Schreyer's generosity toward Type 1 has extended far beyond the JDRF. Her Kadima Foundation made a grant to UCSF to build

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the Justine Kathryn Schreyer Diabetes Care Center and endowed the Justine K. Schreyer Chair for Diabetes Research. Michael German has been clinical director of the diabetes care center and the endowed research chair since 2006. He and his team are trying to determine what destroys the beta cells that produce insulin in a normal pancreas. They are also working with stem cells in an effort to create new beta cells that might someday replace Type 1 sufferers' nonfunctioning cells.

"None of this work would be possible without Chara's support," German says. "She knows how much work it is to manage Type 1 diabetes. You have to test your blood sugar all throughout the day, inject insulin before meals, monitor exercise and calculate carbohydrates. It's always on your mind and if you have the disease, you lack the flexibility and spontaneity that others enjoy and take for granted."

Schreyer is also hopeful that an implantable insulin pump — also referred to as an artificial pancreas — now in Food and Drug Administration trials will make life easier for Type 1 sufferers; Schreyer has been a major supporter of the evolving technology for years. The insulin pump is now being shepherd through FDA trials by Milpitas-based Bigfoot Biomedical and could be available to Type 1 patients as early as 2018.

This year's Hope Gala raised a record \$1.7 million for the JDRF — in large part because attendees were inspired by Living and Giving Award honoree Chara Schreyer.

"I have been privileged to know and work with Chara for over two decades," says Nicole Friedland, executive director of foundation's Greater Bay Area Chapter. "I've seen her apply her vision and resources to make the Bay Area one of the premier locations for Type 1 diabetes treatment and research in the world."

Schreyer's daughter Justine brought her young sons, Jordan and Evan, to the event so that they could see for themselves the difference their grandmother has made in so many lives.

"It is only thanks to my mom's example — her commit-



Chara Schreyer (right) receives the JDRF's Living and Giving Award with her daughter Justine Schreyer Lewin and grandsons Jordan and Evan Podell during the Hope Gala held at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco on May 21.

ment, her generosity, her passion, that I am able to stand here and tell you that Type 1 diabetes hasn't been all bad and has actually helped me grow as a person," Justine said.

"Lucky for all of us, my mom has channeled her unconventional energy toward the service of others," Justine told the crowd.

Schreyer says she was touched by the award and thrilled by the money raised at this year's Hope Gala. She also admits that she's always been exceptionally energetic and organized. Her passions extend well beyond diabetes research. She is also a world-class contemporary art collector and is a board member at SFMOMA, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary

Art, and the Hammer Museum. She is currently finishing a book with San Francisco interior designer Gary Hutton that showcases her art collection and homes in Tiburon, Belvedere, San Francisco and Los Angeles. "Art House," published by Assouline, is slated for September release.

"I was an avid ice skater in my youth and if my dad would have let me, I would have joined the Ice Capades," Schreyer says. "I'm glad he didn't."

Contributor Heather Lobdell of Tiburon has worked as an editor and writer for several home and garden magazines.