

Nathen and Nuch Hughes witih their son, Alessio Phuakngam

History Corner: The Hughes Family
A Story of Community and Family Values

Written by Jorge Rubio

Last month in our Voice of the Past history corner, we looked back at Judge Sillman and his ties to Sun Street Centers dating back to the 1980s. This month, we're sharing a story that stretches just as far into our history, one rooted in family and values that don't fade with time.

When you talk with **Nathen Hughes**, it doesn't take long to understand that Sun Street Centers isn't just an organization he supports, it's part of his family story. Long before Nathen and his wife, **Nuch**, became familiar faces among our supporters, his mother, **Sue Hughes**, was already giving her time and heart to the agency. Sue served on the **Sun Street Centers Board of Directors** from 1977 to 1987 and held the role of board secretary from 1982 to 1986. The agency was still taking shape then, and she played an active role in helping it move forward.

Sue was a woman who led by example in every part of her life. She made history as the first woman to buy a Toyota franchise, breaking barriers in an industry where that simply wasn't common. Nathen grew up alongside that determination. In 1987, he began working with his mom, learning the business firsthand. He stepped away for a short time to pursue other opportunities, but by 1990 he was back, helping open a Hyundai franchise for her. Nathen worked with Sue right up until her passing in 2016.

Those years together went far beyond business. Nathen was always by his mother's side and naturally became familiar with the philanthropic work she cared so deeply about. Sue supported multiple local nonprofits and believed strongly in giving back to the community she called home.

Her involvement with Sun Street Centers came from a very personal place. Substance use was something she had seen up close while watching her own father struggle with alcoholism. As Nathen puts it simply,



“Our family was not different.”

Growing up, conversations around alcohol looked very different than they do today. Nathen remembers a time when heavy drinking was common and drunk driving wasn’t treated with the seriousness it is now.

“It was not considered a big deal, it seemed like everyone was doing it.”

Sue understood the harm behind those attitudes, and that understanding inspired her commitment to organizations like Sun Street Centers that offered real help. After Sue passed away in 2016, Nathen and Nuch continued the work she started. Supporting local causes wasn’t something they had to think twice about, it felt natural.

“It’s a community thing. My wife and I donate to local causes because this is our home.”

Their continued involvement with Sun Street Centers reflects that belief. While it began with his mother’s legacy, Nathen’s connection to Sun Street Centers goes even deeper

“It’s about helping our community, that’s the biggest thing, community.”

Over the years, he has watched the agency grow and evolve from what it was during his mom’s time on the board into what it is today.

“Its grown, it’s huge! I think people started seeing the need. It just took time.”

With that growth, he knows more lives are being touched and more individuals facing substance use disorder are finding support. When Nathen talks about community, it’s with genuine warmth.

“I think of the community as one big family.”

“It gives me a sense of belonging also and it’s a big deal helping other people.”

And at the core of it all is a simple truth: **“It’s obviously something that the community needs and it’s a needed resource. People need the help.”**

Nathen is honest about how much his mother shaped his path.

“I don’t know if I would be as big of a supporter as I am if it weren’t for my mother. She instilled that value in me.”

There’s little doubt that Sue Hughes would be proud to see how Sun Street Centers has grown and how her son and daughter-in-law continue to stand behind the mission she believed in.

As we reflect on the past through stories like this, we’re reminded that Sun Street Centers has always been built on relationships, families who cared, individuals who stepped forward, and supporters who saw a need and chose to help. Nathen and Nuch Hughes carry that spirit forward every day.

Their story is a powerful reminder that when values are passed down, their impact can last for generations, and our community is stronger because of it.