



# Stu News Laguna

Stu Saffer's Laguna Beach News and Community Forum



# Laguna!

LIFE & PEOPLE

## Donnie Crevier: Helping others overcome obstacles

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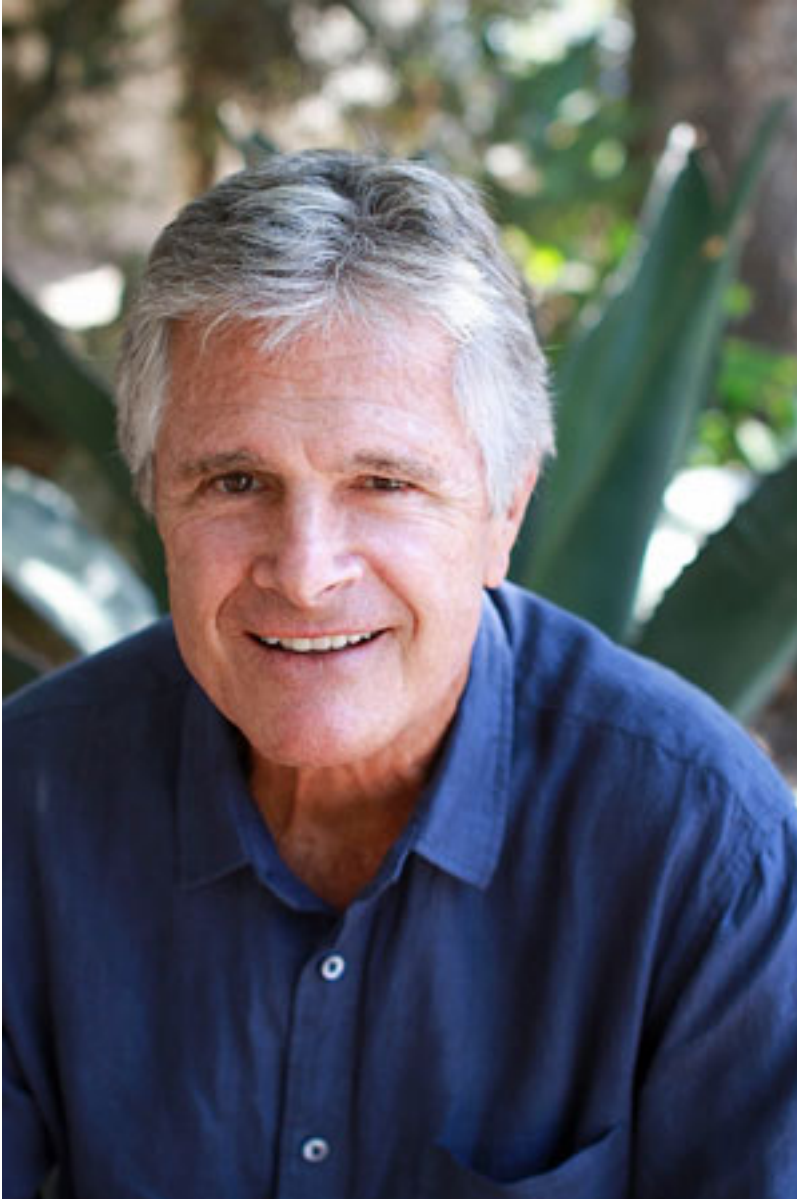
"I was a real stellar guy," says Donnie Crevier. Now, if you didn't know Donnie Crevier, you might think he was being immodest. After all, he is the recipient of countless philanthropic and business awards so if he wanted to describe himself as "stellar" few would argue. However, Crevier was being deeply sarcastic when he used that word to describe himself in his younger days as a teenager growing up in Laguna Beach. Donnie Crevier may be many things, but immodest is definitely not one of them.

### Growing up too fast

He came to Laguna from Glendale when he was five years old with his mother, "...a single, divorced woman with two kids and no skills." Why Laguna? "She was a romantic," Crevier explains. "I'm very appreciative for that." Crevier attended grammar school and middle school in Laguna, but then came the teenage years.

"By 14 I'm growing up too fast. I'm hanging out with older kids so...my parents thought it might be better if I moved back to Glendale with my dad for a little more structure. I lived with him for three years and then begged for forgiveness and was allowed to return (to Laguna)."

This was mid-way through his junior year at LBHS. By his senior year he was living on his own. "I needed an adult to be my guardian. I picked a guy I surfed with. He was about 22. I lived with him for awhile. I barely finished high school. In fact, I had to take a night class to graduate," he explains. There is no drama in his recounting of these years, but clearly they were not the easiest of times.



***Donnie Crevier***

### **Tired of being broke**

Crevier attended college for two and a half years. “I got tired of being broke and got a job in the car business,” he says. He had some experience. His father owned a used car lot in Glendale and Crevier worked there as a kid, washing cars and eventually doing some sales. He took a job selling cars at Theodore Robins Ford in Costa Mesa. He worked there for eight years.

“Then my dad started a BMW dealership in 1972 with my uncle,” says Crevier. His dad had really wanted a Volkswagen dealership, but couldn’t afford it. Back then, BMW was not widely known in the US so it was cheaper to get BMWs than VWs. Crevier joined his father and uncle two years later, in 1974.

### **Success beyond their imagination**

The dealership grew and grew. “It grew beyond anything we had imagined,”

says Crevier. “We had some father/son challenges along the way, but our relationship got tighter and tighter with time. We became mutually respectful of one another,” says Crevier. His father has since passed away, but it is obvious that father and son shared a deep bond.

“My dad was a golden rule philosophy kind of guy. He believed in doing what was right, not just what was legal. And he believed in people. It is the people in that company...there’s a uniqueness in our people. We were lucky, but we consciously tried to find that. It ain’t all GPA or IQ. It’s how you relate to people.

Do you care about people...?” The answer to that question, in regards to Crevier himself, is a resounding yes.



[Click on photo for a larger image](#)

***Crevier shows off a reprinted newspaper photo from 1955 as a member of the Boys Club of Laguna Beach (now the Boys and Girls Club of Laguna Beach)***

### **Time for cars, time for giving**

Crevier sold the company he built with his father in 2011. However, he is still in the car business. His company, called Crevier Classic Cars, LLC, deals in classic cars as well as sales and leasing for all makes and models, new or used. The space is frequently used for events, and he encourages people to come check it out. He’s there every day. And while the car business still occupies much of his time, his philanthropy is also a time consuming endeavor.

### **A laundry list of philanthropic awards**

His list of honors is ridiculously long, and includes the Orange County Human Relations Award, the Good Scout Award (Orange County Council of the Boy Scouts of America) and the 2012 Citizen of the Year Award from the City of Santa Ana, to name just a few. And he certainly didn't bring this list with him when we met, nor did he mention anything about awards or accolades. What he wanted to talk about was why the programs he supported were important to him. Two programs he is most dedicated to are The Boys and Girls Club of Laguna Beach and High School, Inc.

### **An alumni gives back**

The Boys and Girls Club of Laguna Beach holds a special place in Donnie Crevier's heart. "It was a big part of my life. Back then it was just The Boys Club. From the ages of 10 to 14 it was really important to me. I've always felt a sense of responsibility to that organization. Things would have been a lot more complicated for me had it not been in my life," explains Crevier. And to this day, he remains close to Pete Snetsinger, his coach at the Club. "He was a mentor to me. I'm having lunch with him next week, as a matter of fact." Crevier was presented with the President's Volunteer Service Award in 2009 for his work with the Club. He is currently still serving on the Board. "I'm not sure how things would have turned out for me without the Boys Club. I want to try and help kids have an alternative like that so that they can feel better about themselves which leads to better choices."



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***Donnie Crevier, Board Member, in front of the Boys and Girls Club***

### **Ambitious plans for High School, Inc.**

While Crevier will always be grateful for the Boys and Girls Club, he is deeply involved in a new endeavor that, while not as personal, definitely echoes the same theme: helping kids help themselves. High School, Inc. is a program that provides high school students with real work experience through six different academies: health care, culinary arts and hospitality, automotive logistics and transportation, new media, global business and engineering, manufacturing and construction. The program is currently at Valley High School in Santa Ana, but Crevier is looking to expand its reach.

“We just had some wonderful news. Our graduation rate for kids enrolled in the six academies on campus is 98.5%. The grad rate for the rest of the kids is somewhere around 85%. We have 1,000 kids enrolled now. We need all the kids there to enroll.

“We are teaching them career opportunities as well as increasing their interest in education as a whole. We want this to go all over Santa Ana and then the country,” explains Crevier. He is very enthusiastic about this program and what it can do. “It’s a partnership between the school district, the business community, and the school. This is occupying tons of my time.”

## **Committed to giving in Laguna Beach**

If High School Inc. is taking most of his time these days; Crevier still has time for more local giving beyond the Boys and Girls Club. He's on the Board of the Laguna Beach Community Foundation and is heavily involved with the Laguna Beach High School Scholarship Foundation.

"The reason for the Community Foundation's existence," explains Crevier, "is because Laguna is a unique community. Lots of residents support outside issues but are not aware of the needs in this community. We are trying to bring awareness to Laguna causes."

Adding to his seemingly endless list of awards, Crevier was presented with the Donor Honoree at this year's LBHS convocation ceremony. He started giving scholarships, now called the April and Daphne Crevier Memorial Scholarships in honor of his mother and sister. This year eight graduates were awarded these scholarships for doing "the right thing for the right reason." Additionally, Crevier has his own family foundation that he started seven years ago. "My kids and grand kids are all a part of it," he says with pride.

## **Really, truly a stellar guy**

Donnie Crevier uses words like "luck" to describe his success. He likes to give credit to others. And, if I think about it, he really didn't talk much about himself (except to talk about his wayward youth), preferring to discuss the charities he cares about. He is a man who overcame adversity and became successful beyond his own imagination.

He spends a lot of time and a lot of money helping others so that they, too, can overcome the obstacles life has placed in front of them. He would probably not like me to say so, but that, to me, is the epitome of a "stellar guy" (hold the sarcasm).