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Everyone Has A Story



Photo provided by Frank Tamru

Egg Harbor Township heart device entrepreneur Frank Tamru and his late wife, obstetrician/gynecologist Robin Carter, met online and were married for 11 years. She died in December, and Tamru is trying to fill the void he feels by volunteering for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Heart device maker cures broken heart as volunteer

By MICHELLE BRUNETTI POST
Staff Writer

Frank Tamru had already tried several careers before moving to Asia, co-founding a company to make heart devices, and starting Asia's first peer-reviewed scientific journal for heart surgeons.

The 70-year-old is now living in Egg Harbor Township, having returned in 2003 to marry Robin Carter, an obstetrician/gynecologist with the Somers Manor OB/GYN practice in Somers Point, who died in December.

They met through Match.com, he said, when he was living in Singapore and she was in South Jersey. He was planning a move back to the States after almost 25 years overseas. He had a family home in Brigantine and thought he'd look for someone within 50 miles of Philadelphia.

"It was a match made in heaven," he said. "We were totally different people individually but collectively, a synchronous, caring pair."

It was the second marriage for both. Tamru, who lives in Egg Harbor Township, has no children from his previous marriage, while Carter had three.

He retired three years ago, and his wife's death left a huge void in his life, Tamru said. He is raising funds for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Atlantic and Cape May Counties to help fill that void.

Tamru recently raised the most money for the organization at its Wild Walk for Kids at the Cape May County Zoo, largely from his

Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity brothers from Rutgers University, Class of 1966.

"What a wonderful thing, that type of brotherhood," Tamru said. Many of Tamru's fraternity brothers came to Carter's funeral and donated in her memory.

While living in New York City in the 1970s, he volunteered as a Big Brother, he said, mentoring a boy whose father wasn't consistently in the picture.

The local Big Brothers Big Sisters is a small operation with an office on Tilton Road, and it needs help raising the \$1,200 it costs to match an adult and child. It goes mostly toward the cost of background checks, he said.

Tamru started out as a salesman for Proctor & Gamble, then became a high school Spanish teacher. Each time, he asked himself, "Is this what I want to do with my life?" and the answer was no.

He moved to New York City and worked for a messenger service and as a taxi driver before finding the job that would become his career. He was hired as a heart valve salesman by industry leader Shiley Inc., even though others were probably more qualified. It was a serendipitous event about which he still feels grateful, he said.

The man who interviewed him was from Margate, and they happened to have a mutual friend who spoke highly of Tamru.

Tamru was eventually transferred to Australia and later co-founded a heart valve company, Pacific

Biomedical Enterprises, with the late Victor Chang and others.

Chang was a surgeon and the director of the National Cardiac Transplant Center at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

In 1993, Tamru started the medical journal "Asian Cardiovascular & Thoracic Annals," to give Asian surgeons the recognition they deserved, he said. Their work was often overlooked by western journals.

It took years for the journal to be accepted and indexed by American and European medical groups, and is the accomplishment of which he is most proud, he said.

Moving to Sydney, Australia, as a young man opened up a positive Pandora's box, he said.

"My first 18 months in Asia, I flew over Mt. Everest in a small plane, visited the bomb site at Hiroshima, swam at the Great Barrier reef, and walked the Great Wall of China," Tamru said.

The man who had tried many jobs looking for the right fit had found his life's work.

"The key is persistence, luck and loyalty," he said. "That's what has gotten me through."

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Bea Jerkins
CEO of Atlantic & Cape May Counties
Big Brothers Big Sisters



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