

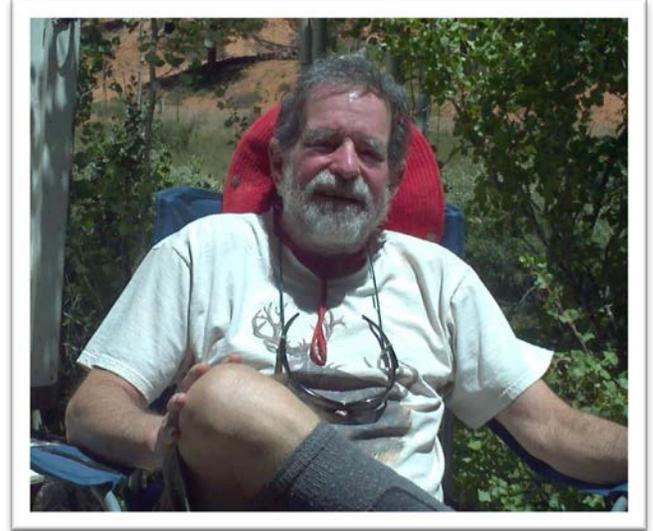
## Boots in the Forest

# VOLUNTEER

Hi, I'm Shawn Heneghan. I lead nature walks on the Cedar City Ranger District, which is part of the Dixie National Forest in southwest Utah.

### How did you become interested in leading nature walks?

I always enjoyed going on nature walks as a kid. Even as an adult, I found them to be entertaining and educational. So, when I thought that I had learned a sufficient amount about "Cedar Mountain," I decided it was time to give back. The Dixie National Forest seemed more than eager to have me. I've been leading walks now for about eight summers. They have become an important part of my weekly routine.



### How did you gain your experience to conduct walks?

Every Sunday, my wife Kathy and I would hike the Alpine Pond Loop at Cedar Breaks. It is a great wildflower walk. I purchased a couple of wildflower identification books, most notably *Wildflowers of Southwestern Utah* by Hayle Buchanan (it is out of print). I took pains to pay attention to details: leaf structure, habitat, and, of course, the flower head. It was only after ten years of self-study that I felt confident enough to offer my services.

### How long have you lived in the area?

Kathy and I took a summer off 20 years ago to travel through southern Utah. We rafted the Grand Canyon, canoed the Colorado River, mountain biked, rode horses, backpacked, and hiked everywhere. We fell in love with southern Utah. We bought our home on Cedar Mountain the first day we saw it. That was 20 years ago and I have been here every summer since. Over that time, we have hiked or biked nearly every road or trail on the Cedar Mountain.

### What did you do before you retired?

One of my favorite lines is "I am a retired rocket scientist." It's the truth. I worked for the University of Dayton and did contract research for the US Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base. I was the lead scientist involved in new fuels development and modern combustor design.



*Shawn's boots "on a nature walk."*

## What do you enjoy when you give nature walks?

One thing I like about leading the walks is that occasionally someone corrects me or adds something that I didn't know. My favorite was the young lady who pointed out to me that ponderosa pines have a beautiful smell of butterscotch or vanilla. I was sure it was a joke, but went ahead and gave the tree a sniff. Sure enough, she was not kidding.

I particularly enjoy having foreign visitors on my walks. No matter where or when I meet foreigners in my travels, I go out of my way to make them feel welcome. My favorites were the two Italian nuns. They didn't speak English well and I don't speak Italian at all, but we had a great walk!

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*"I decided it was time to give back"*

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