



Students HELPING Students

Barrington Children's Charities' "Blessings in a Backpack" program serves students in need within Barrington 220 schools



Tom and Darby Hills join a student who helps pack food for other students.

INCORPORATED IN 2008, Blessings in a Backpack is a not-for-profit organization that feeds more than 87,000 elementary school children in over 1,000 schools in 46 states with a goal of providing weekend nutrition to food insecure children who might otherwise go hungry. Here in Barrington 220, students on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program qualify for Barrington Children's Charities' "Blessings in a Backpack" program. The program addresses the issue that many Barrington 220 children who are on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program go home for the weekend with no certainty that they will have enough food to eat.

Barrington Children's Charities' "Blessings in a Backpack" program began in the 2011 school year first benefiting students at Sunny Hill Elementary School. Thanks to the charity's generous donors and sponsors who participate in their semi-annual fundraisers—Derby Party and Holly Ball—the program was expanded to include all eight Barrington 220 elementary schools and both middle schools. In 2018, Barrington 220's Early Learning Center was added to the program.

"The Blessings in a Backpack program provides supplemental nutrition for our neediest students over the weekend," says Barbara Romano, the Principal and an Early Childhood Educator at the Early Learning Center. "Thanks to our Prairie Middle School students for packing the individual bags with cereal, fruit, and other snacks. Without this nutrition support, our neediest children at the Early Learning Center would be hungry."

Opening Page: Tom and Darby Hills join Early Learning Center students at Prairie Middle School where they pack food for Barrington Children's Charities' "Blessings in a Backpack" program.



Prairie Middle School staff, Barrington Children's Charities' members, and program volunteers support Blessings in a Backpack. From left: Peggie Aliperta, Tami Kopp, Lauren Klauer, Claudia Gerard, Molly Canace, AJ Ostrowski, Anne Marie D'Agostino, Aimee Wright, and Patty Parrish.



Prairie Middle School teacher Aimee Wright helps a student pack food.

Since the local Blessings program's inception, volunteers have packed over 90,000 bags to feed Barrington 220 students in need, and this year the packing will surpass 100,000 bags. The program currently feeds over 700 students each week for 33 weeks during the school year.

The project of receiving pallets of food items and organizing them for packing takes place weekly at Sunny Hill Elementary School on Thursday mornings. Packing is staffed by PTO and community volunteers. Recently, with the addition of students who qualify for backpacks at the Early Learning Center, students from the Full Instructional and Autism Program at Prairie Middle School assist with packing 125 bags per week for ELC students. There, they help pack a variety of packaged and fresh foods into bags.

Recently, Barrington Children's Charities co-founders, Darby and Tom Hills, joined students at Prairie Middle School for the ELC packing day. "Tom and I are incredibly moved by our experience with our first packing of the backpacks with our buddy Jack, and all the kids in the Full Instructional and Autism Program at Prairie Middle School," Darby Hills said. "Seeing these 'kids helping kids' and seeing smiles on their faces is why we do what we do. We look forward to incorporating this wonderful program at Station's Instructional and Autism Program, as well."

Barrington Children's Charities partnership with the Blessings in a Backpack organization has gone from one school to all Barrington 220 elementary and middle schools, for children in need. And now, students can find meaning by participating with the packing process, gaining skills, and helping their fellow students. "I am so grateful to have the opportunity to co-chair our local Blessings in a Backpack program. Childhood hunger is a real issue for many of the children in our district and I want to do whatever I can to have a positive and meaningful impact on the well-being of these children," says Susan Hyde, program co-coordinator.

To learn more about Barrington Children's Charities, visit www.BarringtonChildrensCharities.com. 

"Prairie Middle School students pack at their school, and then deliver the bags to the Early Learning Center. Our weekly packing for Blessings in a Backpack allows for our students to increase their independence in an environment where they may otherwise require adult support. Our students are able to interact in a positive environment with peers and staff while taking ownership over the task at hand. Most often, our students are supported throughout their school day, but this opportunity allows for them to give back to their school community on their own. The packing experience continues to be a positive one where we have seen growth in communication, team work, independence, and self-confidence."

-Peggie Aliperta and Molly Canace, Foundation Teachers at Prairie Middle School



Holly Ball 2018 Co-Chairs Keri Culhane (on left) and Alyssa Pazdan.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA BARRETT

Join Us at Holly Ball 2018!

The 8th Annual Holly Ball benefiting Barrington Children's Charities invites you to its gala to kick off the holiday season in a glowing winter wonderland. This black-tie event on December 8 will be an elegant evening with cocktails, seated dinner by candlelight, and dancing to the band McKillin' It. The evening will be a festive fundraiser showcasing luxurious jeweled treasures donated by Long & Co. Jewelers. Last year's live auction experience of the first-class Kentucky Derby party for four to watch the Derby live in Louisville will make an encore! There will be more live auction items that surely will make the top of anyone's gift list. Most importantly, guests will have the opportunity to learn more about BCC and how they can become part of this charity.

"Holly Ball is a festive event which gathers the community together to celebrate a charity which supports programs that directly impact and benefit children right here in Barrington," says Holly Ball Co-Chair Keri Culhane. "I've always been drawn to this event because I believe that championing such causes is really what the holiday season should be about. Raising monies to support and address the social, emotional, physical and educational needs of the children within District 220 is our priority, all while sharing in the joy and gift of giving."

"There has always been something special about Barrington which is its strong sense of community," Holly Ball Co-Chair Alyssa Pazdan said. "Barrington Children's Charities is the epitome of caring for our neighbors and most importantly the children. I wanted to become a part of this charity that not only serves the well-being of children, but also provides the opportunity for us to give back. My hope is that Holly Ball will showcase and inspire the guests to become part of this mission and support Barrington Children's Charities."

Event Details: Holly Ball will be held on Saturday, Dec. 8 at 6 p.m. The event will be at the Barrington Hills Country Club, 300 W. County Line Road, Barrington Hills. Tickets are on sale now for \$250 per person. Buy your tickets online at www.barringtonchildrenscharities.com.