

Anthony Rizzo, Rick Heidner, and Ian Happ



Anthony Rizzo's Triple Play

A local fundraiser benefitting the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation contributes to the nonprofit's current goal of bringing in three times the proceeds of years past

BY LISA STAMOS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

ON JUNE 9, 2018, BARRINGTON RESIDENTS Alisa and Rick Heidner and their family hosted an extraordinary event in support of the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation. The foundation, with its mission to bring relief and support to families who have a loved one battling cancer, was created four years after Chicago Cubs First Baseman Anthony Rizzo completed six months of cancer treatment in 2008. While starting his career as a professional baseball player in Greenville, South Carolina in Single A ball, he was abruptly stopped short with the shocking news that he had Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

Seventy percent of families who have a child battling cancer run the risk of financial bankruptcy, reports Abby Suarez, executive director of the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation. During Rizzo's treatment, his mom, Laurie, left her job. At the same time, Rizzo's grandmother was fighting breast cancer. "No family can plan for a medical experience such as cancer," Suarez said. Knowing the weight that an entire family bears, Rizzo created the foundation to help others whose cancer experience is reminiscent of his family's.


Anthony Rizzo's family, close friends, and management team members run the nonprofit foundation, with Rizzo providing oversight. On a nearly nonstop basis, Rizzo writes personal letters, autographs memorabilia, visits hospitals, and attends fundraisers. Laurie Rizzo, his mom, is on the board, and maintains daily activities such as reviewing emails, making hospital visits, reaching out to sponsors, and talking with families. Rizzo's brother, Johnny, handles phone calls, accounting matters, emails, and runs the annual "Walk-Off for Cancer" in their hometown of Parkland, Florida. John, their father, also helps run the foundation and attended the Barrington event this year.

A GOAL TO TRIPLE THE FUNDING

In the first years of the foundation, proceeds were at the one million-dollar level with some increases in the past two years. For 2018, however, there is an exciting new goal to reach the three million-dollar mark to help more families. Last year, a check for 3.5 million dollars was provided by the foundation to the Lurie Children's Hospital for the Hope 44 Endowed Fund, which will provide grants for families facing financial hardship resulting from a child's treatment for cancer. The second endowment, the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation Child Life Endowed Fund, will provide ongoing support for two oncology Child Life Specialists to help families cope with the illness of their child.

The foundation is on a growth curve, and the Barrington community is helping. "The Heidners have been with us since the beginning of the foundation," Suarez said. "Their above-and-beyond support, and kindness, have been incredible to watch."

The recent fundraiser in Barrington was a unique opportunity for people to meet Rizzo and Ian Happ, Chicago Cubs center fielder, and have a shot at trying on a Cubs championship ring, visit the golf tent and photo booth, and take selfies and group photos with the baseball stars. After cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, a buffet dinner catered by Moretti's restaurant featured steak, crab legs, chicken, pastas, vegetables, salads, and more. After dinner, host Rick Heidner gathered everyone together for a live auction of signed sports memorabilia and other items. The event raised \$325,000 for the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation.

"We are so grateful for all of our friends, neighbors, and business associates," Heidner said of his guests and sponsors. "We are heart-warmed by everyone's generosity—thank you!" 

To learn more about the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation, or to offer a donation, visit www.rizzo44.com.



Zachary Heidner with the family's German Shepherds.

Andy and Robin Kelleher join Anthony Rizzo and Ian Happ at the party.





Chase Heidner and Ian Happ.

Anthony Rizzo offers one of his rings to Rick Heidner.







Many prominent Barrington residents joined this year's event for the first time to support the Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation.