



*Barrington Giving Day
Executive Director Dori Hough*



The Barrington Giving Day Board members are (from left) Brian Dockery (President), Lauren Hills (Secretary), Dori Hough (Exec. Dir.), Juliana Parry (Vice President), and JP Hills (Treasurer).

Giving Thanks for BARRINGTON GIVING DAY

The greater Barrington area community pulls together to help families in need during the holidays and beyond

by **LISA STAMOS** • Photography By **LINDA M. BARRETT**

A TWENTY PERCENT SOLUTION

Barrington 220 serves about 8,000 students in a 72-square mile area which includes 12 towns and four counties. And while a large portion of our residents overall resource category ranges from affluent to well above the poverty line, there are 1,652 children attending Barrington schools who meet government guidelines to qualify for help at school. This number is up 3.15% from last year.

It may be hard for some to believe that 20.65% of the students attending Barrington 220 schools qualify for the free and/or reduced lunch program. In Federal terms, a family of four whose household income is \$39,000 or less enables their children to receive free lunch at school. For the same sized family with an income of \$55,500, lunch at a reduced cost is available.

“Many people in our area think that ‘if I’m okay, everyone else must be okay,’” says Dori

Hough, the executive director of Barrington Giving Day. But as the numbers show, one-in-five students in our school district live with a family whose circumstances are highly challenged by a variety of issues. “The pandemic affected our district’s low-income residents disproportionately with deaths in the family and illness, as well as job losses,” Hough said.

HOW CAN I SERVE?

Dori Hough follows the lead of Pat Karon as the head of Barrington Giving Day (BGD) since her full-time commitment began in 2017. “It is amazing what Pat built, the foundation she created is solid today. We’ve recently implemented more structure to help with our internal leadership and growth,” Hough said.

Hough grew up in Inverness and moved to Barrington in 1998. She raised three children here. Along the way, she saw a call-to-action in

a school newsletter for volunteers for BGD and she brought her children along. They saw the significance of the Winter Event being organized at Station Middle School—that evolved through a 90-year history of initially the Salvation Army, then the Church Women’s United to the nonprofit operation it is today.


Hough found her mission early on while working for motivational speaker and author Anthony Robbins. She ran the Basket Brigade program through the Anthony Robbins Foundation in San Diego, feeding those in need. She also traveled the world as part of his team. “I liked his question —What is your purpose in life,” Hough said. Through that experience and training, she realized that her mission is to serve others in everything she does.

A BEACON OF HOPE

BGD has grown not only in size and scope, but also in its approach. The cornerstone Winter Event is followed by the Spring, Back-to-School, and Prom events that help students so much, that some return to volunteer once they have made their way to adulthood.

“In years past, families would come to Station Middle School at dawn and wait outside in the cold to receive much-needed items for their children. Some would even line up the night before,” Hough said. “COVID helped us to rethink this process. Today, we refer to our families as guests, who come to shop with us, and we have an online advance registration system so no one must wait outside in the cold.”

Perhaps the donors, sponsors, and army of 500 volunteers who produce BGD each holiday season are on to something—that not only does BGD help families in need to have food at the holidays, warm clothing and boots for their kids, and games and toys for parents to wrap—this community outpouring lifts us all.

Research in an article in The New York Times (Vast New Study Shows a Key to Reducing Poverty: More Friendships Between Rich and Poor; 08-01-22) points out that economic connectedness matters. The research says that children who grow up in a community connected across economic lines helps to improve kids’ outcomes and gives some a better shot at rising out of poverty. And that could be the gift of a lifetime for some of our Barrington 220 students. 



Volunteers gather in the coat room.

Barrington Giving Day event photos courtesy of **BOB LEE**

KARINA AGUILAR

Parent/Recipient

BGD has affected my life in a positive way. The help we receive to cover our basic needs is very useful. BGD positively impacts my daughter's life. She loves attending BGD events, she knows she will receive a toy or new, warm clothes. If we didn't have the help we receive every year from BGD, we would have to decide between buying food or winter clothes. I would say that if you can donate, please do so. There are many families who really need your help. We really value your generosity.

RICK HEIDNER

The Arboretum of South Barrington

My family and The Arboretum of South Barrington are honored to support an organization with such impact on our great community as Barrington Giving Day has for 90 years. We are delighted to provide space at The Arboretum for both a donation drop-off and pop-up prom shop, which supports so many local children.

MARCELLA WATKINS

Parent/Recipient

BGD has provided much-needed support to my family. My kids and I have been through a lot and moving to Illinois was yet another change and another challenge. BGD has given us not only material things, but also a beautiful experience of God's love. Everyone involved in BGD has been kind, caring, loving, respectful, friendly, and helpful. I am beyond grateful for all the blessings we have received. I believe other families have been impacted by BGD, just like mine. We have found much-needed resources, and a caring and loving attitude by everyone in BGD. I am a single parent, and without BGD, I would have to add more work hours to my already busy schedule (I have three jobs) to make ends meet to acquire the items that they have provided for us. They truly go out of their way to make sure we get necessary items but also fun little things for everyone in the family, which is very generous.

STEVE HOLLIS

Barrington Rotary

What always leaves an impression on me, every year even from the very first time experiencing this event when it was just once-a-year (close to the holidays), is the outgoing dignified manner of the shoppers—their big smiles, happy demeanor, and their well wishes to us for a blessed holiday season.

BARRINGTON GIVING DAY

ASHLEY SCHEETZ

2023 Giving Day Co-Chair

Barrington Junior Women's Club

I'm always so impressed by the size of the event and the impact it makes. BJWC partners with BGD by hosting the toy department and it's fulfilling to be able to see our hard work and donations go directly to families in the community. There is something uplifting and empowering about watching families pick toys that their children would specifically enjoy. We strive to have something for everyone and look forward to partnering again at this year's event.

DR. CRAIG WINKELMAN

Barrington 220

Superintendent of Schools

During the past 27 years working as an educator and administrator in District 220, I have seen firsthand the support that the Barrington Giving Day program provides for our families in need of assistance. It is wonderful to see our community come together to provide assistance that started out as clothing, groceries, and essentials evolve over the years into other areas such as age-appropriate gifts and books for our students. The generosity of our amazing community makes Barrington a truly special place.

JACQUI PIERONI

President, Barrington Junior Women's Club

Each year, Barrington Junior Women's Club helps coordinate the toy and gift donations for Barrington Giving Day's Winter Event, as well as provide a grant to help support their Back-to-School event. Last year, BJWC donated and organized over 3,000 toys. Led by our dedicated Co-Chairs, Megan Zarling and Ashley Scheetz, the club is working hard to carry on the tradition. Personally, I have volunteered at Giving Day for the past three years and have found it to be a touching experience. I especially love meeting with the families and helping them shop for their loved ones.



The entire gym is filled with toys and games.



Dori Hough at one of many drop sites for Barrington Giving Day.

MICHELLE GARCIA
BHS Family School Liaison
Coordinadora Familiar

Barrington Giving Day has been much more than just an event for our District 220 families. It is a moment of hope and gratitude. When I was a student in Barrington, my family and I would look forward to the Winter Event every year because the emotions that we would feel afterwards were always the highlight of the day. As a low-income family, the holidays always came with mixed feelings. It is a time to be grateful for what we have, but it also is a reminder of what we did not. BGD allowed our families an opportunity to be able to wrap an extra present under the Christmas tree and make an extra batch of everyone's favorite dish. Now as an employee of Barrington 220, I am given the opportunity to support my community and continue the traditions that BGD has established. What makes BGD so special to me is that I understand the situations and the feelings that the families are going through. I am grateful for the opportunities that were given to my family because it has allowed me to help others just the way that I was.

JULIANA PARRY
Barrington Giving Day
Board Member

I've seen how much our work means to the families we serve. They have the courage to attend our events even though some of the parents are uncomfortable or embarrassed to need the help. They put their own feelings aside to select items for their children. The giving events are designed to allow parents to "shop" rather than accept a handout. When they can choose the items and their children can try on coats or boots, it allows them to retain some pride and dignity.

Then there are times when I don't have enough shoes or boots in a particular size, and I have to tell a parent how sorry I am that I don't have what they need for their child. They insist that they are okay, that they are grateful for all the other things that they have received. I'm truly humbled by their gratitude. I feel that I can't complain about anything in my own life. The experience of working with our Barrington Giving Day families has grounded me.



Volunteers organize items that are stored until the winter event. This year, The Arboretum of South Barrington team has generously offered to be a storage site.

BARRINGTON GIVING DAY

BRIAN DOCKERY

*Barrington Giving Day
Board Member*

I had exposure to Giving Day through my father Bruce, who lived his entire life in Barrington, and helped several years by parking an empty 48-foot trailer behind St. Paul's Church for us to lay out several hundred empty boxes, which we then filled with whatever donated food we had received. I recall going down the rows with a can per box, filling boxes until we ran out in the dimly lit cold trailer the night before the food was distributed. My father and the other early volunteers of our organization always felt that we should give back to the less fortunate members of our community during the holiday season.

We later utilized space in churches to collect and sort items before the event. I was told that Ed Burkness, who ran the local Buick dealer in the 1950s and 1960s, was one of our earliest supporters. Later leaders were Jeanette Muench and Pat Karon. We had the support of many individuals and businesses, as we do today, and liability coverage under the Salvation Army for our limited work. When I was asked to do more and help the leadership plan for the event, it was an easy decision to step up and give my time and thoughts in addition to lending a hand or driving a car or truck with donated goods.

Giving Day is open to the public, but we rely on the District 220 staff to invite guests who are on the free and reduced meal programs. We do get walk-in guests, but they are served only after our invited guests have gone through. We are very grateful for the support of District 220 and the staff at Station Middle and Sunny Hill Elementary Schools who allow us to use their facilities for our events. The Arboretum has also graciously donated space for us to hold a spring prom collection event, as well as to collect and sort items for future events.

Most years I have taken the role of helping with parking at our December event. I bundle up and greet guests as they arrive, noting where they can park. I get the most comments from guests as they leave. I get a lot of goodbye waves, "Thank yous" and "Merry Christmas," to which I reply, thank you for coming!

I think that over the years the changes we've made have greatly improved the experience of Giving Day for our guests. We've eliminated the need for families to wait overnight in their cars in the cold by implementing a lottery system and adding things like a daycare option when mothers need to bring their young children to the event. We've tried to make their experience at our event as easy and positive as we can.



Volunteers from a past BGD are (from left) Lisa Lewis, Dori Hough, Simone Zorzy, and Annmarie Dymon.

CHUCK THYFAULT

*Barrington Lions Club
First Vice President*

The Barrington Lions Club has been a proud supporter of Barrington Giving Day for many years. We have seen it grow from a simple grassroots act of kindness to an extensive, well-thought-out, efficiently run organization that continues to expand their outreach and refine their methods of serving the Barrington area community. We will continue to support their amazing efforts now, and for as long as they wish to serve those in need within our community.

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- ASHLEY SCHEETZ, BJWC BGD CO-CHAIR 2023
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