

Working *Together* for a Healthier Barrington

BARRINGTON IS BLESSED with a lot of individuals and organizations that strive to meet our community's needs. Twenty of these organizations came together in 1995 to form the Healthier Barrington Coalition. The guiding principle is simple — as servants of our community, we are not one without the other. We can do a better job of improving our community and maintaining a great quality of life when we combine resources, share information and work together.

The coalition includes an impressive lineup of organizations, including Barrington Area United Way (BAUW), the Village of Barrington, the Barrington Area Council on Aging (BACOA), the Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Village of Barrington police and fire departments, to name a few. As one of the coalition's founding organizations, I am intimately familiar with the health care needs of the residents we are so privileged to serve. I also know that maintaining good health involves more than just medical care. That's why the coalition aims to tackle a broad spectrum of factors that contribute to our community's well-being, such as education, financial stability, safety and recreation.

One of the coalition's initial priorities involved bridging communication among member organizations. Several coalition leaders assembled a tool kit that included press release templates to alert the media of upcoming events along with a community calendar of youth and family activities. This has helped organizations throughout Barrington collaborate and learn more from each other to better serve our residents.

While we give the term 'healthy community' a broad definition, we look to you to define how we'll achieve it. Since the coalition's inception, Good Shepherd Hospital and the BAUW have co-sponsored a detailed community survey every three years. The purpose of the survey, conducted by a professional research organization, is to identify the community's most pressing needs and provide information to community organizations that helps them respond.

Past results have led the coalition to push initiatives that continue to have an impact. In 2008, the coalition partnered with the Barrington 220 School District to develop and distribute a Teen/Parent resource list. The survey indicated a lack of awareness of many of the available social services in Barrington. The resource list was developed and placed into the student guides so parents and students could find available social services in the Barrington area. Following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, the survey results showed an overwhelming community desire for more disaster preparedness resources. The coalition responded with robust emergency trainings throughout Barrington. Families learned how to assemble safety kits, create evacuation plans and find resources that can help in case of a natural disaster.

Today, we continue to draw input from the communities we serve to better improve our quality of life. The most recent survey, conducted in Spring 2011, was sent to 4,000 randomly selected Barrington area households. As you'll see from the *QB* feature articles, the coalition is already using what we



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learned. We at Good Shepherd are reviewing survey results and identifying areas where we can help. Coalition members will do the same. As we present the findings throughout the community, our hope is that individuals and organizations will find the information useful in addressing community issues and keeping Barrington a good place to live, work and play.

The coalition's work is more than just community service. For many of us, it's personal. Barrington has been my home for more than a decade. My parents, and sister and her family reside here as well. My husband and I chose to raise our three children in Barrington because we sensed the community's commitment to being just that — a community. It is great to know that the coalition is dedicated to ensuring Barrington continues to flourish for the next generation and beyond. 