



Smart Farm



SOUL Harbour Ranch



Citizens for Conservation



BStrong Together



Little City



Barrington Children's Charities

BARRINGTON AREA VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

Introducing the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection, a match-making system where you can find your passion and make a difference in the lives of others, as well as your own, with a nearly limitless source of local volunteer opportunities.

*BY LISA STAMOS
WITH SHEFALI BHUVA AND BOB LEE*



Volunteers work on a project at Little City in Palatine.

BE THE CHANGE

THE BARRINGTON AREA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (BADC) is a non-profit civic organization that has helped identify needs and assisted in the formation of numerous community initiatives since 1966. BADC Director Bob Lee had been nurturing an idea about making it easier and more efficient to help citizens in the greater Barrington area connect with the numerous nonprofits and service organizations available.

“Seventeen percent of people who meet online end up getting married,” Bob Lee said. “The personal connections are made quicker, and last longer,” he said about the function of online dating sites for making connections. “If we take the format of how people meet people today, online, can we relate that to connecting potential volunteers and nonprofits together?” Lee believes it will work and gathered support to make the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection (BAVC) a reality. A vibrant committee has been working all year with success on its launch.

THE YEAR THAT CHANGED US

The year 2020 was about flattening the curve, but the result of heavy restrictions in gatherings of any kind also flattened the social fabric and activity of our community, especially for the nonprofits. Gala fundraisers, committee meetings, and service hours

The Barrington Area Volunteer Connection Committee Thanks These Initial Community Collaborators

Village of Barrington
 Barrington Area Development Council
 Barrington Area Community Foundation
 Barrington Area Library
 Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce
 Barrington Area Council on Governments (BACOG)
 Quintessential Barrington Magazine
 365Barrington

were canceled or leveled. Innovative and creative workarounds popped up to meet and keep the vital services of nonprofits happening. Giving volunteers and nonprofits access to the BAVC platform, which is hosted and maintained by the Barrington Area Library, could not have arrived at a better time to help rebuild and facilitate volunteer connections that are vital to everyone's quality of life.


BAVC is built on an existing software program to foster connections. But is not just a searchable database of organizations that volunteers can use to pinpoint their interests and personal passions. The program—for which more than 70 vital local charities have already signed up for and been trained on—offers much more. For some charities, BAVC offers a “back office” functionality for easy record-keeping of volunteer hours accrued. In addition to the outreach functions available, the BAVC program can aid groups in seeking new board members, reach a much wider audience, offer shift reminders and other touchpoint communications, and bring visibility to nonprofits. Cross-pollination of leadership methods and knowledge will be a bonus.

The BAVC committee has worked diligently since January 2020 to develop the idea and test the waters with local nonprofits to gauge their member's interest. The response has been universally positive, and the database is filling with a remarkable variety of service opportunities for the public and high school students (13 and up) who benefit from gaining service hour credits. A mobile app is available to make connecting easier.

Local Ambassadors have been fostering the adoption of BAVC with volunteers and members of the Barrington area nonprofit community. Ambassadors will use tools such as social media and the BAVC website to encourage volunteers to connect. They will also assist with training for the nonprofits to help them learn the software and its functionality.

Perhaps the best benefit in this ambitious initiative is the improved health that volunteers receive when they engage, connect, and find something that works for them. Bob Lee is as passionate about this known aspect of volunteering as he is about launching BAVC. “Studies show that people feel and function better physically and mentally, and even lengthen their lifespan, when they find something special to do that they are passionate about,” he said.

BAVC offers a model that creates value for the volunteers, charitable and service groups, and the recipients of those heartfelt services—whether it be an elderly person, a family in need, creating opportunities for children, protecting animal welfare, providing youth education, special needs support, or environmental best practices for Mother Nature. Here, everybody wins.

You are encouraged to participate as a volunteer in the community by going to thebavc.org to register as a volunteer. See what inspires you to get involved! 

To learn more about BAVC, visit thebavc.org or email admin@thebavc.org.



Volunteers at SOUL Harbour Ranch help keep the therapy animal barn stocked with supplies.

Barrington Area Volunteer Connection Committee

The following community volunteers are the founding members whose vision, leadership, commitment, and support have made BAVC possible.

Bob Lee, Barrington Area Development Council
 Sam Adams-Lanham, Barrington Area Library
 Diane Kerekes
 Patty Dowd Schmitz
 Frank McGovern
 Kate Himes
 Cyndi Zurawski
 Shefali Bhuvu
 Sam Oliver, Barrington Area Development Council
 Mike Campagna, Barrington Area Library
 Corinne Groble, Barrington Area Library
 Thelma Condon
 Annmarie Crowley
 Diane Decraene
 Suzy Mogler

Several Barrington area nonprofits were asked about their volunteer needs and the importance of the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection.



PHOTO: PATTY BARTEN

A restoration work group.



A SOUL Harbour Ranch volunteer greets children.



A Little City project is run by volunteers.

CITIZENS FOR CONSERVATION

BAVC allows us to post multiple needs directly to those who are looking for volunteer opportunities. This broad access has already increased the number of volunteers who have reached out to CFC to become involved. This access is an improvement over seeking volunteers with specific skills and interests by word-of-mouth. With BAVC's system we can post CFC's needs and find a new, or current, volunteer who responds saying they want to fulfill the need. Also, the ability for volunteers to track and see their hours is a great feature of BAVC. We need 300 volunteer hours per week. Some of those positions include youth education assistant, project management assistants, social media and communications team member, general office support, and restoration participant.

Volunteers mean the world to CFC. We are fortunate to live in a community with a strong spirit of giving and personal involvement. That investment, by so many, has helped make our community special and continues to create a better future for all of us. In 2021, CFC will celebrate its 50th anniversary of being a volunteer-based organization. We thank everyone for each way they volunteer. Together we do more.

SOUL HARBOUR RANCH

We see BAVC assisting with recruitment and management of volunteers whether new or already established in a secure and economical way. For the established volunteers with SOUL Harbour Ranch, BAVC will replace a shared calendar that has required heavier resources than we like. Setting up opportunities will be easier, and the software provides reminders for opportunities signed up for, as well as reminders to log time. Our volunteers will also be able to view hours they have logged eliminating the need to reach out and have them provided. The tool will also provide reporting within as well as ability to export data entered. Currently, we are seeking Registered Handlers and Ranch Hands. We also need help with our barns, training, Pet Partners Testing, and much more. Our total volunteer service hours last year topped 2,400.

LITTLE CITY

We serve more than 1,300 people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. In a traditional, non-COVID impacted year, Little City welcomes more than 1,000 volunteers who combine for more than 1,500 hours of valuable service. The group and corporate volunteer program is the most common and includes activities such as beautifying and maintaining the campus, homes and facilities, assisting at events, and interacting and engaging with Little City residents and participants. Volunteer opportunities include administrative assistance, professional support such as IT or marketing and communication projects, coaching and teaching roles in programs like Special Olympics, art and cooking classes and so much more. BAVC presents an exciting opportunity for Little City to engage with more passionate people and community businesses, college students, and groups in a meaningful and productive way.



Smart Farm volunteers choose from a variety of activities.



Volunteers pack food bags for Barrington 220 students in need.



A Community Meal volunteer at work.



Youth volunteers support BStrong Together.

SMART FARM

At Smart Farm, we have a small staff and our volunteers are an integral part of the farm. When we are accepting volunteers (depending on the time of the year) our volunteer activities include seeding, potting, planting, trellising, pruning, weeding, watering, harvesting (tasting) and donating the food that we grow. BAVC will allow our local volunteers to track and verify their hours. This will save time and give us another way to stay connected with our volunteers. We are so lucky to live in such a supportive area. This tool is a terrific way to create awareness of all the wonderful organizations in our town. It also gives our community an easy way to get involved.

BARRINGTON CHILDREN'S CHARITIES

Barrington Children's Charities could use weekly volunteers to help pack at Sunny Hill Elementary School every Thursday at 9 a.m. Volunteers help pack 800 bags of food to go home with the children enrolled in the Federal Reduced Lunch Program. The packing takes an hour. We are excited to work with the BAVC! One-hundred percent of all donations go to helping local children. BCC has no paid employees and is run entirely by volunteers. During COVID, we are looking for monthly volunteers (we pack once a month to keep our volunteers safe). There are three time slots to sign up for: set-up, morning shift and afternoon shift. We typically pack the first Tuesday of the month at Moretti's Unique Events space in Hoffman Estates. We socially distance and volunteers wear masks. We take temperatures when volunteers arrive, and we limit time slots to 25 volunteers. We open windows and doors, so we ask that volunteers dress warmly. Monthly, we are packing 2,600 bags of food and those bags are delivered to the families in need via D220 buses on a weekly basis.

THE COMMUNITY MEAL

The Community Meal is in need of multiple shifts for each meal. They include: set-up, kitchen prep, plating food, runners, clean up, a photographer, and bakers. We can only accommodate 10 volunteers indoors at this time. The Barrington community has always been a town that values volunteering. We have worked with BHS students, community members, local businesses, and nonprofits over these past 11 years and we are excited to partner with BAVC. The BAVC will allow us to reach more Barrington area volunteers interested in serving their community and other Northwest Suburbs. Our goal is to build a larger core team to expand the meals in the future. We average two meals per month. Volunteers can work one hour to four hours at a meal doing various tasks. When we get back into full swing, we will need 20 volunteers per meal plus two core team members at each meal—about 500 volunteers per year to fully function.

BSTRONG TOGETHER

Volunteers are critical to the success of BStrong Together. Our mission is to enhance the health and well-being of Barrington area children and youth in mind, body, and spirit. We are excited to take part in the BAVC to engage others, adults and students alike, to share in our work to support youth mental wellness, suicide prevention, healthy life choices, substance abuse awareness, strong social connections, and positive parenting. Volunteers on our Programming Committee identify needs in the community and develop free events, programs, and resources in response while the Marketing & Communications Committee helps to get the word out and share our valuable resources. Our Fundraising & Development Committee volunteers help to raise the vital funds that allow BStrong Together to offer nearly all our programs for free and support our work as a community coalition.