

QUINTESSENTIAL PEOPLE®

Honoring DIANE BERGAN

BY LISA STAMOS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

TRIBES OF HER OWN

BARRINGTON RESIDENT Diane Bergan is a wife to Tim, mother of Abigail, a mostly retired public affairs executive in banking and airlines, world adventurer, and active volunteer who moves through her days with humility, while offering the sharp skills of a discerning leader. She's a member of the Barrington Cultural Commission and has helped students through the INCubator class at Barrington High School. It's impossible to miss her genuine smile and the twinkle in her eyes.

Like other effective tribe leaders—she is passionate, driven by curiosity, likes to travel with friends, and ventures outside her comfort zone (she's hiked in Patagonia and heads to New Zealand in 2023; she's seen all seven continents). You may have witnessed her in action at Barrington's Town Warmings. She is instrumental in helping the Village recreate the historic

Barrington events originally held in the late 1930s and early 1940s. She moderates some of the panel discussions with high-profile leaders—and is as elegant and effective as any national TV news anchor in navigating the discussions.

Diane is passionate about helping others, a legacy characteristic of her family. Her two greatest influences are her father, and a great uncle. Dad was a volunteer firefighter for 40 years while holding down a career and being a family man. His Native American heritage of the Samish tribe in the Pacific Northwest—where he and his wife grew up, and later raised Diane—channels a wisdom of the ages. Her great uncle was a Catholic missionary in the poorest places in India. His focus was helping girls access an education and training women to be nurses and teachers, changing the world for them and their communities.

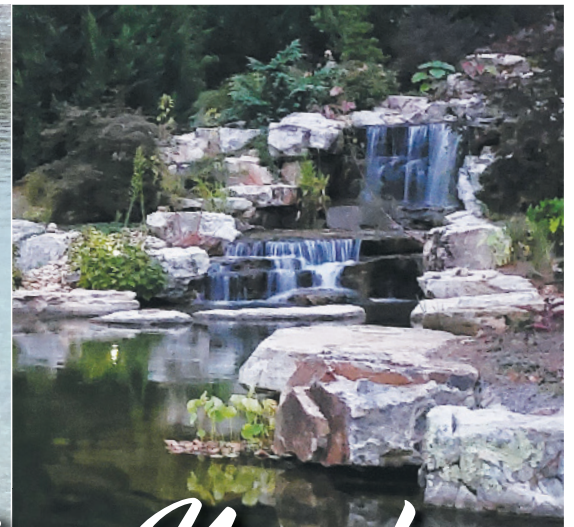
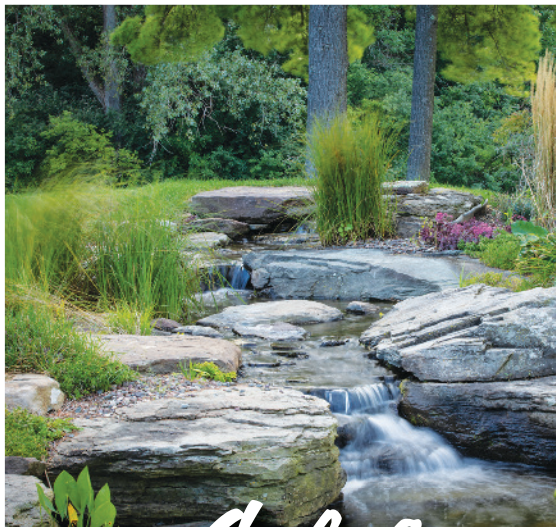
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A moment of truth in Diane's career came when she was working as the Global Director of Customer Relations for United Airlines. She started with United in Washington, D.C., followed by Boston. She and Tim had moved to the area for her transfer to United's Chicago office when two weeks later, the attacks of September 11, 2001, tested the nation. "At that moment, we all had to redefine what our jobs were, and what you brought to your job," she said. "The people at United were extraordinary through this situation."

The move to Barrington was the Bergan's first choice, following a look at the North Shore. Long-time friends, Leslie and John Roberts, connected them to Barrington. "We came here for my job, and have stayed for the community," Diane said.

Diane worries that we are moving into another winter of the pandemic. "The pandemic experience made me revisit my internal compass for what's important—how I use my time and energy," she said. "You let all the other stuff go."

Yet the winter season is also something Diane looks forward to. "It's soups and stew season at my house. I'm big into creative cooking and every burner on my stove has something on it cooking away." Every burner at work. Seems the right metaphor for Diane Bergan, our inspiring first Quintessential Person of the New Year!

HERE ARE SOME WORDS THAT OTHERS SHARED ABOUT **DIANE BERGAN**

Abigail Bergan, DAUGHTER

I'm constantly in awe of everything my mother somehow finds time to do—it's like she has a different 24 hours in her day! Her dedication to the community never fails to amaze me. My mom's passion for community service has influenced how I live my life. Even when I was little, her focus on civic engagement and giving back to others was evident, motivating me to start my own nonprofit, serve as an election judge, and get more involved in the Village. Because of our common interests, my mom and I have even volunteered together on several occasions, which has been wonderful. Beyond all her amazing work in Barrington, my mom is my rock. Whether it's driving me seven hours to rowing competitions, trading book recommendations with me, or helping me tackle whatever life throws at me, I'm forever grateful to have her unconditional support.

Mary Dale, FRIEND

Diane is a dynamic person. She is super smart, engaging, personable, a natural communicator, and connector. Quick to smile and lend a hand, she is a loving mother and wife, loyal friend, successful businesswoman, and devoted community volunteer.



We first met when our daughters were four at a Park District ballet class. Or rather my mom and Diane's nanny, Sam, met. We finally met at the big holiday performance where they danced to "Silver Bells". Since then, their friendship and ours has evolved. The girls met up again in elementary school. When the girls' classmates were going to different middle schools, Diane thought about a monthly dinner club for the girls and moms to keep the friendships alive during the middle school years. Rotating houses and menus, it was fun way to keep connected and watch the girls grow. Often the girls' fifth-grade teacher, Georgia Nelson, would make a surprise appearance. Now as seniors at BHS, those friendships are still there.

Diane is willing to try something new. From taking up rowing and competing in regional regattas to hiking the Camino de Santiago in Spain, to having the courage to perform in local theatre to trying her hand as an entrepreneur with her Golf with Words business, she is constantly doing something cool. Whenever you spend time with Diane, you have a good laugh, probably a good glass of wine, learn something new, and are grateful for the gift of a good friend.

David Nelson, VOLUNTEER AND FRIEND

Diane and I have served together on the Barrington Cultural Commission for six years. She has been an integral member of the team that presents the

Barrington Town Warmings, serving as the host and narrator of the day-long program. She has shared her time and talent as a youth leader with the BHS CREW team and is a key player in the promotion of Barrington's White House.

On any project with which Diane is connected, you can expect her to come competently researched and thoroughly prepared. She strikes a confident pose and is articulate and sharp-edged in her presentation. She always represents Barrington with class and great style and manages to ask penetrating questions and make memorable comments. We are always grateful and pleased when Diane accepts a new assignment on behalf of the Village!

Perhaps her greatest contribution to Barrington is her and husband Tim's daughter, Abigail, who is clearly a future leader and destined to do great things.

Lisa Sodeika, FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

I vividly recall Diane walking into my office more than 15 years ago. She was high energy, positive, and smart. It was my lucky day! Looking for a leader who could build the HSBC Holdings (one of the world's largest banks) U.S. public relations function, I found a real gem in Diane. After all, she had led key operations for United Airlines during the 9/11 attack. She is a leader and a collaborator. Diane built a terrific team for HSBC. She also built a reputation in our corporate community as a genuine and caring leader, and a "go to" colleague for expert advice and sound counsel. There was no crisis Diane couldn't tackle.

Diane is a caring friend and trusted professional colleague. While one can find effective executives, impactful community leaders, and loving family members, Diane truly possesses all these characteristics, "on steroids". She actively cares for her family while being highly engaged in her community and professional responsibilities. She is the first person to ask, "How can I help?" When my father passed away, Diane was the first at my door with a warm casserole. Diane has been engaged in community theatre, care for culture, and public benefit. She is a model, especially for her daughter Abigail, who has followed in her mother's footsteps by launching her own non-profit and actively leading community programs to promote equity and fight injustice. Nothing and no one is out of reach of Diane's thoughtful and caring touch, and we are all the better for it.

Hagop Soulakian, BHS INCUBATOR TEACHER

I met Diane Bergan 7.5 years ago through the INCubator program that I teach. She had agreed to come to class and help student groups prepare for their public presentations to the community. After watching how they performed, you could tell she had a major impact. Since then, Diane has increased her commitment to support my students by not only helping them present, but she has recently taken an additional role as a board member who provides feedback and is part of the decision-making process for funding. Many people have complimented me on how refined my students are when they present on stage or in different pitch competitions. Those compliments are a direct result of Diane's work and commitment to our community's youth. Watching her work with my students and listening to how she encourages and transmits a positive culture has affected me both personally and professionally. She is the epitome of how volunteer community members can positively affect the educational experiences for students. She is someone whom I count on, and she always delivers, with a smile on her face.



DIANE BERGAN IN HER OWN WORDS

Which historical figure do you most identify with? Abigail Adams. **What living hero figure would you like to meet?** Jane Goodall. **Where's your happy place?** Outside: walking on a beach or trail. Inside: curled up with a book. Your guiding personal philosophy for life? Know and stay true to your moral compass; always be open to new ideas, adventures, and opportunities. **Do you collect anything?** No—but the amount of books in my house is a little startling. **Favorite book?** "Angle of Repose" by Wallace Stegner. **What traits do you admire most in others?** Integrity, curiosity, and a sense of humor. **What trait do you most dislike in others?** Lack of civility or empathy. **Pet peeve?** People who are oblivious. **What is something others would be surprised to learn about you?** That inspired by my daughter, I followed her into the sport of rowing a few years ago (and had my first race in Columbus this fall!). **What are you most proud of in yourself?** Building a family and life that have meaning; no regrets! **Favorite song?** "Still Crazy After All These Years" by the amazing Paul Simon. **What is your favorite food?** A perfect tomato with a dash of sea salt. **If you could possess a superpower, what would it be?** The ability to be in two places at the same time. **What do you most value in friends?** Unconditional support, laughter, and mutual surprise that we are somehow this age. U