

#Binspired in Barrington 220

The mission of the Barrington 220 School District is: "Inspiring All Learners to Achieve Excellence". From students, to staff, to alumni, each of us finds inspiration in our own unique way. It is what keeps us going from day to day, especially during the tough times. We hope you will find strength in these inspiring stories from our school community.

Eleni Koulourianos Keller

Hough 2nd Grade Teacher

"My family is from Greece. My mom is from Nafpaktos. My dad is from Koroni. They moved to the United States when I was born. I grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, but everyone around me spoke Greek. I didn't speak a lick of English before first grade. School was horrible. Reading was a struggle. In 7th grade, my family moved to Palatine and everything changed. My English teacher told my parents I was behind and he'd like to work with me. They said they didn't have the money for tutoring. He said it was okay and started working with me every week. He believed in me. I knew from that point on that I wanted to be a teacher. During my first few years as a teacher in Barrington, we had an author named Patricia Polacco come speak to the teachers. She brought her book "Thank you Mr. Falker". The main character in the book is dyslexic and the teacher, Mr. Falker, takes the time to teach her how to read. I bought a copy and had Patricia sign it. A few years later I went back to my junior high in Palatine. My 7th grade teacher was still there. He said he never forgot me because I always tried so hard. I gave him the book. On the inside cover I wrote: "I want to thank you for inspiring me to become the teacher that I am today. You helped me accept myself during a difficult time in a child's life. You were my Mr. Falker!" I found out my teacher's daughter now coaches high school soccer with my husband. She said when her dad retired from teaching, the only thing he walked out of the school with was the book I gave him."



Veronica Roth

BHS ('06), New York Times Best Selling Author

"Curiosity is hands down the best quality you can have if you want to be

a writer, as well as one of the better qualities you can have if you want to be a decent and interesting human being. The world is a big and sometimes ugly, sometimes beautiful, but always an amazing place, full of fascinating things. A curious person is smart enough to want to dive right into it."

Dr. Mary Marks

Hough Teacher Librarian and Longtime Barrington Area Resident

"I grew up with a love for history. My Grandmother was a history teacher. She would tell these wonderful stories that always intrigued me and brought history to life. It's funny that when I started working in Barrington 220, I ended up at Hough, the oldest school in the district. Barrington is rich in history. You walk over to Evergreen Cemetery and see gravesites for Civil War soldiers. Barrington's White House was once used as a hospital for the World War I flu pandemic. A few years ago, I did my dissertation on the history and evolution of school libraries. Barrington 220 was one of the first school districts in Illinois to automate its library card catalogues. A lot has changed through the years, but the heart of the community remains the same. We pride ourselves in offering the best opportunities to our kids. I think the history that surrounds us only enriches the educational experience here."



Don Thompson

BHS Class of 1961, Sunny Hill Teacher (1966-72), Countryside Teacher (1972-76), Barrington Middle School Associate Principal (1976-80), Hickory Hill Principal (1979-82), Barrington Middle School Principal (1982-92), BMS-Prairie Principal (1992-2000), Assistant to Superintendent (2000-03), BHS Alumni Association Founder

"I was born and raised in Barrington. I started attending the old Hough Street School when it was still grades K-12. In Fall 1957, I entered Barrington High School. I joined the band, playing the trumpet. Every homecoming I would march in the pa-



rade. It was down Main Street just like it is today. I love the tradition and the community atmosphere in Barrington. When I look back at my time, I have a great view of what has taken place through the years and the rich history of our school district. Staying in touch with alumni and former Barrington 220 colleagues has been wonderful. I still meet with some classmates for lunch on a regular basis. Once a month I meet with a group of retired school administrators for breakfast. To me, all of those connections have made for a very rich life."

Janet Anderson

BHS Teacher Librarian

"We often give book talks throughout the school year to hook students into reading a book of their choice, with a tantalizing tease of the story. Four years ago, at the end of one of these book talks there was a freshman girl who wasn't sold on anything. I probably gave her 30 books over the span of four years, but she wasn't reading. Whenever I saw her in the halls I would say: 'How's your book coming along?' and she would always smile and roll her eyes. During her senior year one of her teachers sent her down to the library because she didn't have a book for independent reading time. I gave her the first book in a trilogy. Right before graduation she came back into the library and said: 'I had to find you. I love the book you gave me and I need you to know I finished it.' She had already started the second book. I was so excited for her. I even got a little choked up. If you can get people to love books and see how amazing they are, then what a gift they've got for the rest of their lives."



Chuck Thyfault

BHS Alumni Association President

"When I was in college, I never thought I'd end up back in Barrington. I wanted to get out and explore. Now I'm president of the BHS Alumni Association. Two of my children have graduated from BHS. My third will graduate in 2022. I'm thankful for the opportunities they've had here. A couple years ago I had my 35th high school reunion. It's good to see the people you went to grade school with. I think we're all proud to be Barrington High School alumni. A lot of amazing people have walked these halls."



Rhea Thomas

BHS Senior (2019-20)

"I've dabbled in music all my life. It started when I was about five years old and my parents made me learn piano. At first, I hated it, but somewhere along the way I started to enjoy music. When I was a student at Rose, I played the cello. I remember when the high school kids came to perform for us. They sounded so good. I wanted to do what they were doing. Now I play violin in the BHS orchestra. It helps me express myself and relax after a busy day at school. As much as I hate to admit it, today I'm grateful my parents sat me down in front of that piano so many years ago."





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Mary Weerts

BMS-Station Chinese Immersion Teacher

"I was born in Liaoning, China, and moved to the U. S. after college. For a while, I was very afraid to speak English in front of people. Every time I heard something in English I had to consciously translate it in my head. Fortunately, one of my English Language teachers encouraged me, and it was okay to make mistakes in public. Seventeen years ago, I started teaching students of all ages my first language, Mandarin Chinese. Being a Chinese immersion teacher is a tough job, but every morning I look forward to meeting, learning, and growing with my students. Whenever a student speaks Chinese with a cheerful voice, my heart melts. One day, I ran into a student from many years ago and she said, 'I'm very grateful because you changed kids' views of a new language and people from a different country.' She works for an international trading company and uses her Chinese skills. I find languages fascinating. It's a window to someone's world."



Tom Bredemeier

BHS Computer Science Teacher

"My first experience with a computer was in college. They were like the size of my classroom! After college, I helped run my family's manufacturing business in Chicago. We made fabric swatch cards. In the early '80s we bought an IBM minicomputer equipped with source code. I figured out I could make changes to the code and found myself in the groove. I told the computer what to do and it did it. For the next 20 years, I wrote software for our company. After 9/11 the economy took a brief dip. Our business took a hit. We ended up selling it in 2003. I was 48 years old. Too young to retire, I decided to go back to school to become a teacher. I've been at BHS now for 13 years. The students I teach are the first generation in history that can reach the entire world instantaneously. Somebody once asked Warren Buffet what it was like to be Warren Buffet. He said, 'I tap dance on the way to work'. I feel the same way."



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Hagop Soulakian

BHS Business Incubator Teacher

"I worked at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange for 16 years. Had a lot of fun. Developed a lot of connections. Starting in 2009, making money became very difficult. I would come home very angry and I was not a good person to be around. One day my wife finally said to me: 'Listen, our kids are starting to hate you'. At that point I knew it was time to make a change. My wife said: "You love working with kids and high school was the best time of your life. Why don't you go back to school?" I had never thought about being a teacher. I played baseball in high school and college. School was never a priority. In 2010 I took my first class at Roosevelt University. I was 38 years old. I was the oldest student in the class. But I finished my course work and went on to student teach. When I was hired in 2013 to teach the Incubator class at BHS, I worked my tail off to prepare and be the best teacher I could be. A few years ago, there was an article in the Daily Herald about the success of the Incubator program. After it ran, I received a letter from my third-grade teacher at Horizon Elementary School in Hanover Park. I had not spoken to her since elementary school. She said she saw my name in the article. She wrote that she was proud of me and pleased with the success of my students. I guess reading that letter from her sort of put a stamp of approval on my decision to become a teacher. It reminded me that what I'm doing matters. I still have the letter. I keep it in my office."

