

A part of my heart . . .

Stacey Baschwit

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Caryl Barnes is retiring after 38 years of health care service at Ben Hur Health & Rehabilitation. The Houston's had companies in several locations and through the years, Caryl has worked wherever she was needed, spending the last 28 years at Crawfordsville's, Ben Hur facility, Although Barnes is excited about her new venture, she was clear to say that leaving her Ben Hur family was not going to be easy.

"It's been 38 years of different types of Healthcare Management. Twenty-eight years in this building, which have been wonderful to me. I have learned so much. I've had good management, teachers and mentors along the years" Barnes said.

Caryl's parents, Bob and Shirley Cox, had built a home on Ben Hur drive and that was actually the first house Caryl ever lived in. Ben Hur Director of Marketing/Admissions, Jacob Cain joked that, Caryl's working at Ben Hur was "Meant to be". The family moved near Shades State Park when Caryl was just a toddler.

As a teenager, Barnes worked after school as a park office attendant at Shades State Park. She remembers her time fondly, "It was a fun job. It was obviously . . . kind of dear to my heart, because growing up next to Shades we spent a lot of time there and I enjoyed it" Barnes said. It was during this time she met her future husband Jim Barnes.

After graduating from Southmont in 1974, Caryl and Jim married. In 1975, the couple had a son, Jason.

Barnes knew she had a good job as office manager at Shades State Park. However, she wanted to move onto something bigger. Barnes saw an ad in the newspaper for Ben Hur Health & Rehabilitation. "I am a 'People-person', I like being around people. I wanted to branch out and do something different, have more exposure", Barnes said.

That's exactly what she did. In 1979, Barnes began her career at Ben Hur. She started as an assistant in the office. Ben Hur Companies offered a college course program available to Barnes to further her education. Barnes hit the ground running, earning her Nursing Home Administrators degree from Ball State.

Growing up in the community, Barnes has had many friends and family come through the Ben Hur doors. "It really has been a privilege to be involved with so many people, their families and their lives, when they've needed help. I've had my own family here, dear friends, life-long friends, church friends . . . people that have come to me, when they've needed help. 'Not that I've been the only one to help' but being a part of that . . . Helping them care for their loved ones. It's been a joy and a privilege helping people that I know and love."

Barnes spoke about the families she's met along the way. Saying, "The people I have gotten to know here, the residents and their families . . . They become family. When you're with people every day and you're caring for them . . . You care about them. You can't help it." "They've become a part of my heart", said Barnes.

"Every single day you have multiple opportunities to interact with them [residents] and make them happy. You just walk down the hall and you can make somebody smile. Not just once or twice a day but all day long you get the opportunity to help somebody improve their life. These are people in need. People that depend on us, their families depend on us, they have to trust us. It's a huge responsibility that we care for them the way they deserve. They deserve to be well-cared for. In doing that, they become part of your family . . . you love them" Barnes said.

Over the years, Barnes caring heart and loving nature has touched the lives of residents and staff members alike. Barnes talked of how much her Ben Hur Staff family means to her. Saying, "I'm so fortunate here. I certainly could not have been able to do the things we've accomplished here without the assistance of a great support staff. I value them [the staff] and I trust them and I certainly could not have done it without them . . . old and new", Barnes said.

Ben Hur Director of Marketing/Admissions, Jacob Cain, says, "There will be a lot of tears the day she leaves. Truly, I've never had a boss who cares as much about her staff and her residents . . . She would literally give you the shirt off her back, She's that type of person" Cain said. "We're definitely not going to be able to replace her, we may come close . . . but there can never be another Caryl", said Cain.

Barnes says she plans to travel with her husband Jim. Jim works as an electrician at Nucor Steel and will be retiring soon as well. In their free time, couple can be caught out boating at Lake Holiday where they reside.

There will be a retirement open-house in Caryl's honor on Dec. 28, from 5-7 p.m. in the main dining room at Ben Hur Health & Rehabilitation. The event is open to the public and we have been told there is a surprise in store for Caryl!



"It has been a pleasure to work for Caryl as her Director of Admissions. Caryl has never been my boss, but instead she is a leader, mentor, and makes you feel as part of her family. In my 37 years alive, I have never worked for someone with so much compassion and dedication to their staff. She is irreplaceable and will always hold a special place in my heart."
– Jacob Cain, Ben Hur Health and Rehabilitation