

A full-page photograph of Phil Barrett and his wife walking hand-in-hand on a grassy field. Phil is on the left, wearing a dark suit, blue shirt, and red tie. His wife is on the right, wearing a purple dress. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. The background shows a line of trees and a small wooden structure.

# Phil Barrett

## Maximizing Every Day

### COVER STORY

*By Jenna Caputo*

*Photos by SuperSourceMedia.com*

Phil Barrett. We all know the name as the Clifton Park Town Supervisor. But what about the story behind the name?

Phil was born in Washington, DC at the Walter Reed Army Hospital, then baptized at the Fort Myers Chapel. His father was a courier in the Army, responsible for getting top-secret information place to place. The Barrett family was based in Virginia while his father was still in the Army. After he retired, Phil's father got a job with GE in Rhode Island within the accounting department and the family moved once again.

Despite moving around a lot (or, perhaps, because of it), Phil never shied away from hard work, whether for business or for play. He loved watching auto racing but sports were his passion and he played a different sport each season. His first love, though, was basketball and his hard

work along with the rest of the high school team paid off as they became the 1985 Connecticut State Champions.

He also has always had a job ever since middle school when he started working in the tobacco fields, picking the tobacco starting in seventh grade. It was a challenging job that laid the foundation for the strong work ethic that has always been instilled in Phil's family. After the tobacco fields, he picked up a paper route and a job in a lumber yard, helping to load the lumber, stone, etc., both within the yard and for the customers. "It's difficult to move when you're a child and switch schools," he says. "But I think at the end of the day it's actually a positive thing. It puts you in a position to make friends and assimilate to new surroundings and people and teaches you a lot of life lessons in that respect."

Phil received his business degree from Providence College through the ROTC, then became a commissioned Army officer for the reserves. Once in the private sector,

CLIFTON PARK *Neighbors*



he mainly worked in banking, eventually moving to Clifton Park for his job. He quickly realized, however, just how much money was extracted from his paycheck each week and decided that he should become more involved with politics. He noticed there were some elements in Clifton Park that he believed needed improvement and he felt he could help. He decided to first run for Town Supervisor in 1999 with a platform that demonstrated these areas of improvement. Along with strengthening the town's financial position, he also wanted to fix the struggling ice arena and revitalize the exit 9 area. He was elected for the then part-time position, but in 2011, the Town Supervisor role was combined with the Town Administrator and Phil began to work for the town full time.

Over the years he has more than succeeded in fulfilling these campaign promises. He is rightfully proud of Clifton Park's fiscal success, tax reduction, youth court program, full day camp, the 1,500 acres of preserved property with over 16 miles of new trails, completely turned around senior center and ice arena, as well as the thriving revitalization of the exit 9 area. Over the years, they have seen slow and steady improvement, filling the empty retail spaces and diversifying the economy to protect Clifton Park from the decline of brick and mortar retail in favor of online sales. Adding more healthcare business in the location has proven to be a successful move and they continue to encourage new complimentary businesses in the area.

For 2018, Phil's office is working on two long-term planning studies, including for the land on the east side of I-87 in the exit 9 area, as well as for the 37 acres recently purchased from Shen schools. They also are working on two large intersection improvement projects, adding two more new trail projects, and creating ways to save costs on lighting, including replacing the current lights in the ice arena with new LED technology and purchasing the streetlights in town and installing new LED technology in those as well.

While some of the federal and New York State policies can create headaches and make some changes hard, Phil continues to love his job. He enjoys the challenge of improving the operational integrity of a service or entity and most importantly, he loves being in a position to help the people of his community.

Although he has seen a lot of changes in Clifton Park over the years while watching it grow, he is proud that the



area has never lost the feeling of the close-knit community that has been here since the town was founded in 1828. "As a resident of Clifton Park it always makes me very proud that we have a tremendous amount of volunteers and organizations in town working to help people each and every day. That's what makes our town *great*," Phil says. "We've never lost that since 1828 and I pray we never do because it is what makes our town a great place to be."

His own family now includes his wife, Li, who owns a consulting business assisting children with educational needs, as well as managing a program at SUNY; his step-daughter, Jen, a licensed local real estate agent since she was 18; and sons, Philip, currently finishing his master's in accounting while working at GE in the accounting

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department; and Brandon, a rising sophomore at Shen.

Like their father, the kids all played sports growing up. Both boys specialize in soccer and Philip continued to play through his term on the Siena soccer team and is now a member of the Kingston Stockade semi-pro team based out of Kingston, NY.

Both Phil and Li have to work long hours for their jobs but it has forced them to treasure every moment and

prioritize what counts. Phil's biggest stress relief is his passion for singing. He sang with groups regularly off and on over the years, but now he sings for special occasions like the Elks Flag Day ceremony or for certain town events. "It brings me a lot of happiness and is calming for me," he says. "It's soothing in a lot of ways and is just fun!" He chuckles when people assume he doesn't get nervous when he says that because he is *always* nervous before a show. His favorite crooner of all time, Frank Sinatra, also used to have issues with nerves beforehand, but as Phil says, "Once you're up there the nerves go away completely and I'm actually comfortable to be there. It's fun and something I enjoy."

Part of the famous Barrett family work ethic is to get the most out of every day and to maximize each day to its fullest potential. Phil says that they don't strive to *try* their best – anyone can try. They strive to *do* their best every day.

That attitude has carried over into the town affairs as well and has benefited Clifton Park greatly over the years, with no signs of slowing down. "Clifton Park has a very bright future. We are now positioned well to continue to be strong both economically and socially," explains Phil. "Our goal here at the town is to have Clifton Park be a wonderful place for people to invest – to buy a home or start a business. We look at it as our job to do everything possible to give them the best opportunity to receive a return on their investment by having a community that is low cost to live and work or run a business, and having the amenities that bring value to a community as well as a good infrastructure, safe area and everything that makes a community desirable!" ■

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