



Barry and Jeanne McAuley: Making Opportunities for Merced

Written by Kaaren Morgner

McAuley Motors' auto showroom presence on 17th Street spans eighty years. What began in 1937 as a Studebaker franchise, now showcases an award-winning Lincoln dealership. As Main Street grew, so did the medical needs of the community. Community members and business owners gathered to support, raise funds, and stay informed about the

delivery of health care in Merced. That has not changed. As third generation Mercedians, Barry and Jeanne McAuley continue that service. As family, good neighbors and friends, they advocate for the best our community can be.

The McAuleys target their philanthropic efforts based on impact. "The hospital is first and foremost; it touches everyone from

the newborn to the elderly!" Jeanne declares. "In addition, we support things that benefit children: The First Tee, CASA, Our Lady of Mercy School, and the arts: The Merced Multicultural Arts Center."

Not long ago, after noticing their building marked by graffiti, Barry phoned a Boys and Girls Club board member and proposed, "The Montgomery family (Barry's

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extended family) will arrange to paint the building if you will accept our offer.” They accepted. The McAuleys pay attention; they see a need, inquire, and offer their resources.

Barry and Jeanne know the struggle and the reward of sustaining a vibrant downtown atmosphere. Three and a half years ago the Multicultural Arts Center was struggling financially, unable to pay salaries and overhead bills. Barry offered to help. Construction of the UC Merced administration building was underway with the new El Capitan Hotel soon to follow. He knew both businesses would bring new energy to the downtown area. This motivated the couple to organize “Luau at the Lake” which raised \$90,000 for the Arts Center over its three-year run. With the financial pressure off, they stepped back and new people with new ideas stepped forward. “Today it’s a vibrant group with new programs for kids and adults,” Barry concludes.

Passion for Mercy Medical Center’s role in our community requires continued engagement. It requires remembering the story, recounting the story and inviting others into the story.

One of Barry’s fondest memories is reflected in a photo he keeps. It’s that of the first patient being transferred to the new hospital on May 2, 2010. He smiles as he thinks of it. There are some days you just keep going back to – days that matter because they mark well remembered moments.

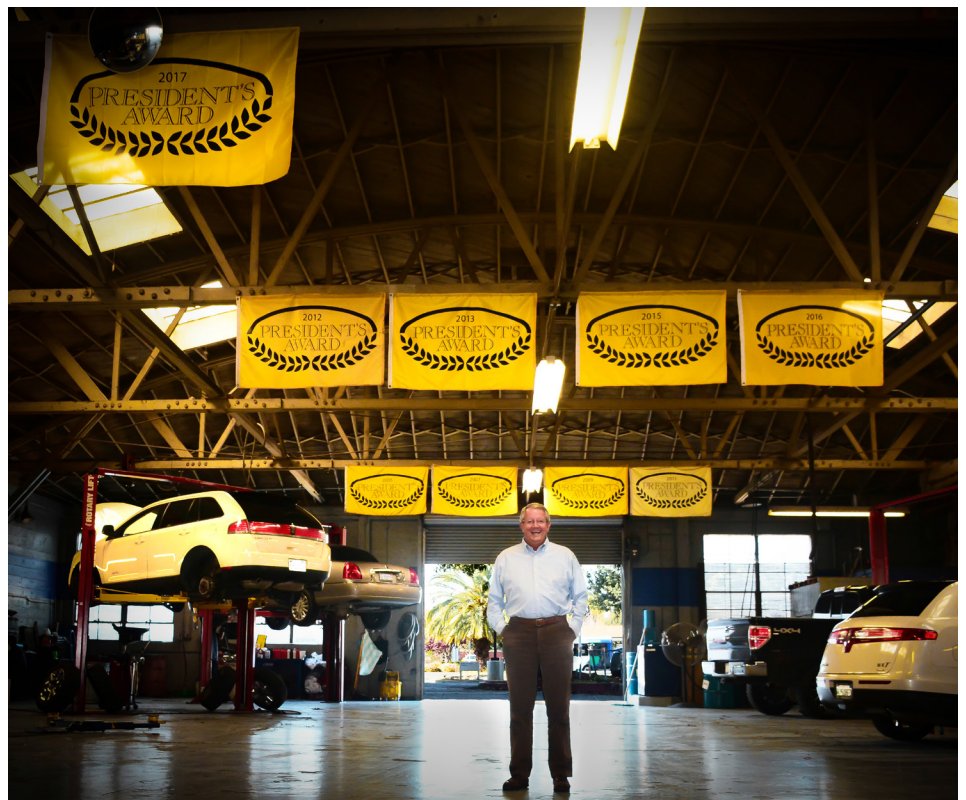
Barry’s relationship with the hospital began in the late 1980’s when he received a call from Walt Adams, then on the Mercy Hospital Foundation Board, asking him to

help decorate for the gala. After climbing ladders and hanging things all day, he found himself involved. Walt’s invitation exposed Barry to the mission and message of the Foundation. That invitation set him on course to engage and lead. Barry went on to serve as president of the Foundation Board in 1992, currently chairs the Mercy Medical Center Community Board, and remains active in the Foundation as an Associate member.

Jeanne’s exposure to hospital service came from her aunt, Beverly Favier, and later, Barry’s mother, Marge McAuley. Her Aunt Bev, an avid gardener and long-time hospital volunteer, looked out for family members in the hospital. She was known for bringing bouquets of flowers from her garden to share with

patients. “There were five brothers and five sisters in Dad’s family. All married and stayed in the Merced area. I have 21 cousins, and they’re all still here with their families!” Jeanne laughs. The odds were that any given week someone was likely to be in the hospital – either sick or having a baby. Jeanne was moved by the attention and concern her aunt showed people during illness and loss.

Marge McAuley offered Jeanne another window into serving the hospital. As president of the volunteers, she visited other hospitals seeking ideas and new ways volunteers could be helpful to the patient. One of her innovations was a travelling cart stocked with newspapers, magazines, and little personal care items the patient



Above: The McAuley Lincoln team earned its 15th President's Award banner signifying its top ten percent ranking among dealerships in the nation for excellent customer service.

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might want or need that the hospital did not provide. Her ability to see needs and devise creative solutions impressed Jeanne.

"We've been brought up by both our families to be involved, by donating financially, offering a talent, and volunteering time. However you are gifted—use it!" Jeanne concludes.

Barry chimes in, "Yes, family set the example, but I go back to this - invite and expose. It's exposure! Give people the opportunity to be in a room with doers. It's easy to be around people that don't do, but my gosh we've got a wonderful base of doers. Give folks an opportunity!"

For Barry, that opportunity came when the Foundation Board raised \$5.4 million in capital for the new hospital. He was part of the Capital Campaign team tasked with taking the vision for the new hospital into the community. His excitement surfaces as he recalls, "This was a once in a lifetime deal. This would be the single most important

privately funded project to benefit this community during our lifetimes. That's a pretty good thing to help out and invest in!"

Barry found that the vision resonated with community members. "I explained what we wanted to accomplish and what we needed. I took people on tours, showed them what was coming, showed the value," he recalls. "I'll never forget Helen Evans' words: 'We always thought of ourselves as community supporters. Nobody's ever asked us for more than a \$100 ticket.'" Barry responded, "Would you consider a \$50,000 gift?" Helen called Barry a few days later to contribute in honor of her late husband, Stratford Evans. "We both had tears," he recalls softly. Just give an opportunity.

When the recession of 2008 hit and the market fell in January and February of 2009, the Capital Campaign team stopped, took a breath, let everyone find their

bearings, and then moved forward. The community response continued to build, and every donation mattered. "I'm so proud of us," Barry says with a smile.

Barry describes his and Jeanne's involvement with the hospital as a team effort. "Jeanne has no title, but she's right there. She's an advocate, and you want her to advocate for you!" he assures. In the beginning for Jeanne, it was decorating for the galas, creating flower arrangements and table decorations. For the last ten years she has served as a lay member of the Community Board's Quality Committee.

According to Walt Adams, Quality Committee chair, "We (lay members) serve as the eyes and ears of the community, sharing compliments as well as concerns regarding patient experience." When someone tells Jeanne about their patient experience, Jeanne asks permission to share that story. The concern or the compliment is shared with the appropriate hospital department head whether it's nursing, emergency room, or ancillary services. The department head follows up and addresses the concern, or shares the compliment. "We want our hospital to be top-notch," Jeanne states. Great care from a dedicated team takes effort and encouragement from everyone involved.

Not long ago, Jeanne experienced that teamwork. A bout with infected kidney stones became a battle for her life. She showed signs of sepsis and needed immediate treatment. "That wonderful nurse got my IV's going and remained with me to coordinate my care," Jeanne recalls. Dr. Dennis Cesar, caring for patients in Los Banos, explained the surgical



Above: Both Barry and Jeanne enjoy the garden. That shared interest finds its way into their travels. "We always find nurseries or botanical gardens to visit!" Jeanne smiles.



Above: Barry and Jeanne recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

procedure Jeanne needed to Dr. Mark Wagner via a phone conversation. Jeanne awoke the next day in the Intensive Care Unit and Dr. Cesar came in to check on her. “You know Jeanne, Dr. Wagner saved your life,” he remarked. When complaints about the emergency room surface in conversation, Jeanne listens and then shares her experience. It’s an opportunity to voice her thanks once again. “That ER team saved my life! I want people to know how lucky we are to have this team and this brand new hospital.”

At a recent joint meeting of the Medical Staff and Community Board, Barry and Jeanne learned of the ongoing effort being made by Chuck Kassis (CEO) and the administrative team to locate and bring new specialists to Mercy Medical Center. Yolanda Brewer, Director of Business Development and Physician Relations, reported,

“We are actively engaged with all the different specialties. A total of six new physicians in the areas of obstetrics and gynecology, general surgery, anesthesiology, interventional cardiology, and family practice/obstetrics have joined our community since March 5, 2018. In addition, we have a letter of intent from a female uro-gynecologist who is trained in robotics. Two general surgeons and one gynecologist already practicing here are in training for certification on the new da Vinci® robotic surgery system.”

Recruiting and retaining new doctors is essential for our community. Jeanne had the opportunity to meet orthopedic spine surgeon Dr. Gabriel Garcia-Diaz. “He and his family are so happy here and want to bring their family from Puerto Rico here too. It’s wonderful to meet new doctors who love being here, who enjoy our

community!” Engaging physicians with a passion to serve and enjoy our community benefits us all.

The McAuleys’ gifts of time and service to the Foundation and Community Boards (over thirty years respectively), and generous financial support of the Capital Campaign as well as the Cancer Center and the Endoscopic Ultrasound System, embody the spirit of philanthropy. Barry’s eyes light up as he leans in and says, “Look how far we’ve come! We are positioned for opportunity for additional services here in Merced, and it portends to be even better going forward. My goodness, look at the synergies converging here! A \$262 million hospital facility, UC Merced, and Merced College with its Allied Health teaching programs for nursing and lab technicians.”

Barry and Jeanne invite us to join the doers. Steadfast optimism fuels their passion and they remind us that we are a community that works together for quality health care delivery. Barry pulls out his phone, and scrolling through his contacts he says to Jeanne with a smile, “Let’s see, who should we invite next?”