

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

LOOK

Faces of Philanthropy – Hillary Carter

September 2018



Where did you grow up and what brought you to Greenwich?

I was born and raised in Atlanta, GA. I attended the University of Alabama where I earned an undergraduate degree in Broadcast Journalism. While I will always be a southern girl at heart, my dream was to live in New York City, so I moved there immediately following graduation. I spent ten years in the city, working in public relations and corporate communications for companies including Rubenstein Associates, DeVries Public Relations, Maloney & Fox and MTV Networks. While working, I also earned a master's degree in strategic communications from Columbia University. And, lucky for me, I met my husband, Ben! When we had our first son, Owen, I decided to stay home with him full

time. When second son Grayson was on the way, we decided to move to the suburbs. We loved Greenwich for its proximity to the city and for the feeling of a quiet, smaller town. We live in Riverside which feels like a small beach town to us. We have met many families with children our kids' age and we are so grateful for our network of friends who feel like family.

Tell us a little bit about your family - kids, spouse, special pets?

My husband, Ben, and I met in New York City through mutual friends. He is also from Atlanta and we went to rival high schools. He went to Emory University, where my mother was a professor. It's such a small world! He is a managing partner at Southpoint Capital, a long/short equities hedge fund based in the city. We have two boys, Owen and Grayson, who are the light of our lives. Owen is nearly 8 years old and loves to read, practice karate and walk on his hands. Grayson is nearly 6 years old and loves Legos and pretty much all sports. Both of our boys are golf fanatics! Their absolute favorite thing to do is play golf, followed closely by watching golf. I've started taking golf lessons so that I can be a part of the action every weekend!

How did you become involved in philanthropy?

When our children were two and a half years old and six months old, they were both diagnosed with multiple, life-threatening food allergies. My older son, Owen, had a reaction to his first bite of peanut butter. My youngest son, Grayson, had an anaphylactic reaction to his first bite of banana. Upon further testing with our allergist, we learned that both boys had multiple, life-threatening allergies. Our worlds were completely turned upside down and we were terrified. I laser focused on educating myself on everything about food allergies and found Food Allergy Research and Education. FARE is a national non-profit whose mission is 1) to improve the quality of life and the health of individuals with food allergies and 2) to provide them hope through the promise of new treatments.

What philanthropic causes are at the top of your list and how do you support them?

There are two philanthropic causes that are near and dear to my heart: Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) and Children of Fallen Patriots.

When our two children were both diagnosed with multiple, life-threatening food allergies, I knew this would be my life's work. Food allergies affect 15 million Americans, including 5.9 million children under the age of 18. That's 1 in 13 children, or roughly two in every classroom. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that the prevalence of food allergy in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011. The top eight food allergens include peanut, tree nuts, wheat, egg, dairy, soy, fish and shellfish, but any food can cause a serious reaction. In fact, every three minutes, a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room.

However, even with the prevalence and increase of food allergy diagnosis, there is not a single FDA approved treatment option to manage this chronic health condition. Only epinephrine is available to stop a food allergy reaction, and it only works if you have it with you and use it quickly.

It is unacceptable that our children should be afraid that a bite of the wrong food could kill them. And therefore, I work with FARE. Not only does FARE raise money for research, but the organization has a strong advocacy and education platform. FARE's work is organized around three core tenets: LIFE –

support the ability of individuals with food allergies to live safe, productive lives with the respect of others through our education and advocacy initiatives; HEALTH – enhance the healthcare access of individuals with food allergies to state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment; and HOPE – encourage and fund research in both industry and academia that promises new therapies to improve the allergic condition.

Over the last five years, I have co-chaired the FARE Walk for Food Allergy three times, both in Westchester and Fairfield Counties. I am thankful for the opportunity to apply my public relations experience to garner media coverage of these Walks, including participating in live interviews for our local NBC and FOX affiliates. I have been so fortunate to work with my best friend, and fellow food allergy mama, Julie Karish (of Greenwich) to lead Team OMG (Owen, Mia and Grayson) at these Walks to raise funds for FARE. Working together with other food allergy families toward the same goal of protecting our kids makes it that much more meaningful.

This year, I'm honored to co-chair the second annual FARE Connecticut Fall Luncheon, along with Julie Karish, Sophie Dowling and Katie Rogers. The event will take place on Wednesday, November 7th at Greenwich Country Club. We are thrilled to have FARE's new CEO, Lisa Gable, and Dr. Jim Baker, CMO, join us and speak at the event. A Marketplace of local vendors who are allergy-conscious will also be available with samples and information. For more information, please visit: foodallergy.org/CTLuncheon



Ben and I both come from military families: Ben's mother, father and grandfather all served in the Army. His mom ended her service in the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel, the highest rank in our family, which I

think is so cool! On my side, my father served in the Navy, and my grandfather served in the Army. He was deployed for four years overseas during World War II and landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day. We grew up having a deep appreciation for the military and have always wanted to give back to those who serve.

Children of Fallen Patriots fills our hearts. Founded by our dear friends, Cynthia and David Kim, the mission of COFP is to provide college scholarships and educational counseling to military children who have lost a parent in the line of duty. Research conducted by The Lucas Group on behalf of Children of Fallen Patriots found that nearly 20,000 dependents have been left behind by troops killed in the line of duty over the past 35 years. Many surviving families struggle to make ends meet with 63% of surviving spouses making less than \$50,000 per year. COFP works to find each and every one of these children to help them in growing their success. To date, COFP has provided over \$22 million in scholarship support to well over 1,000 students nationwide. However, there is still so much need to fill. COFP estimates that there are 7,780 students in the pipeline with a need of about \$500 million.

My husband, Ben, has been honored to served on the Board of COFP for over three years. His fund, Southpoint Capital, has sponsored a charitable golf outing the last three years to benefit COFP. We always look forward to the annual Greenwich Gala, as well, and love to bring our Riverside friends along. This year's Gala will take place on Saturday, November 3rd, at the Riverside Yacht Club. For more information, please visit: fallenpatriots.org

Asides from family and philanthropy, what else keeps you busy? Sports, career, hobbies...

I have always been into fitness and wellness, but my children's food allergies have expanded my interest in nutrition. I am currently finishing a course from MindBodyGreen on Advanced Functional Nutrition and have loved learning ways that our diet can heal our body in different ways. As our environment and food supply continues to change, I am continuing to learn how to find the cleanest, healthiest food for my family. As a former dancer, fitness has always been a big priority to me, and is especially important now to settle my mind from living with three boys! I love to practice yoga and go on long walks through our beautiful neighborhood.

Since my boys are so obsessed with golf, I have started lessons and we usually play nine holes together as a family every other Sunday. We are also a big water family. We spent a lot of time on the weekends on our boat, where our boys enjoy fishing and kayaking on the Sound in their junior kayaks.

What are a couple of your special holiday traditions? (Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years)

We have several special holiday traditions. The Saturday after Thanksgiving, we always watch the Iron Bowl game which is Alabama versus Auburn. Since I went to Alabama and Ben is a huge Auburn fan, this is always a passionate sports event for our family to watch! (P.S. ROLL TIDE!)

Christmas Eve is always very special in our family and we always try to go to the candlelight service at church. I love singing Christmas hymns and taking time to enjoy what Christmas is all about during such a chaotic season. We open gifts on Christmas morning with lots and lots of coffee!

My mother started our New Year's Eve tradition many years ago. Instead of writing New Year's Resolutions, we go around the table and each say what we are proud of from the year that is just ending. Holidays and the end of the year can be emotionally and physically tough and making resolutions for the next year is often a reminder of not meeting last year's goals. So, we celebrate success.

We take the opportunity to review the last year with gratitude and pride. It's always important to set goals for the future – but it's hard to do this without first taking stock, and being happy, with where you are. So, for at least a decade now this has been our New Year's Eve tradition to talk about what has made us happy and fulfilled over a nice dinner...and champagne! (The more champagne, the longer our lists!)

What article of clothing most says holiday to you?

I'm a conservative dresser, but I do love some sparkle at the holidays. I tend to wear a lot of black but love sparkly earrings or shoes to make an outfit more festive. I also keep my leather pants on heavy rotation. It's amazing how they can add a little edge to a basic blazer and camisole. I also think leopard print is a perfect holiday print!



What's the most memorable holiday gift you've received?

The year my Grandmother passed away, my mom had her wedding and engagement rings sized to fit me and gave them to me for Christmas. I had always admired her beautiful, vintage-style rings, and it

meant so much to me to have them. I often wear my Grandmother's wedding band stacked with mine, and I love feeling her with me.

What's the most memorable holiday gift you've given?

My husband is hard to shop for and I'm always on the hunt for a sentimental gift for him. Last year, I found beautiful cufflinks and had them engraved with our boys' initials. Owen's initials were on one cufflink and Grayson's on the other. He absolutely loved them, and I was so happy to find a special keepsake gift for him.

What are you going to be wishing for this holiday season?

I always wish for health. The most important thing for our family is to be together and healthy and happy. We work hard to keep our boys safe from a food allergy reaction and it always feels like a victory when we can get through a holiday season with no issues!

I also want to focus on slowing down and just enjoying it all. It is easy to get caught up in being "perfect" – having the perfect tree, meal, outfit. It's so easy to spend too much money, too much time, too much effort. Of course, I want my holidays to be special for my family. But mostly, I want to be present and happy and calm. I want my kids to remember a peaceful, joyful mommy. Not a crazy busy one! I look forward to snuggles on the couch while watching football or movies, quiet story times, family game nights, and wine by the fire with my husband. Those are the special moments that make a holiday truly magical.

Where is your favorite place to spend the holiday season?

After 13 years of New England holidays, we spent last Christmas in Naples, FL, and it is our new family tradition! We love getting out of the cold and having a new experience of a beach holiday. I bought all white starfish and shell ornaments for our Christmas tree so it's simple, coastal and festive. The boys were thrilled to jump in the pool Christmas morning! There is a tiny chapel walking distance from our house where we can enjoy Christmas Eve service. It is a very special vacation for us and one that we will continue for years to come!

What holiday song do you never tire of?

My favorite holiday song is Silent Night. As a family, we have always attended Christmas Eve church service which ends with the congregation singing Silent Night by candlelight. Every person receives their own candle, and the whole church is lit beautifully. This is a sacred moment in the busy holiday season that I cherish. I also love What Child Is This?, which I sang to both of my boys when they were babies, even when it wasn't Christmas!

What's the one fashion item you can never have enough of?

Shoes! I tend to prefer classic, well-cut clothing fashions, and I wear a lot of black. But I love to splurge on fun shoes!

Photography by ChiChi Ubina