



Hair and Makeup:  
Jafaar Tazi Salon,  
Greenwich

Clothing:  
Saks Fifth Avenue,  
Greenwich

Jewelry:  
Steven Fox Jewelers,  
Greenwich

# Wendy Block and Vicki Craver, Impact Fairfield County

## **Where did you grow up and go to school?**

WB: I grew up in Scarsdale and went to University of Michigan and Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

VC: I grew up in Winston-Salem, NC. I attended UNC-Chapel Hill where I met my husband Dave when we were both seniors.

## **Tell us about your occupation - present and/or past.**

WB: I practiced law for 5 years in New York City. During law school and at the beginning of my career, I founded and helped run an organization that served underprivileged children. I enjoyed this work so much that I changed careers and devoted myself to the nonprofit sector.

VC: I was a chemistry major and worked in a lab for a few years after college. Then I went back to business school at Dartmouth and changed to a career on Wall Street. I was a corporate bond trader at Goldman Sachs until we started a family.

## **Tell us about your family.**

WB: I am one of three girls and my sisters and parents all live within 45 minutes from us. I met my husband Jason while waiting for a table at Blue Ribbon, our favorite restaurant in NYC, a few years after law school. We have three children Tyler (15), Kyle (11), and Ellie (8).

VC: I'm also one of three girls, and Dave and I have three children - also all girls -- Katie (13), Ainsley (10), and Eliza (7). My sisters and I are very close and our families spend holidays and vacations together.

## **Hobbies and interests.**

WB: My interests include exercise, art, reading, traveling, food and wine. I have always been involved in community service and philanthropy and consider that my primary passion.

VC: I love feeling fit, working out, running, and biking. Those are my stress outlets! I try to get outdoors as much as possible. We also love to travel. I think visiting other countries creates empathy, and, of course, is a lot of fun.

## **How did you land in Greenwich?**

WB: Although I grew up in Westchester, I was not familiar with Greenwich. My husband and I were looking to move out of NYC when our son was a toddler. We got lost leaving a party in Purchase and found ourselves driving around Greenwich. We became enamored with the town's beauty, incredible amenities, and great school options. We moved here in December 2002.

VC: As newlyweds, we lived in NYC and Dave did the reverse commute out to Greenwich, so when we decided to move out of the city, Greenwich was an easy choice. It is a beautiful place.

## **Tell us about your philanthropic work - past and present.**

WB: During law school I helped to found New York Benefit and Aid Committee for Kids. Our mission was to raise funds to support small nonprofits serving children throughout NYC. Our largest contributions went toward a scholarship fund we created to support children who went on to college from an alternative high school in Harlem. From there, I became the Director of Development for the Beginning with Children Foundation, an educational nonprofit that now operates several charter schools in Brooklyn and has been at the forefront of the charter school movement in NYC. After 3 years at BwCF, I began to work with the organization's founders, Joe and Carol Reich, on their own philanthropy and their family foundation, the Pumpkin Foundation. Over the next 8 years, I assisted the Reich's with the grant review process and distribution.

My husband and I support a variety of organizations, but have a particular focus in education. We have sponsored three students to attend parochial high schools, and provided mentor support along the way through Student Sponsor Partners and Shepherds, Inc. For the past four years, I have served as a volunteer and Board Treasurer for Stamford Academy Charter School, a high school managed by DOMUS in Stamford that educates the city's most troubled teens.

VC: My first real experience with non-profit work was as a board member at Liberation Programs, the substance abuse agency. The dedication



of their staff and the success of the many clients who had turned their lives around made a deep impression on me. I had the opportunity to be involved with the issues that all organizations face at some point: strategic planning, an executive director search, and rebranding. It was a fantastic learning experience and a great way to understand some of the problems facing Fairfield County residents.

Another group that stole my heart early on was the Fund for Women and Girls at Fairfield County's Community Foundation. The concept of women helping other women really speaks to me. In particular, the women involved with creating and building FWG are so impressive. FWG taught me about grant making and how to be an effective funder. I learned about systemic change and creating models for success.

My involvement with FWG grew into a deeper relationship with Fairfield County's Community Foundation and I have just finished my term as board chair. FCCF is an important backbone for the county's nonprofits. There is enormous wealth here, but also extreme poverty. FCCF is doing amazing work supporting nonprofits and developing pathways to real change.

**Tell us about your partnership and what lead you to start Impact.**

WB: In April 2014, I was introduced to the Impact model through a friend who is a member of Impact 100 Westchester. When I learned that I could not participate because I did not live in Westchester, I decided to find a similar collective giving circle in Fairfield County. After finding that nothing like this existed here, I became determined to bring the model to our community.

Vicki and I have known each other since we both came to Greenwich. Over the years, I had attended the Fund For Women in Girls Luncheons to support the important work they do and celebrate Vicki's leadership. I also knew that Vicki was serving as the FCCF Board President and that she would be a great resource for Impact Fairfield County. We met to discuss creating Impact Fairfield County and became partners in this journey!

What led us to start Impact Fairfield County was our desire to cultivate a collective of women in our community to engage in local philanthropy on a deeper level. By pooling our funds to give large grants to local nonprofits, we can help to make a transformational change in the organizations and the people they serve.

VC: When Wendy told me about the Impact model, I was hooked. The idea of collective giving is so compelling, and I loved the range of opportunities for involvement. We are excited to get women involved in the grant making process.

**In your experience, which fundraising efforts work/don't work?**

WB: The fundraising efforts that work best are those with leaders who have a true passion and vision and are able to clearly articulate the mission. In those instances, the stories of success generally sell themselves.

VC: When people feel that they are part of something larger and can see the impact that their money makes on others' lives, they then have a meaningful connection to their philanthropy. We hope Impact Fairfield County will provide that connection by transforming the work of local

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nonprofits with large (\$100,000) grants and making our members part of the grant making process.

**Are your children involved with nonprofits?**

WB: All three of my children participate in volunteering and fundraising. When Tyler, my oldest, was in middle school, he was a tutor and mentor in the afterschool program at the Trailblazers Middle School (managed by DOMUS in Stamford). Now that he is in high school he tutors at the Waterside School, an independent elementary school for low-income, minority students in Stamford. He was also one of the founding members of the Teen Action Center of the JCC of Greenwich. My two younger children, Kyle and Ellie, have volunteered serving lunch for the elderly, collecting school supplies and putting together back packs for low income children, and hosting numerous lemonade stands for their favorite charities (including Impact Fairfield County!).

VC: Our daughters have been very interested in Impact Fairfield County, and have enjoyed hearing about the Fund for Women and Girls. They each receive a small allowance and we have them reserve one-third to donate to a charity of their choice.

**Do you have any role models for your philanthropic work?**

WB: My parents are tremendous role models. My father has spent his career at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. Not only has he provided medical care with compassion and dedication for the past 45 years, he has had a policy of treating patients regardless of their ability to pay. My mother has been involved in volunteering and philanthropy my entire life. She's held leadership positions in numerous organizations. She instituted several programs, including a tutorial/reading program and a birthday gift-giving program at a homeless shelter and food bank where she has volunteered weekly.

Joe and Carol Reich have also served as incredible mentors. Working with them for 11 years was an honor. I used to quip that every day I went to work I got the privilege of basking in their halo. Their entrepreneurial approach to giving and their commitment to supporting those less fortunate in the community has become the foundation of my philanthropic approach.

VC: From an early age, my parents made sure that my sisters and I were aware of the needs all around us, and that we had a responsibility to those less fortunate. Once I moved to Greenwich, I was lucky to be introduced to opportunities for community involvement by Sue Mandel. Sue, as well as many board and staff members I have met along the way, taught me a lot about accountability and responsibility in philanthropic work. One of my early mentors, Ed Pollak, who passed away last summer, taught me the importance of having a business mentality to be more effective in nonprofit work. And, of course, Juanita James of Fairfield County's Community Foundation does so much work with so much joy and is a fantastic people connector; that allows FCCF to get people around the table to address issues.

One of the big things I have enjoyed about my nonprofit involvement is the opportunity to meet and work with a much wider range of people and personalities than I otherwise would have.

For more information about Impact Fairfield County, please visit: <http://www.impactffc.org/>

