

## James Barry III

President and CEO, Barry Company  
Member since August 1994

It would be a tall order to find someone with a stronger sense of civic duty than Jim Barry.

Jim, a tireless force for good in Milwaukee, has served in distinguished roles with community and philanthropic organizations including the Milwaukee Public Museum, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee, and the American Red Cross of Southeast Wisconsin, to name a few. He is vice chairman of the Bradley Foundation and is currently finishing his term as president of the Milwaukee Club.

Born and raised in Whitefish Bay as the oldest of four children, Jim's devotion to Milwaukee was fostered at an early age. He fondly recalls attending Rotary zoo picnics with his father, who was also a Rotarian. His parents impressed upon him the importance of serving one's community, an ethos in keeping with his family's strong Catholic faith.



Inspired by childhood visions of fighting the Cold War, Jim studied government and law, first at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and later at the University of Chicago Law School, where he was editor-in-Chief of the Law Review. After law school, Jim served as a law clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and worked as an attorney at Foley & Lardner, where he practiced in the real estate and corporate finance departments.



Jim and his siblings left Milwaukee as young adults but their affinity for their hometown eventually led them to return. Jim and two of his brothers work in their family's commercial real estate business where Jim has been the president and CEO for more than 25 years. While he didn't initially see himself in the family business, Jim feels the intellectual challenge of studying the law, solving complicated problems and finding an effective solution prepared him well for the role. The company has thrived under his leadership, winning the Commercial Association of Realtors-Wisconsin "Deal of the Year" award more than 20 times. The first year the company won the award was one of Jim's most memorable projects: the sale of a million-square-foot Briggs & Stratton building to Harley-Davidson.

Jim resides on the Eastside with his wife Nora and their four children: Joan, 18; Jimmy, 16; Ellen 14; and Danny, 12. When asked how his children would describe him, Barry smiles and says, "As a benevolent dictator." He and Nora enjoy traveling with their family and recently journeyed to Ireland to visit Nora's father's family home and reconnect with relatives. Jim also ranks Paris high on his travel list, along with Switzerland for skiing. One of his most memorable trips was a visit to Israel to the Holy Land.

While he projects the gravitas of an elder statesman, Jim is also an adventurer with a keen sense of humor. He takes his commitments seriously but he also knows how to enjoy life and have some fun. Just ask him about the time he went ice wind surfing or when he ran with the bulls in Pamplona shortly after the birth of his fourth child.

It's no small feat to be a dedicated family man, steer a successful business and serve with several community organizations. In fact, Jim's devotion to Milwaukee brings to mind the saying, "If you want to get something done, ask a busy person to do it." Along with being guided by his faith, Jim is motivated by service to family, community, and country. As a proud Milwaukeean, he lauds the city's splendid architecture and cites city hall and the county courthouse as some of the finest civic buildings in the country and refers to the Basilica of St. Josephat as one of Milwaukee's hidden gems.

Jim, who served as Rotary Club of Milwaukee president from 2007-2008, said one of the most rewarding aspects of his term was launching the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum project. Prior to his term, Rotary had completed a major project every five years or so, mostly at the president's designation. Jim helped establish an organized process by which Rotarians could nominate and select a project to pursue with the goal of thinking bigger about the club's community involvement beyond financial funding. He's proud that in addition to the arboretum, runner-up projects such as the Brown Street Academy and Rotary Scholarships also came to fruition.

"I have great fondness for Milwaukee. Rotary is one of the great foundational parts of our community. I'm honored to be a part of it."



**Editor's Note:** *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Elizabeth Evans Draper.