

Pillars of the Community

*Read the stories behind
some of the dynamic duos
who make Brunswick
a great place to live.*

When it comes to the livelihood of any community, people often serve as the pillars holding it up. Take a look at a few civic-minded dynamic duos within the Brunswick community.

Robert & Phyllis Siedler

Phyllis Siedler's father was a coal miner and would get laid off in the summer. In turn, her family would get fed what was then referred to as surplus food, which is now USDA food.

Robert's father died when he was 9 years old, and to make do his family lived off of powdered milk, powdered eggs and similar items.

And so, for Robert and Phyllis, their involvement in Brunswick Food Pantry is all about paying it forward from the times when they needed similar services in their youth.

"We both benefited from this when we were kids," says Phyllis. "When we retired, our plan was just to volunteer once a month, but the way it looks we're running this place."

The couple didn't intend on running the organization when Phyllis began volunteering after she retired from Columbia Gas of Ohio in 2000 or when Robert joined her when he retired from PPG Industry in 2009. They inherited the operation of the Brunswick Food Pantry after the previous director passed away.

BY SARAH WEBB
PHOTOS BY KEN BLAZE



Robert & Phyllis Siedler



Dave & Diane Wiant



Jack Young &
Marsha Pappalardo

To keep the organization up and running, the couple places orders from Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, sorts through donations from local organizations, coordinates delivery times, puts stock away, coordinates the food pantry's 50-plus volunteers, cleans the area, updates the pantry's system in which it enters clients, ensures the pantry follows government guidelines and coordinates the pickup windows on Tuesdays for those who utilize the pantry's services.

The couple is quick to acknowledge that the Brunswick Food Pantry wouldn't exist without the support of the local grocery stores and churches, as well as the Brunswick Athletic Training Building, where the food pantry is located, Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and the Feeding Medina County organization.

The couple also recognizes the openhandedness of the Brunswick community.

For more information on how, what and when to donate, visit brunswickpantry.org.

Dave & Diane Wiant

Thirty-three years ago, Dave and Diane Wiant made a momentous change in their lives by opening up Wiant Jewelers at 3511 Center Road in Brunswick. The couple has been there ever since, serving as co-owners of the store.

"We decided that we wanted to live where we owned our business," Diane says. "It's a bigger community but still has a small-town feel. I know most of the people who come in to shop with us."

But the jeweler has expanded its reach throughout the years to also offer watches, collectibles and fine china.

Although Diane admits that working together was one of the hardest things the couple ever had to learn to do, they now run the business seamlessly after discovering they needed to divide up the duties.

After studying at the Gemological Institute of America and gaining important industry experience, Dave opted to focus on repairs and creating custom jewelry, which has since grown to be about 30-35 percent of the company's business.

"Over the past few years, the business has really taken off," Dave points out. "It's either customers bringing in their old stones and having us reset them or having us create something new."

Working in tandem with Dave, Diane does the jewelry selection and buying, researches the latest, yet timeless, trends, and works the front of the store to sell the jewelry at affordable prices.

"We've both been community active over the years. We'll help out with anyone who asks for anything," Diane says. "There have been a lot of little local things we were involved with over the years, and most of the people know us. Some of them have been church things, some have been charity things."

Within the Brunswick community, the couple is active in the Rotary Club of Brunswick, St. Colette Catholic Church,



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— Marsha Pappalardo



Northern Medina County Chamber Alliance and Eagles. Dave was also involved in the Knights of Columbus and has coached youth baseball.

As far as charities go, Diane says the couple has participated in organizations such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation and Hands Across Medina County Foundation.

"Very seldom does someone come in for help and a donation and we can't help," Diane says.

Jack Young & Marsha Pappalardo

Jack Young, past district governor of the Rotary District 6630 and past president of the Conneaut Rotary Club, and Marsha Pappalardo, past president of the Rotary Club of Brunswick, have collaborated as team members of Rotary Club of Brunswick for about 15 years.

"We do a lot of the stuff together and back each other up on what needs to get

done," Pappalardo says, recalling a recent time in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic when the Brunswick Food Pantry put out a call for supplies, and she and Young worked together on behalf of Rotary Club of Brunswick, with Pappalardo stopping at the store and filling up her car and Young delivering the supplies to the food pantry at the time the organization would be stocking its shelves.

"It's nice to have that community of people, and we have it more so within each other to step up before we have to step outside [of our organization]," she says.

Young points out one of the strengths of Brunswick is the willingness of people to work together when an opportunity of service presents itself.

"It's been very rewarding to see people really coming together," Young says. "It's [about] working together with other service organizations. It's not working against each other in competition. We all serve in different ways to accomplish things in the community."

Pappalardo adds that the Rotary Club of Brunswick recently donated money to Saint Ambrose so that it could put new doors on its classrooms on the first floor. "It didn't matter that it was a parochial school, it was still children from our area that needed to be protected, and we had the funds to do that," she says.

Plus, the pair is actively involved in a variety of other organizations. For example, they're currently on the international board of directors for organizations affiliated with the Rotary such as Shelter Box, a disaster relief organization that provides shelter for those who have lost everything in a disaster. "We sent 32,000 shelter boxes to Haiti back in 2010," Young says.

Young is also on the board of directors for American Nicaragua Hope and Relief Foundation and is on the board of directors for Fellowship of Scouting Rotarians. He's been president of the board of the Ohio State Mental Health Association and some other boards serving the community.

Pappalardo was involved with the Women's Endowment Fund for six years and has served in various other charitable organizations in Brunswick and throughout Medina County.

"We should be giving back to the community in which we live," Pappalardo says. "We're blessed in Brunswick where so many people feel that way. Brunswick is that type of community. You might not know everybody in town but everybody is part of your family."