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## **Berger Family Foundation Pledges \$500,000 to Lincolnwood School District 74 Over Next Decade**

December 1, 2022

Earlier in the school year, the District received an unexpected and wonderful communication from SD74 alumnus, Barry Berger. Mr. Berger was born in Lincolnwood and is the youngest of four children born to Pearl and Jerome Berger. All four children graduated from Lincoln Hall, Barry is a member of the Class of 1968. Upon graduation from Niles West, Barry moved to Phoenix and attended Mesa Community College and transferred to Arizona State University, graduating in 1976 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business.

After graduating from ASU, Barry moved to Los Angeles and started working for a radiology company that provided nuclear medicine and ultrasound services to hospitals. At the age of 26, he ventured out on his own in 1980 to open up a home care company called Accredited Home Health. Throughout the years, Accredited grew by providing skilled and unskilled home health care services to the senior and developmentally disabled population. Today, Accredited still provides skilled home health care including nursing, physical, occupation and speech therapy and assists individuals with their daily activities of living.

Barry's wife, Taffy Steinfeld-Berger, was born in the Bronx, New York. She is the oldest child of Rita and Marvin Steinfeld. Taffy grew up in Oceanside, NY where she attended school. She moved to New Jersey and graduated from Teaneck High School. Upon graduation from high school, Taffy enrolled at Boston University, where she graduated with a degree in Art.

Taffy moved to Los Angeles in 1974, met Barry in 1984, and they married in 1985. Upon their marriage, Taffy left her job to join Barry in trying to grow the business that was started five years earlier. She oversaw the weekly payroll which consisted of about 100 employees along with managing the general operations of providing quality home health care services to the community. Her responsibilities increased as the company grew throughout

the years. She assisted in public relations, marketing, along with her other functions. She grew to be a leader in Accredited's growth and was responsible for its success.

The Berger's saw an opportunity to retire and sell the business in 2021. Accredited was sold on November 30, 2021 to a publicly traded company. At the end, Accredited serviced over 10,000 clients per month and employed 2,500 per week.

The Bergers are very grateful for what they have achieved. They built a business by treating people honestly and with respect. One of their biggest joys was watching their staff grow and achieve their goals. They had over 120 people working in the offices when they sold, and the majority of them were with Accredited for over 10 years, many exceeding 20 years.

Taffy and Barry decided to set up a charitable foundation upon their retirement. Upon thinking whom to donate to, the first group consisted of those in their roots. The Bergers decided along with "paying it forward," they would "pay it backwards." Barry's recollections of growing up in Lincolnwood and attending Lincolnwood Schools and Niles West brings up fond memories. From being Camper of the Year at the \$3.00 per summer camp hosted by Lincolnwood Recreation in 1963 to attending the bonfire at the Halloween Party at the park, to the friends he made in Lincolnwood and Niles West, he could not imagine a better way to spend his youth.

As a means to demonstrate his great appreciation for the upbringing and education he received from the Lincolnwood community and schools, Barry and Taffy have pledged a donation totaling \$500,000 over the next ten years to the District. The first \$50,000 donation is being accepted at tonight's Board meeting. In the coming years, funds will be allocated to projects that are already on the District's Master Facilities Plan; as well as opening up the possibilities to campus improvements that will continue to make facilities more accessible and renovated for the benefit and enjoyment of students, staff and the community alike. We are so appreciative of and thankful for the Berger's donation! We look forward to partnering with them over the next decade!