



“The People are what I love most. All different races and religions sharing their cultures and traditions.”

TARA BARTON



Volunteer Spotlight

...The Bartons

■ **Bobby Kittel**, *Communications and Events Manager*

When you first hear “Tara and Jerry”, you might ask yourself, is this a new sitcom? Did Netflix produce this? They look familiar, what else have they been in? Don’t look to imdb, just keep reading, because you have seen them serving in many roles around the community of South Riding.

Queue the intro music circa 2003 when Tara and Jerry, The Bartons, moved to SR. That was 18 years ago, wow, is time flying by! That’s the same age as their eldest daughter, Eileen, who is closely followed by Kevin at age 16. Tara, who is originally from Long Island, NY moved to VA during her childhood, graduated from Paul VI High School then met Jerry at Frostburg State University in Maryland. Hailing from Edmonds, WA originally, Jerry’s father, a Captain in the Coast Guard, moved the family to Maryland when Jerry was 3 years old.

Tara and Jerry had their sights set on South Riding as Tara already had an “in” with the community, her parents, Bill & Mary, and brother were already living in and loving South Riding. Tara was eager to raise newborn Eileen in a beautiful town of people that Tara has loved the most. Citing different races, cultures and traditions, they love this community and just recently danced in an Indian wedding celebration a few houses down.

While yes, our lead actors were integrated into the community with their love for people, it actually started with volunteering, not just being a great neighbor. Tara volunteered as a cheerleading coach and since moved to the football board (she’s a huge fan) in part to Kevin’s success, oh yeah, you can see Kevin this season as Freedom’s Varsity

Quarterback! Jerry has donated blood over 50 times with Inova and the Red Cross...now that is an episode on repeat, queue the music again, twice as fast!

So, where do you recognize them from? Cheerleading? Football? Blood drives? Oh no, that’s just the “flashback” sequence in our show of these Unicorn Lane dwellers. Tara, though you don’t know, has been one of our Easter bunnies for years, even roping in Eileen as her handler, it’s a family matter! She started originally working a wine tent at an event to meet neighbors, soon bringing in Jerry to assist as she had such a blast making friends. That was over 11 years ago and they are still going strong volunteering at every tent since. But wait there’s more! They also can be seen at National Night out, Kevin handing out popsicles, or all together handing out candy for Halloween and then ending the year with, once again, Tara, as a mascot of a famous red nosed reindeer during the holidays.

“Jerry! You gotta see this” shouted a Kramer like individual. Except this wasn’t Kramer, it was a calling to join the Neighborhood Watch, where our Jerry has volunteered for over 10 years. Serving as both Chair and Vice Chair over the years. What better way to bond with your father-in-law as Jerry is partnered with Bill of the famous Bill & Mary, the early settlers of South Riding that inspired our T n’ J to move here in the first place.

Normally, we would say, “that’s all folks” but that is not how this season of Volunteer Spotlight ends. Here is a big thanks and cheers to you, Bartons, the family that is always there for a loving open armed hug.