



Photo Melissa Hartung

SPOTLIGHT ON BARBARA LOWENSTEIN 15 YEARS OF FUN IN THE SUN

One could call Barbara Lowenstein a pioneer. Or perhaps a master of turning ideas into action – ideas that, to some, might seem colossal and impossible. And yet, Barbara makes it all seem effortless.

Barbara Lowenstein began her career as an editor for a small paperback publishing house. Because she enjoyed working with writers so much, she got the idea to combine her well-honed editing skills with her natural sales ability to open her own literary agency. With about 20 writers on board, Barbara took the leap and created Lowenstein Associates in 1976. Over 30 years later, Lowenstein Associates represents more than 100 writers and is still a growing business.

In the early 1990s, Barbara purchased a summer house on Long Island's famous South Shore beach community Fire Island. At the same time, Barbara had a friend who volunteered at Ronald McDonald House of New York and had the opportunity to hear stories about the children

and families in residence. She was so touched by how much it meant to her friend, she suggested having a little barbeque for the children. It was 1994 when she first opened the doors to her beach house for that little barbeque and has kept them open to our families ever since. "It's changed my life," Barbara says. "I recall one of the mothers grabbing my hand on the way out one year thanking me for making her feel normal for the first time since her child was diagnosed with cancer. It's made me aware of how important health is. I admire these parents so much."

That one mother's sentiment has been the reality for the hundreds of other families Barbara has hosted from all over the world. "It's a great learning experience for me," she says. "I met a wonderful woman from New Guinea. Since I'd been to New Guinea, it was interesting to learn about how she'd come to New York. Meeting the families each year is the most meaningful part of it for me. You learn so much. You learn about the health programs of



other countries and generally, get a whole new sense of the world we live in."

Over the years, the event has grown to the point of earning the reputation as the highlight of the House's summer festivities. "The first year we went, we rented two vans and drove out with about 25 people," says Rich Block, an RMDH of NY staff member. "Now it's so big, we have to rent a big bus. Barbara has the local firemen and policemen waiting to pick us up from the ferry and take us to her house. And she's even gotten the ferry company to donate the ferry tickets. She has the entire community involved."

According to Barbara, the kids arrive at about 10:00 AM and by the time the firemen and policemen drive them to the house, they're hungry and cooking begins immediately. "We spend a lot of time cooking and the kids spend a lot of time eating," she laughs. "We have a huge table on the deck covered with food and watermelons. My neighbor Steve Rosenthal does charcoal portraits of the kids. He sets up the minute they get there and stays until they leave. The kids play on the beach and the time just flies."

Melissa Hartung has attended with her family the last few years. "We love going," she says. She's so friendly and makes you feel so welcome, like you can relax. It's fantastic to open your whole house to all of these families."

"She has so many of her friends involved," Rich Block says. "And there's football, volleyball, boat rides, a portrait artist, we build sand castles – whatever you can think of, she's already thought of it. She's busy cooking and doling out ice cream all day but she takes the time to talk to the kids. She thinks about the families and the House throughout the year."

"When it's time to leave, I hand out pops and wave goodbye," Barbara says. "I want people to know that I love doing this and I could keep doing it forever. It gives me a great feeling and I'm thrilled that it's lasted so long."

