



"The Long Island Community Foundation staff worked closely with me to create a fund specifically tailored to our goal of enhancing our community"

Actor **Billy Baldwin** and childhood pals pledge to raise \$1 million for the town they grew up in

hometown heroes

By Jenny Peters Photos by Danny Turner

It all started with a small idea. Actor Billy Baldwin, the third of the acting clan of four Baldwin brothers, wanted to give a little something back to Massapequa, the Long Island, New York, community where he grew up and where his father was a high school civics teacher and football coach for more than 30 years.

So the initial concept was a simple one. Why not create a scholarship fund at Massapequa High School, where Alexander Baldwin, Sr., taught for so many years?

Billy and his famous brothers (actors Alec, Daniel, and Stephen) didn't actually go to Massapequa High School, but it just seemed right to set up the scholarship there. And while none of the family still lives in

Supporters of the Massapequa Community Fund include (clockwise) Billy Baldwin, Martin Voigt, Patrick O'Rourke, Maureen Gilligan, Chris Bevilacqua, Eileen Minogue, Bob Gannon, Jim O'Rourke, John Kirby.

Massapequa (there are two Baldwin sisters, too), their roots go deep there, and the friendships they made as children are still integral to their lives.

"I was a lifeguard on Long Island with all these guys that I'm doing this [fund] with now," Billy says. "Chris Bevilacqua is my best friend since birth. He was the best man at my wedding, and he's the godfather of my firstborn. His father was a phys ed teacher and wrestling coach, and my father was a civics teacher and football coach."

Jim O'Rourke, a computer software executive, has known Billy since 7th grade and was a big fan of his dad, too. Besides teaching and coaching, "he was also a guy that kept us, pretty much, out of jail! He

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Massapequa Community Fund founders Chris Bevilacqua, Billy Baldwin, and Jim O'Rourke

Foundation a non-for-profit organization that administers charitable funds.

It's going so well, that the fund has already disbursed scholarships to graduating seniors from Massapequa High School, scholarships named in the honor of Alexander Baldwin, Sr., as well as four local firefighters—Daniel O'Callaghan, George Cain, and brothers Tom and Tim Haskell—who died in the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11.

And there's much more to come, according

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would open the high school gym on weekends and some weeknights and essentially baby-sit us and prevent us from killing each other. And at the same time keep us off the streets."

These deep friendships helped morph Billy's original idea of setting up a scholarship fund in his dad's name into a full-fledged fund to benefit the community.

"The notion was very simple," agrees Chris, a media executive. "There were all these people, not just the four of us. We could each think of a list of 50 or 100 people we knew who felt [the way we did] about Massapequa and felt compelled to give back. So we set a goal to raise \$1 million and create a fund with other people who wanted to do something about it."

The result is the Massapequa Community Fund, in the Long Island Community

to Billy, including donations to the local historical society and community counseling center, among others. "We've got several \$25,000 contributions from a handful of high rollers to \$300, \$100, and even a bunch of \$20 and \$50 ones, which will certainly add up," he says happily.

Billy suggests that anyone who feels connected to their hometown, regardless of where they now find themselves, consider doing the same sort of thing for the place that shaped their lives.

"It's a way to be around people you grew up with and care about. It brings you back to your roots and gets you reacquainted with the place you grew up," Billy says. "It's been a great homecoming for me; I can't tell you how much fun it has been."