

## Industry unites to provide support for Barry family

BY RUSSELL VACLAVIK  
Special to THE WHOLESALER

I have known Bob Barry for more than 10 years now, and he is the nicest, most professional man you could ever meet. Bob is the general manager of R&R Plumbing Supply Corp. in Worcester, Mass. In December 2005, Bob and his wife Beth received the terrible diagnosis that Beth has ALS, which is terminal. There is no cure for ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). This disease is merciless in its attack on the body. ALS attacks the muscles until you can no longer do simple things such as swallow, but it leaves the brain fully intact so you are completely aware of what is happening to you. It is a horrible, slow death and most often affects people in their mid-50s.

Unfortunately, the suffering is compounded by the fact that insurance expenses incurred. This disease not only robs you of life together just when



Bob Barry (right) and his daughter Samantha discuss the event with a well-wisher.

you are thinking about retirement, but will completely drain your finances and personal assets as well. Surviving family members are not only devastated by the loss of a loved one, but are in financial ruin as well.

Bob and Beth and their daughter Samantha got involved with a charity called Compassionate Care ALS, which they call their angel. In addition to providing moral support and comfort throughout this battle the families undertake, CCALS helps cover the cost of many necessary items. The group is currently working with more than 150 families.

CCALS also provides support and emotional assistance for caregivers of ALS patients. This organization has been the single biggest help to the Barry family.

I couldn't just make a donation to the cause — I wanted to do more for the family. Bob is the first person who would want to step up and do something for those in need. So I decided to put together a fundraiser for the Barrys. The event was held on February 8 at the Sheraton in Framingham, Mass. I received help from many different places and people, but the two major contributors were the Compassionate Care ALS staff and industry veteran Brad Sell (who is fighting his own mortality with terminal prostate cancer).

We had live music from local singer Sharon Zaffaro and a video journal of the Barry family, along with both silent and live auctions. Former Boston Red Sox pitcher Bill Lee came for the event and gave a speech to the group. He truly lives up to the name of "Spaceman." The industry turned out in full support. Many wholesalers, reps and manufacturers from all over New England chipped in any way they could help. Some donated money and others donated auction items. More than 100 industry people came to the event, bid on auction items and bought raffle tickets. I was never more proud to be a member of this industry. The support was amazing.

The big event for the night was the live auction. One of Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling's and his wife Shonda's charities is ALS, and their support was

amazing. Curt and Shonda donated an autographed baseball, a picture of Curt, a couple of hats and the big items for the night — three sets of the Schillings' personal tickets to a game and an autographed Curt Schilling #38 jersey. The tickets went for \$750 a set and the jersey went for \$1,000. Shonda attended the

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event with her best friend and her mother and father; unfortunately, Curt was preparing for spring training and unable to attend. Shonda Schilling and Bill Lee stayed for the entire night and participated fully in the auctions, entertainment and photo opportunities.

When all was said and done, we were able — with the help and generosity of many people — to raise more than \$22,000 for the Barry family. This allowed the Barrys to purchase a special van they needed to make life more comfortable while transporting Beth around, as well as some other needed items. The van has been modified to meet Beth's

where loneliness and despair can mount quite quickly. Visits to Beth's doctors, therapists, friends and family are now much easier and enjoyable for this wonderful woman who can only find pleasure in moments and in the memories of days not long ago when her young body worked as it should without pain.

The fundraiser also raised additional



Russell Vaclavik with Shonda Schilling (in white), her mother and best friend.

### A personal message from Bob Barry

Following the event, Bob Barry wanted to extend his personal message to all those who supported him and his family:

"Our industry family has come through for our family as families do! Many know of our battle at home with ALS. My wife Beth is in a battle for her life with this disease, and it is devastating for her and her family. The finances associated with this battle are thousands per month for added home care, equipment, supplements, diet — all things that insurance does not cover.

"Our friends in the industry received a plea from our family last fall and responded quickly and generously. We had the fundraising event in February, which was a huge success with help coming from friends, family, industry, Compassionate Care ALS, Bill Lee and the Curt Schilling family.

"Russ Vaclavik of Watertown

Supply in Massachusetts decided last fall to produce this outstanding fundraiser for our family. Russ not only gave us funds raised by the event but allowed our family to be comforted during a night of information, tragedy, generosity and celebration all at the same time. It was truly a night of many emotions.

"Thank yous from a very grateful family go out to Russ, Ron Hoffman, executive vice president of Compassionate Care ALS, and to you — all of our WHIC industry friends, family, partners and associates — for helping to promote our cause and for helping us to move forward with an energized spirit and commitment for Beth's comfort on this journey. We were ill-prepared for this, but now are emboldened and strengthened, thanks to you. Please know that you will always have our love and prayers."



Bob Barry (left) with Shonda Schilling and the winning bidder (\$1,000) on the Curt Schilling jersey.

funds for Compassionate Care ALS.

I was truly honored to be able to help the Barrys and was proud of the way this industry turned out to support and help. Hopefully, with support such as we saw for this event, ALS will one day be a thing of the past. Anyone interested in helping contribute to the Barry Family Fund may still send tax-deductible donations to Compassionate Care ALS, P.O. Box 1052, West Falmouth, MA 02574. More information is available by calling CCALS at 508/563-3677, e-mailing info@compassionatecareals.org or visiting [www.compassionatecareals.org](http://www.compassionatecareals.org).

*(Editor's Note: At presstime, we were informed that Beth Barry passed away on May 11. Our sincere condolences to her family and all who knew her.)*