

NapervilleSun

From The Top: Carrie Buddingh earns Influential Woman award

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For Naperville resident Carrie Buddingh, the moment to shine has already arrived at the age of just 33. Buddingh was selected one of 15 local executives honored at the 17th annual Influential Women In Business Awards event early in November at NIU Naperville.

Buddingh is an associate attorney for the Bellock & Coogan firm in Oak Brook, where she has worked since 2010. Before that, she was employed in Naperville by the Gierach Law firm, where she worked from 2007 to 2010.

“I took a class called ‘American Problems in Law’ at Naperville Central ... and it really engaged me and was one of those classes where I did all my homework,” Buddingh recalled. “For the final exam, we had to do a mock trial, and at the end of it, there was a hung jury. I remember (the teacher) talking to me out in the hall afterward and telling me that the ‘hung’ jury meant there were no winners or losers, but that in terms of being an attorney, he believed I had found my calling — and I did.”

Buddingh’s award as an Influential Woman in Business has little to do with law, however. Her commitment to her community through her professional and volunteer work made her stand out. She is the president of the United Way DuPage/West Cook, which serves a population of about 1.5 million people.

“I’m the youngest person ever to serve in this position, which is kind of amazing,” Buddingh said with modesty. “When the United Way groups here merged, people wanted there to be a ‘voice’ for Naperville in the merger, and my name kept being brought up. People told me I kind of filled a unique niche and had a voice that would be heard at this level.”

Natasha Bonomo, vice president of wealth management at Northern Trust in Naperville, says she isn’t surprised by the recognition that has come Buddingh’s way.

“I’ve known Carrie as well as her parents for some time, and I know she was raised by them to be an active person in the community,” Bonomo said. “A lot of people join organizations and then sit back and don’t participate. Carrie is one of those people willing to roll her sleeves up, and she has wisdom beyond her years. She is able to understand the big picture and is able to bring the Naperville focus into her role as president.”



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Buddingh admits “people often think I’m older than I am” and said that being involved in community service was indeed part of her upbringing.

“The first time I did volunteer work here in Naperville, I worked at the Hased House when I was about 8 years old,” she said. “I have a passion for my community having lived here since I was 3. I live by the idea that says ‘to whom much is given, much is expected,’ and as far as overseeing an organization that serves so many people, I guess I found my ‘voice’ early.”

Buddingh has served on the Board of Directors for the United Way since 2010, in addition to working as chair of the Volunteer Outreach Committee. She also has served on the executive committee as secretary and vice chair before becoming president.

The long-time Naperville resident said she has no plans to live anywhere else.

“This is home and is where I’ve grown up and put down roots,” she said. “I don’t ever plan on leaving as this is where my family, neighbors and my business connections are. Naperville is a unique bubble, and it’s home.”