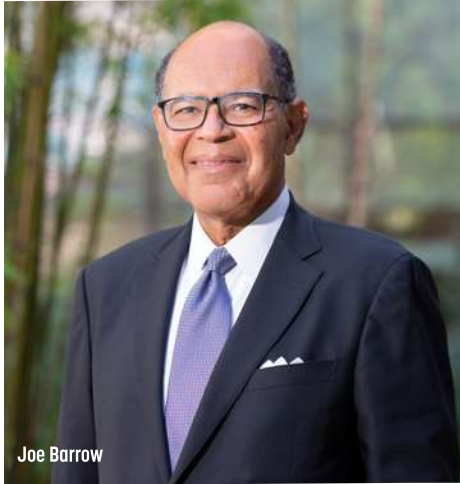


# Joe Barrow takes the governance helm of Baptist Health

## *He's not your average Joe*

BY MARY WANSEER  
Resident Community News



Baptist Health has named Joe Louis Barrow Jr. as chair of the system board of directors for the next two years. He began his service on the Baptist Health board nearly two decades ago, filling a variety of leadership roles. He is also a member of the inaugural board of Baptist Medical Center Clay. "I am pleased, proud, and privileged to take on the chair role," he said. In viewing the long and winding road that led Barrow here, it is clear that he is not your average Joe.

"I'm a pretty quiet guy," Barrow said, which is why many people who know him don't

know that he's the son of the Brown Bomber, the world champion heavyweight boxer of the 1930s and 1940s. People don't make the connection between the father and son's names. When the boxer was signing up for the 1933 Golden Gloves trophy, his full name, Joe Louis Barrow, didn't fit on the registration card. So, his last name was dropped from the cup, and it simply read "Joe Louis."

Unlike his father, Barrow did not enter the boxing ring. With his father's encouragement, Barrow entered the classroom instead. Barrow's stepfather, Dr. Albert Spaulding, a medical doctor in Chicago, also influenced him toward education and, later, to enter service at Baptist.

Barrow attended private school in Chicago and graduated from the University of Denver with a degree in political science with his sights set on becoming a congressman. But instead, while pursuing a career with The United Bank of Denver, he had the opportunity to work for a time in Washington, DC as part of the president's executive exchange program. "I've done a lot," Barrow admitted.

Upon his return to Denver, Barrow worked for IZZO Systems, Inc., the company that designed the dual-strap mechanism for golf bags. He served as president and COO there, directing operations both domestically and internationally. "Golf has made a difference in my life," he said. Both of Barrow's fathers introduced him to golf at a very young age. And his biological father, as an ex-heavyweight champ, became the first Black golfer to play a PGA-sponsored tournament back in 1952.

Following in his fathers' footsteps, Barrow used to play a lot of golf. He still will play an occasional nine-hole round.

He moved from Denver to Jacksonville in 2000, selecting Avondale as his first home here. He had chosen Jacksonville over the gated communities of Ponte Vedra with their winding roads and cul-de-sacs because, having grown up in Chicago, he was used to a perpendicular grid street plan. "I felt very comfortable walking along St. Johns Avenue and to The Shoppes of Avondale. It felt like home, like community," he said.

Barrow lives in Ortega now with his wife, Amy; their daughter, Julia, who is a rising sophomore at Episcopal High; and a schnauzer

North Florida chapter of First Tee, a youth development organization that uses golf as its platform, introducing the game and its values to young people. By his January 2018 retirement, Barrow's tenure at First Tee had taken him from national director to CEO. It was during that time that Barrow was introduced to Baptist Health.

"What attracted me to Baptist was its community orientation and the quality of the service and the care that Baptist provides," he said. The organization focuses outside the hospital walls as much as it focuses inside. Baptist's vision of 'a lifetime of health, together' is consistent with Barrow's values and his belief in young people.



Joe, Amy and Julia Barrow

named Olivia. They moved there seven years ago. Barrow used to bike quite a bit, but today, a daily walk is his preferred method of exercise. His morning routine takes him for a three-mile jaunt through the neighborhood. "I listen to the birds and the cars and the sounds of Ortega as I walk over the drawbridge," he said.

The reason for Barrow's initial relocation from Colorado was to take a position at the

Baptist underscores social responsibility. It maintains a commitment to the community's physical, mental, and behavioral health. It focuses on preventing illness, not only servicing illness. "That's very important to us," Barrow said, speaking on behalf of the Baptist Health system and their volunteer boards.

One of his father's proudest accomplishments did not happen in the boxing ring or on the golf course. It was when Barrow's Aunt Vunies, his father's sister, graduated from Howard University in 1940. Though his father did not have a college education, he understood the importance of one, believing it to be the dividing line in society between those with choices and those without, and it was his boxing career that afforded him the means to finance his sister's tuition and helped her to be the first in their family to earn a degree. This respect for education that was instilled in Barrow is at the core of him. In part, it's why, while serving at Baptist, he remains chair of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program), a network of charter schools that provides educational opportunities to low-income students.

"What really drives me is young people," Barrow said. His passion is for educating, caring for, and making sure that young people are healthy and have a directed focus for the future. He evolved to that position, and it is what led him to First Tee, Baptist, and KIPP. "I think I am making the kind of contribution that I wanted to make," he said. And that is not at all average.

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