



Joel Markel, President, Founder, CEO Preferred Home Health Care & Nursing Services



"To save a life is to save the world," says Joel Markel, Chairman Emeritus of the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation (ECF) and a lifetime member of its board of directors. Joel lives by this credo, transforming a terrible tragedy in his family into service to others. This is why we are nominating Joel to be AFP's Outstanding Philanthropist.

Joel first became involved with ECF in 1990 when his five-month-old son, Ryan, was diagnosed with cancer. ECF provided help and support to Markel's family during this time, which inspired them to remain involved with the organization even after Ryan's death six months later. He was nominated to the board in 2010, and then served as president from 2012 to 2016. Joel has generously offered his expertise, resources and compassion to ECF for over 25 years. He is our largest individual donor and amazingly dedicated champion of our mission, as well as kind, thoughtful and humble, always refusing the spotlight on himself.

In the wake of his son's death, Joel also turned his attention to the idea of helping others who were experiencing the same pain his family went through. When an opportunity arose to purchase a small home health care agency, Joel jumped on the chance, as he had found it difficult to find qualified and committed caregivers who could tend to his family's needs. Joel turned this small agency into Preferred Home Health Care & Nursing Services, a leading provider of medical and non-medical home health care in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Preferred sponsors many nonprofit events, including the past 20 years of ECF's annual Gala, which raises significant funds that enable us to continue helping families struggling with pediatric cancer.

Outside of ECF, Markel and his wife Stephanie, a retired dentist, are well known for their humanitarian and philanthropic work, dedicating their lives and work to caring for others. He is involved with a number of boards and organizations that promote home health care, child welfare, and Jewish causes. His company is also active in a number of educational and service initiatives, including a partnership with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where he sought medical care for Ryan. He created the Ryan Markel Memorial Fund (now called the



Homeless Health Initiative) that supports a program to give children checkups at a homeless shelter.

But Joel doesn't stop at running a successful business and supporting nonprofits. He is also the host of a syndicated radio program that discusses health and wellness topics and uses airtime to promote many charitable and nonprofit causes. He is also the executive producer of a recent film "Oro Macht Frei," a documentary about the Italian Jewish experience during the Holocaust that was screened in Italy and numerous film festivals across North America.

Joel serves as an inspiration to us all. His answer when asked for help is never, "let me think about it," or "let me get back to you." It is "just tell me what you need" with a resounding "yes." He reminds us that he was once unemployed with an unsure future, and now he can finally make a difference in this world, and he is overjoyed to do so. He never forgets his journey to where he is, nor his desire to turn around and help the next person in line.