

# the SGROI FINANCIAL

NEWSLETTER

## Jeff Sgroi, 'Everybody's Brother,' Left a Lasting Legacy

JEFFREY SGROI (1970-2016)



“.....  
*“Nobody knows how much he contributed to the people around him.”*  
 .....”

One of their final conversations was the toughest, as you could imagine. Pat Sgroi knew his younger brother, Jeff, was nearing the end when he sat next to his bed at Kenmore Mercy Hospital in January. He was dying from cancer that had infiltrated his bloodstream in less than a month.

Pat and Jeff, born two years and one day apart, weren't just brothers who shared a bunk bed and played on the same Little League teams. They were best friends. Jeff was Pat's best man in his wedding. They ran with the same crowd. They worked together at a financial firm their father founded in West Seneca.

Guys who have their relationship didn't need the spoken word to communicate. Both knew the cold truth after Jeff was moved into the intensive care unit. His organs

were shutting down. He was losing the battle against cancer, with medication working as a co-conspirator, in this race against time.

*It all happened so fast.*

Jeff visited the doctor Jan. 11 after experiencing discomfort in his abdominal region. He walked into the office figuring it was something minor. Five days later, he was diagnosed with skin cancer that started with a single mole. Three weeks later, he was fighting for his life. It was too much to comprehend.

He was 45 years old. He never married, had no children and had no will. Then again, four weeks earlier, when he was full of life, nobody would have suspected he needed one. In late January, faced with the inevitable, the unfathomable, Pat found himself alone in the room with his brother.

"You look in each other's eyes," Pat said. "It wasn't a long

conversation, and it wasn't a deep conversation. At that point in time, we both knew the battle was going to be more than we hoped for. He gave me that look."

Pat knew what it meant. "What do you want me to do?" Pat asked.

To fully understand the answer, you must first understand Jeff Sgroi. He had three siblings while growing up in West Seneca, but he wasn't just *their* brother. He was *everybody's* brother. He was a communal treasure, an oversized man whose

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 ~ Pat Sgroi  
 .....”

infectious, fun-loving personality revealed a little boy’s soul.

Sgroi was shared because he was so willing to give. He greeted people by hugging them, drawing them closer to his heart, rather than simply shaking hands. It’s an example of how he operated. If compassion and selflessness were transported through osmosis, the world he left Feb. 3 would be a better place.

Nobody knows how much he contributed to the people around him, but everyone took something in one form or another.

He was on the board of the Boys & Girls Club of Orchard Park even though, or perhaps because, he never had kids. He helped out with the First Tee program at Harvest Hill

Country Club, which his father started. He befriended Brian Moorman and contributed to his PUNT Foundation.

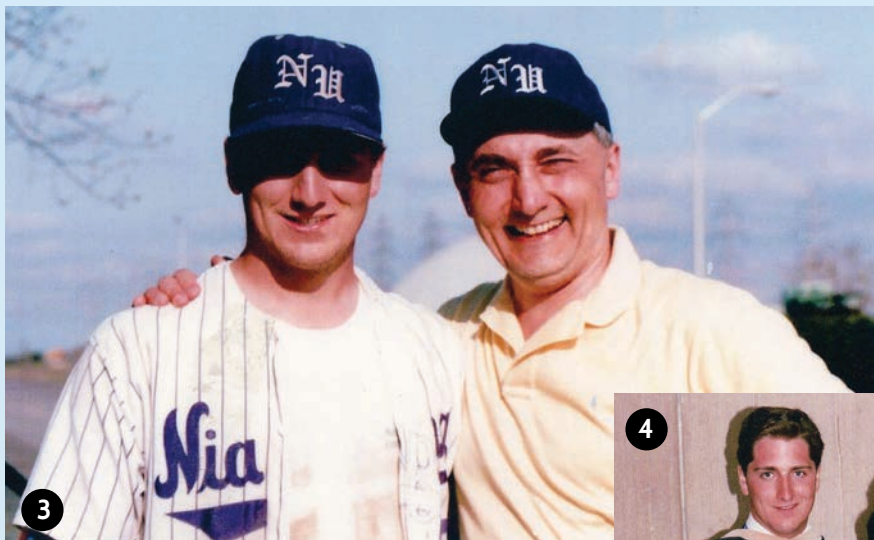
In the days after he died, his family found out he wrote checks to support Dhane Smith and Ryan Benesch’s efforts on Team Canada’s lacrosse team, presumably because the two Bandits stars were friends and needed a boost. He gave to numerous charities when nobody was looking while expecting nothing in return.

“I don’t even know everything he did because he didn’t tell anybody,” Pat Sgroi said Saturday. “Nobody had a clue. Little by little, we’re finding out more. It’s amazing.”

Sgroi was a terrific ballplayer back in the day. He graduated from West Seneca East in 1988, made the team at Le Moyne College as a walk-on and finished his college career with an all-conference season at Niagara. He spent 20 years as a player and coach for West



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- ❶ Sgroi/Clouden family, December 2015
- ❷ Brian Clouden, Jeff Sgroi, Pat Sgroi, John Clouden
- ❸ Jeff and Joe Sgroi (father) at NU Baseball Game
- ❹ Jeff and Betsy Sgroi (mother), Niagara University Graduation
- ❺ Jeff with nephews Jake and Tim
- ❻ Brothers Jeff, Pat and Greg Sgroi

Seneca in the MUNY league.

Nine years ago, he began helping lifelong friend Paul Bartell as an assistant baseball coach at St. Francis High.

Coaching fit him like a glove. He had the right blend of youthful exuberance and experience, a way of soothing struggling players with humor without compromising his authority.

In his view, he had 200 children when all the players were added up.

"Whether you knew him forever or met him a couple of times, you felt like you knew him," Bartell said. "No matter where he was, he knew somebody. He was amazing. And he was really good with the kids."

Heaven knows how many times he reached into his own wallet and picked up the tab for team meals. He bought equipment that wasn't really needed. One player didn't have the money for St. Francis' annual spring baseball trip to Florida. Rather than tap into emergency funds, Sgroi quietly covered the cost.

It was not surprising to hear that his heart was the last organ to fail before he passed away. His death came as a shock to most of his friends. He was reluctant to tell anyone he was ill because he didn't

want people to worry. One night, he motioned for his mother to leave the hospital so she didn't see him suffering.

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 .....”

*But he knew the truth. Pat did, too.*

So he asked the question: "What do you want me to do?"

Jeff had a plan all along. He wanted to make sure his nieces and nephews had money for college. And he wanted to give a substantial amount of his estate to St. Francis. Never mind the time and energy he devoted to Bartell and boys. In his mind, it was nothing compared to what they gave him.

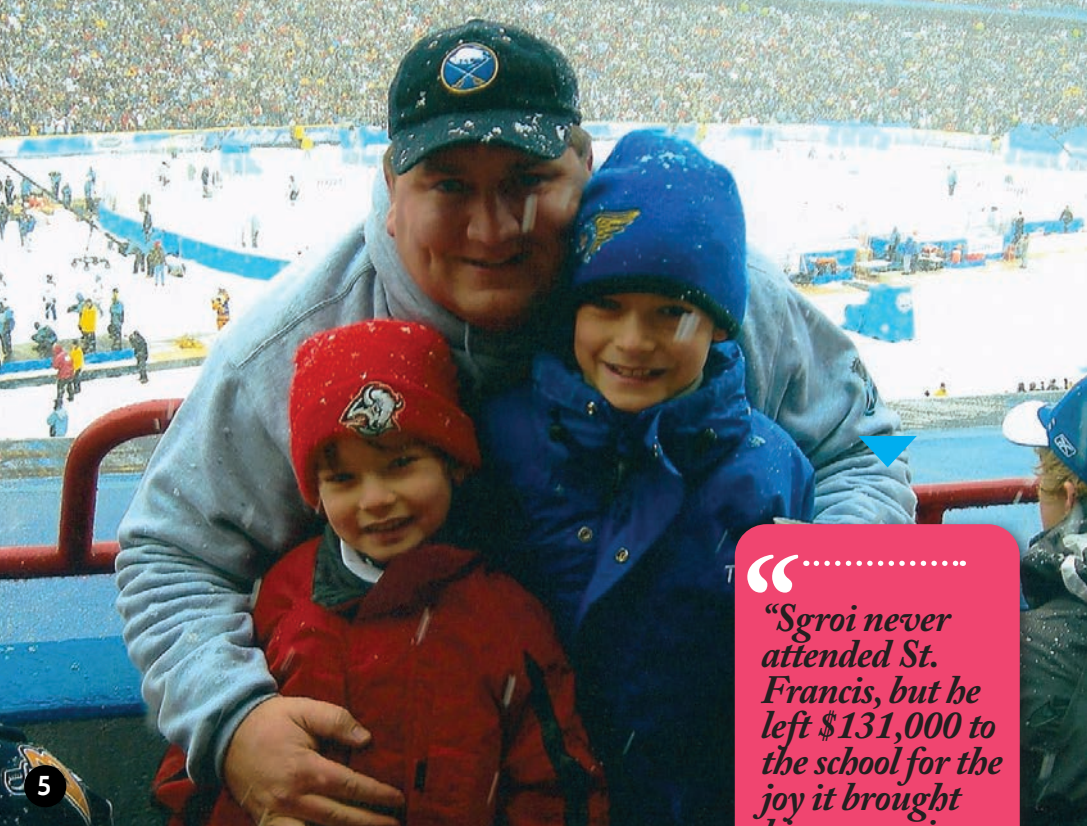


"It would be great if you could take care of Paulie," Jeff told his brother.

Bartell's primary job with St. Francis is vice president for development. He was behind the fundraising effort that allowed the school to build a \$4.5 million athletic complex, including a new football field. Years earlier,

Bartell mentioned in passing that he hoped to someday add dugouts and renovate the baseball field.

Sgroi never attended St. Francis, but he left \$131,000 to the school for the joy it brought him over nine seasons. Who better to execute the plan than Bartell? They had been friends since kindergarten. Bartell had been at his side during cancer treatment. Sgroi never mentioned his intentions because ...



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Now you know Jeff Sgroi.

"I don't dispute when people say, 'I knew him really well' even if I never met the person," Bartell said. "He was a great guy and a great friend. I loved him to death."

Sgroi's heart stopped beating at 10:15 p.m. Feb. 3. His family requested that the medical staff stop attempts to resuscitate him 30 minutes later. Jeff Sgroi was gone. About 30 family members and friends raced to the hospital before celebrating his life in a Delaware Avenue tavern deep into the morning.

In the weeks after he died, some 50 people who viewed him as a brother were examined for melanoma. Two, including a 26-year-old co-worker, were found to have cancerous cells. She could have suffered the same fate Jeff did if it remained undetected. The math suggests there are others among his swath of friends.

For years, Sgroi ran a golf tournament for family and close friends at Harvest Hill on the Friday before every Bills' home opener. Pat named the tournament this year after his brother and established a charitable foundation. The first JMS Golf Tournament was held Friday, the day after a Bills-Jets game that Jeffrey Michael Sgroi would have attended.

A funny thing happened on the way to the first tee. Hundreds of people Jeff Sgroi touched during his life showed up for his cause in death. The tournament included 164 players - more than two foursomes per hole. Pat estimated that he turned away four dozen people who said they were close friends with Jeff. *It sounded about right.*

“.....  
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The tournament raised \$30,000 that will help narrow the gap and grant his final request. Pat accepted \$1,000 checks from people he barely knew because they had so much respect for his brother.

Jeffrey Sgroi Memorial Field, honoring a man whose contribution was priceless, will be ready in the spring. 🌍



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## Thank God for Pinch Hitters

I have tried many times to sit down and write the piece that would convey my feelings, past and present, about my brother, Jeff's, life and passing. It was much easier to explain how we have managed to fill his responsibilities within Sgroi Financial. Our team pulled together to make sure our clients experienced the exceptional service that we will continue to deliver. Jeff's place at Sgroi Financial was but a small piece of a much larger story. I wanted to explain how his presence in this world affected others, but the words escaped me as soon as I sat down to write them. Luckily, the Buffalo News' Bucky Gleason took the words that I couldn't write and put them into the most comprehensive description of a man that was bigger than life. Jeff really was everyone's brother and his life left this world with more joy and gifts than anyone could have predicted. We are reprinting Bucky's article here, with his permission, for our clients and friends. I am sure we can all agree he has relayed Jeff's story and revealed his true spirit. Thank you for letting us share it with you.



Patrick Sgroi,  
President

## JMS Golf Tournament

*An annual traditon begins*



On a beautiful late summer's day in September, over 160 golfers and dozens of volunteers gathered to kick off the first annual JMS Foundation Golf Tournament. Seventy sponsors, from wholesalers to local businesses and personal contributors enabled the event planning to include many personal touches. The tournament's namesake would have been in his glory at this event—fundraising and exuberant fun for a cause close to his heart.

The tournament began with an opening lunch, raffles, and a Strictly Hip serenade. Participants enjoyed various games on the course, along with food

and entertainment. Returning to the club house at dusk, golfers ate dinner from Illio DiPaolo's and purchased auction items from Jeff's personal collections. The entire tournament brought in almost \$30,000 for the JMS Foundation.

The JMS Foundation was opened with the purpose of continuing his good work. Jeff had many passions, but his most beloved was baseball and the teams he coached at St. Francis High School. Jeff's final wish was to devote funds to help build the Jeffrey Sgroi Memorial baseball field at St. Francis High School. The project is on pace to be completed in time for baseball season in the spring of 2017.



## Market Update



In our view, there are positive and negative implications on the markets of a Trump presidency.

In the weeks leading up to the election, markets had already priced in a Clinton victory with a Republican controlled House. Instead, the US election results disregarded status quo, took the markets by surprise and created uncertainty in the economy and the investment landscape. Fundamentals of companies are the same, however the future growth outlooks and risk factors have changed. Shortly after the election results were announced, the markets rebounded and soared to new record highs without any actual changes to policy; he isn't even in office yet. We believe it will take weeks-if not months-for the markets to figure out the future US policy and how the growth outlooks will change with Trump at the helm. A lot can happen in 4 years, so we don't want to be at the mercy of short-term market volatility when we have long term goals for investing.

In our view, there are positive and negative implications on the markets of a Trump presidency.

The positives include tax reform on individuals and corporations including a possible new vehicle to repatriate foreign cash, reduced/amended regulation, and infrastructure and energy investments. Some concerns are trade and monetary policy and the direction of interest rates. Time will tell how many of Trump's campaign "promises" will come to fruition and how that is going to affect trade and future GDP around the globe. As has historically been the case, we expect to see a cooling of campaign rhetoric and more sensible policies in the months ahead.

In addition to a US leadership change, there are several important elections in 2017 that we are going to keep our eye on that could bring Brexit-like volatility to the international markets (Italy, Australia, France and Germany).

Overall for 2017, we have modestly bullish expectations for the equity markets; some sectors are set to have better growth prospects given the new leadership. As we get closer to the December Fed meeting we are going to monitor the bond markets as the expectations for future rate hikes increase. Your team at SgROI Financial will continue to monitor the global markets for the best opportunities for our clients. 