

# JOE ANDRUZZI

## CO- FOUNDER & CHIEF ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Born in Brooklyn, NY, and raised in Staten Island, Joe Andruzzi played football at Tottenville High School, where he was a Division II all-American during his junior and senior years. He went on to play college football at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut, where he majored in special education. In 1997, Joe was picked up as an undrafted free agent by the Green Bay Packers, and in February 1998, he was allocated by the Packers to play football in Scotland for NFL Europe. He was released by the Packers after three seasons and signed as an offensive guard by the New England Patriots in 2000, where he played for five seasons and earned three Super Bowl rings.

In 2001, Joe and his wife Jen met C.J. Buckley, a young man with an inoperable brain tumor. C.J. and his family became part of the Andruzzis' extended family, and his passing left a hole in their hearts. Always driven to help others in need, Joe helped launch the C.J. Buckley Pediatric Brain Cancer Research Fund at Boston Children's Hospital. In recognition of his contributions, he received the Ed Block Courage Award in 2002 and the Ron Burton Community Service Award in 2003.

Joe's philanthropy didn't stop there. As a son of a retired New York City police officer and brother to three New York firefighters – who were all first responders during the September 11 attacks – he organized a trip for 100 NYFD firefighters to attend a Patriots vs. Jets game at Gillette Stadium in 2002. Joe, his father, and his brothers were the honorary game captains.

In February 2005, Joe became a free agent and was signed by the Cleveland Browns, for whom he played two seasons. But on May 30, 2007, Joe was diagnosed with an aggressive form of non-Hodgkin's Burkitt's lymphoma, predicted to double in size within 24 hours. His playing career was over, and the entire Andruzzi family quickly relocated back to New England, where Joe underwent chemotherapy treatments at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Joe fought the disease with strength and passion, receiving his last treatment on August 6, 2007. Since then, Joe has remained cancer-free and lives a healthy life with Jen, their five children (including their youngest son, C.J., named after the late C.J. Buckley), three dogs, and now a grandbaby, Elowynn Josephine!

In 2008, Joe and Jen co-founded the Joe Andruzzi Foundation – a registered 501(C)(3) non-profit organization committed to providing assistance to patients of all ages throughout New England who have fallen into financial hardship as a result of a cancer diagnosis. Because patients and families must often devote all their energy and resources to battling the disease, the Foundation helps alleviate financial and emotional stress by providing support through Financial Assistance, Food Security, Extraordinary Needs, and Treatment Transportation Programs, as well as (Up)Beat Events. In addition, JAF recently launched UniCORN (Universal Community Oncology Resource Network), a free online information portal available to patients and caregivers to help them identify other resources to support them on their cancer journey.

In 2014, Joe was the recipient of an honorary degree from Salem State University's College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education for his commitment to helping cancer patients and families throughout the region.

In his spare time, Joe is a regular visitor to cancer patients in New England at various hospitals and healthcare institutions across the region, often bringing former and current Patriots players along to brighten the days of patients undergoing treatment. Through patient outings and events, coupled with the Joe Andruzzi Foundation's mission, Joe works to bring joy to patients and families, promoting the importance of an upbeat attitude and the power of remaining positive throughout treatment. For the last 18 years, JAF has been a leader in the New England cancer community. Since its founding, JAF has awarded more than \$14 million in assistance to over 50,000 New England cancer patients and their families, removing financial barriers so that patients can access and complete treatment.

