



Ed Gaelick CLU, ChFC

## PAY IT FORWARD

A while back I attended a fund raising event. During the cocktail hour, attendees could bid on many different things in a silent auction. As an avid Yankee fan, I bid on four tickets to a Yankee game. The seats were incredibly great in the Field MVP section right behind home plate on the first base side with Club access and free parking ... so why not? I ended up as the highest bidder and I won the tickets.

From little league to the majors, baseball has held a special place in my heart. So much so that I even made it the theme of our PSI Consultants website.

Some of my fondest memories were at baseball games, but not everyone gets to have that experience. So as I thought more about it, I decided to give the tickets away to a child that wouldn't otherwise have a chance to see a professional baseball game, let alone the Yankees.

My office team and I put our heads together and came up with a game plan. We sent an email blast to all of our clients and business associates describing our "community initiative". We asked them to nominate a child by responding to our email with the child's name and his or her story. We decided that PSI would throw in \$100 to get some peanuts and crackerjacks! The response was immediate and incredible. We received many nominations; all were worthy and deserving.

On the day of the drawing, we wrote each child's name on a piece of paper and put all the names in a hat (a Yankee baseball cap of course) and picked a name at random. The winner was Cole, a 12-year-old who was also an avid baseball fan.

Cole was battling optic, brain and spinal cancer. We were so happy to share the good news with him and his family. All the other nominees were sent a hologram certified sealed "pod" of Yankee infield dirt so everyone was a winner.

Amazingly, one of our clients had a connection to someone who knew Jeff Nelson, a relief pitcher for the Yankees who was going to be at that game in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the 1996 Championship team. My client made arrangements for Jeff to pay a visit to Cole at his seats! Knowing they were traveling a distance, I contacted The Hyatt Place in Fair Lawn, NJ, and asked if they would comp Cole and his family a room the Friday evening before game day. They agreed!

As we got closer to game day, the weather forecast was lousy. That Saturday was to be rainy all day. I would have given up plenty if I could ensure a sunny day. I wanted so badly for this to be a wonderful and memorable experience in Cole's life. I put the word out to the weather gods and they heard me! As we

got closer to that Saturday, the weather report got better and better each day. By game time it was sunny and in the mid 80's. What a relief!

It was a special day for Cole! He didn't just see any Yankee game, he saw them win; score seven home runs, the first time in major league history two rookies hit back to back homers in their first major league at bats; the celebration of the 1996 Championship team; and he got to see Derek Jeter, Jorge Posada, Mariano Rivera and Andy Pettitte. To top it all off, Jeff Nelson made a special visit to meet him at his seats.

What this simple gesture proved was that many people cared and we witnessed "pay it forward". Several people and organizations made this an even more special day for Cole than originally planned or imagined. A VIP corporate executive, Michael, donated the tickets to the charity. He paid it forward. I bid, won and give the tickets away. I paid it forward. Cole won, I won, the Yankees won, Jeff Nelson won, the Hyatt Place won, pay it forward won!

As a life and health broker, my professional role in life is to help people protect what's most important to them and to help them grow. As I reflect back on this special day, I see how giving enriches my professional and personal life as well.

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*In 1985, Ed Gaelick established PSI Consultants, LLC where he specializes in company sponsored employee benefits, business planning and personal insurance. Throughout his career, Ed has received many of the highest professional honors awarded in the insurance industry. [www.psi-consultants.com](http://www.psi-consultants.com)*