

Honoring the Heroes Among Us - Eric Ludin: An Unassuming Hero Among Us



If you ask Eric Ludin to describe his contributions to the community, he is exceedingly modest. Assuming you can get him to discuss what he has done, he downplays his efforts over the last 26 years in Pinellas County. Other than his humble nature, what shines through is his commitment to giving back to the community. As he says, "If you have the talent or the ability to make a contribution or a difference, then you have an obligation to serve your community."

In 1982, a young and energetic Eric Ludin moved to St. Petersburg with his wife Judy. Fresh out of law school in Pennsylvania, he was looking to establish roots here. Eric was 24 years old and he knew no one in Pinellas County. However, he brought a dedication to service without any desire for recognition that led him to quietly impact the lives of thousands of people for the better.

Originally from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Eric left home to attend Michigan State University, where he received his Bachelors degree with honors. There, he met a very pretty member of the Spartan marching band named Judy Drucker, his wife of 28 years. After graduating, they moved to Pittsburgh for Eric to attend law school. He received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh in 1982. The Ludins then moved to Pinellas County where Eric went to work for Jimmy Russell in the State Attorney's office, and was ultimately assigned to the consumer fraud division. Since 1985, he has engaged in the private practice of law, focusing his efforts on securities litigation, general and commercial litigation, commercial landlord/tenant conflicts and personal injury.

When he first moved to the area, donating his time to local causes was born out of his sense of volunteerism. It also helped Eric become known in an area where he and Judy literally knew no one. He apparently got himself known rather well, because, at age 30 in 1990, he became the youngest President his synagogue, Congregation B'nai Israel, had ever elected.

Over the years, his connection to

his synagogue has involved him in many Jewish organizations, both local and national. He has served as the Campaign Chair for the Jewish Federation which raises funds to benefit local Jewish Organizations, such as Gulfcoast Jewish Family Services, the Jewish Day School, and Menorah Manor, as well as international relief organizations. He also served as the chair of the Federation's Operation Exodus campaign, which raised significant funds to help Ethiopian Jews relocate to Israel. Additionally, he served as a board member at the Pinellas County Jewish Day School from 1999 to 2003.

Working with his mother, Arlene Ludin, Eric also established the Jewish Federation's Edward N. Ludin Young Leadership Award, named in memory of his father. In characteristic fashion, he attempted to have himself disqualified from receiving the award, but the Jewish Federation voted to honor him with the award in 1998.

He was also instrumental in starting Camp Ramah Darom, a Jewish summer camp located in Clayton, Georgia. Eric served as a founding board member. Since its opening in 1997, the camp has been very successful, and both of the Eric son's, Joshua and Jacob have attended and been active there.

He lives his philosophy of giving every day. "We have been blessed with the opportunity of living here; we have to give our time back." Over his entire career, Eric estimates that he spent at least a couple of hundred hours per year volunteering for different community projects. He has set an example for not only his sons,



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but everyone he meets.

Eric will tell you that his most rewarding position was serving as President of the St. Petersburg Bar Association from 2000 to 2001. Many will recall his efforts to increase diversity, including the creation of the Diversity Committee and establishing the Frank White Diversity Scholarship at Stetson University College of Law to help keep new lawyers of color in the area after graduation.

He also spearheaded the creation of the museum exhibit "A Legacy of Courage, Vision and Hope" which chronicles the past mistreatment of African-American lawyers by the St. Petersburg Bar Association. The exhibit continues to be displayed nearly a decade after its creation. Eric's efforts on this key issue are highlighted this year, as the St. Pete Bar installed its first African-American President, Jeannine Williams. He later went on to serve as President of the St. Petersburg Bar Foundation from 2004 to 2006. In 2004, the Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association presented their Diversity Award to Eric in appreciation of his commitment to supporting diversity in the legal profession.

He is not about to stop. This year, he and his wife co-chaired the annual fundraising effort for Congregation B'nai Israel, and they raised approximately \$200,000. He also recently completed his term as Chair of the Florida Bar Grievance Committee "E" for the 6th Judicial Circuit.

Presently, he is the Chair-Elect of the Board for Menorah Manor, an assisted living facility in St. Petersburg.

Among his other duties, he is integrally involved in the planning and funding for a new facility that Menorah Manor is opening in northern Pinellas County.

He also continues to serve as the West Coast Chair of the Crohn's and Colitis Florida Law Firm Challenge, a fundraising effort to support the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation. The Challenge has raised over \$1 million statewide to help support research to find a cure for Crohn's and Colitis, debilitating diseases which affect thousands of people in the U.S.

Most recently, he joined the finance committee at the Center Against Spouse Abuse (CASA). In a way, it has brought Eric full circle. When he first joined the State Attorney's office, he was one of the first Assistant State Attorneys assigned to prosecuting domestic violence cases in a special domestic violence unit.

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