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JEWISH BUFFALO'S DIFFERENCE MAKERS

Marc Fineberg: Team Guy and Native Son: Making Buffalo Better One Shoulder at a Time

By Rob Goldberg

As I sit in the comfort of my living room on December 10th watching the Buffalo Bills play the Indianapolis Colts in a blizzard, I remember what Dr. Marc Fineberg, Bills' team physician, shared with me just a week earlier: "The weather can be a challenge on the sidelines. When we know it is going to be really cold, my wife Stacy makes sure I'm layered up. While the players can keep warm by running around, it's more of a challenge for us." At the same time I find myself laughing, as Marc also shared with me his belief that for native Buffalonians, weather plays a significant role in shaping who we are. "Sure, our weather is bad, but what do we do when it snows? We strap on our skis. We adapt and we band together. We are a tough bunch."

Dr. Marc Fineberg is the essence of what it means to be a Buffalonian. "Love thy neighbor, love the underdog. It's in our blood," he laughs. Marc returned to Buffalo nearly 20 years ago to join UBMD Orthopaedics + Sports Medicine, and the Department of Orthopaedics at the University of Buffalo, State University of New York. When asked why he wanted to return to his hometown, his answer was unequivocal: "It is where my family is and a place that has values I cherish."

Even though Marc trained in New York, Chicago and Boston, he always wanted to come home to be closer to his family and give his children an opportunity to flourish as he and his brothers did in the

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Williamsville School system. "I love the way in which people treat each other here. And it's a great place to raise a family."

Dr. Marc and Stacy Fineberg have three children, all of whom continue the proud Fineberg tradition of



attending Williamsville Schools. Justin, their oldest, graduated from Williamsville East and is thriving as a sophomore at Syracuse University. Daughter Sydney is a senior at Williamsville East, and the youngest, Ethan, is a Williamsville East freshman.

In a recent speech Marc delivered after being honored as one of this year's Williamsville Schools Wall of Fame inductees, he told the audience that his high school years at Williamsville North shaped his life. He learned to work hard, be a good time manager and be strategic. After the ceremony at a session with students, he told them he actually had a 20 year plan: "The plan required me to graduate at the top of my college class and excel at my medical school entrance exam." He told the students that he then needed to spend 4 years at a top medical school so that he could obtain a highly competitive spot in an orthopedic surgery residency program, then graduate from a top notch residency program in order to land an orthopedic sports medicine fellowship which would provide exposure to professional hockey and football. "I would then move home to Buffalo and immerse myself in the local medical and sports team communities. I figured.... no problem. I got this!"

And to our great fortune, Dr. Marc Fineberg's plan was executed to perfection, and today he has a fulfilling career specializing in Sports Medicine and Arthroscopic Surgery. And beyond taking care of his home town teams, Marc's greatest passion is making sure athletes are safe. He explained to me that in Sports Medicine, often the strongest

relationship is between the doctor and the athletic trainer.

Concerned that high school athletes don't enjoy the same level of training as those in the pros, Marc created a group called "ATEAM" powered today by UBMD Orthopaedics + Sports Medicine. The mission of ATEAM is to protect student athletes by ensuring that every Western New York high school has a well-trained, full-time athletic trainer who is tied into the local healthcare system. ATEAM provides grants to high schools to make this mission a reality. "Most schools don't invest much in athletic trainers," Marc told me. "So I started this program in order to supply and train trainers. They are critical to ensuring that our kids are safe. It's that simple."

Marc told me repeatedly during our time together that in everything he does – from the Bills and Sabres and ATEAM, to his work and teaching – it all comes down to relationships. "I love meeting people and getting to know them. And I love helping them – it's a gift to me." Marc's many gifts are grounded not only in Buffalo values but deeply in Jewish values. "The Jewish people are hard-working, have needed to be tough, and always give back. Supporting those in need and being a good citizen, that's what being Jewish means to me." Marc also has a passion for Israel, and last summer travelled to the Jewish homeland with his family. "I have always had a deep personal relationship with Israel. Unfortunately my studies and training always held me back from travelling there. But I told myself that when I turned 50 I was going. And so I did."

Perhaps it is Israeli grit that draws Marc to the Holy Land just as the resilience of being a Buffalonian beckoned him to return home two decades ago. Either way, this community is blessed to have Dr. Marc Fineberg as one of its difference makers, whether on the field, in the operating room or in the classroom. And what has made the decision to return to Buffalo even better for Marc is simple. "I can help my lifelong friends, family and hometown community every day," he beams. "And I can make Buffalo better, one shoulder at a time."

Rob Goldberg is CEO and Executive Director of Buffalo Jewish Federation.

