



Meet Joel Markel

PRESIDENT OF **PREFERRED HOME HEALTHCARE**,
HOME HEALTHCARE WITH FEELING

by Lori Draz

Headquartered in Eatontown is one of New Jersey's largest home healthcare companies, Preferred Home Healthcare. Joel Markel, its founder and president, shares how he started the company and grew it into the large corporation it is today, and how he keeps the company full of heart and compassion. In addition to being its CEO, Markel is also the host of a syndicated radio show, a world traveler, and a film producer.

The decision to invite home healthcare into your life is typically linked to a traumatic family event like a serious illness, injury, or recovery following stroke or surgery that affects the dynamics of the entire family, including emotional, financial and scheduling challenges.

In 1988 Joel Markel, experienced these conditions in a heart-wrenching way. "My recently widowed sister was diagnosed with terminal melanoma at age 39, so my wife and I took her and her two sons into our home. At about the same time, our own son, Ryan, was diagnosed with pediatric cancer. Our personal story did not have a happy ending; my sister and son passed away within months of each other. Through it all, we found it difficult to find qualified and committed caregivers who could tend to our family's needs," said Markel.

Rather than sink into immobilizing depression, in 1993 Markel turned his attention away from his other business interests, purchased a small agency and began to develop a home healthcare agency that would provide the highest degree of custodial and medical nursing care, along with giving guidance on the emotional issues families may face.

"Shortly after losing my son, I tried to start a support group for fathers who had lost children. I saw there was little interest among men to share their feelings. I see care as more than just clinical, but also the emotional care needed for the total well-being of the family."

Markel began Preferred Home Healthcare with the intention to offer the full range of care he felt was needed. His vision was clearly well-received and over the past 25 years, Preferred Home Healthcare has grown large enough to have offices in nine locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including schools state-wide that run certification and CPR classes for home health aides and nurses. They recently opened

an office in Andover, MA, that provides nebulizers and breast pumps to women who need them in New England. Several more expansions are planned in the upcoming months.

Markel's record of satisfaction is stellar with his customers and employees, perhaps because of the generous humanity that he instills in every relationship. He requires that his caregivers become like a member of the families they serve, celebrating victories and offering support when needed.

And while Markel is very serious about quality care, he is a joyful man. Bowls of candy fill his offices and flowers are sent to patients on their significant days. Markel himself is never at a loss to share a complimentary word with those around him; so much so he is the host of a syndicated radio program, "Preferred Company" heard on a number of stations in New Jersey and New York.

He is also a philanthropist and is honored to be serving his third year as the President of the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation, which supplies a variety of support services to families with children undergoing pediatric cancer treatment. Joel had benefited from the organization while his son was sick, and said one day he would pay it back.

In his spare time, Markel just finished editing a film "Oro Macht Frei," a Holocaust documentary about Italian Jews. "It took a long time to complete the film, but it is my noble obligation to bring viewers this story that must be shared," Markel noted.

Joel Markel lives in Marlboro with his wife Stephanie, who is a dentist and artist with an office in Matawan. Originally from Bensonhurst in Brooklyn, where his family owned a jewelry store, the couple has lived in Monmouth County for 27 years. He has two sons; James, an attorney in NY; and Lane, a

student in West Virginia. He is proud that his nephew Jonathan Herman serves as his Chief Financial Officer. Jonathan's brother Russell lives in Rumson.

How do you do it all and be so successful?

I surround myself with good people. When I hire someone I always ask, is this someone that I would like to spend the rest of my life with? Credentials are important, but a good team member is not always about qualifications, it's about the full portrait of the person.

Please advise how to achieve what you've done.

Be courageous and persistent. Certain days can be challenging but forge on. And of course, surround yourself with good people. Let your employees make their own decisions and do their jobs. Trust the people to be and do their best. Be a healthy communicator and make sure everyone is too. Another thing that might sound odd is to embrace your mistakes. Learn their lessons and know that everyone makes them.

You've accomplished so much in life. Do you feel accomplished?

Not entirely. I think of myself as ambitious. I recently commented that I think the only way I will be happy in my retirement is to work. I will always have more to accomplish.

Is there one thing you'd like to achieve that you think might be a real challenge?

I always wanted to be part of an improv company. I'd also love to be a flight attendant, for about three months.

For more information, visit
preferredcares.com.