

By Nate Oxman
Sportswriter

William J. McKeown Jr. was a family man.

He ran a family business. His most treasured memories were of time spent with his family, which he

raised with his wife, Margaret, in Cheltenham.

That's what made it, his disease, so hard. It not only stole some of those memories from him, it prevented him from making new ones with his children and grandchildren. Bill's family was growing, but he wasn't able to enjoy it.

In the late 80s, Bill McKeown Jr. began misplacing business papers and had a hard time driving a car. He began showing signs of Alzheimer's Disease, a disorder that progressively destroys brain cells and inhibiting a person's memory, behavior and ability to think and ends, un-

abatedly, with death.

Margaret, along with their three sons: Bill, Charlie and Joe, and his daughters: Peggy, Phyllis and Maureen, took care of him on a daily basis. But when the disease became too much even for family to handle, the McKeown's reluctantly moved Bill to a nursing facility.

Still, Margaret and the family visited every day. She fed him all of his meals and took care of him with undying devotion. Even as Bill's symptoms intensified and began to take a heavy toll on Margaret when she suffered a stroke, before recovering miraculously thanks to what the family attributes to her steadfast determination to be there for her husband.

Margaret and the family were there bedside in prayer at Holy Redeemer Hospital in Meadowbrook, when Bill passed away in 1991.

Alzheimer's took the life of Bill McKeown Jr. in 1991, but like tragedy tends to do to a strong family, the McKeown's grew even stronger.

Shortly after their father's passing, Charlie and Bill approached Joe and asked him what he thought about starting a golf outing in memory of their father.

Soon, the entire family, including Joe's wife Kathy, daughters Kelly and Colleen and niece Michelle, was pitching in. Friends, members of the community, even suppliers for the family business: McKeown Beverages Company, Inc. on Rising Sun Avenue, in the Northeast followed and enabled the McKeown's to host the first annual William J. McKeown Jr. Golf Classic "Fore" Alzheimer's at Ashbourne Country Club in

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Joe McKeown gives instructions prior to the start of the 17th annual William J. McKeown Jr. Golf Classic "Fore" Alzheimer's on May 19 at Philmont Country Club, while (right) Kyle Lograsso kicked off the tournament with a ceremonial tee shot.



McKeown Golf Classic "Fore" Alzheimer's is a family affair

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Cheltenham with 144 golfers.

"It's so nice that the entire family gets involved," said Joe, who lives with his family in Dresher. "Everybody wants to do a little something to give back for grandpa."

The event grew each year thanks to the passionate work of the McKeown's and the generous support of the community. The event grew so large that the McKeown's were routinely turning away interested participants.

That's when Ron Dyson, then president and CEO of the Philadelphia Protestant Home (PPH), a continuing care retirement community on Tabor Road in the Northeast, suggested moving to a larger venue. At the time, PPH was building a wing for Alzheimer's Care, which would eventually include the William J. McKeown Social Hall.

The McKeown's turned to Philmont Country Club, a 36-hole facility in Huntingdon Valley. Dyson and PPH would stay heavily involved as all proceeds from the outing were donated there for three years when the outing would grow to 240 golfers, 120 on both the North and the South courses at Philmont CC.

The event was once again held at Philmont this year for the 17th annual golf classic on May 20, where all proceeds benefited the recently created McKeown Foundation promoting Alzheimer's Disease care, research and education and added to the over \$2 million that has been raised since the event began.

Like each and every year, the event has been fueled not only by the passion of the McKeown's, but many more who want to honor Bill's memory and the McKeown Foundation.

"Everybody I meet, they all want to see what they can do to help," said Joe. "And when they come to this event and they see the way they're treated ... everybody says to me, 'What's the one word you would use to describe the event? It's a 'Wow.' We have that wow factor that really leaves an impression on people here. I think that says a lot about the charity and what we do."

Participants in this year's event were indulged with an all-day lunch both off and on the course from local restaurants: the Kitchen Bar on Old York Road in Abington, Outback Steakhouse on Old York Road in Jenkintown, Bennigan's on Easton Road in Willow Grove, Tortillas! on York Road in Willow Grove.

Former suppliers from McKeown Beverages: Coca-Cola, Snapple, Dr. Pepper, Penn Distributors, Origlio

Beverage, Muller Beverage, Dietz & Watson, Utz and Herr's were also on hand.

"Our family was in the beer business for 51 years and the loyalty that these companies show is really very, very nice," said Joe, who is now Vice President of outside sales & development at Eckenhoff Buick Pontiac GMC Cadillac, Inc. in Jenkintown.

Past employees of Bill, Frank and Bobby Silvester, who now work respectively for Dr. Pepper and Snapple, have been involved since the start.

"They all do so much for us because of the respect that they have for my father," said Joe.

This year's event, benefiting the McKeown Foundation, met its promise of reaching a new level thanks to the continuing support of longtime sponsors as well as the addition of presenting sponsor Cadillac, which has chosen the William J. McKeown Golf Classic as one of two Cadillac Invitational outings in Pennsylvania. Cadillac gave out prizes and gifts, including the opportunity to win a new car with a hole-in-one on four holes. The winning foursome on each course earned a trip to the Cadillac Invitational National Finals at TPC of Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. Jan. 15-19, 2009. The North course winners were Alan Brody, David Goldstein, Jonathan Goldstein and Mr. Jacobson. The South course winners were Joe Bourne, John Pagano, Carl Hinrichs and Jim Grosso.

The event will also host the Buick Clubhouse and the PGA Tour Tiger Woods Golf Experience, where attendees could check out Tiger Woods' memorabilia, take a complimentary Kodak Fantasy Theater photo with Tiger and a receive a free DVD with a computerized analysis of their swings in addition to many giveaways and prizes.

"I wanted to have some type of community event to tie in with our foundation and Eckenhoff Buick," said Joe. "I wanted to raise awareness and also give back to the community through children and golf. If this can put smiles on children's faces, I know that's one thing my father would love. We have the passion for giving back to seniors, but now we're trying to do something for kids and help foster their interest in golf."

The 17th Annual William J. McKeown Jr. Golf Classic was kicked off with a ceremonial tee shot by 5-year-old golf stud Kyle Lograsso.

"I enjoy being a part of it," said Scott Eckenhoff, owner of Eckenhoff Buick Pontiac GMC Cadillac, Inc., who has been a big sponsor of the tournament since the beginning. "Behind the scenes, Joe works so hard on this tournament, all

year long. That's one of the reasons why he works for me, because he is so passionate about anything that he does, especially this tournament and the foundation. When this ends today, he's already starting to work on next year's tournament."

With the foundation continuing to grow thanks to support from so many people, Joe knows he is doing his father proud.

"I think he would be extremely

proud," said Joe. "My father would have been a little low key, but he probably would never have expected it to grow this big. Our focus is on all of the little details because of the passion that we have. We all want to make our father proud."

For more information about the McKeown Foundation call Joe McKeown at 215-669-7999 and visit mckeowngolfclassic.com for more details.

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