

RALPH WILSON LOVED THE COMMUNITY



RALPH C. WILSON, JR. **BUFFALO BILLS OWNER** **1918 - 2014**

Ralph Wilson loved his communities of Western New York and in his hometown of Detroit. He was known for his generous philanthropic endeavors in both. In fact, his presence in the community transcended the game of football.

His outreach to youth-related charities coincided in 1987, when he founded the Buffalo Bills Youth Foundation to benefit youth-related charities in Western New York. The Bills are known throughout the league as pioneers in the area of youth football development and were the first to establish a youth football stadium. In 2013, Mr. Wilson joined the NFL in support of USA Football's Heads Up Football program to support local youth leagues' involvement in this important initiative that teaches youth safer fundamental techniques by taking the head out of the game.

A strong believer in hometown projects, Mr. Wilson played an active role in obtaining matching grants from the NFL's Grassroots program for Buffalo area athletic fields totaling over one million dollars in recent years. He also contributed significant funds for the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Athletic Field in Detroit as part of the NFL's Youth Education Town Legacy gift during Super Bowl XL.

A caring, generous man, Ralph Wilson's philanthropic arm reached various parts of the country with emphasis in the Western New York region. His diverse charitable endeavors included such benefactors as the food banks of Buffalo and Rochester, the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, Hunter's Hope, Shea's Performing Arts Center, the Buffalo Zoo, the Cancer Wellness Center and the Hospice Foundation of WNY, where a wing of its main building is named the "Mary and Ralph Wilson, Jr. Hospice Inpatient Unit." The Wilsons also provided a lead gift for the Hospice Foundation's capital campaign to build a new Children's Services Center. Their gift served as the cornerstone for the building which houses the Life Transition Center.

Throughout his time with the Buffalo Bills, Wilson was a major contributor and supporter of community affairs. He was responsible for the team's strong relationships with United Way, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and Children's Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, the Erie County Sheriff's Department as well as numerous "grass roots" charities in Western New York, such as the Meals on Wheels program and the Buffalo Philharmonic and Erie County S.P.C.A.

In 2011 The Ralph C. Wilson Foundation joined nine local philanthropic partners to form Roswell Park Cancer Institute's "Circle of 10" to support the building of RCPI's Clinical Sciences Center, which broke

ground in 2013. In the same year, the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation established the Buffalo Bills Team Physician's Fund with a one million dollar gift to support the University at Buffalo's Department of Sports Medicine within the Department of Orthopedics at the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. In 2010, Ralph and Mary Wilson, also through the foundation, provided a \$1 million gift to the Kaleida Health Foundation to support adult day care and home care in Western New York.

For his tremendous charitable efforts in the Buffalo area over the years, Mr. Wilson was named the Seymour Knox III Humanitarian Award winner in the spring of 2003 and in 2007 he was named the Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year by the WNY Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Also in 2007, he and his wife, Mary, were named the Philanthropists of the Year by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County.

The Ralph Wilson Medical Research Foundation was established in 1999 and has contributed over \$11 million to support medical research. This foundation and the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, have provided significant support to Buffalo's Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the Cleveland Clinic, The Mayo Clinic, The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, Wayne State University, the St. John Providence Health System of Detroit, the Alzheimer's Association-Greater Michigan Chapter, the Boys & Girls Club of Southeastern Michigan and a number of other worthy local initiatives. He served as Honorary Chair for the Alzheimer's Association for the Detroit Area Chapter and was a major contributor to the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research as well as the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. He made significant contributions to cancer research with annual grants from the Ralph C. Wilson, Sr. and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Medical Research Foundation to Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

Wilson was also a supporter of his own players' charities that were near and dear to his Bills. Among the player charities he was an active contributor for were the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Hunter's Hope, the Stephanie Spielman Breast Cancer Research Fund and the Bob Chandler Foundation.

Mr. Wilson continued his charitable efforts in the field of education. He helped establish scholarship programs at various colleges including Canisius College, SUNY Fredonia and St. John Fisher College.

Wilson established a perpetual scholarship program at Canisius College for student athletes beginning in 1995. At the time, his gift was one of the 10 largest scholarship endowments in the Canisius' history. In continuation of his interest and involvement in education, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Academic Scholarship at Erie Community College was established in 1996.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Educational Program Book Award fund, devoted to book scholarships at SUNY Fredonia for deserving EDP students, was established in the spring of 2000.

The Bills owner was also responsible for a building on the SJFC campus that houses the College of Education. In 2001, Mr. Wilson surprised school officials at training camp at St. John Fisher College by announcing the donation of \$100,000 to create the Ralph C. Wilson Scholar/Athlete Scholarship. He endowed the University of Virginia's Jefferson Scholars Foundation with an ongoing fund that annually provides candidates from the Buffalo area with the ability to be nominated for the University's four-year full-ride merit-based scholarship program.

Wilson also contributed funds to education programs in Detroit, Michigan. He pledged funds to Wayne State University to assist with a new law school building in 2001.