

## **Heroes and Angels...Walking Hand In Hand!©**

### **By Patty Morgan-Seager**

**Have you ever met someone for the first time and instantly connected with them? And you really can't put your finger on it, but this person touches you in a way that is unforgettable? This is my story about a very special person who made a significant difference in my life, in our industry, for his community and in his city...this is my story about Jeff Palmer.**

**I first met Jeff Palmer in the spring of 2004 at one of my client's apartment communities, Times Square. I had visited Times Square in the past and was impressed with the meticulously maintained grounds of the community. I promise you, you could literally eat off the grounds they were so clean! This particular day, I was conducting training at the Times Square leasing/community center and had arrived early to prepare for my training session. As I gathered my training tools, got out of my car, and approached the front door of the leasing center, I was immediately greeted with the smiling face and helpful hands of Jeff Palmer. Jeff welcomed me to the community and helped me get settled. Jeff introduced himself and told me he was in charge of keeping the leasing center and the grounds of Times Square clean and in good order. "Wow! What a great job you are doing Jeff, I am so impressed with the wonderful curb appeal here at Times Square," I said. Jeff smiled at me in a somewhat embarrassed fashion and said "Thank you, I take my job very seriously." From then on, each time I visited Times Square, Jeff would greet me with his big smile and his attitude of helpfulness. You could really tell Jeff enjoyed his job and being of service to those he met. As time went on, I noticed little things Jeff would do for me before I arrived. Things like getting my easel and flip chart out of the closet and setting it up for me prior to training class or making sure the Cyber Café was clean and fully equipped with napkins, bagels and cream cheese for my training class. And at this leasing center, there are copper countertops in the kitchen area and Jeff would polish those cabinet countertops until they sparkled! One time Marla (the Community Manager) and I laughed so hard we cried...we walked in my training room one day and Jeff had hung my flipchart on my easel, but he had somehow attached the hole in the flipchart to the holder clip on one of the legs of the easel... and we didn't have the heart to correct him, he was so proud of the fact that he had helped me get set up ahead of time! And Jeff was always asking, "Patty, do you have everything you need?"**

**Jeff had a great way with the residents of this community as well. I would observe him greeting residents in the leasing center and on the grounds of Times Square as he went about his daily routine. You could tell the residents were very fond of him.**

**Then one day, when I arrived at Times Square, I was not greeted by Jeff. I asked Marla, the Community Manager where Jeff was. "Jeff is going to be off for a few days recuperating from**

surgery,” Marla said, “but he will be back soon.” Jeff returned to the community bright-eyed and smiling in his usual fashion, despite his new challenge of fighting for his health. Jeff never talked much about his illness, but it was hard not to notice changes. You see, Jeff was battling the effects of chemotherapy and radiation and could not be exposed to the sunlight. Despite this, Jeff would show up each day, fully attired in long sleeved shirts and bulky hats (which he was quick to make jokes about) to protect himself from the sun. Still to this day I marvel at Jeff’s ability to maintain such a positive outlook! Even on the days when you could sense he was struggling to maintain his energy level, Jeff was a real trooper...he knew he had a job to do and he was committed to being the best of the best.

Jeff continued his exhausting regimen of chemotherapy and radiation for several months and we were all hopeful and positive about his progress. In July of 2005, after a visit to his doctor, Jeff received some unsettling news about his health. Despite all the efforts and treatment, Jeff’s condition had not improved and Jeff was given six months to live. Needless to say, we were all stunned and shell shocked at his news. Marla, the Community Manager, asked Jeff if there was one thing he would want to do...Jeff replied, “I have always wanted to take my wife on a trip to Las Vegas.” With this in mind, Marla immediately contacted the company President, Debbie Rurik-Goodwin and asked if she could organize a fund raiser for Jeff. Debbie graciously gave her permission and flyers were sent to the residents at Time Square and other Edwards communities with the hope of collecting enough to money to send Jeff and his wife on the trip of his dreams. As the weeks progressed, it was amazing to see the positive ripple effect Jeff’s situation had on all those who knew him and even those who did not know him well. Marla, the Community Manager, the maintenance and leasing team pitched in and carried the load for Jeff on the days he just simply could not muster the energy to come to work, the residents opened their hearts and their wallets in an effort to help, and many team players at Times Square’s sister communities and the Edwards’ corporate office contributed to Jeff’s cause. In spite of this, Marla was still a bit short of the total money needed for the trip.

Jeff Emig, Jeff Palmer’s supervisor at Times Square happened to run into one of the residents, Earl Bruce, former football coach at Ohio State University. Earl asked Jeff how the progress for Jeff’s trip was going and when Jeff told Earl they were still a bit short of their goal, Earl Bruce did an amazing thing...he called Jim Tressel, the current football coach at Ohio State and shared Jeff’s story. What happened next is a great example of...every person we meet has been intentionally put in our path for a reason and there are no coincidences in the universe. Earl Bruce organized an auction for Jeff and arranged it so every item in the auction was autographed by the Ohio State football team. In addition, Gene Smith, the new Athletic Director at Ohio State, donated a pair of tickets for an Ohio State home football game to be auctioned off at the event. The auction was a huge success and the monetary goal for Jeff’s trip was met. But there was more...Earl Bruce and Jim Tressel also arranged for a

**complimentary limo to be available to Jeff and his wife during their entire stay in Las Vegas and treated them to dinner and a show!**

**Marla and her team were ecstatic! They couldn't wait to surprise Jeff with his dream trip. You see, the team knew they had to keep the trip a secret from Jeff because they knew Jeff would be embarrassed and would object to their efforts! The big day finally came when Marla called Jeff and told him she needed to talk to him. The team gathered in anticipation of sharing their surprise...needless to say, there was not a dry eye in the room that day! Jeff could not believe what his teammates had done!**

**Jeff and his wife, Bridgid, left for Las Vegas on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. The Times Square team had arranged for them to stay at The Bellagio, one of Las Vegas' top hotels. Jeff and Bridgid had a fantastic time!**

**On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Jeff Palmer departed this world. He was a wonderful example of a person who knew the meaning of performing simple acts of service. His warm, contagious smile and his joy for life will not be forgotten! Not a day goes by that the team at Times Square doesn't remember Jeff!**

**And thanks to Marla, who had the insight to ask Jeff the important question, "What's the one thing you've always wanted to do?" Jeff Palmer was able to experience a wonderful, once in his lifetime trip to Las Vegas!**

**I am grateful to have experienced Jeff in my life...he made such an impression on me! God bless you, Jeff and all those who opened their hearts and their wallets to make Jeff's dream possible!**

**Isn't this story a great example of the wonderful people we have working in our industry? Many times we don't take the time to share the good...this is my opportunity to share a fantastic story with you...and I hope you will pass it along! I am proud to say I have been a part of the heartfelt property management world filled with caring, compassionate professionals. In your own professional and personal life, who are your heroes and angels? What steps are you taking to make a difference in the lives of others?**

**Author's note: Patty Morgan-Seager, President of Seager Marketing, is a national speaker, author and coach who designs custom training programs for the multi-housing industry as well as other sales and servicing organizations. She is former national sales trainer and regional director for a national publishing company and is known for her genuine enthusiasm, professionalism, and unique ability to motivate her clients to achieve their highest potential. Patty can be reached at (614) 761-2567 or by E-mail at [pattymorgan@seagermarketing.com](mailto:pattymorgan@seagermarketing.com).**