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54 THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING BACK

For Gil Llanas, the director of the Northwestern Mutual Foundation, the answer to the question comes without effort.

56 THE ART OF GETTING INVOLVED

Against all odds, Richard Negrin has fought to triumph over adversity. Now, the board member of the Philadelphia Foundation shares with us why he thinks it's important to give back to the community.

16 LATINO LEADERS SUMMIT!

Amid national and local leaders and with a winning agenda, this year's Latino Leaders Summit and Maestro Awards Gala broke attendance records, and both events were even more exciting than last year.



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An Inspiring giver

Whether as a public official and member of the Philadelphia Board of Ethics or as corporate counsel to a global food company, Richard Negrin's plate is certainly full. There are moments, however, when the high-powered corporate attorney in Philadelphia has a few minutes to himself and he has the chance to look over the city he loves from his 29th floor office. Those moments often remind Richard of the words that helped him achieve the level of success he now enjoys as Vice President and Associate General Counsel for the Aramark Corporation. It was during a church service many years ago when he heard the minister say: "Every tragedy in life leaves you with two choices. You can let it make you bitter or better." It turns out; making the right choice has made all the difference in Richard's life.

It was late November in 1979, and Fulvio Jose Negrin was leaving his house with his eager son Richard to watch him play football for the first time. Fulvio Jose had been a leader in the burgeoning Cuban Community in Union City, New Jersey. A Cuban refugee, Fulvio was known for his courageous and controversial efforts to negotiate with the Castro regime for the release of thousands of political

A professional headshot of Richard Negrin, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some light-colored, branching structures.

RICHARD NEGRIN

Vice President and Associate General Counsel
The Aramark Corporation

prisoners in Cuba. In the end, it was his willingness to negotiate with the Communist regime, in any form, that drew the ire of anti-Castro radicals.

As young Richard stooped to enter the car, another vehicle slowed alongside them as its passengers, armed with semi-automatic weapons, opened fire. In an instant, Eulalio José was dead. Richard, only 13 years old at the time, was the only witness. "As I watched my father quickly slipping away, the overwhelming image that sticks with me to this day was the look of relief on his face. Unconcerned for himself, he was relieved to see me and know that his boy was OK," Richard remembers. "His extraordinary selflessness at that moment combined with my desperate desire to not let him go created an impression that has never faded. In that instant, in that defining moment, a drive was born inside of me that would never fade."

Though he was still too young to fully process the enormity of what happened Richard knew somehow that the first page of his life story had now been written. The passages on that page included circumstances that were far beyond his control. The content of the following chapters, however, remained in his hands. "My faith and my family have taught me to turn what should have been a destructive force into a driving force."

"IF I DON'T HELP THE PERSON WHO'S ON HIS OR HER KNEES NOW, THEN NOTHING WILL HAVE COME FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH."

That tight-fisted drive was first manifest on the playing field. The once gangly young athlete blossomed to become a 6'5" 300 pound consensus All-American Offensive Lineman for the small college 1987 Division III National Champion Wagner College Football Team. Richard even went on to enjoy a stint in the NFL, playing for

the Cleveland Browns and the New York Jets. But while his athletic success would have pleased his dad, it was his next venture that Richard believes truly honors Eulalio's memory. He entered Rutgers University's School of Law, where he graduated with several hon-

ors, and in his first years as a young attorney, Richard showed he had what it takes to, as the old saying goes, 'make the crooked paths straight'.

In his first engagement out of law school at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, Richard became a



prosecutor in the Major Trials Unit. Included among his hundreds of successful prosecutions was the aggravated assault case against the man who attacked former Philadelphia Police Commissioner John Timoney, along with several of Philadelphia's high profile Hate Crime cases.

His success there led to an offer to work as a litigator for the fourth largest law firm in the country. At Morgan Lewis he represented corporations in civil, administrative, and criminal law proceedings. Richard distinguished himself most especially for his work with highly complex corporate litigations. It was at Morgan Lewis that Richard's star took on a whole new trajectory, and it was there where in his service to the Philadelphia community—and to Latinos in particular—he became a dervish.

He was named President of the Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania and was Regional President of the National Hispanic Bar Association. He served on numerous boards and associations throughout the years, including: the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the American Red Cross of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Bar Association's Board of Governors. Most recently, Richard joined the Board of the prestigious Philadelphia Foundation, which helps fund hundreds of Philadelphia's non-profits, serving on its Finance and Strategic Planning Committees.

The accolades were coming on every wave and Richard was becoming a power broker. He was named a Pennsylvania "Super Lawyer" by Philadelphia Magazine and as one of "the brightest people under 40 years-old practicing law in Pennsylvania" by the Pennsylvania Law Weekly.

But just as it seemed Richard's career was on an unstoppable rocket ride of success he would come to another cross-roads in his life that once again put his faith and resolve to the ultimate test. In 2001, his infant daughter Abigail was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA.) It's an insipid, congenital disease that renders its victims unable to walk or speak, there is no known cure, and it is 100% fatal. From 2001 to 2005, Richard served as volunteer

General Counsel to Families of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (FSMA). FSMA is a national charity dedicated to finding the elusive cure to the disease that has become the number one congenital killer of American infants. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the organization, behind the leadership established by Richard and his wife Karen, has been able to raise over half a million dollars for research over the last few years.

But now, their efforts are put forth in their child's memory.

Abigail lost her battle with the disease in 2006. Twenty-seven years after burying his father, Richard Negrin would have to bury his daughter

of deal making that it has engendered were keen and painful realities that caused Richard to leap at the chance to effect change in his adopted hometown before "change" became a buzzword in American politics. In November of 2006, Richard accepted the invitation to be a charter member of the newly formed Philadelphia Board of Ethics, where he now serves as Vice-Chair. The mission of the Ethics Board is to investigate and enforce ethics laws over all of Philadelphia city government, and to ensure that all city officials and workers are held accountable. Through courageous oversight of campaign finance limits and disclosures, Richard and his

"MY FAITH AND MY FAMILY HAVE TAUGHT ME TO TURN WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE INTO A DRIVING FORCE."

three months before her sixth birthday. Richard's mother Miriam and stepfather Raul—who co-pastor an evangelical church in Florida—stood with him reminding him that true faith not only consoles and sustains, but ultimately triumphs. He knew he had no choice but to find a way to let an unspeakable tragedy make him a better person... again.

For many people, the story would've understandably ended there with an open-ended final chapter that never reconciled how so much tragedy could fall upon the shoulders of a man who did it the right way, played by the rules, and succeeded as a truly self-made man. But Richard says he still finds strength in what his fallen loved ones left behind. "I think of my dad and my daughter and I want to share with others what they were to me. Their legacy is wrapped up in the teachers, coaches, mentors, ministers and friends who were in my corner during those critical moments. If I don't help the person who's on his or her knees now, then nothing will have come from what I've been through."

Nowhere, perhaps, are these values more apparent than in his two most coveted associations.

The hardscrabble politics of the city of Philadelphia and the unique brand

collaborators exposed the entrenched interests of union heads, party bosses, and ward leaders, holding them to unprecedented levels of accountability. Just a few years into it, the work of the Ethics Board has already been heralded by the Christian Science Monitor as "the most remarkable example of urban ethics reform" in the country. His colleagues say Negrin's input has been critical. The Board's Executive Director, J. Shane Creamer, says: "Richard understands that it's not just what we do, but how we do it. He has the kind of effective, practical judgment that can't be learned."

Equally close to Richard's heart is his role on the Board of Congreso de Latinos Unidos, one of Pennsylvania's premier Latino social service organizations. He is Congreso's Governance Committee chairman. And it is the role that helps him most directly influence the lives of Delaware Valley Latinos in need of a helping hand.

The Richard Negrin Story is still far from completion. But he still takes those moments to look from his 29th floor office and contemplate the legacy he'll leave behind for his family and for the City of Brotherly Love. He also enjoys the fact that he's sharing the view with a pair of ever present angels on his shoulders. 