



2011 CIBPA PROFESSIONAL AWARD



JOE AIELLO HEART OF GOLD

For Joe Aiello, a person's life is often measured in the memories of strangers. A celebrated media personality, Joe's face and name are known to generations of Winnipeggers, most of whom he has never met. Joe understands that with celebrity comes responsibility because he

knows that when his days are up, people will remember more than just his voice.

"I've always believed that this job gives people like me a voice to speak out," explains Joe. "When someone needs help, it's important that we do what we can. I hope that when my time is up, people remember that I did what I could."

Joe's heart of gold comes naturally, he says. Born into a typical Italian family, he learned early on that familial ties and friendship are keys to a loving life and that giving back is something expected of everyone. As for his gilded tongue, well, that's another story.

"Since I was a kid, I wanted to be in broadcasting," he recalls. "I think my parents thought I was crazy because I'd walk around with my Mom's spoons, pretending I was talking into a microphone. I was always fascinated with radio and I've been blessed with a long professional career in my hometown."

Since 1986, Joe has been a fixture on local radio, working behind the scenes as a producer and on-air as a broadcaster. For the past 18 years, he's been "Joe" in the Tom and Joe morning show on 92 CITI FM. It's a gig he's proud of because it lets him be himself; something that he doesn't take for granted.

"When I got into the radio biz 26 years ago, having an ethnic-sounding name was often frowned upon," Joe notes. "I remembered my grandfather telling me stories about the value of self-respect and I never stopped using "Aiello." My Canadian-Italian identity is a source of pride and I have lots of fun with it on the show, telling stories about my family and explaining to folks what it's like to grow up Italian."

Personally and professionally, Joe attends up to 250 community activities and charitable events a year. It's a busy schedule but one he's only too happy to keep. After all, it's in his nature to give back to causes he feels are worthy, and especially to those he has a personal connection with.

"Like others who might have had a personal crisis, you jump on board for a certain cause," Joe remarks. "I have a list of professional causes and a list of personal causes I work hard for, including breast cancer awareness. I lost my mom and most recently my wife, Alanna, to cancer so the cause is close to my heart."

There is humility in someone who understands the value of his work. For Joe, making a living having fun and entertaining people is something he's always wanted to do. The real worth, he says, is being able to help out when he's called upon. After all, he says, his celebrity is really an opportunity.

"I have a voice that entertains but I realized a long time ago that I could also use it to make a difference. Off-air, if I can make a charitable event that much better, that much more successful, then I've achieved my goal."

by Bernard Kruchak

