



# HISTORY OF THE ED BLOCK COURAGE AWARD & THE *COURAGE HOUSE NATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR KIDS*

**Mission Statement:** The Ed Block Courage Award Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of neglected children and ending the cycle of abuse. The purpose is to raise awareness and prevention of child abuse. Since its inception the Foundation through its charter with the Courage House National Network for Kids and affiliation with the National Football League and the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society has helped to provide hope to countless children and raised millions of dollars.

In 1978, Sam Lamantia Jr. of the Eastside Athletic Club envisioned a sports-oriented event, utilizing the Baltimore Colts, to raise funds for abused children in the Baltimore area. The Courage Award concept itself was initiated by then Baltimore Colts Assistant General Manager, Ernie Accorsi. Larry Harris, an assistant sports editor with *The Baltimore Sun*, recommended that the award be named after Ed Block, the longtime trainer of the Baltimore Colts whose most passionate cause was aiding children at-risk. These elements culminated in the presentation of the first Ed Block Courage Award to Baltimore Colts' defensive end, Joe Ehrmann in 1978.

The scope of the Courage Award expanded to the national level after the Colts' left Baltimore in 1984. That expansion was successful due to Lamantia's resourcefulness and the support of former Baltimore colts' Head Athletic Trainer John Lopez, Sister Grace Calvisi of St. Vincent's Center in Timonium, Maryland, and the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society (PFATS). Predicated upon PFATS' involvement, the Award expanded to honor one player from each NFL team who, in the eyes of his teammates, best exemplified a commitment to sportsmanship and courage. Each March in Baltimore, the Foundation honors those 32 recipients from each team in the NFL who, in the eyes of their teammates, exemplify a commitment to the principles of sportsmanship and courage. Courage Award recipients embody everything that is positive about professional athletes as they serve as constructive role models in their communities and inspirations in their locker rooms. The award has become one of the most prestigious honors a player in the NFL can receive, especially since his selection is based upon the vote of his peers.

The impressive list of players who have received this honor includes Joe Montana, Jerry Rice and Peyton Manning. Additionally, the distinguished speakers/guests who have participated in the annual Courage Awards event have included Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrines, Don Shula and the late Johnny Unitas; Steve Sabol, president of NFL Films; and NFL Commissioner, Paul Tagliabue. Today, the gala is heralded as one of the finest events of its type in the NFL, as well as throughout the nation.

The main focus of the Foundation's efforts is the organization's *Courage House National Support Network for Kids*. Named after the NFL team in a respective city, a Courage House is a facility that provides support/quality care for abused and neglected children in that community. Through this partnership with its respective NFL franchise and the Foundation, the agency's prevailing identity and standing are augmented, not eliminated. Throughout the year, the Foundation provides an abundance of its own resources, including staff hours, volunteer/vendor support and guidance involving the team relationship, to the Courage Houses in an effort to help increase the visibility of their objectives.

To date, the *Network* consists of more than 50-percent of the teams in the NFL. Those teams are as follows: **Pittsburgh Steelers, Chicago Bears, Miami Dolphins, Detroit Lions, Dallas Cowboys, Baltimore Ravens, New York Giants, Oakland Raiders, Seattle Seahawks, Carolina Panthers, Cleveland Browns, Atlanta Falcons, St. Louis Rams, Indianapolis Colts, Buffalo Bills, San Francisco 49ers and Minnesota Vikings, Green Bay Packers, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Washington Redskins, Philadelphia Eagles and New Orleans Saints.** The Foundation is committed to establishing a Courage House in every NFL city.

