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VOL. 21 • NO. 29

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THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023

A great community contributor loses battle with ALS

Phil Greco of The Odeum passes away at 67

By Dee Longfellow FOR THE INDEPENDENT

Phil Greco, owner and president of The Odeum Expo Center in Villa Park, and longtime resident of Villa Park and Elmhurst, passed away peacefully at his Elmhurst home surrounded by family and loved ones on June 20, 2023. He was 67. Phil battled the devastating disease of ALS for five and one-half years with tremendous strength and courage. His optimism, wit, and humor throughout have been an inspiration to all who shared in his life.

A graduate of Marmion Military Academy and Elmhurst College (now University), he served as owner and president of The Odeum Expo Center for 40 years. The family business hosted a variety of special events including concerts, indoor soccer, corporate events, and public tradeshows. Phil loved the challenge of producing unique and complex events that were visited by more than 1.2 million visitors each year.

Through the years, Phil also remained involved with PEP Industries, a manufacturing company

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SUBMITTED PHOTO Elmhurst Independent

Dealership gives to hospital's cancer center

On June 28, representatives from Grand Subaru came to the Nancy W. Knowles Cancer Center at Elmhurst Hospital to surprise patients with warm blankets and care kits for cancer patients, along with handwritten messages of hope. The dealership also gave a \$5,000 donation to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society®. See story inside.

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Locally owned and operated
240 N. West Avenue
Elmhurst, IL. 60126

Main Phone 630.834-8244
Fax 630.834-0900

Visit us at:
TheElmhurstIndependent.com

The Elmhurst Independent
USPS#022-607 is published every
Thursday by Rock Valley
Publishing, LLC, 240 N. West
Avenue, Elmhurst, IL. 60126.
Periodical Postage Paid at
Elmhurst, IL.

Display Advertising:
630.834-8355

Classified Advertising:
630.834-8244

News:
630.834-8244

General Information:
630.834-8244

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Subscriptions:

The Elmhurst Independent is
mailed at no charge by request to
residents in the 60126 zip code area.
Out-of-area mail subscriptions are
\$29.95 yearly. Single copies are
also available at more than 80
newsstand locations in Elmhurst.
For home delivery information call
630.834-8244.

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THE ELMHURST INDEPENDENT
240 N. West Avenue,
Elmhurst, IL. 60126

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday 11am-3pm



223-989

• Greco (Continued from front page)

established by the family in 1947, which specializes in ecclesiastical furnishings for Catholic churches.

Phil was involved with many community events and organizations. He volunteered his time and expertise with the Elmhurst Summer Fest, Village of Villa Park Economic Development Committee, International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), Villa Park Chamber of Commerce, along with many other organizations and events in Villa Park and Elmhurst. Phil played a key role in establishing the DuPage County Convention and Visitors Bureau, serving on the inaugural board of directors and continuing to serve for many years thereafter.

John R. Quigley, president and CEO of the Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce & Industry, not only knew Greco from the business world, but was his classmate at Elmhurst College (now University).

"Phil was one of the nicest people you could ever hope to know," Quigley said. "He was kind-hearted and genuine. He cared greatly for his family, friends and community, and



Phil Greco

his family's business was an extension of those beliefs."

It was a big surprise when it was announced that The Odeum Expo Center would be hosting its 40th anniversary and Farewell Season in 2022. At that time, Phil and his sister and co-owner Sis Greco released the following statement: "We have had a lot of fun and have met fantastic and unique people from around the country, so we've enjoyed this business."

Over the course of his lifetime, Phil was recognized several times for his service and generosity. Most notably, Phil, along with the Odeum and his family, were recognized by the DuPage County Board and the Village of Villa Park Board of Trustees with several Proclamations for their investment and commitment to the community. One such contribution was the development and construction of The Great Western Trail Head Arch.

In his own fight with ALS, Phil helped fund a study with Northwestern Memorial Hospital studying the positive and clinical effects of yoga and breathing exercises on ALS patients. This study will soon be published and has already proved helpful for many patients with lung disease.

Phil leaves behind his wife, Kathleen (nee Olinger); daughter Jordan

(Blake) Lejcar, granddaughter Loretta, brother Patrick Greco, Sr., and sisters Francine "Sis" Greco (Bruce Campbell) and Renee Greco, his nieces and nephews Patrick Greco Jr. (Antoinette), Carly Greco (Dave Bischoff), Shannon (Jeff) Rodenberg, Tara (Andy) Wilhoit, Colin (Taylor) Murphy, Jeff (Melissa) Schultz, and Kristen Schultz, and many

great-nieces and great-nephews.

Phil loved his family, all of whom were so proud of him. He was an inspiration to all of us and will be truly missed.

Memorial donations in Phil's name may be made to the Les Turner ALS Foundation for research at Northwestern Memorial Hospital: <https://events.lesturnerals.org/site/Donation>.



ARCHIVE PHOTOS Elmhurst Independent

Odeum owner Phil Greco (left) talks with haunted house designer Mike Skodacek and his wife Lianne just before dress rehearsal of the Asylum Xperiment Haunted Attraction held at the Odeum in 2012.



Representing The Odeum, (front to back): Phil Greco, Sis Greco and Bruce Campbell took part in the Villa Park Chamber's 51st Annual Swing and Sizzle golf/steak fry in 2012.



Phil Greco talks with Jeannie Nicols at the Villa Park Chamber of Commerce's Swing and Sizzle event in 2014. To underscore his involvement, over Greco's shoulder on the right, a sign is visible indicating the Odeum provided the chairs and the set-up for the event. Greco passed away on June 20 at the age of 67 from complications of ALS.



The extended Greco family of the Odeum Expo Center was honored by the Villa Park Village Board in 2018 for their years of volunteerism, community involvement and participation. Then-Village President Al Bulthuis (center wearing a tie) specifically dedicated the new 'Great Western Trail Arch' to Phil Greco (standing, third from left). Phil Greco not only contributed funds, but also helped oversee the planning, design and installation of the Arch. Phil lost his valiant battle with ALS on June 20.