



GRACE

UNDER PRESSURE

A BLOG BY EDITOR JOE GRACE

Grace: Childhood hero's story gives hope

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ST. CHARLES – It's not every day you see your childhood hero in person.

So Sunday was a special day for me as I went to watch NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Jim Kelly speak at Christ Community Church in St. Charles. Kelly played for my favorite NFL team – the Buffalo Bills. (I was young and impressionable watching the NFL for the first time in 1989 – I jumped on the Bills bandwagon after watching them in the playoffs that year and haven't jumped off.)

Kelly and his wife, Jill Kelly, spoke about many topics, including the loss of their son, Hunter, who passed away in 2005 after being diagnosed shortly after birth in 1997 with Krabbe disease.



NFL Hall of Famer Jim Kelly and his wife, Jill, talk Sunday with Senior Pastor Jim Nicodem about the Hunter's Hope Foundation at Christ Community Church in St. Charles. The foundation is named in honor of the Kellys' son. (Photo by Karen Naess for the Kane County Chronicle)

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Since their son's birth, the Kellys have spent much of their time and resources helping other children who have the disease. You can learn more at www.huntershope.org.

Listening to the couple was inspiring, and it got me thinking about my own life.

It was a tough weekend for me. I spent Friday at Delnor after having a biopsy needle stuck into my kidney – about as much fun as it sounds – and spent the rest of the weekend trying to stay in positions in which it did not feel that little Mark Wahlbergs were inside my body using my right kidney as a punching bag.

But as much as I would have liked to continue to feel sorry for myself, it was hard to after listening to the Kellys tell their story of overcoming adversity.

I left the church on Sunday morning feeling better than I had in weeks.

Jim Kelly inadvertently caused me many tears growing up, as I cried after every one of the Bills' four Super Bowl losses.

But on Sunday, he and his wife filled me with something I've never felt while watching a professional football game – hope.

• *Joe Grace is the editor of the Kane County Chronicle. Write to him at jgrace@kcchronicle.com or call him at 630-845-5368.*