

CEO of the Year: Joe Ellis goes long

By Stewart Schley
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Joe Ellis steered his company car to the crest of La Veta Pass, rising from the swirls and curves of U.S. Route 160 to reach the road's high point, where the wide floor of the San Luis Valley beckoned below. Alamosa was dead ahead, and beyond it the little town of Del Norte. Both were familiar stops within Ellis's territory, a broad swath of southern Colorado where scattered exits from Lamar to Pagosa Springs led to local grocery stores and the people who ran them. Twenty-two years old and newly graduated from Colorado College, Ellis had a car, a job selling caps and T-shirts to retailers and a take-home salary of \$1,000 a month.

"I was living large," Ellis says. "I never had so much money."

Ellis didn't know it, but his future was riding shotgun over long stretches of Colorado roads in 1979.

"We were selling Denver Broncos merchandise to supermarkets at the time," remembers Tom Burke, a Denver-based business owner who had been impressed enough by Ellis to hire him, unproven and untested, straight out of college. "So he kind of started early with the Broncos."

Some combination of fate or destiny or sheer coincidence has tied Ellis to the Broncos ever since. Thirty-five years after he prowled southern Colorado with a product list, Ellis succeeded team owner Pat Bowlen as CEO of the Denver Broncos Football Club and the organization's Stadium Management Co. affiliate. Previously chief operating officer, Ellis added the title of president in 2011 and was elevated to the CEO post in July 2014 when Bowlen, struggling with a worsening Alzheimer's condition, relinquished day-to-day operational control.

At a 2011 press conference tied to the reorganization that made Ellis president, he was the man literally in the background. The cameras and the media attention were trained instead on John Elway, the former quarterback and legendary comeback kid who had returned to run the Broncos football operations, reporting to Ellis. The moment was a metaphor for Ellis' professional career: understated, considerate and above all, deferential.

Nowhere in Ellis's official biography, for example, is there mention of a link to one of America's foremost families: the Bushes. (Ellis's mother is the lone sister of former U.S. President George H. W. Bush). To those who know him, that's to be expected.

"He has no ego whatsoever," says Paul Tagliabue, the former National Football League commissioner who hired Ellis in 1990. "Joe is decisive but deliberate. And he's willing to share victories and defeats in an even-handed way."

Impressive record

Lately, the victories have been piling high. After adding responsibility for day-to-day operations in 2011, Ellis has managed an organization that won five consecutive AFC West titles and six playoff games while racking up 68 regular season and playoff wins to produce a .731 winning percentage. Since Ellis was

named CEO two summers ago, the Broncos have retooled the coaching staff, elevated the winning percentage to .775 (through four games of the current season), won an AFC Championship in dramatic style at home and dominated a Super Bowl opponent to collect a third Lombardi trophy.

In the meantime, the team's estimated market value has soared to \$2.4 billion as of August 2016 from \$1.5 billion two years earlier, according to estimates published by Forbes. During a tumultuous period for the Broncos, as the team's longest-tenured owner relinquished day-to-day control, Ellis and his executive team at Dove Valley have managed to accomplish exactly what his boss wanted to do: put a championship team on the field and make a few million fans deliriously happy. Recognizing these achievements, ColoradoBiz has named Ellis 2016 CEO of the Year.

The selection is about more than football. As CEO, Ellis oversees a company with 206 employees (not including players), an annual payroll approaching \$200 million, two professional sports teams (the Broncos and the Denver Outlaws), estimated annual revenue of close to \$400 million, fully staffed human resources, IT and sales departments, and physical facilities that demand constant care and investment. Beyond the pressures confronting almost every CEO – a fast-changing technology environment, pitched competition for talent, macro-economic headwinds – Ellis deals with a heightened level of scrutiny that comes with the job of managing a prized community asset.

"People are very close to this team and this town," he says. "They feel like it's a part of their lives. We have to behave ourselves accordingly. There are times we don't. We have to apologize for that, move on from our mistakes, and try not to make them a second time."

When it comes to game day, Ellis confesses he prefers traveling to Other People's Stadiums, where it's somebody else's job to try to please the faithful. Ellis badly wants to win at home for the same reasons a doting grandparent wants Sunday dinner to be flawless: because he's the host, and he has got guests.

"This is going to sound odd, but I really enjoy road games," says Ellis. "I get real nervous and real anxious at home games because all you want to do is send 76,000 people home happy."

The January 2013 loss to the Baltimore Ravens at a frigid-cold playoff game in Denver still haunts Ellis.

"I felt so bad. You talk about sending 76,000 people home disappointed. That was a devastating loss."

Part of the desire to please is Ellis' nature: He likes to succeed. Part of it is a sense of obligation he feels to Bronco Nation, the collective of orange-bleeding fans who make up Ellis's core customer base. And part of it is about extending Bowlen's legacy. Over the eight years he worked for the NFL, Ellis advised and crossed paths with lots of team owners. Among them, he says Bowlen consistently stood out for his appreciation of the civic and emotional attachment football produces.

"(Fans) give equity in the form of money and emotion, and he understands and respects both of those better, I think, than almost any owner in sports," Ellis says.

Bowlen's influence on Ellis's career runs deep. The Broncos owner recommended that Tagliabue consider Ellis for an NFL job in 1990 after Ellis earned an MBA from Northwestern University. Bowlen had been impressed a few years earlier by work Ellis did in the Broncos' marketing department, where a 25-year-old Ellis had started out by selling advertising space in game-day programs.

When Bowlen was looking for a No. 2 executive to join the organization in 1998, he called Tagliabue again, this time asking for the commissioner's blessing to poach away a rising star who Tagliabue had promoted to vice president of Club Administration and Stadium Management. "We gave some thought to putting the 'franchise player' tag on him," Tagliabue jokes. "He was one of our better people, and teams were saying, 'I want to hire him.'"

Since then, Ellis has been the steady if unheralded presence behind the scenes, attentive both to day-to-day management and the occasional burst of unpredictability. When the Broncos parted with short-lived head coach Josh McDaniels following the 2010 season, it was Ellis who summoned McDaniels to his office to deliver the news.

When two senior-level employees were charged with driving under the influence in separate incidents during the summer of 2013, it was Ellis who castigated the men publicly and later suspended them. When it comes time to name one of Bowlen's children as the owner's successor, Ellis will have a big say in the decision as part of a three-person evaluation committee.

Ellis' management style is big on delegation (see sidebar). His approach: Hire talented people and empower them to think through problems.

"I spend more time listening than I do talking, and I think that's pretty important," Ellis says. "There are plenty of people in this organization who know a hell of a lot more than I do."

He says his career clicked into a higher gear once he took a job with the NFL, where bosses Tagliabue and his successor Roger Goodell were inspirations.

"Those were turning points for me, seeing how seriously they took their work, but not necessarily themselves," Ellis recounts.

Outside the Broncos' Centennial headquarters, Ellis pays close attention to what's happening with the core product of NFL football. He sits on two NFL committees: Stadiums and Fan Enhancement/Security. He plays around with digital applications like NFL Game Pass, an online streaming and game-archive platform, and keeps tabs on news developments via Twitter, which now streams live NFL games.

Like almost every NFL executive, he worries about how to keep the live-game experience vibrant and appealing as electronic, stay-at-home alternatives become better and better. He marvels at the seemingly insatiable appetite among fans for more football content, more of the time. "I don't know if it's unstoppable, but on the other hand people can't seem to get enough of this league," says Ellis.

As a kid growing up in Concord, Mass. – too small for football, Ellis played ice hockey, soccer and baseball – he admired Boston Bruins hockey legend Bobby Orr. It wasn't just that Orr was one of the greatest hockey players ever. It was his demeanor that resonated with Ellis. "He was a really humble, modest, hard-working competitive guy who I just looked up to," Ellis says. When he suggests the same characteristics might apply to his own workplace persona, he waves off the comparison to a boyhood hero. "That might be a stretch," Ellis says.

But if he won't go there, others will. Tom Burke, the man who hired Ellis out of college and still stays in touch, says Ellis was a star performer from the start.

“When I hired him I figured he was young guy who I hoped would be OK. He turned out to be outstanding,” says Burke. “I hired two other guys from Colorado College and the two of them together didn’t equal Joe. He just went out and worked all day and had the personality and the brains to approach people properly and sell product for us.”

In football, and in business, Joe Ellis has proven that’s the sort of stuff that makes for a winning game plan.

Joe Ellis on the Xs and Os of organizational leadership:

Have a mission: “Ours is to put a Super Bowl championship team on the field each and every year, and be good corporate and individual citizens off the field.”

Empower people: “No one knows it all. If you’re not going to empower people and allow them to take some risks, you’re just going to stay in neutral. I encourage people to bring me solutions and ideas, and not be at all nervous about the outcome.”

Fix conflict the old-fashioned way: “My pet peeve is resolving conflict by email. I can’t stand that. And when I see it happen, I will intercede no matter who it’s involving. You just put people together and air it out and get it over with.”

Take a breath: In dealing with crisis, “You’ve got to think it through, and be reasonable and rational, and use common sense. If you panic based on public pressure, inevitably you’re going to end up in a bad place.”

Cultivate buy-in: Ellis wants everyone from the team’s graphics department to the groundskeepers to understand they’re united in a common goal. “It’s (about) empowering them to make sure they understand that everything they do is important. It helps us win.”

Broncos president Joe Ellis: Pat Bowlen would say he 'loved this team'

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
February 9, 2016

There are times when Denver Broncos president and CEO Joe Ellis will ask, when he's faced with a decision, "what would Pat do?"

Just before John Elway and Gary Kubiak talked Tuesday about how the Broncos won Super Bowl 50 and what's to come for the team, Ellis took a few moments to offer what Pat Bowlen would think of the seventh Super Bowl team -- and third title-winner -- since he purchased the team.

"Pat should be here, this is who should be talking to you now," said Ellis of Bowlen, who is battling Alzheimer's disease. "He would tell you that he loved this team, he loved everything that they were about, their resolve and their grit, their determination and the way they finished. He would have been so impressed with that and so pleased and so proud. ... And (Sunday night) he would have said if you were surprised by the outcome today, you shouldn't have been. He would have recognized the great confidence and the preparation, everything Gary and his staff did to get this team ready to play."

The Broncos defeated the Carolina Panthers, 24-10, in Super Bowl 50 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. The Broncos won 11 games this season -- regular season and playoffs combined -- by seven or fewer points, a single-season record, and Ellis termed the team's defensive performance as "historical."

Ellis made his remarks just before the Broncos left for the team's parade and rally in downtown Denver that a mayor's spokesman said was expected to draw "hundreds of thousands" of people.

"I think he would have been overwhelmed with and pleased with the fans," Ellis said. " ... Pat, and all of us here, never underestimate that, we never do."

Broncos coach Gary Kubiak had Ellis speak to the Broncos players about Bowlen the day before the team left for California in the days leading up to the Super Bowl. Bowlen stepped away from the team's day-to-day operations in the summer of 2014.

Many of the current players have not met Bowlen, who was inducted into the team's Ring of Fame earlier this season.

"The ability and the way to treat his people, the culture that he has created for this organization, the culture of winning and the expectations of competing for world championships, that is what he wants," said Broncos executive vice president of football operations/general manager John Elway. "I think that as a player and as an employee now, that you can't ask for anything else. It starts at the top with the owner, with the guy that is making everything happen. You can't be in a better situation to be competitive and again trying to compete for world championships."

"I think Mr. Bowlen is a leader of people," Kubiak said. "For me to be gone from this organization and come back 10 years later and see so many of the same people still in place, still in this building, still working and still contributing, and then even now with Mr. B not here on a regular basis, his presence is

here every day -- what he stood for, what he wants his people and this organization to stand for, just a tremendous leader."

Broncos CEO Joe Ellis Told Team Pat Bowlen Would Be 'Enormously Proud' Of Them

By Staff

CBS 4 Denver

February 4, 2016

The Denver Broncos have been in the business of winning for more than three decades, and it has started at the top with owner Pat Bowlen.

But as the Broncos prepare for their battle with the Panthers in Super Bowl 50, Bowlen is unable to be with the team due to his battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

"You know, he's doing the best he can fighting a terrible disease," Broncos president and CEO Joe Ellis told CBS4. "He's resting comfortably at home. I wish he were here with us here now; he'd really enjoy this. But unfortunately he can't be, and I know he's here in spirit."

It has been a couple of years since Bowlen has been able to address the team, so before the team departed on their trip to the San Francisco Bay area last weekend, Ellis spoke to the players on Bowlen's behalf.

"I told them how much he would love this team and their resolve and how hard they've fought, how well they've conducted themselves on and off the field this year," Ellis said. "He'd be enormously proud of this team and I wanted them to know that."

Broncos cornerback Aqib Talib was among the players who said afterwards that they appreciated Ellis' words and called Ellis's speech "heartfelt."

Quarterback Peyton Manning told reporters this week that Bowlen deserves a lot of credit for the success they've had since he arrived in Denver four years ago.

"There's no way that any of us would be in this position without the support and the role that Pat Bowlen has done as an owner," Manning said. "We're trying to do our part to honor him."

And what better way to honor Bowlen than to thank him in the exact same way that he honored John Elway after the Super Bowl XXXII win when he declared "This one's for John!" and handed him the Lombardi Trophy.

"Pat would never want it to be for him. He'd want it to be about them and he'd want them to win it for each other. And I hope the players do do that. But it would be nice — and the right thing to do at the end — to have John stand up there and honor Pat up there on the platform for sure," Ellis said.

Bowlen is already a member of the Broncos Ring of Fame. Ellis thinks the next honor Bowlen gets should be an election to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Broncos President/CEO Joe Ellis discusses Pat Bowlen's legacy: 'He did everything the right way'

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
October 29, 2015

With Owner Pat Bowlen set to be inducted into the Ring of Fame this weekend, Broncos President/CEO Joe Ellis sat down to discuss Bowlen's lasting legacy, his continued influence on the organization and the hopes for the future ownership of the franchise.

What do you think it meant to Mr. Bowlen to see the franchise get back on the right track before he stepped away because of Alzheimer's disease?

"Well, I think he was proud of that. But that was also -- and always will be -- his expectation: that we're going to put the right people in place and we're going to turn it around, and if we make a mistake, then we're going to fix it again.

"He didn't consider it rocket science. He's had -- and has always had -- a good feel for when it's time to make these moves, and when the right time is. But he doesn't take much satisfaction [in it]. He's too modest to take personal satisfaction in having those situations corrected. He's more concerned with, 'Are we ready to win the Super Bowl each and every year?' I think that's his focus.

"I don't think he is a guy who believes in rebuilding. He's a guy that believes in quick retooling. That's how he approached it, and I don't think he sat back and said, 'Wow, look at the moves we've made to make things better.' Because it's never good enough for him until you win that Super Bowl. That's how competitive he is."

And even after Bowlen stepped back, that attitude still pervades the organization, making tough moves like what happened after last season, parting ways with one coach and bringing in Gary Kubiak and a mostly new staff:

"Yes. He wasn't involved in that decision last year, obviously, but I think if he were, he would have understood. He was always very supportive of those who reported to him that had the courage of their convictions and felt things were the right things to do, whether it was Mike Shanahan running the team for 14 seasons, or even Dan Reeves prior to that.

"He's proud of John [Elway] for the way that he's designed and been the architect of this franchise. He's very, very proud of the work John's done, no question in my mind."

How about Bowlen's influence on you? How often at a big decision do you ask yourself, "What would Pat do?"

"If those things come about, I do reflect back on how he handled things and what he would have done, because in my mind, he did everything the right way when it came to running the organization. If there are things that I think should have been done differently, maybe I'd consider that.

"But I always consider what I think he would have done, and one of the things he always did was stay out of peoples' way and listen and if their recommendations were sound and solid, he'd give them the the opportunity to execute them."

And Bowlen is still the owner. The wins the Broncos accumulate still count toward his total. This is still his show, even though he's not here every day.

"And I think we as an organization still understand that if they've got something they want to present, whether it's a football transaction or a business transaction, step up and give it a try, because the odds are, you're going to get the rope to do it."

You have a unique perspective because you were on the business staff when Bowlen became the Broncos' owner in 1984. What changes did he make, and what tone did he set when he assumed control of the Broncos?

"He didn't mandate anything. He made it clear that he was coming in to learn and he was going to listen to [Head Coach] Dan Reeves and [General Manager] John Beake on the football side. They were running the whole program at that time, and he deferred to them. I wasn't in a lot of those meetings, because I was 27 years old, and not privy to his discussions at the highest levels, but if he were operating the way I think he always has operated, he was just asking a lot of questions.

"And I remember he told something to Paul Tagliabue. He said, 'When I first bought the Broncos, I saddled up to [then-Commissioner] Pete Rozelle and I said, 'How should I conduct myself as an owner?' And Pete Rozelle said, 'You know, you ought to spend the first three to five years keeping your mouth shut and learning what goes on in this league.'

"[Bowlen said,] 'I did that, and then unfortunately for Paul, I was in my sixth year in the league when he became commissioner,' so that's when he started speaking up. And actually, just prior to that, he started speaking up, because he was one of the ringleaders to get support for Tagliabue.

"The vote came down to Jim Finks [a long-time personnel executive, then the Saints' general manager] and Paul Tagliabue, and Pat was firmly entrenched in Paul's camp. And I think he rallied other owners around him and they eventually got the votes, and they put the right guy in there, and the league took off with Paul, and Roger [Goodell] has taken it to another level. But people forget that Paul Tagliabue into the early 1990s and early 2000s really grew the game."

And a big leap forward came in the 1990s, with the Fox TV contract in 1994 and then the CBS/FOX/ABC/ESPN contracts of 1998.

"Yes, and then NBC went away, and came back with Sunday Night Football in 2006, which was Mr. B's baby, along with Dick Ebersol. [Bowlen] really grew in stature and he was a good listener. And he has great instincts. He's always had great instincts as an owner."

And so much of what he envisioned comes together in the NFL of this moment: Thursday night games on the NFL Network, Sunday Night Football and a growing international presence starting with the three games this year in London:

"Exactly. He is kind of the author of a lot of this that got everything propelled and moving forward. I think he'd be stunned by what's happened in the league if he were back in his office right now, but he'd be full speed ahead. He certainly would."

What does it mean not only to the organization, but its fans, that the Bowlen Trust was set up to provide stability and keep the team running smoothly -- because some other ownership transitions throughout pro sports have turned chaotic?

"Well, he had a firm plan for keeping the team in the family, and it's his hope that it will remain there, and one of his children will come along and earn the right to sit in his chair. He was unwavering in that, and he set out some guidelines and everything else as to what he'd like to see.

"But he planned ahead, and he had a very strict vision, if you will, as to what needed to happen. Hopefully we can keep things afloat until the right child comes along."

Will the changes approved in May by league owners to allow trust ownership and reduce the percentage of a team that must be controlled by the managing partner (to 5 percent) help make it possible to keep the team in the family?

"In some ways, yes. The trustees have work to do with the league to make sure that we are always in compliance with league ownership policies. That's our job, that's our task, that's our responsibility for Pat, so we continue to work all the time on those things."

What has Gary Kubiak brought to the building to energize the atmosphere around the team?

"Well, I think with the players, there's a clear path to how we're going to succeed on the field, and that come from Gary and his staff. It's a renewed sense of accountability, which I think is the word that's up in the back of the team room now. I see that in the players, and in some of the discipline they've shown on the field, and how they've performed.

"So we're off to a great start. It's a long season. Let's hope the last 10 games go as well as the first six."

And with Kubiak and his staff, there's a deep connection to the successful legacy of the Broncos:

"There is a connection to the history of the team -- during an era when there was tremendous success, led by Mike Shanahan and some great players such as John Elway, Terrell Davis, Gary Zimmerman, Shannon Sharpe and people like that.

"But this is a new era, and you have to prove yourself every day, and all those coaches know that down there. They're dedicated to their craft, and they're working as hard as they can to give the Broncos success."

Ellis speaks to CSU students about sustainability in business

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
April 16, 2015

For as much as the Broncos want to excel on the field, they want to mirror that success off it, President and CEO Joe Ellis told Colorado State University students on Thursday.

Speaking at CSU's 37th annual Business Day event, Ellis detailed how the team has worked to create synergy in both team and environmental sustainability. From switching to playbooks on iPads (saving on paper each season) to stadium-wide recycling and waste-reduction initiatives that since 2007 diverted more than 1,200 tons of waste from landfills, produced over 130 tons of compost and

recycled more than 250 tons of cardboard, to saving more than 8.5 million gallons of water over the last five years, the Broncos have worked to improve their environmental impact.

After his speech, students were able to ask questions to inform their perspective about perhaps working in sports, and about what's involved creating a valuable organization in sports, and not just on game day.

"We just started the partnership with CSU this past year and I think it's got great promise. We're in our infancy stages and to participate in this day, this Business Day here, I think we'll hopefully add some value," Ellis said. "I think I can speak on behalf of the Broncos and let everybody know how excited we are to have this sponsorship doing some events with them, not just today but in the past and the future and our connections will enable students to grow and heighten their outlooks in terms of what their career opportunities will be in the world of sports, not just in football but all throughout the world of sports."

While the Business Day is an event produced by CSU's College of Business, it's open to all students to get valuable experience, as Ajay Menon, the dean of the business school, noted.

"We are, today, celebrating 37 years of what we call 'Business Day' where we allow our students the opportunity to work with and listen to business executives from a variety of industries and backgrounds," Menon said. "...You'll find today largely Colorado kids and they are studying marketing, accounting, finance, supply chain, HR — all different facets of business. But we open this program to the rest of the campus where we have students from all sorts of fields coming to us today, so you'll find undergraduate students, 18 to 21, 22-years-old; graduate students, veterans and a whole host of community folks also visiting us today."

With a leader from such a influential and iconic Colorado institution to speak before students finding their paths, Menon said Ellis' presence offers students helpful insight into a sector many are interested in breaking into.

"Our students have always thought about the Denver Broncos as being the brand that they have chosen for part of their football interest, and as a result, what you find is we bring in an iconic leader like Joe

Ellis who has the reputation for integrity, the reputation for steely leadership; we're steering one of their favorite franchises to the top of the NFL heap," Menon said. "These are students looking to see what leadership is like in a sector of the industry or a sector of their workforce that they never get a chance to see. So having Joe Ellis is one of the big highlights of this day's program for our students here.

"It's about paying forward, it's about developing young talent further. All of these aspects that impart to what life might be in corporate America. And so there is a huge synergy between the Denver Broncos operations and what these students might face in other parts of the business sectors that we have."

As Joe Ellis knows, new year for Peyton Manning brings new questions for Broncos

By Mike Klis
Denver Post
March 23, 2015

Happy birthday, Peyton Manning.

The Broncos' star quarterback turns 39 on Tuesday. The stinging truth is the birthday brings as much concern as celebration to the Broncos' fan base. Especially when his 38th year, after a promising start, didn't finish so well.

Manning's age is one reason it's fair to wonder which way the Broncos' arrow is pointing. It's not the only reason.

For the first time in the Joe Ellis-John Elway management era, the Broncos lost more headliners (Julius Thomas, Terrance Knighton, Orlando Franklin and Rahim Moore) to free agency than they signed from the market (tight end Owen Daniels is the team's most significant addition).

The Broncos posted 13-3, 13-3 and 12-4 records the past three regular seasons, yet in part because those years did not culminate with the hoisting of the Lombardi Trophy, the team turned over the top end of its coaching staff with John Fox, Jack Del Rio, Adam Gase and Jeff Rodgers exiting and Gary Kubiak, Wade Phillips, Rick Dennison and Joe DeCamillis stepping in.

And has it been mentioned that Manning is 39?

But this is the half-empty approach. Sit across the table from Ellis during a break from the NFL owners meetings Monday at the Arizona Biltmore resort, and the Broncos' president and chief executive officer provides a far more optimistic outlook between sips of his iced tea. And, yes, there were long stretches when the glass was half full.

"We're excited for 2015," Ellis said. "It's true 2014 didn't end the way we wanted to, but we're assembling a team that should be competitive again. We believe we will be competitive again in 2015. We've had a nice run of success since John Elway took over football operations.

"I think there's some anxiety out there that we didn't make a splash in free agency. Two things on that: You don't win a Super Bowl in March. And two, John made some significant investments in players in recent years in free agency."

"Spend to the cap"

Still, any team with Manning on its roster is going to be a team heavily dependent on its quarterback.

And for the first time since coming back from his surgically repaired neck that forced him to miss the entire 2011 season, Manning will enter a new season with questions.

"There's been a lot of speculation regarding how he's going to perform when he comes back," Ellis said. "I think a lot of that speculation is questioning his ability and doubting his ability. And I can only imagine how hard he is champing at the bit to prove everybody wrong."

Manning will play while living on a tighter budget; the Broncos slashed his 2015 pay from \$19 million to \$15 million. Some American families have tighter budgets than others.

But the Broncos had to get their books in order this year after they spent heavily in free agency the previous three seasons. And within the next 12 months, the team hopes to sign the likes of Demaryius Thomas, Von Miller and Malik Jackson to contract extensions.

And so asking Manning for financial relief was deemed necessary.

"It's sticking to a discipline," Ellis said. "You step outside the discipline, it comes back to bite you. And John's not going to do that. He's a smart businessman as well as a good football person."

By discipline, Ellis means maintaining a budget that spends one dollar of cash for every dollar of the Broncos' \$150 million salary cap payroll in 2015.

"We'll spend to the cap," Ellis said. "We've spent a lot of money. We've always done that. We better do that. Because if you're not doing everything you can to win, why would anybody support you? Why would people purchase their tickets?"

"Sometimes I think it's easy to forget you can't spend like that every year because you end up mortgaging your future. The system doesn't allow for that to happen."

The Broncos' ownership structure is unusual, if not unprecedented, because Alzheimer's disease caused owner Pat Bowlen to place the team in a trust last July. The trust states Bowlen's desire is to have one of his seven children run the club when one proves to have earned the position.

Bowlen "a battler" The trust is controlled by Ellis, Broncos general counsel Rich Slivka and Denver attorney Mary Kelly. The New Orleans Saints are going through an embarrassing family feud with owner Tom Benson's revised secession plan. Could the Broncos be similarly vulnerable?

"Pat Bowlen put in a plan over a decade ago to deal with the secession planning for his team in the event of death or incapacity," Ellis said. "We're executing that plan, we're keeping the family informed and any further details on that are private to the family and out of respect to Mr. B and his wife and his children."

Bowlen's absence from these annual meetings remains palpable; for years he was one of the NFL's most influential owners, serving as a longtime co-chairman of the broadcast and labor committees.

So how is Bowlen doing?

"He's a battler," Ellis said. "He's doing the best he can with a disease that's just unfair. It's tough on him, it's tough on Annabel, it's tough on his seven children. But he's fighting it as best he can."

Broncos CEO: 'I don't think we should drop our standards, ever'

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
January 14, 2015

The most stunning sound at Sports Authority Field at Mile High on Sunday was the booing.

It wasn't just smattering of disgruntled fans, but boos from before halftime that grew louder by the end of the Denver Broncos' 24-13 divisional playoff loss to the Indianapolis Colts – a loss that precipitated another coaching change.

The booing was the type of sound the front office couldn't ignore, and the Broncos are starting their third head coaching search since 2009.

Team president and CEO Joe Ellis spoke with USA TODAY Sports about the decision to part with coach John Fox, the state of the Broncos franchise and the future of quarterback Peyton Manning on Tuesday.

It was Ellis who in 2011 was the driving force behind hiring Elway to run the Broncos front office, and last summer Ellis assumed the title of CEO when Pat Bowlen, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, had to place his ownership into a trust. As in 2011 when the Broncos hired Fox, Ellis will be involved in the coaching search, but the final decision will be made by Elway.

Q: What role did you have in this decision; what was the process like with John Elway?

A: We talked about it at length. John Fox did what we needed him to do four years ago. And we owe him a great debt of gratitude for that. It's just a situation where felt that, to get to that next level, it was time to move in a different direction and bring in something else.

Q: From a big-picture perspective, what is the state of this franchise? How set are you to win right away with a new head coach? Is the championship window still open?

A: I think it's a good group of players and some good coaches -- we'll see what the staff is that comes here with the new guy. I think our organization is positioned, starting with the players, to continue to be successful. I don't think we should drop our standards, ever. That's just not what was in (owner) Pat Bowlen's DNA, and it's not going to be as long as we are here trying to do his work the way he wants it done.

Q: But how much of that ability to win right away is tied to Peyton Manning?

A: You heard John say it today, we want him back. I mean, this is one of the game's greatest players, and you know, for much of the season, he performed at a very high level. But it's a decision that, as John said, Peyton will have to make. I think our opinion is a player of that stature is entitled to make that kind of decision on his own and on his terms.

Q: But when you look around the NFL, the teams that win consistently are the ones with a quarterback. If Manning doesn't return, how confident are you that this team will have a viable quarterback without him?

A: It is. It is. The quarterback is more than half the battle. That's a challenge I don't want to think about until we know what the future is. As I said, I think we hope Peyton returns.

Q: How do you think this decision will be met by your fans? Was it hard to hear boos at Mile High on Sunday?

A: I think they'll be energized and excited. I think our fans are very, very smart and they understand the nature of this business. They understand what our mission is, what we're about here, and they have as much passion and energy and devote as much passion and energy to it as we do. They really do. We're on the same page with what they want, I believe. You know, they are all disappointed. I think it's discouraging to watch them be disappointed. I think disappointed is an overused words these days, so I'll take it up a step and say it is discouraging, frankly. But we don't have any time to sit around and mope and feel sorry for ourselves.

Q: What's the urgency to get this coaching search done?

A: We're fast at work right away. And that's what happens` when you have one of these transitions. You don't sit and thing about last Sunday for four days. Now, when we lost to Baltimore a couple years ago, that took a long time to get over. This one was bad, we had a terrible taste, but we have to wipe it out of our mouth and find ourselves the best head coach we can.

Ellis co-hosts Habitat for Humanity build

By Lauren Giudice
denverbroncos.com
October 10, 2014

DENVER – Broncos President and CEO Joe Ellis and more than 30 of Denver's top executives ditched their ties for construction hats on Friday as they came together for Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver's Annual CEO Build.

Ellis co-hosted the event with Habitat Denver CEO Heather Lafferty.

"It's been a blast working with all these CEOs and their representatives from around the city," Ellis said. "To be able to add something that has value and is tangible and benefits people who deserve the right to live in a safe and fun environment is incredible. Habitat for Humanity does wonderful things to give people great opportunities."

Executives from Denver companies including U.S. Bank, Denver Business Journal, Arrow Electronics and 9 News were in attendance. He worked alongside them and the future owners of the townhomes that were being built.

Ellis spent the morning on scaffolding preparing the siding of one of the townhouses. He was impressed by the turnout and the skills of his fellow builders.

He said working with Habitat for Humanity is extremely rewarding, especially when the future homeowners are onsite. Ellis noted that the work that Habitat for Humanity does changes lives and gives people hope.

"What you get out of it is a real recognition and understanding that what you're constructing and what you're helping to build is touching people directly and you're doing it alongside those people," Ellis said. "You're allowing people to live in environments that they weren't necessarily privy to or accustomed to previously and now they get to live in these safe, comfortable, clean homes."

The Sable Ridge Townhome development in Northeast Denver, where the build took place, is the largest project Habitat Denver has done locally. Once the entire project is completed in 2016, there will be 51 townhomes.

While Ellis participated in the event on Friday, the Broncos are year-round partners of the organization. The Broncos regularly work as a staff on build projects and incorporate build opportunities into organization-wide community days.

Lafferty said this event is especially exciting for the organization because people who are fierce competitors in business on a day-to-day basis come together for a

day to work towards a common goal. She acknowledged that the work that Habitat does wouldn't be possible without volunteers and that the work done during builds like Friday's make a big impact on local families.

"The families that we're working with, these are hard-working families," Lafferty said. "Many of them work at our airport or down at the Anschutz Medical Campus or in the local economy here. They are essential to our economy and yet they don't have a good place to call home.

"In Denver one in four children live in poverty, many of those children don't have a good roof over their head. They don't have the stability of a good home. That's what Habitat provides is the ability for the family to have a stable, affordable and safe home - a place where they, as a family, can grow and thrive."

30 CEOs roll up their sleeves for Habitat home

By Tim Ryan

KUSA.com

October 10, 2014

DENVER - The saying that it's hard to get good help these days did not apply to the Habitat for Humanity CEO Build, when about 30 of Denver's top business leaders helped build a home.

"Every time we come out it is really fulfilling," says Denver Broncos CEO Joe Ellis. "You feel good about what you are doing even if you aren't very good at it."

CEOs and other leaders from Wells Fargo Bank, Jonah Energy, the Denver Business Journal and 9NEWS joined Ellis for the annual event.

The home they worked on is in the Sable Ridge Townhome development in northeast Denver, near I-70 and Chambers, which will be finished in 2016 with 51 townhomes.

Joe Ellis has background to take over Pat Bowlen's Broncos duties

By Mike Klis
The Denver Post
July 24, 2014

Had Pat Bowlen not handpicked his successor and the Broncos instead used an independent search committee, Joe Ellis might well have landed the job on résumé alone.

Ellis got his start in the NFL by selling ads in the Broncos' GameDay program. He later worked as an intern in the NFL office, working his way up until he became cohorts with a promising administrator named Roger Goodell.

After returning to the Broncos, Ellis was put in charge of marketing, finance and, ultimately, the whole Broncos' organizational shebang.

"Anymore, to operate all the stuff for an NFL organization, you've got to have a feel for all of it," Broncos coach John Fox said. "Old, hard-core football people, they can't do that. You've got to deal with the owners. That's a different breed of cat, having been around a few. Dealing with marketing people. Dealing with football people. Joe's got great overall, expansive knowledge and experience to do his role. I think people skills are really important, and he does a tremendous job with that."

Leadership streams through Ellis' bloodlines. His mom is the sister of George H.W. Bush, who in the four years from 1989-93 was the leader of the free world. Bush's oldest son, and Ellis' cousin, George W. Bush, was president of the United States for eight years, from 2001-09.

All Ellis has to do is lead an NFL team.

And so far, he has shown promise. During the past three years in which he has had final-say authority of the club, the Broncos won three AFC West titles and three home playoff games, and averaged better than 12 victories, counting playoffs, per season.

As Bowlen cedes control of the Broncos so he can continue to battle the insidious disease that is Alzheimer's, it would appear Ellis is well qualified to take charge. "I got asked to do it," Ellis said Wednesday. "I had the best mentor anyone could

have. I just feel fortunate to be part of the organization. I wish Pat were here to do it. That would be better."

Ellis may be kin of the Bushes, but he's more a protégé of Bowlen's.

"His style comes from Pat, which is why Joe is so terrific to work for," said John Elway, the Broncos' general manager and head of football operations.

Elway answers to Ellis. He has since Ellis and Bowlen hired Elway to run the Broncos' football department in January 2011.

The announcement of Elway's hiring drew one of the largest news conferences in Denver sports history. Ellis stood by at the same news conference while a release circulated to the media announcing his promotion to president.

On that same day, Bowlen essentially stepped back from overseeing the Broncos' day-to-day operations and transferred that control to Ellis.

"He never used the Bush card, and he never used the team president card, either," said Ray Baker, chairman of the Denver Metropolitan Football Stadium District.

"You would not use the word ego with Joe. He likes to stay invisible. He is fiery and a competitor. We've had some tough negotiations, and at times they got contentious. But he has always been a man of integrity. He's a handshake guy. He is a man of character that you trust."

A 1980 graduate of Colorado College, a liberal arts school in Colorado Springs, Ellis joined the Broncos in 1983. He started in the marketing department, where he started at the best place any up-and-comer can hope for — the bottom. Meaning no disrespect to program ads.

After three years with the Broncos, Ellis went to Northwestern University to earn a master's degree in management. Document in hand, he began interning with the NFL office in New York in 1990, where he worked alongside Goodell, who is now arguably the most powerful commissioner in sports.

"Joe's deep experience ensures that the Broncos will continue to have strong leadership," Goodell said Tuesday in a statement to The Denver Post.

Before the Broncos' second Super Bowl title season of 1998, Bowlen hired Ellis to run his business department. Ellis has been Bowlen's right-hand man ever since.

Ellis was promoted to chief operating officer in 2008, then quietly became the team's president in 2011.

Well before Bowlen's health became debilitating, the owner put the Broncos in a trust. The Pat Bowlen Trust entrusted Ellis.

"He asked me to run it," Ellis said. "And I will do that. This is not about me today, but he asked me to do it, and I stand shoulder to shoulder with everybody in the organization to follow through on what his goals and objectives were."

More than anything else, winning defines Bowlen's legacy as the Broncos' owner. He was the first NFL owner to reach 300 career victories by his 30th season.

Ellis was by Bowlen's side for much of that time.

"His style is a lot like Pat's, because he grew up under Pat," Elway said. "He's involved and knows about everything that's going on, but he also gives you the ability and resources and the parameters to be successful. And he allows you to do your work."

Involved, but not a meddler. Sounds like the Broncos' leader hasn't so much changed as stayed the same.

Meet Joe Ellis

A 1980 graduate of Colorado College, Ellis joined the Broncos in 1983. He started in the marketing department selling ads.

After three years, Ellis went to Northwestern University to earn a master's degree in management.

He began an internship with the NFL in New York in 1990, where he worked alongside current commissioner Roger Goodell.

Bowlen hired Ellis to run his business department before 1998, the second Super Bowl-winning season for Denver.

Ellis was promoted to chief operating officer in 2008.

In 2011, Ellis became the Broncos' team president.

Tuesday, Ellis became CEO of the Broncos, replacing Pat Bowlen.

Meet Joe Ellis, the man taking over the Denver Broncos for Pat Bowlen

By Lindsay H. Jones
USA TODAY Sports
July 23, 2014

DENVER — Though Pat Bowlen relinquished ownership of the Denver Broncos this week as he battles Alzheimer's disease, little will change in the day-to-day operations of the team.

That's because Bowlen four years ago named Joe Ellis as team president, and Ellis has handled all of the major decisions the team has made since, with Bowlen's advisement and approval. Ellis officially now adds the title of chief executive officer.

Ellis has a long history with the Broncos, dating back to the early 1980s when he started as an intern in the team's marketing department, where he was working when Bowlen purchased the team in 1984. He left the team to pursue his Master's in Business Administration at Northwestern and spent eight years working for the NFL, rising through the ranks of the league office alongside commissioner Roger Goodell.

Ellis, a first cousin of former President George W. Bush, returned to the Broncos in 1998, and has played a major role in projects like building of Sports Authority Field at Mile High (which opened in 2001) and the current massive renovation project at the Paul D. Bowlen Memorial Centre, the team's headquarters in Englewood, Colo. The current project includes a complete overhaul of the team's existing facility, as well as construction of a field house that is set to be completed this fall.

Ellis was also a driving force behind the team's decision to hire John Elway as executive president of football operations in 2011.

Ellis, in addition to his personal history with Goodell, is well known in league circles, having attended owner's meetings for at least a decade. He was the Broncos' voting representative at the meetings this March.

The Ellis file:

- Graduated from Colorado College in 1980.
- First joined the Broncos in 1983 as their director of marketing.
- Left the Broncos after the 1985 season to pursue a master's degree from Northwestern University, where he graduated in 1988.

- Joined the NFL in 1990 as vice president of club administration and stadium management.
- Returned to the Broncos in 1998 as executive vice president of business operations.
- Was promoted to chief operating officer in 2008 and to team president on Jan. 5, 2011, with responsibility on ownership, business and football matters.
- Married to wife, Ann, with three children: sons Si and Zander and daughter Catherine.
- Cousin of former U.S. president George W. Bush and nephew of former president George H.W. Bush. (Ellis mother is the elder Bush's sister.)

Joe Ellis leading Broncos to NFL owners meetings in Orlando

By Mike Klis
The Denver Post
Monday, March 24, 2014

ORLANDO, Fla. — In contrast to his surroundings, Joe Ellis strode unassumingly into the gilded lobby of The Ritz-Carlton resort Sunday.

While other NFL executives, including team owners and head coaches, arrived in rented Cadillac Escalades and black Lincoln Town Cars, Ellis climbed out of a white-and-orange Ace Metro taxicab.

His brown loafers tapped against the pristine marble floors while his blue blazer and brown slacks were a fitting fashion for league meetings that are underway.

It's not that people have forgotten Ellis has been overseeing the Broncos' day-to-day operations and all key franchise decisions the past three years. It's that few people were aware he held such authority in the first place.

The day Ellis was formally announced as Broncos president was the same day John Elway was introduced as the team's executive vice president of football operations in a banner news conference. Elway's hiring that day officially ended the Hall of Fame quarterback's 13-year separation from the Broncos.

This is the fourth set of owners meetings since Elway's hiring and Ellis' promotion. And like the others, Ellis is leading the Broncos contingency that includes Elway, who recently added "general manager" to his title, and coach John Fox.

What is different about these meetings? Broncos owner Pat Bowlen isn't attending them.

Long a dominant force on the owners' broadcast and labor committees, Bowlen decided to step back from his usual day-to-day duties as he pushed Ellis forward in January 2011.

Bowlen has apparently become so comfortable with the transition, he is leaving these league meetings to Ellis and Elway.

"Mr. Bowlen is at home in Hawaii," Ellis said. "He's relaxing with his family. He's obviously taken a step back in the last few seasons. But he has set in stone a culture of winning that is understood by all of us with the Denver Broncos. He may

not be as involved as he was, but let me tell you something: Nobody loves the Broncos more than Pat Bowlen."

Bowlen celebrated his 70th birthday last month, and Sunday marked the 30th anniversary from the day he was officially announced as the team's owner. It's not unusual for some of the NFL's longest-tenured owners to miss these meetings.

It's a first for Bowlen, though, and his absence may raise concerns about his health. It should be noted that Bowlen remains physically and mentally active every day.

"He's checking in regularly, and we keep him updated from Dove Valley, and I will keep him updated from Orlando," Ellis said. "He does have some health issues at this point in his life, but he's doing OK. Those are personal to him and personal to his family. He pushes through valiantly. The best news is, outside of this brief stay in Hawaii, he's around every day and enjoys going to practices and being around his football team."

Ellis has been around the Broncos and the NFL since soon after graduating from Colorado College in 1980. He started in the team's marketing department in 1983, then went to Northwestern to earn a master's degree in management. He put his education to use with the NFL in 1990, when he worked alongside an up-and-comer named Roger Goodell.

Before the Broncos' second Super Bowl title season of 1998, Bowlen hired Ellis to run his business department. Ellis has been Bowlen's right-hand man ever since.

Ellis was promoted to chief operating officer in 2008, then quietly became the team's president in 2011 as the Broncos community was enthusiastically distracted by the return of Elway.

With good reason. The year before Elway took charge, the Broncos were 4-12. In Elway's three seasons as football operations boss, the team has a 34-14 record and three AFC West titles.

After the Broncos won the AFC championship in January, only to get humiliated by the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl, Elway bulled ahead once more.

In free agency, Elway signed defensive stalwarts DeMarcus Ware, Aqib Talib and T.J. Ward, plus wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders, to a combined \$124.5 million worth of contracts.

"He has a plan, he works hard at that plan, he executes it and he sticks to it," Ellis said of Elway. "He stays very disciplined, and that is not always the case in the NFL

with general managers. Sometimes people will overreach. We've seen it in the past. And we see it around the league today, at times."

During free agency, Elway made strong offers to retain cornerback Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and sign pass rusher Jared Allen and wide receiver Brandon LaFell. When those players didn't accept, Elway didn't offer them more money to sign with the Broncos. He turned elsewhere and signed Talib, Ware and Sanders.

"If there's any notion that this is some kind of reckless spending splash, that's just not right," Ellis said. "These are good football players that we're bringing in to help us win not only now but, in the case of many, in the future as well."

In the Broncos' chain of command, Ellis reports to Bowlen. Elway reports to Ellis. Fox reports to Elway.

When it comes to on-field competitive matters, whether it be in team personnel or league rule changes, Ellis trusts his subordinates.

"John Elway and John Fox are polite enough to hear what I have to say but smart enough not to listen to too much of it," Ellis said, smiling.

And so the Broncos will carry on at these league meetings as they have for the past three years — with Ellis in the lead. Bowlen is content to check in.

"He's proud of his team," Ellis said of Bowlen. "He's proud of the season we had. He knows we can do better. He's excited about the recent free agency period and the job John and the staff have done. And he's looking forward to next year."

Elway, Ellis Help Ring NYSE Opening Bell

By Stuart Zaas

DenverBroncos.com

January 30, 2014

John Elway and Joe Ellis were part of a group that rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange Thursday morning.

NEW YORK – Broncos President Joe Ellis and Executive Vice President of Football Operations John Elway were part of a group representing Super Bowl XLVIII that rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday morning.

They are likely welcome back any time as the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished up more than 100 points for the day.

"It is very cool. Everybody knows John Elway," NYSE President Duncan L. Niederauer told Broncos TV. "I just said to John how his career off the field is to be admired as much as his career on the field. He has been a great businessman."

The group included representatives from both teams playing in Super Bowl XLVIII as well as the ownership groups of the New York Giants and New York Jets.

Ellis and Elway were joined by Seahawks Owner Paul Allen, President Peter McLoughlin and General Manager John Schneider.

Giants Co-Owners Jon Tisch and John Mara were also part of the group, along with Jets Owner Woody Johnson.

Niederauer was especially excited to see Elway and Ellis represent the Broncos since despite growing up in the New York area, he is long-time Broncos fan.

"I've been a Broncos fans since 1973 and I've idolized Elway since 1983, Niederauer said. "I'll be at the game on Sunday sitting with my man, Mr. (Karl) Mecklenburg. So far my tack record going to Broncos games with this jersey – let's just say it's pretty good. Hopefully my luck will continue this Sunday."

After presenting NYSE medallions to Ellis and Allen, Schneider pulled a Karl Mecklenburg jersey, showing his allegiance.

"It was nice to see him put the Karl Mecklenburg jersey on out there," Elway said. "It was a great thrill and nice to meet Paul Allen for the first time and John Schneider, their GM, who has done a tremendous job. Really a great experience."

Broncos Host Quarterback Club

By Mike Morris
DenverBroncos.com
November 6, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- With the lights on and the cameras rolling at the Broncos' conditioning center in Dove Valley, several dozen members of the Denver Broncos Quarterback Club had a special start to their Wednesday evening as they sat in as audience members for 9News' taping of its weekly Broncos Huddle TV show.

Members of the club – which was incorporated in 1964, making it the Broncos' original booster club – traveled to Broncos headquarters for the taping and for a special address and Q&A session with Broncos President Joe Ellis, who spoke to the audience after the show.

"For us, it's always an honor to be able to come out here," Quarterback Club President Paula Faulkner said. "We're so appreciative of the opportunity and the privilege that the Broncos give us to come and visit Dove Valley – to be around the ambience and for Mr. Ellis to address us and let us ask him questions."

Ellis noted that he was excited by the turnout and the enthusiasm demonstrated by Quarterback Club members.

"A terrific turnout from our longest-standing fan club," Ellis said. "It's nice to see them here and for them to be able to participate in the Broncos Huddle show. And to be able to stay after and chat with them for a bit, it's fun for me and fun for the organization."

For Broncos diehards like Faulkner and other Quarterback Club members in attendance, having such close proximity to the Broncos organization made for an engaging experience.

"It's a great honor and a great privilege because the NFL today is a little more closed than it used to be," she said. "This is a privilege and we appreciate it very much."

Faulkner noted that having the opportunity to interact with Ellis firsthand and ask questions was particularly enjoyable.

"You watch interviews on TV, or you hear interviews on the radio and you go, 'Yeah, but what about this?'" Faulker said. "Now you actually get to ask the question and get an answer from the people in charge, firsthand, without somebody else trying to analyze, decipher and translate it. It's really great."

Ellis said that he appreciates the opportunities to interact with fans on a personal basis and share their passion for Broncos football.

"It's great because these people are the lifeblood of the team," Ellis said. "They're the ones that garner all the support, that pay for the tickets, that buy the merchandise, that watch the games on TV when we're on the road. It's really fun to be in touch with them on a personal basis and to interact with them."

And the club's enduring devotion to the Broncos is ultimately, as Ellis noted, what makes sitting down with them so enjoyable.

"These people have been with us through thick and a lot of thin, you know?" he said. "It's just fun to see their support and their enthusiasm in person – it makes doing these kinds of events so enjoyable."

"We're not fans – we're fanatics. We're Bronco fanatics," Faulkner added. "The Quarterback Club is a great place for people to get together and be able to share that enthusiasm."

Q&A: Joe Ellis on Bowlen, the Broncos and the Bowl

By Wayne Hicks
Denver Business Journal
October 17, 2013

Joe Ellis, president of the Denver Broncos, has a long history with the team, beginning in 1983 when he joined as director of marketing. His initial stint didn't last long – it was just a couple of years before he left to earn a master's degree from the J.L. Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

It was back to football for Ellis in 1990, when he signed on as a vice president with the National Football League, but he returned to the Broncos in 1998 as executive vice president of business operations, a job he held for 10 years. After a three-season stint as COO, Ellis was elevated to president in January 2011.

Ellis and I talked Thursday afternoon, before he was scheduled to speak at the University of Denver Daniels College of Business as part of its Voices of Experience series. An edited transcript of that conversation follows.

You work for a company that gets a lot of attention locally and nationally. Do you feel like every decision you make is scrutinized to the nth degree?

Yes, but that's the way it should be, right? In so many ways this team is – as Pat Bowlen, our owner, has described it – a public trust. They have a say in this team. In Pat Bowlen's words, it's their team. He just happens to own it. I think everything that we do is justifiably scrutinized. If someone is in this business and doesn't like it, then they've signed up for the wrong experience.

You mentioned Pat Bowlen. You've worked for him for decades. What have you learned from him about leadership?

Pat has said to me, "Remember this. I give my people who work directly for me plenty of rope to do their jobs and just enough rope to hang themselves." He expects you to do things the right way, to excel and get the message across to everybody that works for him that he wants to be the best at everything. Winning is important to him, but doing things the right way are important to him as well. He's been very kind and very generous and comforting in his guidance in the years that I've worked with him and I take a lot of that to heart and try to employ those same characteristics to my leadership when he asks me to guide the organization in a certain direction.

If you have a difference of opinion in how things should be, is he amenable to listening and maybe changing his mind if he thinks you have a good point?

Absolutely. Absolutely. There's another leadership trait that I take to heart. I think you have to talk a little and listen a lot, and Pat is that way. Pat has the courage of his convictions like any great leader and when he believes and knows that he's right about something, he knows exactly how to apply the pressure and anybody that's dealing with him or working for him understands that and goes the way that he feels is the appropriate way to go.

Season tickets to Broncos games have been sold out for a long, long time, so how do you grow your business and get people to become fans if they can't see a game in person like they might want to?

You've got to maintain that relationship with the ticket holders you currently have and try to make that in-stadium experience the best it can possibly be. And then you grow fans obviously through television. We have a prominent relationship with network broadcasters as well as with ESPN on the cable side. Then you try to do a lot of programs in the community to nurture young kids, the younger generation, so that when the time comes along when perhaps tickets are passed through or tickets become available you can hopefully make them feel good enough about you and what your product is and how you present yourself so that they become customers and buy season tickets. There's all kinds of ways now you can touch fans. Through digital means, through print means, through event hospitality means, events centered around community development programs. You're always trying to reach out and touch as many fans as you can and this is a football craving/crazy market and we're very fortunate that a lot of people have been willing to react and respond to some of the things that we've undertaken.

There was a recent poll that showed that among Americans who follow football, the Broncos are now their third-favorite team, and that's up from tied for 17th favorite last year. What's changed in the past year?

Well, they've gotten used to seeing us a lot more on prominent games, nationally televised games. Those are sometimes 2 o'clock on Sunday where we're going to 85 to 95 percent of the country's TV sets that are watching football games. More Sunday night games, more Monday night games, and Thursday night games. We're getting a little more exposure than we used to in the past. That obviously has to do with how we're doing on the field. That's John Elway and John Elway and Peyton Manning and his teammates, what they've accomplished. We've won 17 regular-season games in a row now, and people are enamored of our story. It's no secret Peyton Manning has brought a lot to this organization. He's welcomed by the coaches and he's welcomed by his fellow players. He's done a terrific job and we're very, very lucky to have him.

I read that you were responsible for getting Elway to sign on as a front-office executive. Is that right?

Well, Mr. Bowlen made the final decision on it. We talked about it at length. In 2010 we'd kind of lost our way, is the way I would put it. Pat Bowlen recognized that and the way to stabilize that and regain the trust of our community and our season-

ticket holders and our sponsor partners and everyone else was to bring in someone who had some real leadership credibility when it came to football. Not only did John Elway have that, he had business sense, he had intelligence, he had common sense. He is and remains extremely competitive and Mr. Bowlen is extremely competitive. We all are. And I think just those characteristics there, as well as his history and all the great things he's done, not just for the Broncos but for the community, made it a very easy decision.

What was going on in 2010 that made that a bad year for the Broncos?

Aside from the fact that we were not winning games – if you recall, we were 4 and 12 – it was the way we were going about our business. We weren't being accepted or perceived very well by not only the media but the general public and a lot of partners, our ticket holders. You learn this by listening. Mr. Bowlen agreed dramatic changes were in order. Even though 4 and 12 is not the worst record in the history of the franchise, it was certainly the worst year under Pat Bowlen's ownership and he wanted a reversal of that. Thus we went in the direction of John Elway and John Fox was brought in simultaneously and both those guys solidified the leadership and the experience that was needed to conduct a first-class front office on the football side.

The Broncos have had some great seasons and some not-so-great seasons. During down times how do you keep your employees and yourself pumped up?

Well, you just have to accept the fact that success in this league goes in cycles and sometimes you're not going to be successful. You don't like to think about that. That's not what you're striving for each and every year. Our league is set up with a player allocation system and a salary cap system such that everybody has a chance to win. You just keep working as hard as you can to maintain your relationship with your customers, the general public, with your community. You have to be honest and truthful about where you are and assess everything and take steps to try and correct the problems that you have and move forward.

After every game this season I imagine there are people in offices all across Denver and across the country who are speculating about will this be the Broncos' year for the Super Bowl. Is that a conversation that takes place in your office?

No. We take it one game at a time, because if you start thinking the way some of the public thinks you get trapped and you lose your way. You lose your focus and your concentration. We have a lot of people who have a lot of experience in this game. John Elway is one. John Fox, certainly. He gets his players to clearly understand the focus needs to be on one game at a time. Yes, the end goal is to try and win the Super Bowl, but that's the way it generally is every year. It happens that this year expectations are a lot higher. Sometimes you just have to ignore the noise and stay focused, stay humble, and take it one game at a time. I think John Fox, the coaches and the players have done a great job of that so far and I hope that extends through the rest of the regular season and then we'll see where we go from there.

If you were to leave your job today, what would you consider to have been the highlight of your career with the Broncos?

I don't think that's happened yet. Aside from winning the Super Bowl, which we want to see happen every year – and I was here for the Super Bowl championship in 1998 – what I hope to have accomplished before long is that we win the AFC championship in our own stadium. There was a lot of anxiety and concern when we left Mile High Stadium, which had served us so well for so many years. We left it on a high note. We left it having recently won two Super Bowl championships. When we moved into the new stadium, our fans are terrifically loyal and they stayed with us through the transfer. We've never presented them with the AFC championship trophy in that building. We had a chance in 2005 and we lost to Pittsburgh. My hope is that one of these days soon we can host that championship game, win it, hold up the Lamar Hunt trophy, which is the AFC championship trophy, and assure them that we'll be heading to the Super Bowl site to bring home the real trophy, the Lombardi trophy. That would be something I'd like to see. I know Mr. Bowlen feels that way as well.

Ellis Participates in DU Speaker Series

By Mike Morris
DenverBroncos.com
October 17, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- In front of a capacity crowd at the Newman Center for Performing Arts, Broncos President Joe Ellis spoke at the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver Thursday evening.

Ellis shared his business management and leadership expertise at the event – which was part of the Daniels College of Business' Voices of Experience speaker series – providing the audience with a window of insight into the business enterprise of the sports industry.

"I thought that it was a good opportunity for the Broncos and those of us in the industry to kind of give business school students and other businesspeople around the community an idea of what our business is like behind the scenes," Ellis said at the event.

Ellis' speech was followed by a networking reception, and Broncos tickets and autographed footballs were given away through a raffle.

Ellis was the first figure from the sports industry to ever speak at a Voices of Experience event – something that Daniels College of Business Program Developer Kate Sparks said was an engaging way to bridge the gap between business leadership and innovation perspectives with a brand that is so prevalent throughout Colorado and across the country.

"It's really exciting," Sparks said, noting that previous speakers have included CEOs from US Bank, Visa, Home Depot, Crocs, and other companies. "We kind of want to broaden it a little bit, look into other industries to kind of hear their perspective of the business of that industry. We thought, 'Well, we have to reach out to the Broncos because there's nothing more fun than that.'"

"Joe was obviously our first choice to hear his perspective and get his take on the organization, leadership and the business of football," she added.

Ellis – who is in his third season serving as President and his 19th season overall with the Broncos – has worked in the NFL for 26 seasons, developing an extensive expertise in business operations, financial management, and numerous other areas of operations involved with an NFL franchise. Ellis received his bachelor's degree from Colorado College in 1980 and obtained his master's degree from the J.L. Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in 1988.

In serving atop the management structure of the Broncos and overseeing an organization with such a wide range of operations, Ellis noted that carrying out the

vision and standard of excellence set by Broncos Owner and CEO Pat Bowlen remains pivotal to the organization's success.

"He sets the standard and I think we all know what that standard is," Ellis said. "He wants to be the best at everything and here he is in his 30th year, about to hit his 300th win. It speaks to the standard that he sets and the expectations that he has of all of us. I think everybody in our company really has a clear understanding of that and conducts themselves in a manner that allows us to be successful."

Working in an organization like the Broncos, Ellis added, means serving as ambassador of the brand – whether in a professional setting, or in public.

"I think success in our industry is defined on the field by victories, by winning, and that's pretty cut and dried," Ellis said. "But I think how you conduct yourself, how you behave – whether you're working down at the stadium in the marketing department, or whether you're a trainer or whether you're a player, coach or an executive – if someone finds out or knows that you work for this team, or in this organization, you're sort of on notice."

"That's kind of a tall order to carry, but I think everybody understands the importance of that," he added. "You're representing something that's special to the people in this community."

And for Sparks, that relationship between the community and the Broncos made Ellis a particularly relatable speaker for those attending the event because the Broncos' brand and product is so tightly knit within the city of Denver.

"I think it's hard to find organizations that their culture and their brand just seeps through – not only through their internal organization, but to the customer – and everyone is living and breathing that same culture and energy," Sparks said. "When we can find someone who represents that, who has managed to establish that sense of culture, that's ideal for us."

"Everybody feels so connected to (the Broncos) that you feel like you finally get a chance to come and hear someone talk about something that is so important to you in your daily life," she added. "Definitely your Sunday."

Ellis Listens to Season Ticket Holders at Town Hall Meeting

Broncos President Joe Ellis held a Town Hall meeting with season ticket holders on Thursday evening at the team's locker room in Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

Mike Morris
DenverBroncos.com
Jun 27, 2013

DENVER -- Broncos President Joe Ellis needed no microphone during his Town Hall meeting on Thursday evening at the team's locker room in Sports Authority Field at Mile High – the audience surrounding him was close enough to hear without one.

For the second time this offseason, Ellis spoke face-to-face to the 60 or so Broncos season ticket holders who attended the intimate event, fielding questions about all things Broncos football and addressing the concerns of season ticket holders.

Broncos cheerleaders Tara and Toni G. also attended the event - chatting with fans, taking pictures and signing autographs. The fans also got to take a sneak peek at the new scoreboards that have been installed as part of a \$30 million investment to improve gameday experience for ticketholders.

Ellis listened and interacted with the season ticket holders for nearly 90 minutes, addressing concerns and emphasizing the importance of transparency for making fans feel like a valued part of the Broncos organization that they so passionately support.

"It's important to be transparent," Ellis said. "Not only do you, the fans, invest your money, but you invest your emotions in our team. It's a big deal to you. It's more than just season tickets for you and we recognize that."

On the heels of back-to-back AFC West titles, Ellis also touched on the lofty expectations for the Broncos in 2013.

"We're excited about this year," Ellis said. "Everything that you read, everything that you hear, everything that you watch on TV – as we go into training camp – they're going to speculate us to have a very high finish this year. That's all good. But here's the deal – you've got to play the games, right?"

"It's not going to be won on paper. But we feel that we're in a good position and we're excited about all of the offseason moves."

One of the most prominent issues that was discussed between Ellis and the fans were new security policies at Sports Authority Field for the 2013 season – most notably the new bag policy.

"I'll be very blunt with you," Ellis said. "The Boston Marathon was a game-changer. The NFL is the most high-profile sport in America. We've got to make sure that you're safe and that you have a good time. We're going to try to make these lines go well."

"Even if the new policy is not the most family friendly, I think that everyone would agree in the end that safety is the most paramount issue for us," one fan added.

Ellis noted that there will be significant improvements in cellular coverage for fans using Verizon, AT&T and Sprint services – and he also addressed a wide continuum of topics ranging from stadium accessibility to the game day atmosphere to beer and food selections in the stadium.

When asked about the progress of Montee Ball, Ellis responded, "I think everybody's very optimistic. He's had a really good run at things in minicamp and during OTAs. He finished up strong in the last minicamp and the coaches like him. They like his toughness. He carried the ball a few hundred times in college and he's just very tough."

One fan asked Ellis why Simon Fletcher, the Broncos' all-time franchise leader in sacks with 97.5, has not yet been inducted into the Ring of Fame.

"He was a sack specialist," Ellis responded. "I think the committee will re-look at it. There are some other guys who aren't in who should be, too. (Fletcher) was a great player and he'll probably be re-looked at."

Distinguished Alumnus Award

Fenn.org
May 31, 2013

Joe Ellis, a 1971 graduate of Fenn, is in his third season as President of the National Football League's Denver Broncos. In his current position as team president, Joe operates atop the Broncos' management structure and has primary responsibility for the organization. He has worked with owner and Chief Executive Officer Pat Bowlen for nearly thirty years and has been entrusted with substantial authority regarding all aspects of the Broncos. Joe's leadership skills and business knowledge have helped the Broncos strengthen their reputation as one of the most successful and fan-friendly franchises in all of professional sports.

Before he was named team president in 2011, Joe spent three years as the Broncos' chief operating officer and ten years as the club's executive vice president of business operations. He began his nearly twenty-year relationship with the Broncos in 1983 as their director of marketing, leading all of the club's marketing and promotions for three seasons.

Joe left the Broncos following the 1985 season to obtain his master's degree from the J.L. Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. He graduated from Northwestern in 1988 and joined the NFL in 1990 as vice president of club administration and stadium management.

Joe came to Fenn as a fourth grader in 1965. While at Fenn, he was captain of the Varsity soccer team, played second base for the Varsity baseball team and played on the Varsity hockey team. Joe was also involved in student government and the Glee Club.

After graduating from Fenn in 1971, Joe went on to Milton Academy and received his bachelor's degree from Colorado College in 1980. He has called Colorado his home for more than twenty years and lives there with his wife, Ann. They have three children: sons Si and Zander and daughter Catherine.

Ellis Hears from Season Ticket Holders in Fan Forum

Broncos President Joe Ellis answered questions and listened to suggestions from season ticket holders on how to improve the overall fan experience Tuesday evening.

Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
May 28, 2013

DENVER -- Tuesday evening, Broncos President Joe Ellis held a fan forum, answering questions and listening to suggestions from season ticket holders on how the team could improve in all areas, including on gamedays.

The group of fans provided their input and heard from Ellis on how to improve the overall experience at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in 2013. Afterward, Ellis took the more than 60 season ticket holders on a tour of some of the \$30 million worth of stadium enhancements, including a preview of the new scoreboard's capabilities.

The theme of the night was how much the Broncos are looking to improve the fan experience.

"How many people here have nice, flat-screen television sets and comfortable couches?" Ellis asked the audience. "To sit at home and watch a game on television, it's a great experience. We've got to make this experience better and more fun."

From cell phone and wifi issues inside the stadium to content on the scoreboard, halftime shows, in-game music, food, merchandise, preseason games and even the experience of arriving at and departing from the venue, Ellis touched on a number of topics important to the season ticket holders.

One of the biggest points Ellis made sure to get across was the importance of safety and security at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

"We have to look at as many deterrents as we can," Ellis said. "You want to have fun. But at the same time, we've got to be aware of this and cognizant of it. We've got to keep you coming back; we've got to keep it fun. But we also have to make it safe. So there is a balance."

Safety inside and outside the venue was discussed, including wanding every fan, bag checks, the stadium's RESPECT text number for any behavior issues and increased security in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing.

The layout of the evening was similar to the fan forum Ellis held before the Broncos' Divisional Round matchup against Baltimore last season, when NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell also spoke with season-ticket holders.

The idea was to hear directly from fans how the club can be better in a number of areas.

One topic addressed at both Goodell's fan forum in January and Ellis' Tuesday night was whether a Super Bowl could be headed to Denver in the future.

Goodell and Ellis both said a lot depends on how the cold-weather game in New York goes this February, and the NFL commissioner said, "My personal view is the game of football is made to be played in the elements."

With that in mind, when one season-ticket holder suggested the Broncos move to a dome to get the big game in Denver, Ellis asked if that's what the fans want.

That led to a resounding shout of "No!"

"So that's why we're not going to a dome," Ellis said as the crowd laughed.

"We've hosted a lot of great events here," he said of a Denver Super Bowl. "We'd do a heck of a job here. I know that. We've got a lot going on and a lot to offer. And the building can certainly handle it. The owners know what a great football city this is, thanks to you. They do. So I don't discount our chances."

After nearly 90 minutes of fielding questions and suggestions, Ellis thanked the fans for their loyalty and said they're one of the reasons being at Sports Authority Field at Mile High on a game day beats staying at home.

"I think all of you collectively as a community being here is something special," Ellis said. "When 75,000 people are gathered in one place, united in orange, it's a really powerful thing."

One of the best examples of that, he said, was how the crowd stuck with the Broncos to the very end of the team's double-overtime loss in the bitter cold against Baltimore.

"To me, it just magnifies how great your support of our organization is and how meaningful it is," Ellis said. "I hope this year that we can take it a few steps further for you."

"Our goal and the goal of (Owner and CEO) Mr. (Pat) Bowlen that's on the entire organization every year is to win a Super Bowl for you. We've got high expectations, and you should, too."

Ellis: 'Hopefully We'll Put on a Good Show'

Team President Joe Ellis reacted to the 2013 schedule on Friday, focusing on the excitement surrounding the season opener.

Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
Apr 19, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- When Team President Joe Ellis received the Broncos' 2013 schedule, he immediately called Owner and CEO Pat Bowlen.

"In his 30 years of ownership, I sensed in his voice that this was the most excited he was about an opening game," Ellis said.

The Broncos, for the first time in franchise history, will take part in the NFL's annual Kickoff Game, scheduled for the Thursday prior to the first Sunday of the season.

The game has been held since 2002, and since 2004, the defending Super Bowl champion has earned the right to host the event. But due a scheduling conflict with the Baltimore Orioles, the Ravens will head to Denver for the contest.

"This is really a great tribute to our fans and our city and our passion for pro football and the Denver Broncos that we get to be the opening game of the 2013 regular season in front of -- I think it's somewhere north of 25 million people will be watching us," Ellis said. "So hopefully we'll put on a good show that night."

Even though the pregame celebrations put on by the NFL will "rightfully" take place in Baltimore, Ellis said the team has held meetings to determine plans to commemorate the 2013 season opener in Denver.

"We're going to do our own thing here to celebrate the start, as we should, and reward our fans with the opportunity to get excited about the start of the year," he said.

As far as the rest of the schedule, Ellis said the main thing that sticks out is the number of primetime games. For the second consecutive season, the Broncos are scheduled to play in five primetime games -- the second-most in franchise history.

In addition to the Kickoff Game, the club hosts Oakland on Monday Night Football in Week 3, visits Indianapolis on Sunday Night Football in Week 7, travels to New England on Sunday Night Football in Week 12 and plays San Diego on Thursday Night Football in Week 15 in Denver.

"Five primetime games — that's something that we wouldn't have had a few years ago, so we've elevated our status as a team, and that's a testimony to the hard work (Executive Vice President of Football Operations) John Elway, (Head Coach) John Fox and our coaching staff and most importantly, the players," he said. "We're in a good place as a team right now."

Another standout game? When the Washington Redskins head to Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Week 8, just before the team's bye week.

"I think our game against Washington will be very, very compelling because the Redskins are going to have a good team and (Redskins Head Coach) Mike Shanahan is coming back here," Ellis said. "That'll be fun for everybody."

All-in-all, the team president said he wasn't too surprised by the schedule, particularly which games were pegged for primetime.

He's excited that fans have such high expectations for the year, but he cautioned that there is still plenty of work to be done.

"I think the expectations of the fans are that the bar has been set a little bit higher this year — as it should be, and that's a good thing for us," Ellis said. "We had a great run last year, winning 11 in a row to lead the regular season, and then we just missed an opportunity -- we let one go. And the goal is to try and get back to have that opportunity again and have greater success."

Ellis keeps Bush connection quiet

By Mike Klis

The Denver Post

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When the political dynasty that is the Bush family effectively ends with Tuesday's election, life as Joe Ellis knew it will become life as he's known it.

The majority of people familiar with the unassuming Ellis may know him as the Broncos' chief operating officer. Few know him as the cousin of our 43rd president, George W. Bush, and nephew of former President George Herbert Walker Bush.

"I'm proud of my family and their accomplishments and all that," Ellis said. "But I try to keep all that private. I don't share political beliefs or provide insight about family members or anything like that."

Ellis' mother is George H.W. Bush's sister.

It was a White House run that began in 1980 when Uncle George began his eight-year term as vice president to Ronald Reagan. The uncle got his own chance to lead our country in 1988.

And then in 2000, cousin George began what became an eight-year term in the Oval Office.

There were times when the Bushes were immensely popular in the polls. There were other times when their popularity took a hit. Up or down, Ellis was steady as they go.

"I have known Joe for almost 25 years and I have never known him to flaunt his connection or try to gain benefit in any way," said Jim Saccomano, the Broncos' longtime chief of public relations. "And I would venture to say more than 90 percent of the people employed here are not aware of it."

Proving his political naivete, Ellis once helped organize a campaign rally for cousin George at Dove Valley. He soon regretted the decision, as some Democratic season-ticket holders took offense.

"Joe is not political." Broncos owner Pat Bowlen said. "He's been a football guy all his life. He's a Bush, but it's sort of like a family thing to him. He keeps it there."

Posted on Fri, May. 19, 2006

Ellis lays out plans for children's charity

Inspired by his sons, Macon mayor is creating a foundation for special-needs youth

By Travis Fain
TELEGRAPH STAFF WRITER

Macon Mayor Jack Ellis' oldest son has spina bifida, which confines him to a wheelchair. He has another son with Down syndrome who competes in the Special Olympics.

Because the federal government has acknowledged a link between spina bifida and the herbicide Agent Orange, which Ellis said he was exposed to in Vietnam, the mayor's oldest son can live on his own with government financial assistance.

But not every family with special-needs children has that help, Ellis said.

So when the mayor turned his attention past his time in office, which comes to a close late next year, it wasn't hard to decide what to do.

He is establishing a foundation, the C. Jack Ellis Youth Foundation, for children with special needs.

"I wanted to follow my heart," the mayor said Thursday.

The foundation has been coming together for some time.

Insights Marketing, which company President Keshia Walker said puts on charity events for famous athletes including Donovan McNabb and Magic Johnson, set up Ellis' foundation as a 501(c)3 organization, making donations tax deductible. The organization has raised about \$10,000 in start-up money and plans its first major fund-raiser next month.

The foundation will host a golf tournament at the city-owned Bowden Golf Course, and the proceeds will benefit Special Olympics and the Booker T. Washington Center, a community center in the Pleasant Hill neighborhood that has long served Macon's children.

Georgia Milton-Sheats, executive director of Special Olympics Georgia, said she was "thrilled that someone would recognize the great needs that people with special needs have."

"By empowering people with special needs, they can be more productive citizens," she said.

Ellis said the foundation will focus primarily on Macon and Middle Georgia, but it will also help children in the Caribbean, where Ellis used to live, and in Ghana, where he has traveled to visit one of Macon's sister cities, Elmina.

He said many children there with special needs don't have the opportunity to go to school because the schools can't accommodate them.

Ellis' daughter, a bank vice president in Atlanta, is on the foundation's board, and Walker is serving as director until the foundation is fully up and running, Ellis said. He's seeking other board members, and Walker said invitations have been sent to several people. That includes famed investor Warren Buffett, whom Ellis said he met through the former mayor of Omaha, Neb., as well as former Georgia Bulldog and current Denver Broncos football player George Foster, who is from Macon.

"We feel that people will contribute," Ellis said. "We've put together a team that will make sure we deliver on our promises."

Ellis said the foundation will also put on events for children. He mentioned a lock-in and a Christmas party for children with special needs and a possible summer camp. He didn't set financial goals for the foundation, saying the "sky, obviously, is the limit."

"I would like for (the foundation) to exist long, long after I have gone to my grave," Ellis said.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Mayor Jack Ellis' new foundation and a June 16 charity golf tournament, visit www.cjackellyouthfoundation.org.

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