



Mr. Joel A. Stern of Kildeer

October 24, 1958 - May 21, 2026

Joel Stern, 67, Kildeer, Illinois, passed away peacefully on May 21, 2026, in Lake Forest, IL after a courageous six-year battle with kidney cancer.

Joel was born on October 24, 1958, in Shaker Heights, Ohio to Myron and Chialeen Stern and was the youngest of three boys. He grew up proud of his Ohio roots and remained a loyal Cleveland Browns fan through every heartbreaking season. He shared a close bond with his brothers throughout his life and was preceded in death by his parents and his middle brother, Mitchell Stern. He is survived by his older brother, Eric Stern.

Joel built a distinguished career as a corporate lawyer and leader. He spent much of his career at Accenture, where he served as Deputy General Counsel and COO of the Accenture Legal Group. He later served as CEO of the National Association of Minority and Women-Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF), where he was a passionate advocate for diversity, equity, and opportunity within the legal profession. Throughout his career, Joel was deeply committed to mentoring others and helping people grow both personally and professionally. While Joel accomplished much professionally, one of the most meaningful chapters of his life began after his diagnosis with Stage IV renal cell carcinoma in 2020. Joel chose not only to fight relentlessly for himself, but to dedicate himself to helping others facing the same battle. He became an advocate, educator, mentor, and source of hope within the kidney cancer

community.

Joel served on the Board of Directors for both the Kidney Cancer Association and the Judy Nicholson Foundation, where he worked to support patients and families navigating kidney cancer. He founded an online Facebook support community that connected and uplifted people, frequently wrote and spoke on renal cell carcinoma topics, and became a trusted resource for many patients and caregivers searching for guidance and hope.

In 2025, Joel published his book, *My Journey with Stage IV Renal Cell Carcinoma: How to Make the Most of a Dire Diagnosis*, sharing his wisdom, resilience, and determination to help others live fully. Even during the hardest moments of his illness, Joel continued showing up for others with honesty, compassion, humor, and strength. Outside of his professional and advocacy work, Joel was an avid tennis player who cherished the friendships and community he built through the sport over many years.

Above all else, Joel loved his family deeply. He is survived by his beloved wife, Donna; his daughters, Brittany, Amanda, and Taylor; his son-in-laws, Jason, Ben, and Will; and his cherished grandsons, Aidan, Ollie, and Lucas. His love, guidance, humor, resilience, and unwavering support will be profoundly missed by all who knew him.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Kidney Cancer Association (<https://secure.kidneycancer.org/forms/donatetokidneycancer>) or the Judy Nicholson Foundation (<https://jnfkidneycancer.org/donate/>) in Joel's memory.

The family has created this Life Tributes page to make it easy to share your memories, photos, and videos. For those of you that would have attended services and would like to express your condolences please click on the

"Share A Memory" link above and you can leave a message. If you wish to send a Sympathy Card, please feel free to send it to Morizzo Funeral Home, 2550 Hassell Road, Hoffman Estates, Illinois, 60169 c/o the Family; we will gladly forward it on to the family.

For further information please contact the Morizzo Funeral Directors at 847.752.6444. Arrangements entrusted to Morizzo Funeral Home, Cremation Services and Cemetery Memorials, at 2550 West Hassell Road, (Northeast corner at Barrington Road), Hoffman Estates, Illinois 60169. Morizzo Memorials and Monuments (<https://www.morizzofuneralhome.com/monuments-and-headstones/memorials-monuments-and-headstones>).

Cemetery Details

Evergreen Cemetery in Barrington

600 South Dundee Avenue
Barrington, IL 60010
(847) 713-2368
<http://www.barringtonarealibrary.org/cemeteries/302-evergreen>

Tribute Wall

PB

“ I met Joel and Donna a number of years ago at a dinner to honor and support those fighting kidney cancer. I was there to support my late wife Melissa Burns. She found great solace and love from those in the group, and especially from Joel. He was and still is a light in this world. I am forever grateful for his support of me after Melissa passed away. We would meet periodically for breakfast at First Watch, which was Melissa and my favorite place to go on Sunday mornings. His love and guidance and support were immense as I struggled, especially once my wife was gone. I am forever grateful for him. I regret not knowing when he passed until recently. I wish I knew he was about to pass. This message is also for Donna, who I met a few times. My heart is with you Donna. I know that what you are going through is incredibly difficult. Should you ever need anything--support, resources, or simply someone to talk to who understands, do not hesitate to reach out. My heart is with you and Joel.

With Love,
Patrick Burns

PATRICK J BURNS - Yesterday at 07:19 PM

LS

“ Hello my name is Lori. I met Joel in a kidney cancer 123 support group 2 years ago when I was diagnosed with stage 1 kidney cancer. Joel was incredibly kind and understanding and answered all of questions. He would check in every week for the first 3 months after my surgery. Even though Joel was fighting his own battle with kidney cancer he was always positive and supported new members to the group. To the Stern family I am so very sorry for your loss. Joel was a amazing person and his legacy will remain forever.

Lori Stone - June 02 at 04:23 PM

HS

“ I am heartbroken to hear about Joel Stern’s passing. He was a truly remarkable man. Joel and I were not close friends, but friends. We had a lot in common, Cleveland, OH, Case Western Reserve, Accenture and cancer! We had reconnected over FB over the last few years to discuss cancer and other more fun stuff. He fought this disease like a champ, with as much grace and class as possible as you can with wicked nasty disease. God’s Blessings to the Stern family and may Joel enjoy his trip home. Rest well my friend!

Howard Schreiber - June 01 at 08:47 AM

SI

“ To Donna and family, especially his adored grandsons. Joel was an extraordinary man. Like so many, I knew him through the Stage IV RCC page he created. It’s funny how I feel so connected to him, even though we never met in person. I was lucky enough to attend a couple of online meetings, and I was struck by his warmth, compassion and positive attitude. Since we heard about his passing, we have been mourning a dear friend. I hope your young grandsons will know what an incredible difference he made in our lives and so many others. We stand by you in grief and we lift up prayers of gratitude and comfort to you all. With affection, Solange (caregiver) and Leonardo (warrior)

Solange Inghilleri - May 30 at 01:47 PM

NB

“ In all seriousness, I can say that Joel was one of the finest humans I have had the opportunity to get to know. We desperately need more people like Joel around to show us the way to integrity, respect, fun, and love of life.

Nick Buris - May 30 at 01:41 AM

CI

“ Joel was truly a fierce tennis competitor and a great person. His journaling that ultimately led to publishing a book that was always a positive twist on life's difficult journey. I typically did not have the advantage of having him as a playing partner but rather an opponent on the other side of the net. Thoughts and prayers to the Sten family as he will be missed by many. RIP Joel.

Chris Inglot - May 28 at 01:34 PM

FA

“ Since the 1990, we shared more than tennis courts — we shared friendship, laughter, competition, and memories that will stay with me forever. From the days at Heritage Club, to USTA matches to our time with the Hotshots in Northbrook, and finally back again to Heritage, you were always there with your fighting spirit and love for the game.

You were truly a gladiator on the court and a loyal friend off of it. Every match we played together carried passion, camaraderie, and respect. The courts will not feel the same without you.

I hope one day we meet again at the other club — the Angels Club — where the matches never end and the friendships live forever. You will be deeply missed, my gladiator friend.

Frank Aywaz

Franklin Aywaz - May 28 at 10:40 AM

TF

“ On behalf of all the tennis players in Joel's Sunday "Hot Shots" group, I want Joel's family to know how much we loved Joel, his fierce competitive spirit and his uncanny ability to put a ball away at the net. Joel was candid about the challenges of his diagnosis but was always upbeat when he made it out to play with us. We enjoyed our time with Joel and will miss him terribly.

Tamara F.

Tamara F - May 27 at 11:43 PM

JB

“ I still remember meeting Joel at my first day at Accenture. We bonded over our love of Cleveland and the Browns. He was a mentor to some many of us during his time at Accenture and beyond. He will be greatly missed.

Jennifer Van Blargan - May 27 at 07:28 PM

NB

“ Joel is someone who has touched so many lives and made so many of us feel like we have a future even with this terrible disease. He kept us laughing, focused and empowered to fight the fight everyday. He always made me as a caregiver feel valued and motivated me to take care of myself too. He was an exceptional man that will be missed by many. His love for his family was constant and I send my condolences to Donna and their entire family. We will keep fighting for Joel and he won't be forgotten.

Nicole Blackman - May 27 at 01:43 PM

KS

“ We all smiled when Joel was on the tennis court. He had such a great sense of humor and was so thoughtful about everyone else's issues even though he was dealing so much himself. He will continue to be in our thoughts.



Ken Simpson - May 27 at 12:39 PM

MF

“ Losing someone like Joel is hard and there are not any words that will make it easier. But as you look on his life and others remember him with you, hope you know there are many caring thoughts being sent your way. Joel's legacy was of hope and optimism. His characteristics of leadership, generosity, kindness, and humor will never be forgotten. My sincere condolences, and deepest sympathies to Donna and the entire Stern family during this very difficult time. Thank you for sharing Joel with all of us. He was such an inspiring man.

Michael Freeman - May 27 at 11:34 AM

FG

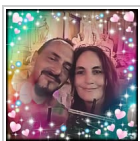
“ My thoughts and prayers go out to Joel's family, friends, and people that he guided through the RCC journey. I know how important he is to the family. I'm glad they got to go on some fun trips together. May he rest in peace and always be a source of inspiration to all.

Felicia Gilg - May 27 at 11:16 AM

AG

“ *Bill and I were very close to Joel. Bill and Joel realized they had both worked years for Accenture. Joel, mentored Bill when he found out he also had Stage 4 renal cancer. We attended his monthly support group meetings every month for the last 2 1/2 years. We would love the opportunity to honor him at his memorial service and share our condolences with his family. We live in Hinsdale (just moved from Chicago yesterday).* ”

Amy Gowans - May 27 at 07:25 AM



“ *I was never fortunate enough to meet Mr Stern in person, I only knew him through his participation in the Kidney Cancer support group on Facebook, he was the first person to reach out to me when I joined. What a wonderful person he was, and what a privilege it was to know him. He faced his journey with bravery, humor, kindness, and such compassion for others. No matter what his personal struggles were, he always took the time to listen to others and offer his encouragement. His strength and bravery inspired so many people, he was a friend to us all, and he is greatly missed. My sincerest condolences to his family, we were all so fortunate to have him with us. Rest in peace, my friend.* ”

Cathy Quick - May 27 at 01:09 AM

TR

“ To Joel’s family, though the heartache you feel now is overwhelming, may our God of peace bring you joy in days to come. I never met Joel in person. I dare say the biggest majority of posters in the Stafe IV RCC group had ever met him. Over the course of time since Joel passed I’ve read hundreds of messages describing him to be compassionate, caring, knowledgeable, loving, a great friend, an amazing supporter and of course Our beloved Warrior. There’s not many people in the world that will ever have the impact that Joel had on so many people he never even met. I joined one webinar that he hosted. His voice was calm, concerning, caring and loving. He spoke with so much wisdom and knowledge. You, his pride and joy, Joel’s family must be honored to have been led by this man. May God bless you and comfort you. May Joel’s memories lie fresh on your mind and heart all the days of your lives. May you always know his guidance, even in his absence. And may you know the impact you allowed Joel to have on so many by letting him share so much of himself with others. In God’s Love- Tammy (caregiver) and Mark (warrior) Rash

Tammy Rash - May 26 at 05:11 PM

TP

“ Donna & Family,
We are so sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Joel will be deeply missed by our JNF BODs, and the entire RCC community family. We're so grateful for the time we shared with him. "It's a marathon, not a sprint". ❤️

With love and sympathy,
Tracy & Adam Poyneer & Ollie



Tracy Poyneer - May 26 at 04:47 PM

TC

“ There's nothing I can say that hasn't already been said about Joel Stern. I sincerely appreciate the online Stage 4 Kidney Cancer group he founded. While I never met Joel, he was a champ at advocating for kidney cancer patients & caregivers. My husband was diagnosed in January of 2023 & I have learned so much from Joel & others on that page. His honesty & encouragement has meant so much to so many people, & for that alone, he will never be forgotten. Thanks to Joel's family for sharing him with us. Praying for peace & comfort as you learn to navigate a very different life without his physical presence.

Teresa Crawford - May 26 at 04:07 PM

RN

“ All of us who knew Joel via the various kidney cancer organizations of which he was a part will miss this is great warrior tremendously! I am a part of the stage 4 kidney cancer Facebook group that Joel started. I will always be grateful to Joel's posts and replies that provided me so much invaluable knowledge and encouragement. I pray God will bless you, Donna, and all the family with His perfect peace and comfort during this difficult time.



Rosie Niebolt - May 26 at 03:45 PM

SK

“ No words truly feel enough right now. Thank you for everything, Joel. ❤️ Your kindness, energy, and presence will always be remembered. Rest peacefully. ☐ Keeping your family and friends in my thoughts and prayers. 🙏

Sedika Kubat - May 26 at 03:35 PM

JD

“ Joel myfriend you will be sadly missed, you were always there to help. You were a warrior My heart aches for your loss, and for Donna and your family. May you continue on your peaceful journey may God take you in his arms and comfort you. May the perpetual light shine upon you. May you rest in peace 🙏🙏💔

Joanne DeChellis - May 26 at 03:09 PM

KP

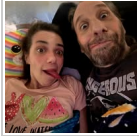
“ Thank you Joel for helping guide us through our Journey. Much love to your family, friends and associates.

Kimberly Paschedag - May 26 at 02:39 PM

BG

“ God bless you Joel and your family such an inspirational man your legacy will live on and on
You will be sadly missed by all your warriors what more can be said
xx

Barry Greenwood - May 26 at 01:58 PM



“ Joel was our mentor on this journey, but more than that, he became a beloved friend. Donna and family, our hearts are heavy with grief, but we are so in awe of the sheer number of rcc warriors and caregivers who join us in soul deep gratitude for his open, genuine care for all of us. He was a special man, an angel on earth, now to look over his family.

Sending so much love and deepest condolences from our broken hearts,

Merry-Ellen Unan (Mel) and Earl Epstein

(I started to share a few stories, but realized i could write a novella, so please accept how deeply Joel affected and uplifted our lives)

Merry-Ellen Unan - May 26 at 12:33 PM

RS

“ Joel was a tremendous source of strength, hope, and encouragement to our family and so many others. He had a rare gift for making people feel less alone while carrying his own burden with courage, humor, and grace. His compassion, guidance, and willingness to support others touched countless lives.

Joel reminded so many of us to live fully, appreciate the time we have, and not let fear steal our joy. He was truly a pillar in this community and beyond, and his loss is deeply felt.

His legacy of kindness, leadership, and generosity will never be forgotten. Our deepest condolences to Donna and the entire Stern family during this incredibly difficult time.

Renee Splitt - May 26 at 12:30 PM

GR

“ Joel introduced me to the stage 4 community and through messages and comments in groups became a mentor to me through this journey, I only knew him for a short time but his impact on me is everlasting, but being in a different country being guided by someone like joel was a massive help in this marathon.

Thank you joel, rest in peace.

Graham - May 26 at 12:22 PM

JR

“ I only met Joel in person once when we happened to be in the same airport. However, as a stage 4 rcc cancer patient I messaged with him often. He was a great cheerleader, advocate and positive influence. One thing that was clear was that he loved his family. My condolences to Donna and family.



Janelle Reese - May 26 at 11:26 AM

CA

“ Carole A. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Joel A. Stern of Kildeer.



Carole A. - May 25 at 07:32 PM

CA

“ Carole A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joel A. Stern.

Carole A. - May 25 at 07:32 PM