

## PeopleSoft Pulls Together For Couple

**Worker's child was stricken with deadly illness.**

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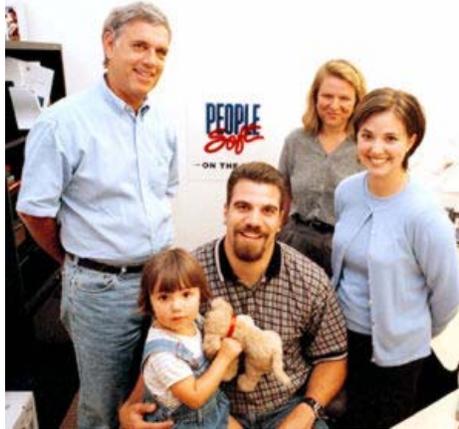
By Ed Frauenheim, Staff Writer

As their baby's brain was failing, Joe and Janis Wuelfing found so lace in a company's big heart.

The Dublin couple's infant son, Markie, died July 2 after three months of surgery, hospital visits and frequent fits of arrested breathing, which meant Joe and Janis jumping out of bed several times a night to revive the boy.

During this difficult time, though, Joe's employer -- [PeopleSoft](#) -- and many of his coworkers provided support. PeopleSoft gave Joe, a company Web site editor, a flexible schedule allowing him to work from home. Colleagues, mean while, sent the couple caring emails and supplied hot meals daily for nearly three months.

"I was very overwhelmed by all of the food that people were making for us," said Janis, 28. "Most of the people who were doing this I had never met before."



(Sitting) Joe Wuelfing and daughter Madeleine.  
(Standing L-R) PeopleSoft's David Ogden and Allison Scott Majure, and Janis Wuelfing.

"It was probably one of the most tangible ways of (giving support) that really helped us get through each day," Joe said. "It was just very comforting."

PeopleSoft, the giant software firm whose buildings dominate the skyline near the Dublin/ Pleasanton BART station, is famous for a family-friendly, fun loving culture created by founder Dave Duffield.

The support shown to the Wuelfings is one example of PeopleSoft's unique, compassionate soul, said Allison Scott Majure, a product marketing manager involved in the dinner drive.

"At a lot of companies there are two cultures. There is the company culture and the human culture," she said. "That is not true at PeopleSoft."

Fittingly for a software firm, employees set up a computer database and entered their names to provide food or a cash donation on a particular date.

The dinners that came over thanks to the "meal matrix" showed thoughtfulness by including food likely to be eaten by the Wuelfings' 3-year-old daughter, Madeleine. What's more, the family enjoyed several-course meals complete with soups, salads, french bread, pasta, meat and desserts.

"It was great," Janis said with a laugh. "It was better than any thing I would have been cooking."

Those square meals helped get the family through a rough stretch of uncertainty and sleep less nights.

Markie Wuelfing seemed healthy when he was born in February, but doctors noticed he twitched slightly. The problem worsened into constant seizures.

In late March, Joe and Janis brought their son to the hospital for what turned out to be a nine week stay.

Doctors could never pinpoint the cause of Markie's nervous system disorder. That was frustrating for the couple, and on top of their anxiety they frequently had to travel to hospitals from Vallejo to Palo Alto for additional tests.

When they brought their son home, he was on a breathing monitor that sounded an alarm whenever his brain stopped sending the right signals to his lungs.

Two or three times a night, Joe or Janis would spring out of bed to see their son turning blue. They would pat his back or rub his feet to stimulate his breathing.

"We'd lie down," Joe remembers, "We had one ear open for the monitor constantly."

Ultimately, the couple made peace with their son's impending death and began to see his short, difficult life as a gift in its own right. Joe remembers a moment when he spoke to Markie, telling him that although he had dreamed of fishing and playing basketball together, he couldn't have been prouder of his son for enduring such pain.

The pride also came from the lessons other people said they learned from the Wuelfings and Mark. "As a parent, you always want your kids to make a difference and affect people's lives," Joe said. "Markie did that for hundreds of people."

Allison Scott Majure is one. "Joe and Janis and Madeleine -- and Markie of course -- paid the price for the perspective we all got," she said. "It gives me perspective so I don't sweat the small stuff with my husband and my two toddlers."

The Wuelfings have set up an organization -- [The Markie Foundation](#) -- to help other families handle the care of a sick child. PeopleSoft employees have already contributed roughly \$2,000 to the account. The idea is to duplicate what the company did in the case of Markie, Joe said. "The foundation is definitely going to spread what PeopleSoft did for me," he said.

For more information about The Markie Foundation, call (925) 829-4921. A website should be running within the next few weeks at [www.markiefoundation.org](http://www.markiefoundation.org)

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