

## Tippett takes on 'dream' job with team

By Laura Crimaldi | Sunday, January 27, 2008 | The Boston Herald | Local Coverage

You may love the New England Patriots, but would you ever dare to ask for a lock of Junior Seau's hair?

If so, just be warned that former star Pats linebacker Andre Tippett is going to hear about it.

"I don't think he likes those kinds of things," joked Tippett, 48, who tends to the wishes - be they charitable or wacky - of the Patriots' growing global fan base as the team's executive director of community affairs.

The scope of Tippett's work requires a big heart and a healthy sense of humor. One day, it's a request for permission to use the Patriots logo on a headstone. Sometimes it's a fan from Japan or China looking for a player autograph.

Tippett, who will hear on Saturday whether he's been selected for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, is also always in demand for appearances at charity events. Even if it means he has to waltz!

"Andre was fantastic," said Evelyn Darling, executive director of Fields Corner Main Street program in Dorchester.

Tippett learned to dance the waltz last spring to perform in the nonprofit's "Dancing with the Stars of Boston" event, which raised about \$25,000.

"It was hard," said Tippett, after demonstrating a few steps from ballroom dance debut in his office at Gillette Stadium.

Some of the Patriots' charitable efforts are downright personal to Tippett. The Kraft family and New England Patriots Charitable Foundation have donated \$500,000 to the Greater Boston Food Bank to support **Kids Cafe** programs at the **Boys & Girls Club of Boston**. The Kids Cafe offers free, hot dinners five nights a week to children at the clubs.

"I think back to growing up in Newark in the day. I tend to tease people about missed meal cramps and what it feels like. I joke about it, but there are a lot of kids out there in our society that go to bed without having a meal," said Tippett.

Catherine D'Amato, president and CEO of the Greater Boston Food Bank, said Tippett's life experience makes him a compassionate ambassador.

"I find him to be a very genuine human being who cares about the community he lives in, worked in and profited from as a professional athlete," she said.

Tippett, who lives in Sharon with his wife, Rhonda, and four children, said don't look for him in a luxury box Sunday when the Pats take on the New York Giants in the Super Bowl.

"I'll be in the stands. I like watching the game in the stands. I like when you are at a Super Bowl or at a playoff event or a different event when you are just a fan. Sunday I'll be just a fan cheering on a team I care a lot for," he said.