

Steve Gleason Bio



Steve Gleason played for The New Orleans Saints from 2000-2008. As a counter-culture athlete who spent his off-season adventuring in third world countries, he will always be remembered for his blocked punt on the night the Louisiana Superdome reopened for the first time after Hurricane Katrina.

In January, 2011 Steve was diagnosed with ALS, considered a terminal neuro-muscular disease. Beyond his faith that there is a solution to heal, it is his mission to show that patients can not only live but thrive after this diagnosis. In doing so, he hopes to inspire others to do the same.

With that in mind, Steve and his wife, Michel, formed "Team Gleason" to help him accomplish those goals and more.

Team Gleason's **The Gleason Initiative Foundation** is a charitable 501c3 non-profit corporation with the mission to:

- **Help provide individuals with neuromuscular diseases or injuries with leading edge technology, equipment and services.** Steve and Team Gleason recently opened the Team Gleason House for Innovative Living in New Orleans. It is only the 2nd of its kind in the world. The residence is equipped with the latest computer-operated technology to allow individuals with ALS the highest level of independence possible.
- **To create a global conversation about ALS to ultimately find solutions and an end to the disease.** As an example Team Gleason hosted a summit in 2013 in New Orleans that included world leaders in ALS research and cutting edge technological developers. We believe it sparked a new global conversation around solutions to ALS across the medical and technology boundaries. The result of the Summit was the largest single collaborative research effort in the history of ALS, *Answer ALS*.
- **To raise public awareness toward ALS by providing and documenting extraordinary life adventures for individuals with muscular diseases or injuries.** As avid adventurers, Steve and Michel wanted to continue pursuing life adventures for themselves despite Steve's diagnosis and found that many people with ALS were choosing to accept their assumed limitations. Through Steve and Michel's inspiration and tireless work, Team Gleason has helped hundreds of people with ALS experience adventures they never thought possible after their diagnosis.



Steve's story and mission have been told countless times throughout the media and in a soon to be released documentary. The NFL Network, ESPN, HBO, ABC, CBS, CNN and many local outlets have all been inspired to share the Team Gleason story in many ways. He was featured in 2 Peter King interviews during Super Bowl pre-game shows, NFL's A Football Life, Good Morning America, HBO's Real Sports and more. He was named one of 2 Sports Illustrated's Inspirations of the Year in 2014 and been a keynote speaker for Microsoft and at 2 United Nations sponsored Social Innovation Summits. Steve was the featured personality on the highly praised and reviewed Microsoft commercial during the 2014 Super Bowl. It has been viewed over 3 million times since airing. **In 2015, both the US House of Representatives and the Senate unanimously passed "The Steve Gleason Act" to ensure the availability of life sustaining communication devices. The Act was signed into law on July 31, 2015 by President Obama.**

Most recently, Steve's film, 'Gleason' was released to outstanding reviews. The film was heralded at the Sundance Film Festival and premiered across the country to equally impressive reviews. Variety called the production, "an emotional powerhouse" and reviews continue to echo that sentiment as the film becomes widely available.

But, the most significant accomplishment for Steve and Michel since Steve's diagnosis was their decision to have a child. In November 2011, Rivers Gleason was born and is the center of their lives. When Steve was diagnosed, he famously said there will be "No White Flags". This has become the Team Gleason mantra, but it is most important when applied to Steve as a father. No goal is more important to Steve and Michel than finding a solution for ALS, so they can share many, many years together and as parents to Rivers.