

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (Ontario, CA)

February 23, 2006

Section: Local

Remembering Karla fondly

LORI CONSALVO, STAFF WRITER

Karla Asch-Rosen was someone you would have wanted to know. She was faithful, intelligent, athletic, beautiful, social and happy. But on Jan. 7, 2005 the then-14 year old was diagnosed with brainstem glioma, an inoperable brain tumor that had a zero percent chance of survival.

Something that big could have had a devastating impact on the teenager, but Karla had a different attitude. Instead of focusing on the negative, the glass-half-full teenager began treatment and hoped for the best.

"Throughout the last year of her life, Karla never complained and she was never afraid," said Ruthe Rosen, Karla's mother. "She handled everything so well, she was so strong."

Her fragile body was put through chemotherapy pills, steroids, radiation, brain surgery and further chemotherapy the doctors at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. The drives to the hospital became tedious, but Rosen and her husband Michael, who helped raise Karla for the past 10 years, tried to make the best out of it. Eventually, she moved into a room at Children's Hospital, but never let her sickness overwhelm her giving spirit.

During the months spent in her new home, Karla received many care packages from friends and family. But when she realized that not every patient felt as loved as she did, she decided to do something.

"Karla made the situation better for everyone in that hospital," Rosen said.

On Valentine's Day, she bought gifts with her own money and every on every MRI trip would bring baskets for other patients.

"She would sneak into the rooms of sick children and place these baskets on their bed stands to make them feel better," said Rosen. "Even when things got worse, she was still thinking of others."

But that was not all.

Karla was a dedicated Christian who spread her joy throughout the hospital with her actions and her words. Everyday she would talk to others about God and prayed with children who were scared.

"We didn't go to the hospital on a mission, we went there to get treatment, but God used Karla along the way," Rosen said. "And she was proof that if God lives in your heart, you can get through the worst circumstances."

On Feb. 11, 2005, Karla shaved her head.

"She had just gotten to the point where she loved her hair," said Rosen. "And she had to shave it off."

Even through that, Karla possessed complete confidence, running around the house without even a hat.

"No matter what, this girl had a smile on her face," said her mother.

Hard times came again. Karla quit school in February and took up home studies.

But she kept herself busy encouraging cancer awareness. Karla had two younger brothers, Brandon, 8, and Cole, 5, who did not quite grasp the concept of cancer. From this, she assumed there were other children who were curious about the disease. So, she spent a few days traveling to classes, talking to elementary-aged students and allowing them to ask her questions about what she was going through.

There were also the important hobbies she continued to keep throughout 2005. Karla was on the Chino Hills High School dance team and she played soccer.

She enjoyed the Motocross world her father, Rick Asch, introduced her to and she kept up with her family when they participated in water sports.

"Every chance she got, she was with family and friends," said Adam Knowles, 18, from Chino Hills, who was like an older brother to Karla.

In July, Karla's tumor began to shrink at an amazing rate, she was getting stronger and ready to move on.

She joined her friends back in the classroom in September with a full school schedule, including honors classes.

But things took a turn for the worse, and Karla was hit hard with her symptoms again. On Jan. 12, she was told her tumor was back, and larger than when it was originally discovered.

"The best things about Karla is that I can honestly say I never say her in a bad mood," Knowles said. "Of course there were days when she would admit that things were hard, but it was never to get pity."

Through the ordeal, Karla just wanted to make sure people were there for her and loved her, he said.

On Feb. 5, 13 months after she was diagnosed, Karla died. It was 6 a.m. and she was surrounded a small group of friends and family, just the way she had wanted it. Karla told her mother she was ready to go be with God that Saturday night, and the simple statement was what Rosen needed to hear.

"When she couldn't have hope anymore, she made me promise that I would," Rosen said.

Her funeral could not be contained to one service, so instead Karla's life was celebrated at three separate memorials, accommodating thousands of people.

"The community support has just been amazing," said Rosen. "I have felt so loved in the past few days."

Rosen said everywhere the family goes, they are greeted with a hug or they see the blue bracelets made to remember Karla and her life.

"To have to community behind you makes you feel very loved and reminds you that you are not grieving alone," she said.

Through all of this, Karla's family believes God has a big plan that is not going to stop with her death.

"He didn't gather thousands of people for nothing to happen," said Rosen.

Karla's families have set up two different donation funds in her name.

Donations can be made to the **Karla Asch-Rosen** fund that will be used to support causes and organizations important to the teenager.

"We want to make a difference on Karla's behalf," Rosen said.

Another, less conventional, fund was set up with the Inland Hills Church where the Rosen's attend.

That money will be used for a prayer walk on the IHC campus. The project will create a green space with plants, benches and a walking trail where individuals may pray and reflect, in Karla's honor.

In the short time Karla was alive, the people who knew her believe she fulfilled her purpose of offering hope and a message. She inspired others with her strength and pleasant demeanor through the most difficult of times, her mother said, and she left the world in the most appropriate way, in celebration.

Lori Consalvo can be reached by phone at (909) 987-6397 ext. 426.