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Meeting the need for “normal”

Let It Be foundation helps families through life-threatening diagnosis by restoring a sense of normalcy

LOS ANGELES – When Ruthe Rosen’s family learned that 14-year-old Karla had an inoperable brain tumor, they did what any family facing life-threatening illness would do: they put their normal lives on hold, sought the best doctors, solicited prayers, and clung to hope.

Karla’s yearlong cancer fight evoked a community-wide outpouring of love, support, media coverage, and magical moments. She received private guitar lessons from James Valentine of Maroon 5, got to meet her hero pro-surfer and *Soul Surfer* author Bethany Hamilton, was given a \$2500 shopping spree, and got a surprise room makeover worthy of a TV special. But more than any of those wishes granted in her final year, all she really wanted was to “be normal.”

In Karla’s memory, her parents, Ruthe and Michael, founded **The Let It Be Foundation™** (www.theletitbefoundation.org), a nonprofit organization that helps restore a sense of normalcy during life-threatening pediatric illness. A source of ongoing support not just for the sick child but also for the entire family, The Let It Be Foundation partners with families as they battle the most serious illnesses, because when a child is sick, the entire family is rocked.

When illness strikes, medical expenses can overwhelm a once financially stable family, not to mention a family already living day-to-day. The stress and financial strain can damage even a strong marriage, and siblings are left feeling despair and loneliness as all of the family’s attention centers on the sick child.

That’s why the foundation works to meet families’ everyday needs with housekeeping, grocery shopping, lawn care, meals, and transportation, sibling play dates and family outings. Through donations and private funding, they help with the normal day-to-day activities that get lost in the process.

They also created a Youth Leadership Program to help the sick children they serve feel like normal kids again. Drawing on local student volunteers to give back to the community, members of the Youth Leadership Program befriend the kids, take them to local baseball games, bring them cards and handmade gifts, and hold fundraisers for special projects like Room Enhancements. The students work with local designers and construction companies who volunteer their services, making sure the rooms are kid-approved.

Ruthe hopes The Let It Be Foundation will serve as a national model for community service. “If your heart’s desire is to help someone in need, just do it, and know you are making a difference,” she says.

To pass on the meaningful lessons she learned from living with Karla’s cancer, Ruthe also wrote ***Never Give Up: How to Find Hope and Purpose in Adversity*** (Cypress House, Sept. 2011), a remarkable story of faith, hope, and joy in the face of the unimaginable. The book follows Karla’s cancer journey and her unwavering optimism, inspiring readers to turn pain into purpose. Proceeds will benefit families served by The Let It Be Foundation.

RUTHE ROSEN (www.rutherosen.com) is a family advocate, speaker and author. She is the cofounder and CEO of The Let It Be Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps families with children who have been diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses. She shares her journey as a public speaker to healthcare professionals and to parents and families coping with a sick loved one. She has been recognized for her community service with many accolades. She was named the 2010 MLB and People Magazine “All Star Among Us,” and in 2009 received a “Making a Difference for Women Award” and an award for “Outstanding Citizens of the Year.” She lives in Chino Hills with her husband, Michael, and their two boys.

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