

Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation

By Diana Price



When Jill Albert was diagnosed with Stage IV breast cancer, she and her husband, Jon, made a decision: creating happy, vibrant memories of their family life would be their priority. Their children deserved memories that were not wrapped up in cancer treatment or anxiety or fear; they deserved normal, joyful memories of time spent together as a family. These memories, they believed, would be the most valuable legacy they could provide for their two children.

As Jill's cancer progressed, so did the Alberts' plans for a foundation that would help other parents facing a terminal cancer diagnosis create memories for their own children. In 2006 the Alberts officially launched the Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation. Jill's final words the evening of the foundation kickoff—just days before she passed away—have become the foundation's mantra: "The children need a break...

they just need a break; and so do the parents. This foundation needs to continue... it must."

This mission has continued to fuel the foundation. "When Dad or Mom has late-stage cancer," Jon says, "the focus and much of the family's resources are directed toward the patient. The children are often put on the back burner." This is despite the fact that a terminal diagnosis affects every member of the family, often robbing children of their sense of security and their dreams for the future. "The kids deserve a sense of normalcy," Jon says. "The moms and dads are in treatment and are not giving up, but we are treating the *families*."

Through referrals from oncologists (a controlled process unique to the foundation), the Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation provides opportunities for families to come together, through WOW! Experiences,[®] which include VIP tours and status, special access, privileged guest ap-

pearances, tickets, and meet-and-greets. Family experiences have included vacations at beach, lake, or mountain resorts; behind-the-scenes tours; movie set or music recording studio visits; tickets to professional and college sporting events; cruises; theme parks and attractions; and even private tours of the White House. And because the focus is on creating memories, each family is provided with a photo album of their experience—a beautiful reminder of their time together.

It is the photos, Jon says, and the accompanying gratitude that families express that continue to inspire the work of the foundation. "When we see the pictures—the smiles, the relief, the joy of families living in the moment—we know we are doing the right thing." 🌸

For more information about the Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation, visit www.jajf.org.



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