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Cancer Takes a Holiday

From Michael Albert

My wife Karen and I were privileged to welcome the Skinner family to Useppa last May. They were guests of The Useppa Island Club through an alliance with the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation.

Many of you learned about the work of the foundation last year during my brother Jon's visit. The following letter from Aileen Skinner says it all. (Well almost all.) It doesn't tell you she was able to finally meet her 6 month old niece during her family's visit here. It doesn't say they were able to see their families for the first time since her husband's diagnosis and treatment for terminal brain cancer. It does however express the joy and gratitude they feel for having been fortunate enough to share this experience.



The Skinner Family

Thank you for making our amazing adventure at Useppa Island possible. In truth, I'm not sure we can properly express how much we appreciated this WOW Experience from the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation. WOW just doesn't say enough. It was spectacular from beginning to end. There are so many people and companies that made this possible for us. Each one made the experience special and relaxing.

From our arrival at Park 'N Fly Plus where our car and luggage were taken care of with great ease, to the smooth and efficient flight on Air Tran. Our airport experience was nothing but a pleasure. When we arrived in

Fort Myers, our limousine driver from Dolphin Carey Transportation gave William (5 years old) the thrill of his life. William loves cars and had never even seen a limousine before, let alone ridden in one. He had hundreds of questions to ask the driver. The driver graciously answered as many as he could, and made us feel like celebrities all the way to the marina. That brings us to the slice of heaven named Useppa Island. What an amazing place. We feel extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to enjoy the amenities and exclusive location.

Our trip to Useppa Island was more than a vacation. It was a chance for us to really relax by the beach as a family. Because we are originally from Florida, our extended families still live there and were able to come by to visit us. This is a rare treat since Charlie's diagnosis with brain cancer. We feel especially blessed by the opportunity to spend time with them. I don't think any of us knew how much we needed a break from all the doctor's appointments and treatments to just be a normal family spending time together.

Everyone on the island was so friendly and welcoming. The staff went out of their way to make us feel welcome and at home. This is especially true for Chad Cadwell, who made the whole experience possible for us. He was so gracious and accommodating. We really enjoyed his company. The Turtle Grass Cottage we stayed in was beautiful and spacious. All of the food at the Collier

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Inn was delicious without exception. I could go on and on. It was nothing short of perfection.

One of our favorite activities was our fishing charter on Saturday morning. Captain Pat Hagle (Captain Pat Sparrow as our son named him) was the perfect combination of knowledge and patience. He took us to all his best spots and showed us how to catch the most fish. He even taught William to fish so well that he caught some real big fish (wink-wink). We even got the opportunity to go to an isolated beach where we found some of the most beautiful shells. It was such a pleasure to spend the day with him. It was something we'll never forget.

As you can see, every aspect of our trip was beyond our expectations. We can never express how much this WOW Experience from the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation has done for our morale. We have made very special memories that will stay with us forever. This has truly made a difference in our lives. Thank you so much for allowing us to enjoy this special time together. Gratefully,

Charles, Aileen and William Skinner

The Jack and Jill Foundation was founded by my brother Jon and his wife Jill during the last stages of her life as she was dying of cancer. They and their children Jake (now 15) and Jamie (now 13) planned it as a family. ...The Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation (JAJF) helps families focus on the now. They recognize the pain a terminal prognosis brings to the whole family; the heartbreak of losing a parent. JAJF seeks to create immediate joy for the entire family by creating lasting memories for the surviving children and spouse. JAJF provides WOW experiences where the entire family can spend quality time together in the face of hardships and uncertainty; because, Memories become our greatest inheritance.

Through the generosity of Useppa Island Club and some of our members, we will again host a family to the island in early January. Many of you will be here by then to meet and interact with them.

We hope to host at least four families throughout the year. Your participation is needed and appreciated. Fishing trips, shelling expeditions, the beach, etc... are sometimes rare and wonderful to those not blessed with what we see and experience every day. You can contact the foundation at www.jajf.org for more information. We thank each and every one of you for your ongoing generosity. We all can and are able to make a difference in this world.

Good-bye MJ



The hub of the office is gone. The woman who sat calmly at her desk while the rest of the back rooms buzzed retired last fall. We miss her spunk as much as her wisdom.

“MJ where’s.....???”

And she retrieved whatever it was the crier needed.

“MJ how do we ????”

“It’s simple just... Oh, here let me.”

She was a friend, a professional, and a woman with an attitude (I can just picture her riding that Harley with her Honey.)

Mary Jane gives longtime marriage a good name. Her loyalty to Useppa never wavered, and she reminded us all that hard work should still be fun.

Homeowners, Island employees, and her co-workers in the back office miss her already, but MJ’s spirit hasn’t left. Lisa sits at MJ’s desk and Mary Jane must have passed it on. Lisa already knows what we need.

Happy Retirement Dear Friend.

Kids’ New Years Bash at Tarpon Bar

**Dinner, Snacks, Games, and a
Celebration!!!**

**6:00pm-1:00am - \$15 per child
(15 years and under)**

**Bring your sleeping bags.
Reservations: Call Reception
239-283-1061**