

Aruba welcomes their first "Wow!" family from the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation

The Westin Aruba Resort has been proud to host Toni and Scott LaFond of Brooksville, Florida and their sons, David and Benjamin, who, for the past week, enjoyed a "time out" on Aruba through the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation.

The foundation was inspired by the story of Jill and John Albert, who faced the disruption of family life imposed by Jill being diagnosed with Stage IV Metastasized Breast Cancer. Realizing the disease was not only taking its toll on Jill physically, but on the entire family psychologically, they founded this organization dedicated to rewarding families where a parent is diagnosed with cancer and a limited life expectancy the opportunity to share treasured memories away from the pressure of mounting medical bills and the constant pall of a terminal disease irreparably effecting their lives.

A friend of Toni's saw the foundation spotlighted on The Today Show and told her she should apply for just such an experience. Toni was diagnosed 4 years ago, at the age of 30, with Stage IV Metastasized Breast Cancer which had already reached her bones. She applied through her oncologist, and within 3 weeks received a call from Heidi Cohen of the Jack and Jill Foundation informing her that the family was accepted into the program.

The LaFonds were in a quandary as to where to go; they knew they loved water sports, beaches and beautiful weather. Fortunately, with the recent addition of AirTran Airways flying to Aruba, this new destination was on the Jack and Jill roster, and the family was more than ready for their week in a tropical paradise. Starwood Resorts, the parent company of the Westin, is a staunch supporter of the program, and Toni and the family were surprised and thrilled to have General Manager Richard Roy personally meet them at the airport to bring them to their "home in Aruba" for the past week.

"This week has been exactly what we needed," ex-



Photo depicts Scott and Toni, (in back) David and Benjamin

pressed Toni and Scott, "it is way beyond anything we expected. We did not realize the Westin would give us everything, all inclusive, so we have had wonderful meals in the resort, and our every need has been looked after. When we arrived, the entire staff was lined up to greet us; during our stay, if any of the staff noticed us preparing to go somewhere, they offered to take us."

"When we went to breakfast the other day our older son David wanted to sleep in," recounts Toni, "and we couldn't believe the restaurant staff noticed and asked where he was! They insisted on making up a plate for him for us to take back to the room."

The LaFond family adored the beach and what they consider the most incredibly blue waters they have ever seen, but the Westin also kept them very busy by recruiting the services of two of their vendors, De Palm Tours and Pelican Tours, who were more than happy to accommodate the Florida family with complementary island tours, a snorkeling and sailing trip, deep sea fishing and a morning at De Palm Island. The whirlwind schedule is having the desired effect.

"We made ourselves a

promise before coming here," explains Scott, "no video game devices, no wireless, no TV unless we are all watching together, this is family time. Time to enjoy without Toni's condition shadowing everything we do; we have tucked that away for the time being."

Despite the condition that resulted in a prognosis of perhaps only weeks to live, Toni has hung on for 4 years. "I had gone to my gynecologist with a lump, but I was only 29, so he dismissed it, saying women my age get lumps for all sorts of reasons," Toni recalls. "Then the pain started, mostly from my ribs to my hip, sometimes agonizing. We had been back and forth to the hospital, and they discovered many minute fractures. They even asked me if Scott was abusing me! Of course, it was the cancer, which had metastasized to my bones. Finally, after a year of frustration, we tried a different hospital, and within an hour they diagnosed my cancer and admitted me. They were amazed when I walked out of the hospital a few weeks later, they didn't expect me to leave there alive."

Toni's greatest fear for the past 2 months was that her condition would interfere


with their vacation, as she began chemotherapy just before they were informed of being awarded the trip. Fortunately, this was not the case, and they have had a wonderful, memorable week on Aruba. "It was everything we could hope for and more," they uniformly agree. Scott, who was in the Navy and traveled extensively, considers Aruba the most beautiful

places he has ever seen. Their busy days have provided Toni with "the most restful nights I have known in months. We are also particularly impressed with the friendliness and warmth of the Arubans. Everywhere we went, though they had no idea of our situation, people were eager to help us in any way they could."

Toni does offer one particular piece of advice to other young women after her experience. "I have learned you have to take charge of your health, we tend to accept what doctors say and just continue to suffer. If one doctor is not giving you answers, then go to another, don't let them dismiss your pain."

The LaFonds return today to their lives and the ever-present medical bills, but for the past week "have just been having a great time being silly and laughing. We haven't had much of that over the last few months."


Sadly, Jill Albert lost her battle against cancer in 2006, leaving behind a husband and teenage children, who now carry on her legacy through the foundation. For more information about the work of the Jack and Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation, visit their website: www.jajf.org.



ATTENTION INVITATION

WEB has the intention to expand their Sea water reverse osmosis water plant with a new SWRO plant (phase II). Also to expand the electric generation capacity with RECIP Engines (Phase III) Just like the current plants these units will also be located at the premises of WEB at Balashi.

WEB would like to invite those interested for an informative session (hearing) on **MONDAY August 16th from 7 pm to 8 pm** in the Canteen of WEB at Balashi.



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