

● Sharing Hope

Everyone has a "tribe" of people who care

When people work together, there's no limit to what they can accomplish. That's what Jaclyn Foutz realized when she set out to help her friend Kindra . . .

Still on cloud nine after returning home from her honeymoon, Jaclyn Foutz smiled to see she had a voicemail from one of her best friends, Kindra McLennan. But her grin vanished when she heard Kindra's voice.

"I have some news, and it isn't great," Kindra began. "I have cervical cancer."

Jaclyn's heart sank as she sat down on the stairs of the Scottsdale, Arizona, condo she shared with her new groom, Ryan.

But you're only 29 years old! she thought. How could this be happening?

Strength in friends

From the outside, Kindra didn't look any different. She was as cheerful as ever. But inside, an aggressive tumor was attacking her body.

"I'll be there for you, no matter what," Jaclyn promised, blinking back tears.

"I know you will," Kindra replied.

Ever since college, Jaclyn and Kindra had been there for each other, whether it was worrying about an exam or crying over a boyfriend.

Yet being there for Kindra now, when she truly needed her, wouldn't be easy for Jaclyn, with Kindra living 2,000 miles away in Chicago with her husband, Mark.

So as Kindra started chemotherapy, Jaclyn booked a flight to be with her. For

four hours, they sat in the chemo room, munching on snacks and watching DVDs, silently praying the IV dripping into Kindra's arm would work its magic.

Afterward, Jaclyn took her for a pedicure. And she marveled that despite the pain she was going through, Kindra almost never stopped smiling.

When Kindra had to undergo a hysterectomy, Jaclyn was by her side, too, doing laundry and washing dishes so Kindra could rest. And when Kindra was up to it, Jaclyn took her out, gingerly placing a pillow beneath the seat belt on her lap to protect her tender abdomen from aching when they hit bumps in the road.

But just after her 30th birthday, Kindra grew so weak that walking up the stairs left her gasping for breath. And, on top of it

Ryan, a jeweler who worked with turquoise, crafted simple but beautiful necklaces—"belief beads", as Jaclyn called them—and sold them to raise money for Kindra's expenses.

"These are beautiful!" friends, family, co-workers and strangers marveled. And when Jaclyn explained what they were for—to give Kindra much-needed financial relief—they thought they were even cooler.

"So many people care," Kindra marveled to Jaclyn. And, realizing how much the necklaces boosted Kindra's spirits, it struck Jaclyn: Wouldn't it be incredible if we could help other families, too?

Making Kindra proud

So, combining Kindra's love of blogging with her handmade fund-raising necklaces, Jaclyn came up with The Human Tribe Project.

"Everyone has a 'tribe' of people that supports them—their friends, family, community," Jaclyn explained to Kindra. "These people can sell necklaces—tribe tags with their loved ones' initials—and then whatever money is raised can go toward helping them



Jaclyn's "tribe tags" have raised over \$150,000!



"We're helping Kindra's legacy live on!" Jaclyn says.

get through tough times."

"I love it!" Kindra replied with a smile. "Let's do it!"

With the help of family and friends, the pair got to work planning the website and necklaces. But sadly, Kindra's cancer was rapidly spreading. And she soon lost her battle.

Hearing the news, Jaclyn felt as though her heart had shattered.

But with time, Jaclyn began to tell herself: Kindra would have wanted me to move on. She would've wanted me to help others . . .

So in honor of Kindra's inspiring spirit, The Human Tribe project officially launched on July 18, 2009 (HumanTribeProject.com).

Soon, families across the country facing hardships like cancer, car accidents and multiple sclerosis were joining. And when each member's "tribe" of supporters snapped up necklaces in their loved one's honor, the proceeds went to cover his or her medical costs.

Three years since its inception, more than \$150,000 has been raised for hundreds of tribes across the country! And the generosity has blown Jaclyn away.

One woman battling cancer was blessed with good insurance, but still wanted to help. So she wrote to Jaclyn: *Please donate the money my tribe raises to a single mother with breast cancer. I want her to know she's not alone.*

Today, Jaclyn still wears the tribe tag she crafted in Kindra's honor. Keeping it close to her heart helps her feel her presence and reminds her that there is always hope.

"When people work together, it's incredible what they can do," Jaclyn says. "And seeing what Kindra inspired us to create—a way for people to connect and support each other—that's pretty amazing. I know she'd be proud!"

—Rachel Misenko

"Being rich of heart makes you wealthy beyond compare."

RODNEY WILLIAMS

all, her medical bills had piled up.

"There has to be a way we can help," Jaclyn told Ryan one night. And, while brainstorming, the two realized a way they could make a difference, even from across the country.

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✔ **Visiting your M.D.!** A regular Pap smear is one of the best study-proven protections. Not only can the test detect precursors to cancer—so you get treatment quickly—but women who are diagnosed through a Pap test are 25% more likely to be cured!

✔ **Considering an aspirin regimen.** A new study suggests low-dose aspirin may help prevent cervical cancer for those at high risk of developing it. Talk to your doctor first to see if an aspirin regimen is right for you.

✔ **Getting your 5-a-day!** Research reveals the flavonoids and antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables can help your body fight an HPV infection, one of the leading causes of cervical cancer.

