

NEWS

Morgan Jayne Makowecki's spirit living on in Honduras

By Erika Soliven
Valley Times staff writer
Morgan Jayne Makowecki's spirit is living on in Honduras, preventing infants from succumbing to the AIDS epidemic.

The Morgan Jayne Project helps infants with HIV positive mothers from being infected with the same affliction.

Fred Makowecki, Morgan's father, is looking to the project to help ease his grief.

"I just feel it's a way of her going on," he said.

Morgan Jayne passed away on May 4, one week short of her 19th birthday.

It happened when Morgan didn't respond as she was being woken up for school.

She was ambulated to the hospital and there, it was determined that she suffered from a complete liver failure.

It was a rare and deadly liver disorder named Wilson's Disease.

The following day, a Tuesday, Morgan was airlifted to another hospital where she was approved for a liver transplant, which took place the next day.

"Because of her liver failure, she had kidney complications," Makowecki said.

"And she died on Thursday, exactly a week short of her birthday."

Her death came as a sudden surprise to those who surrounded her.

It came without warning.

"This summer she was going to take bike lessons and we were going to go for a ride this summer," Makowecki said wistfully.

Between the time of her death and the funeral services, Makowecki tried to contact an old friend of his, Valerie Nelson.

About 20 years ago, Nelson had helped Makowecki adopt Morgan.

Then Nelson was the chairman of a private adoption agency of Alberta.

"Valerie said that (with a private adoption agency), the mother and the child came first," Makowecki explained.

Morgan's birth mom had chosen Makowecki, and the day she was born, Makowecki was called to Edmonton.

"I held her at noon that day," he said.

"I fell in love with her immediately."



Fred Makowecki, owner of Image Craft Signs in Drumheller, has a reminder of his daughter, Morgan Jayne, hanging up in his shop. Her memory will live on in a project in the Honduras. Valley Times photo by Erika Soliven

Makowecki wanted to contact the woman that had made it possible for him to hold Morgan.

"Valerie is an incredible inspiration to everybody," Makowecki said.

He explained that Nelson has adopted abandoned infants at the hospital.

These infants were usually left behind by their birth parents because they may not have been able to deal with how physically ill their babies were.

"One of the children she adopted was Dawn, a little girl without a stomach," Makowecki said.

"They fed her through IVs and she was never really allowed to leave the hospital until she was about eight-years-old."

Unfortunately, Dawn passed away and Nelson found herself doing charity work in Haiti, leading her to Honduras.

In Roatan, an island off the coast of Honduras, Nelson involved herself in a project that focused on HIV positive women and their children.

"The babies weren't necessarily born with AIDS; they get it from the breast milk," Makowecki said.

According to Makowecki, Nelson's group found that if antibiotics were given to infants right out of the womb and formula was used instead of their mothers' breast milk, the possibility of AIDS is avoided.

"They reduced the infant mortality in four years from 40 or 50 infants to three," Makowecki said.

When Makowecki was finally able to get a hold of Nelson, an exchange of emails ensued.

"She wrote me back an email about Morgan and was just absolutely shocked as everybody was (about her death) and then said to me that they had a project going on there for four years," he said.

In the same email, Nelson informed Makowecki that the said project never had a name.

She told Makowecki: "This is why we haven't named it because somewhere in the whole scheme of things it was meant to be."

The Morgan Jayne Project is going strong, with some support and involvement with Drumheller.

Makowecki has been talking to churches, drug stores and even the Drumheller Composite High School for some support.

Morgan's death seemed to have taught Makowecki about the nature of people.

"I was cynical about life in general, people in general," he said.

The demeanor in the hospital while Morgan was in intensive care for four days was not what Makowecki had expected.

"We had nurses and doctors hugging us and crying with us. I couldn't even comprehend it. People that

were there to see other people would hug us. And when their loved ones got transferred out of the ICU, they came back to the ICU to see how Morgan was doing."

He said some had even sung for her daughter and prayed for her.

"She never woke." Despite this glimmer of good amongst Makowecki's loss, he cannot shake his grief.

"It's just a terrible thing to go through," he said.

He compared the loss of other loved ones, like his mom, to the loss of a child.

"It's general nature, when you separate from the nest and distance yourself, it's still a terrible thing when a parent dies," he said.

"But with a child you remember everything from the minute they were born until they die - if they die before you."

Those wishing to contribute to the Morgan Jayne Project can send their contributions to the Dawn Land Children's Health Care Foundation c/o Kate McDonnell at 17905 98A Ave., Edmonton, AB T5T 3L3

"The money that goes toward the Dawn Land Foundation goes straight to Valerie for the project. No administration is involved," Makowecki said.

For further information about the project contact Makowecki at signboy@telus.net.

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