

Memoirs Inspire Effort to Eradicate Human Papillomavirus

Kirk A. Forbes, BS, MBA

Kirk A. Forbes and his family share their experience of dealing with cancer and grief in the book Love, Kristen. Kristen Forbes died June 1, 2008, at the age of 23 from cervical cancer. Kirk's summary of the book and the Kristen EVE Foundation's mission follow.

Kristen graduated from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) with a bachelor's degree in business and a double major in human resources and management. She had just opened a new, exciting chapter in her life. Fresh out of college, she began a promising career with Walgreen's Drug Store in management. The very next month, however, her right ankle swelled up and she spent the next year fighting advanced cervical cancer.

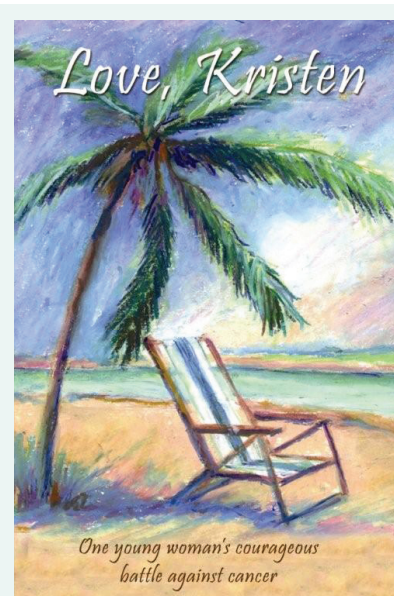
I wrote her story to document Kristen's courage. She never lost her faith, her sense of humor, or the will to fight. Kristen's own journal entries, our e-mail updates to friends, and her poetry provided the framework to tell her story. Myself and my family also wanted to relate Kristen's experience with the medical community.

The compassion and support of the doctors, nurses, medical staff, pharmacists, physical therapists, transporters, and EMTs were unwavering throughout her illness.

I am a reluctant author. I never intended to write a book. My son Eric was dealing with his grief by going through Kristen's belongings in the garage. He came into the house and said, "Dad, you need to come here and see this." I followed him out to the garage and he pointed at a stack of journals that he had found written by Kristen. I had no idea that my daughter was such a dedicated writer. I spent the next week reading all 17 of Kristen's journals. Two were full of poetry and song lyrics (she played the cello and guitar) and two were about her last year.

Kristen had a little 5-year-old friend named Jacob, the son of her best friend Jeff, and she loved Jacob like a son. I thought that it may be a good idea to put together a story about Kristen in a three-ring binder with some pictures so Jacob could read it when he is old enough to understand who this person was that loved him so much. After reading her story, a good friend of mine, an author, said, "You should consider making it a book." So I did.

When you lose a child, your mind starts searching for answers as to why . . . why Kristen, why now? Because of Kristen and our personal beliefs, we know we will see her again someday. Perhaps my next door neighbor was right when he said, "Kristen and your family have suffered and sacrificed so many others will not have to suffer and sacrifice."



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Debate exists in the United States on whether the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination should be mandated. The Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has made a universal recommendation that all girls be vaccinated at age 11 or 12, but this is not a mandate. Eight countries currently offer the vaccination free of charge to girls in sixth through eighth grade. Pap smear screening can identify potentially precancerous cells. Kristen had a Pap test 18 months before being diagnosed with cancer. In her case, an annual test may have detected it early enough to have led to a different

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