

Kelley Jo Davis Liljegren leaves legacy as humanitarian, cancer research advocate

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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COLLINSVILLE - Kelley Jo Davis Liljegren left a legacy in her life as a fighter, athlete, mother, wife and friend.

Kelley died at age 45 on March 2, 2017, after a 13-year battle with breast cancer. She was surrounded by her family - husband, Mike, children, Hanna, 18, Luke, 16, and Faith, 14, - at the time of her death. Her sister, Kerry Lorton, said she loved her family more than anything. Kerry is the mother of Sophia Lorton, an outstanding athlete for Calhoun in recent years. Sophia is Kelley's niece.

Kelley was a 1989 Carlinville High School graduate. She was a star in every sport: volleyball, basketball and track. Kerry, her sister, said more than 4,000 visitors passed through the funeral home at St. John Evangelical Church in Collinsville. She was a high school math teacher in Collinsville off and on for 13 years. Signs honoring Kelley were displayed all over Carlinville.

“She was an awesome sister,” Kerry said. “I learned from the best. She did a lot to raise funds and awareness for cancer. She always did anything in general to donate back to her community.”

Kelley was first diagnosed with cancer in 2004 at age 32. After chemotherapy and radiation treatment, the cancer went away until 2014 when it returned to her bones and breast area. She returned to chemo and radiation but the tumors kept growing and invaded the liver. However, Kerry said her sister fought her cancer bravely until the end.

After topping 1,000 points in her basketball career at Carlinville High School, Kelley continued to play as a point guard at Illinois College. There, she was homecoming queen, obtained a degree in mathematics and computer science and married her computer science professor Mike Liljegren on June 5, 1993. She obtained her MBA

from Sangamon State University and started teaching at Palatine High School where she was also an assistant coach for the girls basketball team.

She moved to Collinsville in 2003 and started coaching and teaching there, then in 2004 she began her battle with cancer.

Memorials for Kelley can be made to KAHOKstrong, Inheritance of Hope, and Jeffro's Angels by going to www.barrywilsonfuneralhome.com. KAHOKstrong was established as an organization that helps families in the CUSD 10 community going through tragic times. Kelley's daughter was one of the founding members of the group.

"Kelley was an inspiration to anyone who met

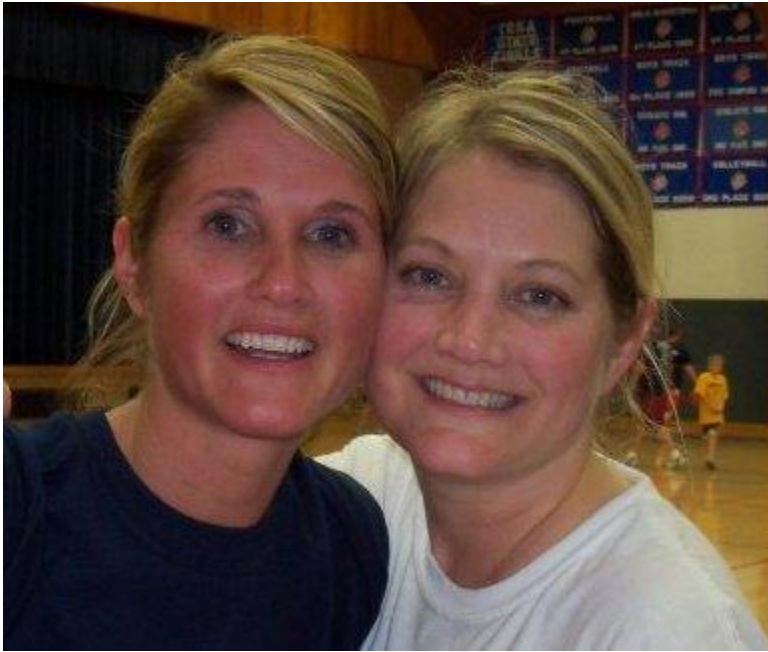


her," her sister said. "She inspired a lot of people in her life."

Kerry could say only positive things about Kelley's husband, Mike, her sister's best friend, who was with her every step of the way in the cancer battle and her life until the very end.

"My eight-year-old son described his aunt as just 'awesome,'" Kerry said. "He said Aunt Kelley always gave the best hugs."

Below are some of Kelley's inspiring quotes as found on her website that documented her cancer fight. She often talked in terms of a battle on the basketball court and compared it with her cancer fight:



Hello Team:

“I don't like calling you back to the court for competition. In 2004 on February 25th I sent out the battle cry. I was 32 years old. We rallied and kicked cancer's butt. I underwent a double mastectomy, removal of ovaries and lymphnodes, 8 rounds of chemotherapy and 31 rounds of radiation. June 25, 2005 on my 34th birthday I spoke at the Relay for Life Macoupin County as a survivor and I cut the last loop off the survivors basketball net.

“Now on June 25th as I turn 42 a sneak attack was discovered. I am getting my game face on and lacing up my shoes again. My Coaches (Dr.'s and Mike) are coming up with a game plan. My strength and conditioning coaches (Hanna, Luke and Faith) have grown and are preparing for their roles. This is much more difficult for me to handle witnessing the fear in their eyes that they didn't have at ages 1,3 and 5. We have a game plan and will execute the plays to perfection.

“I will continue to update you on the game plan. I do not mind you sharing my story. There are power in numbers. I am setting up a caringbridge page so that I do not send you what you don't want to receive. <http://www.caringbridge.org/> Just search for Kelley Davis Liljegren and set up an account - very simple.

“We have lost three teachers/friends to cancer in the last year. Not to mention many friends. I am not sure what my role is in this. God brought us close to family and gave me nine more years to be a mama, wife, sister, daughter, aunt, teacher, coach and friend. We will continue with faith...”

Love,

Kelley #42 (I retired my uniforms from high school as #23, college as #12, victory one age #32 and now #42)