



MATT PARKER HONORS HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER THROUGH THE 2K4KIDS FOUNDATION HE ESTABLISHED IN THEIR NAMES.

2K4KIDS Foundation funds scholarships

Kari Parker, a high school teacher in Temecula, would have been proud of the nonprofit, all-volunteer foundation her husband, Matt, started in January with the goal of helping students in need.

Sadly, Kari was killed on June 28, 2007, in a single-car highway accident as she was driving home from visiting with Matt as he coached a traveling baseball team in Arizona. The couple's 22-month-old daughter, Keira Lyn, was also killed. The cause of the accident on Interstate 10 is unknown.

The Parkers were married in 2003. About the time Kari and Keira were killed, the Parkers were planning to move to Needles, where Matt grew up and still had family. After the tragedy, Matt Parker, his family and his late wife's family wanted to create something positive from their loss and carry on Kari's love of education and children. In January, Parker, who teaches health and life skills at Fallbrook High School, co-founded 2K4Kids, the Kari and Keira Lyn Parker Foundation.

"Our goal is to help with educational needs in the cities we have lived in, worked in and came from. We'll pool all the money together and give away scholarships at Needles High School, Fallbrook High School, Great Oak High School,

PHOTO BY AMY BENTLEY

Chaparral High School and Julian Charter School. We're hoping to expand to Temescal Canyon, because that's where my wife started teaching in the community," says Matt, who lives in Murrieta. The foundation's officers (Matt is the executive director) will also accept grant requests to buy supplies for needy child-care centers.

So far, three students – one from Chaparral High and two from Needles High – have received college scholarships in the foundation's name.

"My wife was keen about making sure her students finished the job of going to college and finishing college," explains Matt.

On Aug. 1, the foundation held its first big event, a 200-guest black-tie dinner and auction for invited family and friends at the Wiens Family Cellars in Temecula.

"For a lot of people, it was a time to share and reflect. It was the first time many had gotten together since the funeral. We had a video side show presentation that was hard to watch but was very moving. I spoke about the direction of the foundation and what our plans were," says Matt. The event raised more than \$20,000. "We hope to do that dinner every year and invite around 200 people. This next year we are going to open it up to the public."

The dinner was followed the next day by a 2K walk at Great Oak High School in Temecula, where Kari Parker had taught at one time. The walk attracted 250 participants.

"We just wanted to give an opportunity for the community to participate," says Matt. The walk and dinner will be annual events held on the first weekend of August to commemorate the Parkers' wedding anniversary of Aug. 2 and their daughter's birthday on Aug. 5.

More recently, the foundation held the 2K4Kids Fun Run in Needles on Oct. 24 and Oct. 25. The fundraiser included a barbecue, walk and fun day in the park, and also will be an annual event in Needles. 2K4Kids.com ■

AMY BENTLEY is a contributing writer to Inland Empire Family magazine.

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