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Capital campaign underway for Zafia's Family House

By: Sena Christian, Staff Reporter



Philip Wood/Press Tribune

Robert and Rebecca Fyfe are attempting to build Zafia's Family House in Roseville, where families with loved ones in local hospitals will be able to stay, instead of in hotels or RVs in medical center parking lots.

A promise two parents made to fulfill their daughter's dying wish is almost within their grasp, as they attempt to build a house for families of loved ones with illnesses and chronic conditions that require extended stays at Roseville medical centers.

Rebecca and Robert Fyfe, of El Dorado Hills, told their daughter, Zafia, they would build the house after experiencing for themselves the important need for this type of facility near the hospital to go for a shower, to make dinner, to rest and possibly spend the night.

At 12 years old, Zafia was diagnosed with stage four osteosarcoma cancer and doctors told her she had two months to live. Over the next two years, the

cancer spread throughout her body and she died in 2006. That whole time, the Fyfes spent many long days and nights near her side at Kaiser Permanente Roseville Medical Center.

They had no place to go for a break from the heartache and stress because there is no facility for the families of patients at Kaiser Permanente Roseville or Sutter Roseville Medical Center. Some families end up sleeping in hospital chairs, in their cars or in recreational vehicles parked outside the hospitals.

"The whole point of the house is to keep families together," Rebecca Fyfe said.

Dr. Kent Jolly, who works in pediatric hematology and oncology for Kaiser Roseville, said all area hospitals are in serious need of additional convenient, affordable, family housing.

"Most families with premature infants, childhood cancer or life-threatening trauma are brought from out of the area for life-saving care at Roseville's major hospitals," Jolly said. "Those families are faced with the additional hardship (and expense) of no place to live for the duration of their loved-one's hospitalization. Zafia's Family House will give them an affordable place to stay, close to the hospital, with much more amenities and emotional support than any hotel."



Zafia's Family House is named for Zafia Fyfe

Jolly noted the importance of the nonprofit organization's capital campaign, which is currently underway. "Without the public's support, these families will continue to live out of suitcases and sleep wherever — in their cars, the hospital lobby, or even on the floor of their child's hospital room," he said.

Zafia's Dinner, Dance & Auction

When: Friday, April 26

Where: Morgan Creek Country Club in Roseville

Info: www.zafiasfamilyhouse.org

The house will also be for families of adult patients. Once built, guests will be asked to contribute a \$30 donation per night, but will be waived if the family can't afford the fee.

Sutter Roseville Medical Center CEO Patrick Brady echoed the importance of this type of facility.

"Nothing is more important to us than our patients and the communities we serve," Brady said. "When we can collaborate with organizations like Zafia's House, to provide temporary housing to the families of patients who need it, we are thrilled to do so. We invest significant dollars region-wide into organizations like Zafia's House and many others because it's at the core of our not-for-profit mission and because it's the right thing to do."

Last year was big for Zafia's Family House. The nonprofit organization continued to fundraise and generated about \$100,000, but they need an estimated \$2.5 million to build the house and cover the costs of two years of operating expenses. The group has launched a capital campaign, and Jan. 2 marked the organization's third year with nonprofit status, which means it can apply for grants.

Pro-bono architect Kevin Pressey, of Pressey and Associates, designed an 11,000-square-foot house, which includes nine rooms for overnight stays, a suite for larger families, a family room, storage and laundry facilities, a kitchen and dining room, office space and a conference room.

The Fyfes said the architect's contribution amounts to about \$200,000 of in-kind value.

"We heard about the story and met with the Fyfes, and we fell in love with their story and with them, and we just wanted to help out ... It's a good-sized project and we just felt it was something we wanted to do," Pressey said.

John Caulfield, of Landmark Builder, stepped up to take care of construction. The Fyfes hope to break ground in 2015, but still need to get the site secured.

"It's been an unbelievable gift that John came up and said, 'I'm going to build the house for you,'" Rebecca Fyfe said.

Zafia's Family House also receives regular donations from city of Roseville employees through the city's REACH (Roseville Employees Annual Charitable Hearts) campaign. Robert Fyfe said despite the challenging economy and as other charities have folded, their organization has managed to show the value of the house to the local community.

And for the Fyfes, the house will also help keep the memory of their beloved daughter alive. They adopted Zafia when she was 3 years old from an orphanage in Uzbekistan.

"The journey has been long and exhausting at times and has had its ups and downs, but 2013 was definitely an up year and has kept us going," Bob Fyfe said.