

Headline: Kara Magez becomes a star attraction for Loyola lacrosse

By Michael J. Lewis

In the middle of a joyous celebration for the Loyola (Md.) women's lacrosse team on April 26, 2014, there was hugging and high-fiving and the most glorious celebration these women had ever taken part of.

That's because the Greyhounds had just won their first Patriot League title, and advanced to the NAA Tournament. So as fans gathered around the victorious team on their home field in Baltimore, some fans asked for players' autographs.

And right there beside Tournament MVP Maddy Leshner and Marlee Paton and the rest, was a pipsqueak of a 5-year-old, with blonde hair and a huge smile, signing her name for anyone who was around.

"That was so much fun!" Kara Magez recalls. "I got to sign my name a lot, like the players did!"

Two years after the Loyola Greyhounds got to adopt their own Friends of Jaclyn superstar, the relationship between team and player could not be going better.

Loyola coach Jen Adams and her team have gone above and beyond in welcoming Kara and her parents, Sheri and Charles, into the family.

Sheri beams when talking about the incredible love and support the team has given Kara, including coming to her youth lacrosse games (she plays for the Purple Cheetahs) and taking the whole team out for pizza ("all of a sudden everyone wanted to be on the Purple Cheetahs when that happened," Sheri laughs), baking cookies with Kara at holiday time, letting her sit on the bench during games ("it's really fun to MMZMB yell 'Go Greyhounds'" when the game starts," Kara says) and numerous other activities.

Maybe Kara's favorite thing? When she was finally finished with her last chemotherapy session in March, 2014, the team took her to the Annapolis Mall to get her ears pierced.

"We had promised her that once her chemo was done and she had her port taken out, she could get that done, and the whole team was there," Sheri says. "She was smiling all day."

Kara's been smiling ever since she hooked up with Loyola. Her journey toward Friends of Jaclyn began in Oct. 2012, when after 4 years of healthy childhood she began having small seizures and drooling out of nowhere.

Doctors at Johns Hopkins hospital eventually found an astrocytoma, performed brain surgery on Kara. Sheri says doctors told her 95 percent of the tumor was removed, but in early 2013 it started growing again, and Kara had to have nine rounds of chemo over 45 days.

During that period Sheri and Charles learned about FOJ, and after the adoption gift of a Build-A-Bear for Kara, she and the team have been inseparable.

Kara goes to practices and every home game, and gets to go into the locker room anytime she wants. Loyola players like Elizabeth Barranco, Cami Whiteford, and Olivia Blakeman have been Kara's closest pals, taking her on outings and high-fiving her during games.

"I get nervous during the games," Kara, now 7, says. "I really want them to win."

As with so many FOJ adoptees, Sheri says Kara gets excited and forgets about her discomfort on a game day.

"She gets sad every year when the season ends," Sheri says. "Kara has two older brothers (Anthony, 20, and Austin, 19) but this team is really all of her sisters."

"She's really just in heaven around these girls."



