

BRINGING JESSICA'S Splashpad TO LIFE

Jessica Starr-Rose wasn't someone who craved the spotlight. In fact, she would much rather someone else take all the accolades while she worked quietly in the background.

The former FOX 2 meteorologist simply loved weather and being on television allowed her to share her love with others.

"It wasn't just a fascination, but a gift," said her mother Carol Starr. "When she was 6 years old, she said 'I'm going to be on TV and tell the weather.' You never squash those dreams; you just encourage them, and it became reality."

Now her family is taking a dream of its own and working to make it a reality to honor Jessica, who died of suicide in 2018 following complications from surgery. The vision is a splashpad at Bosco Park – complete with weather-themed features – to be enjoyed by Jessica's two children and children from across the area.

Carol came up with the idea for a splashpad after visiting a park in Commerce Township and seeing the joy on everyone's faces while they played. The family approached the City of Novi about their idea since Jessica's husband Dan Rose and two children live in Novi, and plans came together quickly.

The Novi Parks Foundation immediately hopped on board and fundraising is underway.

"I can think of no better avenue to express her joy and zeal for life than to create something like this where kids will laugh and enjoy themselves for years into the future," said Mayor Bob Gatt. "It is something that will live on forever."

Dan Rose acknowledges this project is "bittersweet," but it coincides perfectly with Jessica's giving personality. He said it was overwhelming the amount of people who reached out after she died to tell stories about how generous and nice she was to them.

He shared one story from a woman whose teenage daughter called FOX 2 looking to talk to someone about a future in television. There were three-to-four personalities in the room when the producer walked in to ask if anyone would help, and Jessica jumped at the opportunity. The two exchanged emails and text messages, even meeting for nearly three hours at a coffee shop. Dan didn't even know all of this happened until after she died.

"She would always help people but didn't have to brag about it," he said. "She was very humble with how she helped people."





Jessica was a big supporter of St. Jude's Children's Hospital, and was also involved with Habitat for Humanity, the American Heart Association, and was a bell ringer every year at Kroger in Northville for the Salvation Army. The Walled Lake Central High School graduate even lent a helping hand to rival Walled Lake Western to serve as the emcee for its Pink Out event.

"It's just who she was," said Carol. "She always felt it was important to give back."

Now people have the opportunity to give back to her and her family to make this splashpad dream a reality. The Novi Parks Foundation, which raises money for supporting park enhancements, recreational opportunities, and scholarship programs for local children, is soliciting donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations on its website noviparksfoundation.org. The family is planning a golf outing next year, along with other fundraising events.

"We are building this in her memory, but it's for the community," said Carol. "It's not just for kids, but parents and grandparents and friends. It's a place to have fun and represents sunshine and laughter. It will embody all the things Jessica stood for."

While it's a memorial in Jessica's honor, Carol said for the family it's a place of "renewal."

"Our family has been grieving for almost three years and we want to bring everyone together," she said. "Water represents life and the continuation of life. This is a positive way to remember her and will be there for generations."



How to support Jessica's Splashpad

- Visit noviparksfoundation.org/Jessica and donate online.
- Mail a check to Novi Parks Foundation, P.O. Box 1169, Novi, MI 48376
- Cash and check donations can be made in person at the Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services office at 45175 Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI 48375

Dan said while it will be "very emotional" for him and their children, he sees it as a place the children will enjoy and one day even take their own children there.

"I just think having something that honors Jess and myself and (our children) is a really positive thing," he said.

For more information about Jessica's splashpad and to donate, noviparksfoundation.org/jessica or call 248-347-0400.

