

Remembering Kacy

BY BRITNEY PORTER
Special to *The Free Press*

BUDA—Mr. and Mrs. Ron West draw strength from family and friends as they continue to mourn the loss of their 19-year-old daughter, Kacy, who died last August in an automobile accident near her home.

The community's response for the last four months has been cards, phone calls and financial support.

A cheerleading mom set up a memorial fund at First American Bank in Buda, where almost \$3,000 was donated to purchase Kacy's gravestone, according to Ron West. The minimal cost for the funeral was about \$12,000.

"It's been overwhelming to see how many people have helped us," West said. "So many people have come into our lives as a result of her."

Since that Thursday night on August 23, when Kacy drove her 1997 Toyota two-door into a Ford pickup driven by Manchaca resident Michael Case, the West family has learned to take each day as it comes.

"It's a daily process," West said. "This time of the year really hits home. You can't



Kacy West

enjoy the holidays."

But presents don't always come in boxes and bows. The Wests may find comfort in the "season of giving" because they donated some of Kacy's organs to save six lives,

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including a 50-year-old Austin teacher who received Kacy's heart and a one-year-old baby who received part of Kacy's liver. Their names were not released.

"Kacy was a giving person," Ron West said. "We knew she was into helping people, so we decided to help save the lives of others."

Those who were with Kacy the night of the accident may have found a whole new meaning of life since their blond-hair friend no longer sits next to them. West hopes that through their suffering, they have learned a lesson.

One lesson may be not to drink and drive. Kacy was leaving a friend's 21st birthday party with alcohol in her system, when she forgot her purse and turned around to retrieve it. Around 3 a.m. Kacy ran the stop sign at the intersection of Dove Dr. and FM 967.

But West said that Kacy was not a partier.

"She was a small girl and more than likely any alcohol was going to affect her," he said.

Kacy was also on a cell phone talking to a friend in Dallas.

"With as many things that didn't add up, that it was 3 a.m., and she was on the phone and she forgot her purse," said West, "we console ourselves by thinking that it was her time to go."

Still, West said it's hard to go back to normal life because normal life included his daughter.

Traditional vacation spots have already changed. And West said he can hardly listen to the radio because he may hear a song from her funeral.

"There are constant reminders everywhere, but you have to work your way through them," West said.

The Wests recently attended a wedding for their niece.

"It's devastating to know that there's a wedding that we won't go to," Ron West said.

At the tender age of four, Kacy began dancing her way in life up until she joined the Hays Highsteppers. During her junior and senior years, she was a varsity cheerleader. She also worked as a waitress at Texas Land and Cattle Co. off Mopac in Austin.

The 2000 graduate of Hays was to begin her third semester at Austin Community College

the Monday after the accident. She may have pursued child psychology after transferring to Southwest Texas State University, according to West.

"She affected so many people's lives," he said, "whether that's because we've lived here for 18 years, or all her dance classes and friends."

On the day of the viewing, unexpected showers rolled out of the sky; tears rolled down faces. Friends and family formed a line so long, West said, that it wrapped around the funeral home in Oak Hill.

As the community reaches out to the Wests, perhaps some are reaching into their homes.

"Maybe other kids (who are) putting off hearing about God need to find out about that," he said. "Maybe parents are starting to talk to their kids."

Or perhaps the people of the community are reaching inside themselves, taking to heart a young woman's senior motto engraved on her tombstone: "Live each day like there's no tomorrow."