

Full court press

Athlete creates kits to combat cancer

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As a shooting guard for the lady Viking basketball team, senior Jordan Lopez-Rhodes knows how to reach a goal. However, Jordan's story doesn't start or end on the court. Since last year, Jordan and her family have been striving to reach a different goal: helping to ease the suffering of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. With that goal in mind, Jordan and her family began making care packages in order to counteract some of the harsher side effects of the treatment - a reality Jordan and her family know all too well.

"Over the past couple of years my dad and uncle were diagnosed with cancer and we lost a cousin to breast cancer," Jordan's mother Sefra Lopez said. "This project hits home for us and I thought my kids may be able to connect with and learn to do something for another child or teenager their age."

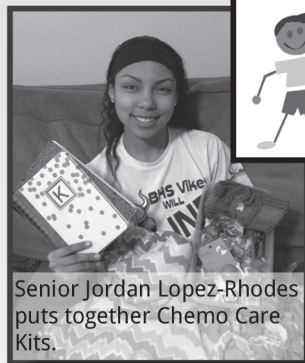
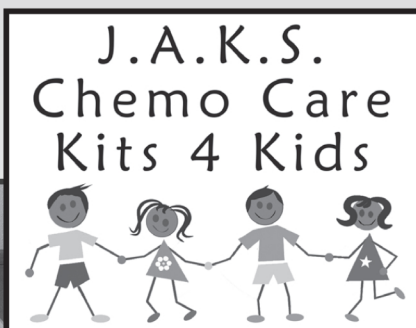
The family took their drive to fight cancer and began finding ways to practically touch lives.

"My mom saw the idea on Pinterest and said, okay, let's start it and see how it goes," Jordan said. "I wanted to know more, so I did a little research on my own about what would help with the

symptoms of chemo."

The family wanted to help by creating a project to be representative of their values as a family, and serve as a constant reminder of all they are have to be thankful for.

"We call them JAKS Chemo Care Kits 4 Kids to symbolize that each kit is from our family to them," Mrs. Lopez said. "JAKS is a moniker that plays off our first names (Jordan, Amaia, Kennedy, and Sefra) that means family to us. This project also helps to teach my kids to give back and be thankful for their good health. Our



Senior Jordan Lopez-Rhodes puts together Chemo Care Kits.

goal is to let these little superheroes fighting for their lives know that 'No One Fights Alone' and that we are

here to support them." After researching the side effects of chemo, Jordan and her family began making the care packages, consisting of items such as hand sanitizers, non-fragrant lotions, and iTunes giftcards for teenage patients, all donated by members of the community.

"Although our family coordinates the JAKS Chemo Care Kits 4 Kids project, it

really is a community project that we absolutely could not do without all of the generous donations," Mrs. Lopez said. "I would really like to see the Bryan High student organizations and clubs get behind us and collect items as a group to donate."

While it started out as a small family project, the care packages have grown over the past year to touch more lives locally, and in surrounding communities.

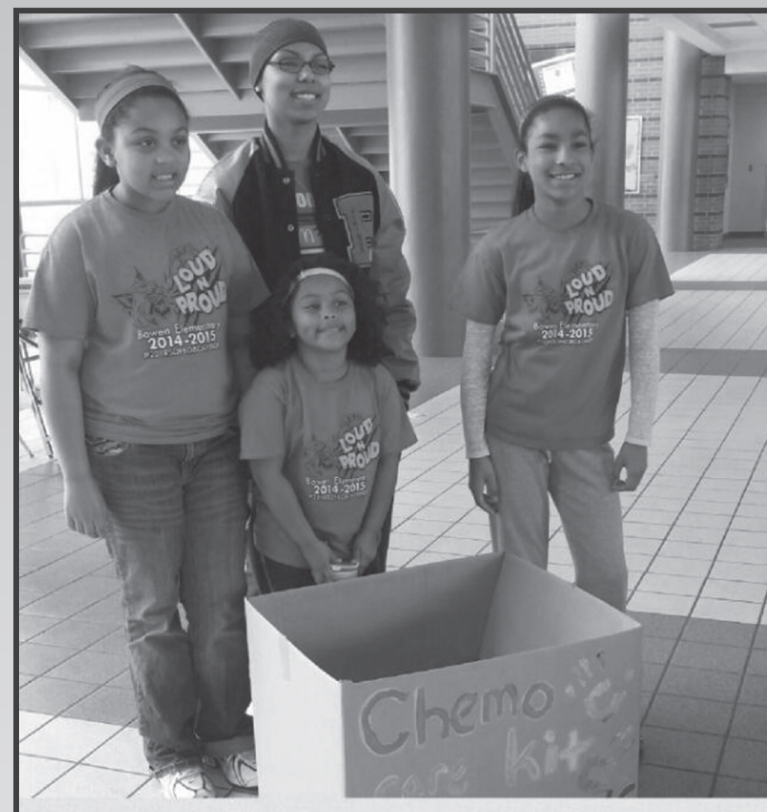
"Last year, our goal was 60 kits, but we ended up making 80, and the community was really for it," Jordan said. "Because of last year's result, we wanted a bigger goal this year, which is to make 300 kits."

As part of reaching their goal, Jordan and her family have called upon members of the community to, again, provide their support by donating to the cause.

"We had a drive on February 28 at the Silver Circle from 10 AM - 1 PM, and we have a Facebook webpage with a list of items that you can donate," Jordan said. "Whatever people can donate will be helpful and I know the kids will appreciate it as well."

As part of their plans to continue the project, Jordan and her family have begun to discuss ways to help collect and produce more care kits in the future.

"Jordan and I have talked about making this something we do annually or even



Several Bowen Bobcats stop by Bryan High to donate items for the JAKS Chemo Care Kits 4 Kids project.

a couple of times a year, so our hope is to keep this project going," Mrs. Lopez said. "Maybe even create an online site where people can create a chemo care kit by selecting the items they want to include and have it shipped to the individual."

In addition to the Care Kids project, Jordan enjoys using her experiences to coach younger kids in her free time, helping them stay fit and express themselves in a positive manner.

"I've been coaching kids for the past three or four years," Jordan said. "I like helping kids, and allowing sports to be their outlet to build their confidence."

In spite of all of the activities, planning, and work Jordan has to do, she says that the leadership skills she learned in basketball, and the support of her family helps motivate her, however, the greatest recognition she receives is from the kids she helps.

"Last year we got a card saying that the kids loved [the kits] and all the supplies," Jordan said. "They helped them cope with the side effects of the chemo and that's really our goal. I'm glad they put a smile on kids faces. The best part is touching families lives, and having them reach out to us and saying thank you."