

One Mother's Battle. A Community Beside Her.

At just 37 years old, **Jasmine Wade** is confronting Stage 4 cancer and fighting to stay present for her two young children. "Some days I want to give up," she admits. "But my kids are my reason."

At home in Long Beach, Jasmine is raising both her children on limited means while managing the relentless physical toll of her illness.

Even standing or walking for a few minutes leaves her in pain. Tasks as simple as shopping, cooking, or chasing after a toddler have become nearly impossible without help.

That's where her daughter, **Anaiyah**, steps in. She isn't your typical 19-year old. She is Jasmine's best friend, a second care partner, and her companion in raising 18-month-old **Kairo**.

Jasmine's cancer story first began while pregnant. A lump initially diagnosed as a clogged milk duct never disappeared. A biopsy later confirmed breast cancer, and Jasmine started chemotherapy—the kind patients call the "Red Devil"—while carrying Kairo.

"Whatever I had to do to save my baby," she recalls.

Kairo was born healthy. That was the light at the end of one tunnel.

Jasmine's treatment still continued—a daunting 27 rounds of chemo—followed by a brief, jubilant season of bell-ringing and "cancer-free" language that felt like a promise. That was before the cancer metastasized to her brain.

Once Jasmine's cancer advanced, Anaiyah put her own dreams on hold, leaving college in Florida to come home and help.

"She shouldn't have to be my nurse," Jasmine said. "But I don't know what I'd do without her."

Referred to Sid Jacobson JCC's Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center, Jasmine connected with **Joy Rubel, LMSW**, who became her advocate—handling paperwork, making calls, and, most importantly, never letting her feel forgotten. "[Jasmine] didn't need more forms," Joy says. "She needed someone who wouldn't walk away."

But as Jasmine's needs grew, Joy turned to **Debbie Kessler**, Sid Jacobson JCC's Director of Early Childhood.

With a toddler at home who she could barely care for, Jasmine required assistance beyond medical treatment. Debbie turned to her Early Childhood families—parents who know the daily demands of raising young children—and shared Jasmine's story.

Almost instantly, the messages poured in: *What can we do? How can we help?*

The response was overwhelming. Families sent in gift cards, packed bags of baby clothes, and even started a Venmo fund. In a week, \$2,300 in gift cards had been collected.

With four dedicated social workers, the work of Nancy Marx is amplified by the collective compassion of an entire community at SJJCC who forms a safety net around families like Jasmine's. Together, they have turned what could have been unbearable isolation into something resembling hope. "Because of the JCC, I'm not alone," Jasmine says. "If I didn't have them, I don't know where I'd be."

Jasmine doesn't call herself a survivor yet. She calls herself a fighter. And she calls herself lucky, too.

Ask Jasmine what keeps her going and she answers without hesitation: "My children. They're always going to be my reason." Ask Joy what keeps her going, and she points to clients like Jasmine: "She makes this work worthwhile. She makes us fight harder." Ask Debbie, and she talks about the families who didn't blink before giving: "Life is unpredictable. You realize how lucky you are, and then you act."

On Sunday, October 19, 9:30am, Sid Jacobson JCC hosts its **Stronger Than Cancer 5K Run, Walk, and Family Block Party**. Proceeds from the event sustain the free, personalized support of SJJCC's Nancy Marx Cancer Wellness Center—programs that offer comfort to hundreds of individuals and families like Jasmine's when they need it most.

This is not just a story about cancer. It's a story about love that keeps showing up. And in Jasmine's words, it's a story still unfolding: "I want to be better."