

Clara Viviana Ulloa 1974 - 2009



Viviana Ulloa was born in Bogota Colombia on November 13, 1974 . Grew up in Panama and at the age of 15 moved to the United States. She graduated from Laguna Hills High School in 1992, attended Saddle Valley Community College where she discovered her passion for psychology and anthropology. In order to keep her family together Viviana moved to Madison, Wisconsin where she attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

During her undergraduate career Viviana was an active member of the community .She volunteered for the Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, and she was also a cofounder of CEPLA an organization committed to help Latino students succeed in high school. Viviana graduated in 1998 with a double major in anthropology and psychology and a women's studies certificate. After graduation Viviana work at Centro Hispano, a nonprofit organization in Madison. Then she went on to obtain her Masters Degree in counseling psychology. Upon receiving her masters, she was a family advocate for Head Start and at the same time found out she was pregnant. After the birth of her child, she went back to work as a child therapist for the Mental Health Center of Dane County.

As a single mom Viviana moved with her mother and daughter to Kirkland in the winter of 2004 in order to live closer to her brothers and nieces. Upon arriving in the Seattle area Viviana started working for Consejo, a non profit counseling and referral service for the Latino community. She is currently employed by the city of Seattle as a contract and grants monitor for Seattle team for youth, a program designed to help youths achieve in school.

During the summer of 2007 Viviana began having symptoms of anemia, so she went in for an ultrasound of her uterus, and was diagnosed with endometriosis. The Doctor recommended a full hysterectomy, during surgery they discovered she had stage IV stomach cancer that had metastasized to her, intestine, ovaries, cervix, spleen, and lymph nodes. They removed her reproductive system and another surgery was to come.

The oncologist was not hopeful, but if there was a chance it would be with Dr. Gary Mann at UW and Cancer Care Alliance. His procedure is experimental and is only performed in a few places in

the US. The 17 hour surgery involved the removing of Viviana's stomach and affected areas, and the reconstruction of her digestive system. For the second half of the surgery Dr. Mann lowered Viviana's body temperature in order to pump hot chemotherapy drugs into her abdominal cavity for 2 hours. They sutured her up as the chemo was flowing over her organs and proceeded to shake Viviana for the next two hours. This is known as Shake and Bake according to Viviana and her family. At the end of the surgery they took out the chemo pump and stitched her up and sent her off to a long and painful recovery.

At the end of the Summer Viviana had barely recovered from the surgery when she started on a new and aggressive form of Chemotherapy, one of the only ones to have an effect on Stomach Cancer. The chemo consisted of a 24 hour, 7 days a week infusion of 5FU, and on every third week she would get an all day infusion of two other types of chemo. Viviana had to endure the chemotherapy for 6 months. Her day of freedom was February 11, 2008. She lived those next few months with vigor and life, traveling to Cancun, Mexico, Orange County , CA, Managua, Nicaragua and Disney World! It was almost like she knew that she had to spend these moments with her loved ones because her cancer was aggressive and coming back. In the fall of 2008 she developed multiple tumors in her rectum and intestine, she underwent radiation for a few weeks on the tumor in her rectum, which was a very painful process. Eventually she went to see an oncologist at Fred Hutchinson, who told her that the cancer had spread to her lungs and there was no longer anything that they could do for her. This was a tragic moment in the lives of her family as we had to come to grips with the fact that we were going to lose our sweet Viviana. Dr. Whiting told us that she only had 6 weeks to live, and that she needed to enter hospice care.

Hospice care was a godsend and a curse. We couldn't wait for the hospice nurse to come to the house and tell us all of Viviana's vitals and whatnot, but then, we would have a conversation out of earshot as to how much longer she thought Viviana had to live. This was the hardest thing to hear and go through as a family, putting a time frame on somebody's life. Eventually Viviana succumbed to the disease and died on March 15, 2009, almost 6 weeks to the day after entering hospice care. Viviana left behind a 7 year old daughter, 2 brothers, 2 sister in laws, countless extended family members, best friends and 2 very devastated parents.