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Free or low-cost cervical cancer screenings offered at Planned Parenthood save lives

Tara Brooke is a 25 year-old law student who plays by the rules. She eats right, exercises and doesn't smoke. But her healthy lifestyle wasn't enough to protect her from a precancerous growth forming on her cervix. What may very well have saved her life, however, was the fact that Brooke discovered the problem early at her well-woman examination.

When a Planned Parenthood clinician called Brooke to tell her she had an abnormal result on her cervical screening, Brooke immediately scheduled a Colposcopy. Later, she had a LEEP procedure to remove the fast-growing cells. At her follow-up exam, Brooke was relieved to hear the procedure was a success. "The scariest part was not what happened, but what could have happened," said Brooke. "The actual experience was no big deal, but the fact that this could have become cancer is very frightening." She encourages all women to get their well-woman annual exam at a reproductive health center like

Planned Parenthood.

In addition to cervical health screenings, Planned Parenthood also provides the Gardasil vaccine, which reduces the risk of acquiring the human papilloma virus (HPV) that causes 70 percent of all cervical cancer.

Each year 4,000 women in the United States die from cervical cancer, but the Gardasil vaccine and early detection can save lives. "Cervical health is something I will always be aware of now, but I take comfort in the fact that there's a way to keep tabs on it," says Brooke.

When patients are diagnosed with cancer, they sometimes report that they hadn't had a medical exam in years because of a lack of insurance. Planned Parenthood of San Diego & Riverside Counties reminds you and your loved ones that our services are free for most patients. (Fees are on a sliding scale based on a patient's ability to pay.) Please schedule a cervical cancer screening at your nearest health center today. It's a call that just might save your life.

Call us at 888-743-PLAN (7526) or visit us at www.planned.org.

To ensure patient privacy, names have been changed.