



# M.E.N.D.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

## Neonatal Death

It was while driving on Interstate 35 headed to downtown Dallas when the name finally came to me: M.E.N.D.—**Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death**. I knew one of my first orders of business when I started this organization was to come up with a name. I had hoped to title the group after my baby, Jonathan, who died, but there were too many letters to create an appropriate acronym. I prayed for a revelation. I wanted something unique, yet fitting. Then suddenly the whole epithet just popped into my head while fighting Dallas traffic.

The word *neonatal* technically refers to a newborn. Yet despite our name, our ministry does not solely reach out to parents who suffered the death of their newborn baby. Instead, we cover the gamut of loss by comforting parents whose baby died at any stage of gestation and up to one year of age. Seemingly, the majority of those who come to our support groups experienced the stillbirth of their baby rather than a miscarriage or shortly after birth. Therefore, the main threads of our sharing and newsletter submissions tend to deal with stillbirth more than early loss or true neonatal death.

Over the years we have printed a few newsletter editions that primarily focused on miscarriage, and certainly stillbirth is often mentioned in our publications. But we have never published an issue devoted to the babies who lived outside the womb and to those of you parents who truly got to know your precious babies. You were privileged to feel and watch them breathe, maybe got to see their eyes open, had treasured moments of feeding them, caring for them, and perhaps even took them home for a short while. And many of you were sadly honored to hold them tightly in your arms as they passed from this life into the waiting arms of Jesus.

I appreciate those of you who submitted your sweet stories and memories to this issue. Thank you for sharing your tender moments and allowing us to meet your little ones who left this world too soon.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell*



## M.E.N.D. Reunion

Recently M.E.N.D. hosted our first family reunion at Andy Brown Park East in Coppell, Texas.

Forty-five M.E.N.D. family members came to reconnect with each other and get acquainted with new members.

Our first nine Walk To Remember ceremonies were held at this park and took place at the original M.E.N.D. tree pictured above.

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M.E.N.D. is a Christian nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to reach out to those who have lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death and offer a way to share experiences and information through monthly meetings, this newsletter, and our Web site.

For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the newsletter, contact us at

M.E.N.D.

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*M.E.N.D. is a member of  
First Candle/SIDS Alliance*

  
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## *Two Lifetimes*

*By Robert Davis © 2006*

When does two hours seem like two lifetimes? When that's all you have. For two hours, I was able to hold them, comfort them, love them, and cherish them. I knew we wouldn't have a long time together, but I knew that what little time we had, it had to be special.

From the first moment I saw Parker Logan and Riley Carter, I wanted the doctors to tell me they were going to be okay, that the original prognosis was wrong. I wanted to have them fight for their lives, to do everything they possibly could to save my little boys. Little boys. They were both so very little. Parker weighed in at 1 pound, 5 ounces, and right at 12 inches long. Riley was a little smaller at 1 pound, 1 ounce, and 11.8 inches long.

As precious as they were, we already knew the outcome, and we couldn't subject them to the pain of "all heroic efforts." It's not that we didn't want them to live; we desperately wanted them to live. We had made that decision through a great amount of prayer in a very little time. It was God who gave us the blessing of children, and it was Him who was giving us this time together. Who were we to throw away that gift, no matter how short of a period of time that might have been? It was God who gave us this time, and it would be Him who determined how long that would be.

When Parker was born at 12:47 a.m. and Riley 13 minutes later, all I wanted them to do was live. But, as soon as my wife and I were able to hold them, all of our thoughts and fears and anxieties were gone. Our boys were here. It didn't matter now what time it was or how early they were, they were here. For whatever amount of time we were going to have with them, we were going to be the best parents in the world. We knew we were going to be the best parents because we had received that charge from God Himself, and He wasn't going to let us let Him down.

Through His grace, our boys were able to meet and be loved by two sets of grandparents. Through their love and support for us and the boys, Parker and Riley knew a love as great as any on the face of the earth, but we knew there was an even greater love waiting for them.

When does two hours seem like two lifetimes? When that's literally all you have. See, I was holding both boys in my arms when they were pronounced at 3:09 a.m. I knew they had passed sooner than that, but I also know that they died while being held by a loving parent, and not in some plastic crib or incubator, never having known the touch of their mother or father. When does two hours seem like two lifetimes? For me, it was the morning my two sons were born...and born again.

### *Upcoming Events*

#### **October 4**

- Walk To Remember in Irving, TX

#### **October 11**

- M.E.N.D. - Houston Walk To Remember

#### **December 6**

- M.E.N.D. - Houston Christmas Ceremony

#### **December 8**

- M.E.N.D. - Texarkana Christmas Ceremony

#### **December 9**

- Christmas Ceremony in Irving, TX

- M.E.N.D. - NW Arkansas Christmas Ceremony

## Medical Moment



**According to a recent study, preterm birth contributes to 34% of infant mortality rates in the United States.** *Callaghan WM, Macdorman MF, Rasmussen SA, Qin C, Lackritz EM. Pediatrics. 2006 Oct; 118(4):1566-73.*

**Objective:** Although two thirds of infant deaths in the United States occur among infants born preterm (less than 37 weeks of gestation), only 17% of infant deaths are classified as being attributable to preterm birth with the standard classification of leading causes of death. To address this apparent discrepancy, we sought to estimate more accurately the contribution of preterm birth to infant mortality rates in the United States.

**Methods:** We identified the top 20 leading causes of infant death in 2002 in the US linked birth/infant death file. The role of preterm birth for each cause was assessed by determining the proportion of infants who were born preterm for each cause of death and by considering the biological connection between preterm birth and the specific cause of death.

**Results:** Of 27,970 records in the linked birth/infant death file for 2002, the 20 leading causes accounted for 22,273 deaths (80% of all infant deaths). Among infant deaths attributable to the 20 leading causes, we classified 9,596 infant deaths (34.3% of all infant deaths) as attributable to preterm birth. Ninety-five percent of those deaths occurred among infants who were born at less than 32 weeks of gestation and weighed less than 1500 g, and two thirds of those deaths occurred during the first 24 hours of life.

**Conclusions:** On the basis of this evaluation, preterm birth is the most frequent cause of infant death in the United States, accounting for at least one third of infant deaths in 2002. The extreme prematurity of most of the infants and their short survival indicate that reducing infant mortality rates requires a comprehensive agenda to identify, to test, and to implement effective strategies for the prevention of preterm birth.

Source & full-text available at: <http://www.pediatrics.org>

## Book Review

### *For the Love of Angela*

By Nancy Mayer-Whittington  
Saint Catherine of Siena Press  
[www.fortheloveofangela.com](http://www.fortheloveofangela.com)



Nancy Mayer-Whittington and her husband Bryan wanted to add to their family after the birth of their daughter Molly. Following a series of miscarriages, they finally conceived a baby that the doctor called "a keeper." However, weeks later, tests revealed the baby had Trisomy 18, an anomaly incompatible with life. The author candidly shares her emotional journey of carrying baby Angela to term while preparing for the worst, yet hoping and praying for a miracle. ♥

*Review by Rebekah Mitchell*

M.E.N.D. has a complete list of books, Web sites, organizations, and music resources available online at [www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org).

If you would like to submit a review of books, music, Web sites or other resources dealing with infant loss, please email them to our newsletter editor Heather Fann at [heather@mend.org](mailto:heather@mend.org).

### November/December Topic

Holidays

Deadline: September 30, 2008

### January/February Topic

Advice for those experiencing a recent loss:

Things I wish I'd known then.

Deadline: November 30, 2008

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcomed. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the newsletter. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Please see page two of the newsletter for the appropriate address to send your submissions. Any submission printed in our newsletter will also be posted to our Web site indefinitely unless we receive notice in writing that you are only granting permission for your submission to appear in the printed version of the newsletter.

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Visit our Web site at:  
[www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org)



# Birthday Tributes

## Happy Birthday Aiden!

What a big boy you are getting to be. I can't help looking at all the back to school supplies and think that this year we would have been shopping for you for the first time. Would you be a Batman fan or a Cars fan like your brother? Or would you rather have sports—baseball like Opa or hockey like Daddy? I think about searching for the perfect crayons and paper. I wonder, would you run to your classroom forgetting to kiss me goodbye—or would you cling to me, frightened wanting me to stay? All the while your dad and I would be feeling a bit sad to see our little boy grow up.

But all these are only in my dreams. You have been gone now six years, and we miss you so much. Your brothers remind us each day of you. We know you are happy and playing with your sweet friends. We love you. Happy birthday little tiger!!!!

Love,

Mommy, Daddy, Joshua, Sebastian and Benjamin

*Aiden Xavier Sohn*  
*Stillborn October 13, 2002*  
*HELLP Syndrom*  
*Also remembering babies*  
*Hope and Whisper*  
*Miscarried May 2003 and Oct 2003*  
*Parents: Angelique and John Sohn*  
*Siblings: Joshua, Sebastian, and Benjamin*



## Happy Birthday Jayden!

My Angel, My Little mama  
 It's seems like just yesterday  
 I felt your kicks so strong, and even though  
 I didn't get 2 hold U N my arms, your memory  
 keeps me going on. I Love U with all my heart.  
 Tell Big mama, Paw Paw and Grandpa I miss them to!  
 This is so hard for me because you were my first born. Thank U  
 4 allowing me 2 spend that 1 hour and 3 minutes with U on Sep-  
 tember 25,2007. I will cherish it 4 the rest of my life. I Love U.

Watch over Mommy, My Little Angel!

*Jayden Breonna Jenkins*  
*September 25, 2007*  
*Toxemia*  
*Mommy: Shanae Jenkins*



## Happy Birthday Ethan!

Happy 1st Birthday Ethan, "wild thing"  
 We miss you very much and will always LOVE you.

Love,  
 Mom, Dad and Thomas

*Ethan Kane Spurrier*  
*September 5, 2007*  
*Cord Accident*  
*Parents: Bruce and Sandra Spurrier*  
*Brother: Thomas*



## Happy Birthday Sweet Baby Girl!

Rylee Lynn, I can't believe it has been three years since you came into our lives. I love you and think of you everyday. I wonder which of your older brothers you would look like. Would you play guitar and drums and love music like Jared? Or love TV and Playstation like Hunter? I think you would have them (and your Daddy) wrapped around your little finger!

I thank the Lord every day for choosing me to be your mother. You have changed my life in so many ways.

We love and miss you,  
 Mommy, Daddy, Jared and Hunter

*Rylee Lynn Crye*  
*Stillborn October 31, 2005*  
*Multiple Brain Malformations*  
*Also remembering:*  
*Baby Crye #1*  
*March 21, 1994*  
*Baby Crye #2*  
*January 14, 1997*  
*Parents: Gene and Randi Crye*  
*Big Brothers: Jared and Hunter*



## Happy Birthday Mercedes!

**M**y heart's treasure  
**E**nduring love despite loss  
**R**ichest joys because you've touched my life  
**C**ontinuing on because God makes all things new and good again  
**E**nveloped by the love of your four sweet brothers  
**D**aily aware of God's blessings  
**E**ver amazed at the opportunities God still gives to share your  
 life with others  
**S**ecure in the arms of Jesus  
  
**R**emembered  
**U**ntil we met in Heaven  
**T**hankful for your life; Trusting in His plans  
**H**ope that only Christ provides; HAPPY 13TH BIRTHDAY!

Always Remembering,  
 Mom

*Mercedes Ruth Spigener*  
*Stillborn September 21, 1995*  
*Intramembranous Insertion of Um-*  
*Cord*  
*Also remembering:*  
*Twin Blossoms*  
*Miscarried July/August 1996*  
*Baby Spigener*  
*Miscarried February 2004*  
*Parents: Grant and Jana Spigener*  
*Siblings: Wyatt, Ford, Porter Wayne, and Calvin Russell*



## Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Aidan!!!!

Aidan would be three today  
And what a special boy he would be.

He would have big brown eyes  
Which would sparkle in the moonlit sky.

His smile would brighten everyone's day  
"Such a happy boy" people would say.

He would love to take trips to the zoo  
But only if his Grandma got to go too.

He would have to pick out his own clothes to wear  
Stripes and plaids that didn't match – he wouldn't care.

He would run and play, skip and jump  
Bruises and scratches to show his fun.

We would read Dr. Seuss before we turned out the light,  
One Fish, Two Fish would be the perfect bedtime story all right.

Of course these are all guesses  
Because I will never know for sure,  
My little boy was so special  
God called him home two months after he was born.

Love, Mommy

*Aidan Shaw Vander Cruyssen*  
*October 2, 2005 – December 3, 2005*  
*Polycystic Kidney Disease*  
*Mommy: Shane Vander Cruyssen*  
*Little Sister: Cameron*



## Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday, David!

We think of you all of the time, knowing you would soon be five years old! You've been on our minds so very much lately as we picture you with a new little sibling in heaven. We love knowing that you were there to welcome your little brother or sister into Paradise. What a fun thought for us to imagine you celebrating your 5<sup>th</sup> homecoming together!

Please know how very much you are treasured and loved. Every night when we pray with C.J., he thanks God for you. I long for the day when we will all be together as a family, but until then, you and that new baby of ours give each other lots of hugs and kisses and think of us.

Happy birthday, our precious little prince. We love you!  
Mommy, Daddy and C.J.

*David Atkins Stephens*  
*October 23, 2003*  
*Possible complications from omphalocele*  
*Also remembering*  
*Baby Stephens*  
*June 30, 2008*  
*Parents: Rob and Melissa Stephens*  
*Little Brother: C.J. Stephens*



## Happy Birthday Ashley!

Happy 9th Birthday to our Sweet Angel  
Love, Mommy and Daddy

*Ashley Renee Dedear*  
*October 29- November 1, 1999*  
*Placenta abruption, extreme prematurity*  
*Parents: Tim and Cindy Dedear*  
*Sisters: Laura (Ashley's surviving twin) and Katherine*



## Happy Birthday Logan!

Happy 6th Birthday Logan!  
We love you and miss you more than you know.

Love,  
Mommy, Daddy, Landry and Hudson

*Logan Wayne Fish*  
*September 17, 2002*  
*Skeletal Dysplasia*  
*Parents: David and Brittney Fish*  
*Siblings: Landry Dale and Hudson Kelly*



## Happy 6th Birthday, Laiken!

Our Princess Laiken, oh how we miss you! We think of you each and every day and wish that our time with you had not been so short. You made such an impact on all of our lives and we will never be the same. It is so hard to believe that it was six years ago that we held you in our arms and tried to squeeze a lifetime of showing our love for you into a few short moments.

Arianna, Jarod and Gavin talk about you all the time. They always remember to include you when someone asks how many siblings they have, or how many children Mommy and Daddy have. Gavin always wants to send his balloons up to you in heaven! Your baby sister Alyvia was born on Oct. 20th, 2007 and one of her middle names is Laiken in honor of you. I know that as Alyvia grows up, they will tell her all about you as well.

This year you will get to celebrate your birthday with my mom (your "Dobbie," as your siblings call her) who passed away in February. I miss her so, but I am thankful that she can hold you in her arms again just as she did when you were born. And we know that someday we will also get to hold you again, and for that we have peace. When that beautiful day comes, we will never let you go.

May you have a wonderful heavenly birthday, Baby Girl.

We love you always and forever,  
Mommy, Daddy, Arianna, Jarod, Gavin, and Alyvia

*Laiken Riley Madison Kale*  
*September 15, 2002*  
*Pulmonary failure and Severe prematurity at*  
*24 wks due to HELLP Syndrome*  
*Parents: Rick & Alysha Kale*  
*Siblings: Arianna, Jarod, Gavin, and Alyvia*



## Happy 2nd Birthday Samuel!

We can hardly believe it's been two years since we said goodbye. We miss you each and every day. Your baby brother was born May 10th of this year. We so wish you could be here to teach him all the things big brothers do. We gave him one of your blankets and it is his favorite.

We so look forward to the day when we are all reunited. In the mean time, we know Jesus is taking good care of you. First Samuel 1:28 brings us comfort when we remember that you were made to worship our Lord.

We love you so much!  
Mommy, Daddy, and Landon

*Samuel James Nienhuis*  
*Stillborn October 14, 2006*  
*Factor V Leiden, MTHFR*  
*Parents: Seth and Marcie Nienhuis*  
*Sibling: Landon John*



## In Loving Memory



### **Jordan Alexander Booker**

Stillborn January 11, 2007  
True Knot in Cord  
Parents: Norma Jordan & Mark Booker  
Given by mommy Norma Jordan

### **Abigail Grace Crump**

Stillborn July 1, 2003  
Trisomy 18  
Given by parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump  
and little sisters Cami and Karli

### **Riley and Parker Davis**

November 14, 2006  
Prematurity  
Given by parents Robert and Cheryl Davis  
and little sister Annalise

### **Kyler Paul English**

Stillborn January 20, 2006  
Cord Accident  
Given by parents Laurie and Bob English  
and brothers Justin, Kinser, Kelson,  
and Kayden

### **James Jackson "Jack" Henry**

Stillborn July 4, 2001  
Tetralogy of Fallot

### **Baby Henry**

Miscarried October 2003  
Parents: Chris and Renee Henry  
Siblings: Evan and Luke  
Given by George and Beverly Palmer

### **James Jackson "Jack" Henry**

Stillborn July 4, 2001  
Tetralogy of Fallot

### **Baby Henry**

Miscarried October 2003  
Parents: Chris and Renee Henry  
Siblings: Evan and Luke  
Given by Hossley Lighting Associates, Inc.

### M.E.N.D.

gratefully acknowledges these gifts of love given in memory of a baby, relative, friend, or given by someone just wanting to help. These donations help us to continue M.E.N.D.'s mission by providing this newsletter and other services to bereaved parents free of charge. Please refer to page 2 of this newsletter for more information regarding where to send your donations and what information to include.

**Thank you so much!**

### **Matthew Shane Kennedy**

April 28, 2008  
Preeclampsia  
Parents: Zac and Dawn Kennedy  
Given by grandparents Gene and Betty Lynch

### **Avery Merae Longgood**

August 2-3, 2007  
Possible Stroke  
Given by parents Jamie and Neil Longgood

### **Avery Merae Longgood**

August 2-3, 2007  
Possible Stroke  
Parents: Jamie and Neil Longgood  
Given by Mike and Joyce Shima

### **Avery Merae Longgood**

August 2-3, 2007  
Possible Stroke  
Parents: Jamie and Neil Longgood  
Given by grandparents  
Don and Annette Longgood

### **Bay Miltenberger, Jr.**

Stillborn December 9, 1998  
Preterm Labor  
Given by parents  
Bay and Paula Miltenberger  
and little brothers Bryce, Bo, and Brady

### **Jonathan Daniel Mitchell**

Stillborn June 24, 1995  
Cord Accident  
**Baby Mitchell**  
Miscarried December 2001  
Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell  
Big brother: Byron, Jr.  
Given by grandparents  
Dennis and Sue Brewer

### **Baby Nall "Twin A"**

Miscarried January 2, 2008  
**Kevin Nall, Jr. "Twin B"**  
March 8, 2008  
Infection  
Given by parents Keshia and Kevin Nall

### **Christian Allen Scott**

June 1, 2005  
Bilateral Renal Agenesis

### **Savannah Scott**

Miscarried January 7, 2003  
Given by parents Scotty and Mary Scott and  
siblings Lenny, Will, and Ariel

### **Gift of Support**

Metropolitan Baptist Church  
of Houston, Texas

### **Mercedes Ruth Spigener**

Stillborn September 21, 1995  
Intramembranous Insertion of Umbilical  
Cord

### **Twin Blossoms**

Miscarried July and August 1996

### **Baby Spigener**

Miscarried February, 2004  
Parents: Jana and Grant Spigener  
Siblings: Wyatt, Ford, Porter, and Calvin  
Given by grandparents  
Barry and Sheryl Spigener

### **Ethan Kane Spurrier**

Stillborn September 5, 2007  
Cord Accident  
Parents: Bruce and Sandra Spurrier  
Sibling: Thomas  
Given by grandmother Norma Bomar

### **Gift of Support**

West Conroe Baptist Church  
in Conroe, Texas

## Still

By T. Jarmon Hildreth

There remains a silence  
inside my womb,  
Once ripe with you;  
My body misses that  
sacred heaviness,  
Until it betrayed us both;  
Your passage was almost complete.  
No celebration of your genesis,  
Only masked strangers who severed,  
The awaiting quiet circle  
of your origin;  
Nightly, I coddle *myself* with images  
of rocking you while praying:  
"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray  
the Lord, my soul to keep..."

Avery Corinne Hildreth  
Stillborn October 29, 2006

PROM

Parents:

Wilmer and Tameka Hildreth

# Michelle Grace

By Marie Stockdale

Christmas 2001, my husband and I were thrilled to be expecting our first child. We went in to our 20 week ultrasound appointment eager to find out if we were having a boy or a girl; little did we know we were to find out much more. The doctor reported she could not make out all four chambers of our baby's heart, so over the next few days we were sent to specialists for further ultrasounds and an amniocentesis. It was finally determined our baby had Ebstein's Anomaly, a rare and often fatal heart defect in infants. After much prayer and research we decided we would deliver out of state where a pediatric heart surgeon specialized in this defect. We believed with certainty that God would heal our daughter, either by His own hand or by the hand of the surgeon.

Michelle Grace Stockdale was born August 22, 2002 after a long and difficult labor. The initial plan was to perform surgery when she was 2-3 days old. However, shortly after birth Michelle suffered a brain hemorrhage. Surgery had to be delayed until scans showed the bleeding in her brain had stopped. Days later, surgery was set to take place again, when it was discovered Michelle had suffered yet another brain hemorrhage. Michelle's condition continued to worsen. Over the next week, doctors determined she was in kidney and liver failure. At three-weeks old, it was decided that Michelle be taken into surgery in spite of her critical condition. Without the heart surgery, her other organs would continue to fail and she would die.

The surgery lasted about five hours, after which the surgeon came to us with an encouraging smile, letting us know the surgery had been successful. The surgeon, also a Christian, had repaired Michelle's heart, giving all glory to God. We rejoiced with him, all of us believing the worst was over and our miracle had finally been granted.

The next day after surgery, Michelle again took a turn for the worse. Her condition continued to deteriorate over the next few days, so much it was extremely difficult to even look at her. Three days after surgery, the doctors told us she wouldn't make it through the night unless God intervened. There was nothing left they could do. We left that night heavy hearted but still believing God would indeed intervene. Several hours later in the middle of the night, we were called to come back up immediately. Michelle didn't have much time left. We rushed back to her room to find she was in cardiac arrest and several nurses and doctors were attempting to revive her. The doctor said they had been trying for quite some time now, and she wasn't responding. He asked my husband if they could stop. He nodded, and they quickly pulled up a rocking chair and placed Michelle in my arms for the second and last time. The next few minutes seemed like a dream. I rocked my little girl as she breathed her last and she left our world for heaven.

It has been six years since Michelle's life and death. We did not receive the miracle we hoped and prayed for, but we have received the miracle of restoration and joy we thought we'd never again have. God has used Michelle's life to teach us so much. It is only natural to pray for our child's life and health when it is threatened, but ultimately our prayer should be not our will, but Yours be done. We have learned that God is the author of life, and He is the one who numbers our days. Michelle's life, though brief, was ordained by God. Her life and death were all part of His sovereign plan. This brings us great joy and comfort, knowing her life was not in vain. Though the pain of losing Michelle will remain forever, we are a living testimony that "Though the weeping may last through the night, joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

*Michelle Grace Stockdale,  
August 22-September 16, 2002  
CHD, Ebstein's Anomaly*

*Parents: Joe and Marie Stockdale, Siblings: Caleb, Audrey, Claire, and new baby due Feb. 09*

## M.E.N.D. *Support Group Meetings*

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

### **Daddies group**

meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of

March, June, Sept. and Dec., 7:30—9:00 p.m.

*A time for dads to meet together and discuss topics relevant to them as fathers. Our moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups for discussion.*

### **Food and Fellowship**

*A time to relax and meet with other M.E.N.D. parents in a social setting*

Contact Brittney Fish: [Brittney@mend.org](mailto:Brittney@mend.org)

**Subsequent pregnancy group** meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Led by Liz Walker:

[Liz@mend.org](mailto:Liz@mend.org)

*For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss.*

### **Playgroup**

*For families with children born prior to or subsequent to a loss. Meeting at various locations.*

Contact Mary Steen or Brandee Dill for more info: [Mary\\_Steen@hotmail.com](mailto:Mary_Steen@hotmail.com) or [dillsforchrist@yahoo.com](mailto:dillsforchrist@yahoo.com)

**Mommies AND daddies are both welcome at all M.E.N.D. meetings.**

**All main chapter support group meetings are held at:**

**Suggs Law Firm**

**1522 W. Airport Freeway, Suite 200  
Irving, TX 75062**

*(Located on the south side of the highway, Between MacArthur Boulevard and Story Road)*

For more information, call (972) 506-9000.

**Infertility group** *(Temporarily Inactive)*

Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday from 7:30—9:00 p.m.

Led by Melissa Stephens:

[Melissa@mend.org](mailto:Melissa@mend.org)

*For families experiencing infertility after a loss.*

## *Aidan's Story*

*By Shane Vander Cruyssen*

Sunday, October 2, 2005 or Saturday December 3, 2005...I don't know which day I remember more: the day my son Aidan Shaw was born or the day he went to heaven.

October 2 was a warm Houston day and I was 32 weeks along. My pregnancy had been normal until that Sunday morning when I woke up having contractions. In the emergency room they did an ultrasound and ran some tests before the doctor told me I was in labor and ready to deliver. The nurses and doctors kept telling me that my baby had a kidney disease called PKD but I was so scared, nervous, excited, etc. that I didn't pay that much attention—until they took him away from me immediately after he was born and rushed him to Texas Children's Hospital.

The next three days became a blurred nightmare. My precious little boy was fighting for his life at TCH while I was stuck in a hospital on the other side of Houston recovering from my c-section.

I finally got out of the hospital and went to TCH to see my sweet Aidan, but I wasn't ready to see him with all the wires and tubes and hooked up to various machines. Because he was two months early and because his kidneys were enlarged, his lungs were severely underdeveloped he was hooked up to a machine that was the size of a refrigerator and as loud as a motorcycle. His 5 pounds 10 ounces body looked so small lying in the hospital bed.

My heart and body ached as I looked at my sweet pea lying in that hospital bed. My body ached to hold him, to feel his skin on mine. My heart ached as it sunk in that was my son laying there and he was really, really sick and may not survive another day.

Again, the next week became a blur of nurse, doctors, social workers, family and friends coming by to talk to me as I sat at the side of my precious Aidan. I remember not wanting to get up to eat, go to the bathroom, pump, or sleep because I thought when I came back he might be gone. I wanted to spend every second I could next to him.

To everyone's amazement, Aidan was still alive after a few days and started breathing better. His kidneys were still not functioning properly so we had our first surgery to remove one of his kidneys. I'll never forget that feeling as I stood there watching the anesthesiologist inject my son with medicine that put him to sleep and then we wheeled him up to the surgery room. I remember not wanting to let go, afraid he wouldn't come back. The doctors were hoping the other kidney would do the work of both but this wasn't the case so we were back in surgery. This time the doctors inserted a catheter in Aidan's abdomen that we would use for dialysis.

The next month was my definition of perfection. The dialysis was working and his breathing kept improving. I remember one of the doctors even saying something about us going home—words of utter joy!

I got to hold him, change his diaper and bathe him. We read endless books and we always ended our day with Dr. Seuss's "One Fish, Two Fish"—it was our one bedtime routine. Aidan was responsive to my voice and would squeeze my finger from time to time. I remember thanking God daily for Aidan getting better and giving me hope that one day I could bring him home. This was the best time of my life.

My world began to crumble the last week in November. The nurses noticed Aidan's dialysis fluid was cloudy which translates to "infection." The rounds of tests began and Aidan started having blood pressure issues, seizures and his dialysis wasn't working properly. The test confirmed he had an infection that would render his dialysis useless. He was too young for a transplant so we opted for one more surgery, which was not successful.

I made the decision Friday, December 2 to pull his life support the next day. On that Saturday, family and friends came to visit Aidan one last time. Everyone cleared the room and the nurses put little Aidan in my arms as they began unhooking the tubes and wires that were keeping him alive. I remember holding him and not wanting to let go. I could have stayed in that room forever!

When I was ready, we laid Aidan down on a bed and I was allowed to give him one final bath and dress him. The nurses and staff helped me load up his things and I left TCH, which had been my home for the last two months.

It's difficult re-entering a world after spending so much time isolated in the NICU where your only thoughts are about oxygen levels, breathing patterns and dialysis fluid.

I was blessed to have a friend take care of all Aidan's funeral arrangements and we buried my precious son on Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005. As difficult as those two months were, I would not change that fact that I got to spend that time with my son. I got the opportunity to hold, bathe, touch, sing, and read to my baby. I know how lucky I am because so many women are not afforded that chance.

After two and a half years, I have learned to take comfort in knowing that sweet Aidan has joined His Father in heaven and will never again feel pain, hurt or sorrow. There will be no more machines, tubes, wires, needles or surgeries. Aidan's life is now filled with laughter and joy—what else could a mother want for her child?



## *Sweet Kaitlyn*

*By Rhonda Castro*

One, two, three...push! I held my breath as I gave the push of my life. At that moment my daughter Kaitlyn Nicole was born. I listened for a cry but all I could hear was silence. The doctor quickly handed her over to the team of specialist in the back of the room. Quiet chatter echoed throughout the room. They called my husband back to them for an update. I looked for a pleasant expression on the doctor's face, but it never came. They worked on her for minutes to get her stable. They rushed her by me and said, "This is your daughter." Still in shock I looked over at her. She looked so strange that I thought, "She can't be mine." She had a head of light brown hair and small eyes that looked like they belonged to a monkey. In an instant the team of doctors and nurses rushed her away.

While recovering, news that she wouldn't make it filtered through my room. I was sad but numb. I couldn't feel emotion. All I can remember thinking is that this is not how the biggest moment of my life is supposed to happen. There were supposed to be cameras flashing and video rolling. My family was supposed to have smiles on their faces not tears.

A couple hours later the neonatologist entered the room and surprisingly said Kaitlyn is now stable in the NICU. As I was waiting to get feeling back in my legs, Matt took the swarm of family down to see her. One by one they came back with reports that "She doesn't look that bad." Although reluctant to establish a bond with my daughter that may not live, my family wheeled me down to the NICU. Once there, I took a shy glance at her. She had tubes running every which way, a c-pap in her nose, and a splint on her right arm. From that point on, I knew it was okay to love her and cheer for her again like I did when she was in my womb.

As the days passed, doctors examined and x-rayed her. Even a geneticist came by to try to diagnose her condition. Kaitlyn, born without the top portion of her skull, with contractures of the hands and feet, weak bones, ultra wrinkled skin and other internal irregularities seemed to baffle everyone. Doctors could not pin a name to her condition. Nobody could believe she was still alive.

My husband and I would go visit her daily for 15 days. Although her prognosis seemed to get better during the first couple of days, we were shocked to hear on the fourth day there was really no hope for long life for her. The doctor warned us that her days were numbered and she was starting to look and get worse.

After the meeting, we were allowed to hold her, read Curious George books to her, change her diaper, sing "You are my Sunshine" to her, and most importantly, we were able to get her baptized. Our fondest memories are hearing her faint cry, seeing her thrust her arms and legs in the air when the nurse cleaned her airway, and watching her eyes light up when we played a "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" music box. She loved music just like her daddy.

By the end of our time with her I couldn't imagine ever having the horrible thoughts I had on her birthday. By then, I was convinced I had the most beautiful daughter in the Austin NICU. My heart was filled with love and joy even though I knew her time on Earth was limited. She taught me that being a mother is and can be wonderful. I will love her until the day I die and then some. I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know and truly love my precious little girl. She taught me so much. For that I will confirm, there is a God!

*Kaitlyn Nicole Castro*

*January 21-February 5, 2007*

*Unknown Cause*

*Parents: Mathew and Rhonda Castro*

## *Today*

*By Sabria A. Mason*

Today was supposed to be your birthday but you didn't make it to see.

You came about just way too early to be a part of this world with me.

Even though I never saw your smile or stroked your hair, You're still my very first.

Even though I never held you in my arms, we share something so much closer, Because I held you in my womb.

Such a close bond that can never be broken. You're eternally imbedded in my heart.

One day, we'll have an encounter again. We'll meet and share a close embrace.

But on that occasion, we will be eternally together, Sharing time with our Heavenly Father, who you've already been able to meet.

Until that day arrives, I'll continue to think of you each and every day.

I'll love you for always, forever and a million days.

You'll always be my very first.

*Elijah Darrell*

*Miscarried February 13, 2008*

*Mommy: Sabria A. Mason*



## M.E.N.D. Chapter Corner

### Chapter Meeting Information

#### M.E.N.D. - NW Arkansas

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday from 6:30—8:00 p.m.  
Jones Center for Families, Room 206,  
922 East Emma Avenue,  
Springdale, AR 72765  
Director: April Moreton  
April@mend.org, (479) 524-3500

#### M.E.N.D. - Kansas

Meets the 2nd Thursday, 7:00 p.m.  
at Cora Miller Hall/Newman  
Division of Nursing, Room 107  
1127 Chestnut, Emporia, KS 66801  
Director: Stephanie Metzger  
Stephanie@mend.org., (620) 343-6357

#### M.E.N.D. - Houston

Meets the 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m.  
HEALTHSOUTH Houston  
Rehabilitation Institute  
17506 Red Oak Drive, Houston, TX 77090  
Director: Jaimie Crump  
Jaimie@mend.org, (281) 374-8528

**Subsequent pregnancy group** meets in the same  
place the 1st Thursday, 7:30 p.m.,  
led by Sarah Winebrenner  
(swinebrenner2004@yahoo.com).

#### M.E.N.D. - Georgia

Offers peer support via phone and email contact.  
Director: Marie Stockdale  
Marie@mend.org, (678) 634-3686

#### M.E.N.D. - Texarkana

Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday 7:00 p.m.  
CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehab Hospital  
2400 St. Michael Drive  
Texarkana, TX 75503  
Director: Monica Davis  
Monica@mend.org, (903) 490-1210

#### M.E.N.D. - Nacogdoches

Meets the 2nd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.  
The Badders Law Firm  
4002 North St., Nacogdoches, TX 75961  
Director: Lori De La Torre  
Lori@mend.org, (936) 569-1739

#### M.E.N.D. - Hill Country

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.  
Gillespie County Historical Society Building  
312 W. San Antonio St.  
Fredericksburg, TX 78624  
Director: Larissa Hallford  
Larissa@mend.org, (830) 456-4178

#### M.E.N.D. - Tulsa

Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.  
Canyon Crossing  
1651 E Old North Rd.  
Sand Springs, Oklahoma 74063  
Michele Wilson  
michele@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

## M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates

### NW Arkansas

While M.E.N.D.—NW Arkansas has sadly welcomed new members to our chapter over the summer, we anticipate the arrivals of several subsequent babies in the next few months. These joyous blessings are an encouragement to many of us that God answers prayers. It's also a reminder in many ways of our losses, so the ministry of M.E.N.D. continues to reach out to those who are traversing the journey of grief.

*April Moreton*

### Kansas

Summer is winding down and our fall and winter plans are becoming more concrete. We have set our date for our Candlelight Ceremony for Friday, December 5. Times and details to follow at a later date. The 2nd Annual Bunco Bash is tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 20, 2009. If you are interested in helping with either of these in any way, please contact Stephanie at [stephanie@mend.org](mailto:stephanie@mend.org).

*Stephanie Metzger*

### Houston

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Walk to Remember is October 11<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. The Walk will be held at Metropolitan Baptist Church (13000 Jones Rd., Houston 77070). Everyone in the Houston area who has lost a baby, as well as friends and family, are invited to attend. Reservations are requested. Please email [Jaimie@mend.org](mailto:Jaimie@mend.org) or call 281-374-0141 to RSVP or to receive an invitation. Also, on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 11a.m. at Miller Outdoor Theater, M.E.N.D.—Houston is coordinating with The Methodist Hospital, Texas Children's Hospital, The Women's Hospital of Texas, and March of Dimes to present "A Life to Remember." This is another special ceremony commemorating babies who have died in the Houston area. Please visit [www.alifetoremember.wordpress.com](http://www.alifetoremember.wordpress.com) for more information or email Jaimie for an invitation (no RSVP is necessary).

*Jaimie Crump*

### Georgia

M.E.N.D.—Georgia continues to minister to hurting families through email and by phone, but is not currently holding support group meetings. For more information, please email [Rebekah@mend.org](mailto:Rebekah@mend.org) or [Marie@mend.org](mailto:Marie@mend.org) or call Rebekah Mitchell at 972-506-9000.

*Marie Stockdale*

### Texarkana

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana continues to minister to families. We have had several new families choose to participate in our monthly meetings. The gun raffle was successful in raising financial support and awareness for our local chapter.

*Monica Davis*

### Nacogdoches

Families are receiving comfort and encouragement in beautiful ways as members reach out to each other with the comfort they themselves have received from God.

*Lori De La Torre*

### Hill Country

The Hill Country Chapter is ministering to many families on the phone and email. I am praying for assistants to help me run M.E.N.D.—Hill Country. The community of Fredericksburg continues to support our group with prayers, sponsorships, and help spreading the word about our chapter.

*Larissa Hallford*

### Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa is still going strong! Special thanks to Keri Gerkin for using her contacts to arrange for me to be interviewed on KJRH (NBC) during their Middy Show. This will be wonderful publicity for M.E.N.D.—Tulsa. And, thanks to all who volunteered to help with upcoming Shop for a Cause at Macy's.

*Michele Wilson*

## *Memories of my Baby, Erika*

*By Yvette Grau*

*Written in memory of my baby and in honor of my Mom*

Eleven years later and I feel emotionally compelled to share my daughter's story once again. You see, eleven years ago I took my daughter home with a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order and on Hospice Care. Until then, I only knew hospice to provide services for the elderly. Erika lived for 26 sacred days before she died in my arms. It wasn't just any day of the year, but she died on my very own mother's birthday, August 3. My mother never met Erika on earth, but I always knew they would meet each other in heaven. Now exactly 11 years later to the day, I am taking my precious mother home on a Do Not Resuscitate order and on Hospice Care. Two of God's princesses, each on the opposite spectrum of life, both so dear to my heart will soon meet and be together. I will never question God's timing and why my daughter and mother have shared and overlapped such significant days for me. Going through this process with my mother now, during this specific time of the year has been extremely emotional for me. It has brought back so many memories and emotions, and at times it is as though I am back 11 years ago. Emotions I thought I had already dealt with, I'm realizing that I have not. So fresh are the memories that I'd like to share my daughter with you all over again.

Erika was born into life July 9, 1997 and born into eternal life August 3, 1997 at only 26 days of life. She was full-term and perfectly healthy until she suffered the consequences when my uterus ruptured while attempting a vaginal birth after a previous cesarean (VBAC). At seven centimeters I felt the pain and knew something was terribly wrong as I was rushed to the operating room for an emergency c-section. She was taken to another hospital as soon as she was born and I was not released and able to see her until four days later. It was only through a few instant Polaroid pictures that I was able to see my beautiful precious baby. She was born weighing 7 pounds 10 ounces and was quite long at 21¼ inches long.

At first sight her beauty was deceiving. She was pink and plump. You would never know that the rupture led to her anoxic brain injury causing severe brain stem damage. Functionalities like gag reflex, blinking reflexes, sucking and swallowing were compromised, therefore Erika did not have any of these functions. She could not make any sounds or cry. When I held her hand, there was definitely something about the way her touch felt to me. Her diagnosis and prognosis was not good and only worsened each day. Days later we were faced with a decision that parents should never have to be faced with.

July 20, eleven days after her birth, I held her tight and close to my heart for what I thought would be the last time. While the respirator was removed I prayed, not alone, but in the company of a vast prayer group of family and friends around the world. Like there was no imaginable way to prepare for such decision, there was no imaginable way to prepare for the blessing and miracle that we were about to receive. By the grace of God she welcomed and fought, as did we, for every breath God granted her. Every second and every breath that she took thereafter was a blessing in our life. She was not expected to survive but a few minutes. Well, the seconds, minutes and hours turned into days.

Sadly, her prognosis did not change with the fact that she was breathing on her own. At fourteen days old, we ultimately took Erika home on a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order after spending a few days in a private 'family room unit' at the children's hospital. It was just a matter of time that we would be facing the inevitable. Until then, we desired to go home, join her big brother and be the family we were supposed to be for as long as God would grant her His breaths of life.

For the next few days of her short life we did what we could to spend as normal a life as possible with our baby. Although she was finally at home, it was still minute by minute, hour by hour and day by day. Daily, we welcomed family and friends who came from near and far to meet Erika and support our family. While company was visiting, I made sure they had private time with Erika. In one of my moments of denial, I took her to a studio to have her pictures taken. After all, that is exactly what I would have done had she been healthy. Her beauty and perfection deceived everyone. The photographer and others around had no idea that our baby was ill let alone that she would be going home to Jesus soon. While alone with her, I prayed with her and read to her. I bathed her and played her music she'd been listening to for nine months. I would sit outside on the front porch or in the back yard in the afternoons. Like it is today, it was an unbelievably hot summer in 1997.

We took video and pictures daily at the hospital and at home. Strangely, the desire to take video and pictures diminished toward her end days. It was the first sign I realized that her time was nearing. She was gradually losing weight and her skin color was changing along with her facial features. It was just a few days before her death that I became all of a sudden more selfish with her. It was also at that time that visitors were no longer constant. God allowed me my own private time with her. I slept by her bassinet or she would nap by my side.

## A Father Reflects

By Bruce Spurrier

I was sitting in my backyard the other night just enjoying some peace and quiet. As I looked out across the yard I noticed in the left corner, next to a tree near the fence, were three small orange flowers. I'm not sure what type of flowers they were. I'm not even sure that I've ever seen flowers that orange before. I got up and walked over to them and picked one of the flowers. I took it into the house and over to a photo album on the kitchen table. I placed the flower into the album.

My wife is working on a memory book for our son Ethan, who passed away in September of 2007 when she was eight months and one week pregnant. I guess you never know when the smallest thing will remind you of the event. I know it is something I will be dealing with for the rest of my life.

We are pregnant again. Going to be a Christmas baby, so they tell us. And now I must find the courage to go into what was to be Ethan's room. I've been in his room maybe twice in the past 10 months, neither time to reflect.

I don't know what God's plan is, what fate has in store. But I guess there's a reason for everything.

I would like to share with you the eulogy I wrote the night before my son's funeral:

*Ethan Kane "wild thing" Spurrier  
We were never given the opportunity  
to know you personally,  
To watch you as a child,  
To see you as a teenager,  
To know you as a man.  
But for eight months we were given the  
opportunity to love you with all  
our hearts.  
You will never be forgotten.  
And you will always be loved.  
Rest in peace my son.*

*In memory of Ethan Kane Spurrier  
Stillborn September 5, 2007  
Cord Accident  
Parents: Bruce and Sandra Spurrier  
Brother: Thomas*

## Remembering Logan

By Brittney Fish

After being involved with M.E.N.D. for almost six years now, this is the first attempt I've made at submitting something for the newsletter. I've never told Logan's story. Since this is the issue where we'll be celebrating our son's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, I thought it may be appropriate now to tell the story of our son, Logan.

When our first child, Landry, was only 11 months old, we found out that we were unexpectedly pregnant again. Not having made that plan myself (control issues) I was very upset by this news. And since I was on birth control, we thought to ourselves, "Well, God has another plan for us—clearly." Once we found out that it was another boy, and my boys would be only 18 months apart I was ecstatic. However, the entire pregnancy I had this feeling that something wasn't right. It seemed that nobody listened to me and my doctor patted me on the head, assuring me that it was just "mommy jitters."

It was August 28, 2002 and I was a little over 34-weeks pregnant. I had gone to what was supposed to be a routine doctor's visit when my doctor told me I wasn't measuring correctly, which could indicate that "there may be something wrong..." Later that day we had a level two sonogram with a perinatologist who confirmed our fears and said to us, "I do see something wrong." My heart stopped beating...David almost passed out and had to sit down on the floor. He proceeded to explain to us that Logan had "skeletal dysplasia," which didn't sound so bad to me. I kept hearing the word "skeleton" and thought to myself, "Well, that can't be all that bad..." He told us that our son would be a dwarf.

Now, my husband is 6-feet, 5-inches and I'm 5-feet, 8-inches and I thought, "How can we have a dwarf?" Having been a teacher and having a Masters degree in special education, I had thought about every possible thing that can go wrong with a pregnancy, but let me tell you, dwarfism never once entered my mind. The perinatologist suggested we go and see his partner the next day for another sonogram and that is the day that we found out that Logan would not only be a dwarf, but would likely not live long past delivery.

What a blow...I thought that after you got past the 12-week marker, all was good. We found out that Logan had a *lethal form of dwarfism*. They told us, after further testing, that there was a 1% chance they were wrong, so we held on to that 1% chance with everything we had. We prayed and prayed that the doctors would somehow be wrong and that this would be one of those "miracle stories." We went ahead and went full term with the pregnancy (holding onto that 1% chance).

There I was, 9 months pregnant, walking around a cemetery looking for just the right plot to purchase to place my infant son when he arrived; looking for just the right music to play at his funeral; trying to find the perfect outfit to dress him in and blanket to wrap him in so we could place him in a beautiful casket, and ultimately in the ground. It was completely unfair. I know everyone feels this way when they find out that their baby is not "perfect" and on top of that, their baby will not live.

Logan was fine as long as he was inside me, he didn't have to breathe on his own. His lungs had not developed due to the small rib cage and once he was delivered, they told me he would die from lack of oxygen. But on September 17, 2002, I, a young, totally naive woman, walked into the operating room all alone, to let them deliver my son, knowing that doing so would kill him.

*Continued on page 13...*

*Continued from page 12...*

It was probably one of the most difficult days of my life up to that point. Logan was born just as they said, he was a dwarf. His lungs were too small to inflate properly, so he would basically suffocate to his death. It was devastating. My husband, David, did get to see his precious eyes opening, looking up at him as if to say, "Daddy, please help me..." To this day, my husband cannot talk about that moment without tears coming to his eyes. He says, "Daddies are supposed to be able to fix things, but I couldn't fix this." David and I, held him for about 10-15 minutes before inviting the rest of our family and friends into our room to meet our precious boy before he would be gone forever. He died about an hour later.

We have an amazing picture that was taken about the time that he died that I'd like to share with you. I've had many people look at this picture, even professional photographers, who cannot say for sure what happened in the picture. But one sweet, older gentleman told me, "Brittney, I think what's happening in this picture is exactly what you think is happening." He went on to explain... "It looks as if the heavens opened up for that split second to show Logan exactly where he needed to go." None of us saw that amazing moment of light, but the camera did. If anyone can give me a scientific explanation of it, I don't want to hear it.

My explanation is that God knew how angry and unsure I was later to become, and He let that happen so that I would know for sure that He had Logan in His arms and that He would keep him for me until we could be together again.



*Logan Wayne Fish  
September 17, 2002  
Skeletal Dysplasia  
Parents: David and Brittney Fish  
Siblings: Landry Dale and Hudson Kelly*

*Continued from page 11...*

August 2, 1997 I decided to attend our Saturday evening church service with Erika. As I walked through the aisle I felt this urge to slightly elevate Erika as if delivering her and whispered, "Lord, she is yours and we are ready whenever you are." It was with excruciating human pain but with spiritual comfort and peace that I repeated these words. It was then that I realized it would not be long before she would be leaving us.

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, I knew her divine appointment was nearing. I held her in my arms from dawn. We stayed in her room all day. I read to her, I prayed fervently, I sang to her and I rocked her. I cried with her. I held her close until she died in my arms that afternoon. I was honored to have been blessed to be holding her when she was silently born to eternal life. Erika's 26 days of silence speaks louder than ever to me today.

All this to say, and as I have written before, grief is a journey. It is not something we finish, it is a process. So many times, we are emotionally shaken whether knowingly or unexpected. This is one of those times for me. Although painful, I embrace this time for it builds on my faith and foundation that my mother so lovingly gave me without even realizing it. Grief is something that only God can provide the strength to manage. Jesus wept. I will weep; sometimes more often than other times. But, I will always be thankful for all circumstances because our Lord is the magnificent orchestrator of time and He makes no mistakes, nor is He ever caught off guard.

As with my daughter Erika, I will treasure the numbered days with mother. When I think of one, I think of the other. Although I will wonder on occasion why they were so connected, I know without a doubt that it was for His Glory and I will always see His light shining through my daughter and mother whom I love so very much.

*Erika Brienne Grau  
July 9-August 3, 1997  
Anoxic Brain Injury due to Ruptured Uterus  
Parents: Ray and Yvette Grau  
Siblings: Nikryan and Nataly Nicole*



## *Subsequent Births*

**Eric and Angie Brown**  
of Royse City, Texas,  
along with big brother Conner,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Campbell Reagan,  
born June 19, 2008,  
measuring 6 lb., 4 oz.  
and 18 ½ inches long.

The Browns lovingly remember  
Payton Riley,  
March 16, 2006,  
abnormally short umbilical cord.

**Chris and Ruth Williams**  
of Flower Mound, Texas,  
along with big brother Jack,  
joyfully announce the birth of  
Grace Elizabeth,  
on June 3rd, 2008  
measuring 8 lb., 1 oz.  
and 21¼ inches long.

The Williams lovingly remember  
Grant Michael,  
September 30, 2005,  
cord accident.

“While grief is fresh,  
every attempt to divert  
only irritates.

You must wait till grief  
be digested, and then  
amusement will dissipate  
the remains of it.”

- Samuel Johnson

## *A Mother's Love*

*Both By Megan Coltman*

### *Chasing Butterflies*

I see a little boy, as happy as can be,  
I see him chasing butterflies, so joyful  
and so free;  
I once held that little boy so gently to my  
breast,  
I held him, and I loved him, and I knew  
that I was blessed.

He runs in such a garden, more won-  
drous than you've seen,  
It's filled with birds and flowers, trees  
so vast and green,  
There are no thorns or sadness there, no  
tears run from their eyes,  
Just little children laughing, chasing but-  
terflies.

The Hand he holds, it is not mine, but  
beautiful and strong,  
That mighty Hand, just like this child,  
did not to earth belong;  
It leads him through the garden, amongst  
the flowers they run,  
The small hand in the large one, the Fa-  
ther and the son.

The Arms that swing him high and low  
are holding me here too,  
And as the tears flow from my eyes I  
realize, God knew  
That this precious little boy was not  
meant to stay,  
But in that Heavenly garden he is to run  
and play.

His little body, perfect now, will never  
know our pain,  
He runs on little legs so strong, he  
dances in the rain.  
He has One there who loves him, even  
more than I,  
He is so happy in that garden, chasing  
butterflies.

### *Precious Baby Luke*

I loved you from the moment we heard  
your little heart,  
I loved you each time I felt you kick, and  
move each tiny part.  
They told us that you weren't so well,  
the sadness you might bring,  
I longed to keep you safe inside and  
whisper baby things.

I loved you when I heard your cry and  
new that you could breathe,  
I loved to hold your little hand and touch  
your baby knees.  
The joy and love you brought me when I  
held you to my skin  
Will never be forgotten, my precious  
little one.

I kissed your dark and silky hair so gen-  
tly with my lips,  
I felt your cheeks and little nose  
And watched you fall to sleep.  
I told you that I loved you and I never  
would forget  
My sweet and tiny baby boy, my pre-  
cious little one.

I wrapped you in your blankets and gave  
you back to God,  
I prayed that He would hold you close  
and cover you with love.  
I cannot hold your little hands or kiss  
your baby hair,  
But I will hold you in my heart and whis-  
per to you there.

*Luke Charles Coltman*  
*September 18 - 22, 2007*  
*Trisomy 18*

*Parents: Rory & Megan Coltman*  
*Sibling: Oliver Coltman*

# My Precious Babies

By Summer Williamson

I was blessed to have months of time with my two baby's Matthias and Autumn, so I, of course have a few memories. I will share a couple with you.

Matthias was such a sweet shy little man. It didn't take much to hurt his feelings and he oftentimes would look to me for reassurance. He was a momma's boy and loved to sleep forehead to forehead with both me and his daddy. There were times I would wake up and just see him staring at me with love and adoration in his eyes. It made me feel so special. Matthias also seemed wiser beyond his years as an infant, which is how he got his nickname "Muphasa." Funny thing is he knew his nick name and when I called to get his attention by way of it, he always looked straight at me. There were always questions in my boy's eyes and I always felt he was trying to talk to me. He was so serious, but always had a ready smile, too. He really was such a light and people were drawn to him not just because of his condition, but because of his sweet disposition. It was that same disposition that made him fearful of those same people who just wanted to get to know him. A testament to his sweet self was how much he loved my cat, Patches, and she loved him. Patches would crawl up on the couch just to lay next to him and he would, with his limited motion, touch and pet her with his eyes full of wonderment. I think he loved how soft and fluffy she was. I miss Matthias so much and will celebrate his life and what was, not just what could have been, on his birthday September 11. Seven years may have passed since he was born and six and half since I have held him, but my love for his spirit and gentle nature is as strong as the first day I laid eyes on him. I miss you my little "Muphasa."

And then there was my red-headed daughter Autumn. She was my feisty one, full of attitude and yet also love. You always felt you had to work to get her approval and yet little did one know she really was only a heart beat away from complete adoration of you. The trick was to ignore her because she couldn't stand this and would quickly grunt for your attention. Autumn was the perfect diva. Most importantly though she was her big brother, Thaddeus', perfect match. She worshipped him and he her. He would walk into the room and it was as if the world stopped for her. All Autumn wanted was his attention and to play with him in any way possible. Thaddeus loved her just about as much as Autumn did him. They would lay on the floor hand in hand snuggling each other as they watched cartoons. They had this sweet little tradition as they laid down there together—one which Thaddeus started—where the two of them would take turns stroking each others cheek. Autumn had much less mobility but she took this affection very seriously and would, when it was her turn, put all of her effort into repaying her brother's patience and affection. I was never more proud when I saw the two of them loving on each other as siblings should. I think it's those moments I miss the most. My baby girl—my twin—would have been two years old on August 1. My heart breaks for the loneliness I see in her brother for her and the void her feisty self left in our hearts. Our "Chunky Monkey" is forever in our hearts loved and missed.

Of course I have more stories but I don't think I'm allowed to write a book for this newsletter so I will stop there. I may have only had the six months with Matthias and five with Autumn, but those months were enough to get to know my little ones in a powerful way. Those memories will be cherished and never, ever forgotten. So help me GOD!

*Mathia Swithin Williamson*  
*September 11, 2001-March 14, 2002*  
*Spinal Muscular Atrophy*  
*Autumn Lilly Williamson*  
*August 1, 2006-January 3, 2007*  
*Spinal Muscular Atrophy*  
 Parents:  
*John and Summer Williamson*  
 Sibling: *Thaddeus Cole*



## Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program

**Louisiana and Texas Residents ONLY:** In order to continue to support M.E.N.D. through your purchases at Kroger, you will need to link your KrogerPlus Card to M.E.N.D. using the following steps:

1. Take this newsletter with you to your neighborhood Kroger store the next time you go shopping.
2. Present the letter with **your organization's barcode** to your cashier upon checkout.
3. After they have scanned your KrogerPlus Card you will be enrolled for the current year of the **Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program**.

MEND (MOMMIES ENDURING NEONATED DEATH)



Every time you shop at Kroger and use your enrolled KrogerPlus Card, Kroger will contribute a percentage of your eligible purchases to the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation fund. Once a card is scanned with the barcode, it will be active for the remainder of the program year.

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*“... that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4)*

### M.E.N.D. Fundraisers

*As a non-profit organization, M.E.N.D. is funded solely by private donations and fundraisers. Any assistance you can give us by participating in any or all of these fundraisers is greatly appreciated.*

- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, contact Rebekah (Rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Kroger Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D.
- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please ask your Tom Thumb cashier to link your card with M.E.N.D. Our number is **6265**. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- **Glenn Martin** is looking for M.E.N.D. families willing to grant space for small gumball machines in order to raise funds for M.E.N.D. If you have a retail business or connections to a high traffic location in the Grapevine, Southlake, or metroplex area, Glenn will place, stock, and service the equipment and give M.E.N.D. 35 percent of the proceeds. Glenn can be contacted at (817) 874-5366 or [glmartin@attg.net](mailto:glmartin@attg.net).
- M.E.N.D. can now earn funds through **i.think inc.**, an online marketing research firm. You can help by signing up as a survey panel member and designating us as the recipient of your fee. Just go to the Web site at <http://www.ithink.inc.com> and choose "Sign up to become an i.think inc. panel member." Fill out the sign-up survey. Under the "Funds for Charity" section, select M.E.N.D. from the list of names.
- **Little Beads & Macaroni & Cheese**, owned by M.E.N.D. member Marilyn Brown, offers custom jewelry. Her keepsake angel bracelets are \$20 each, and ten percent of each angel bracelet sale will be donated to M.E.N.D. Marilyn can be reached at 817/996-1920 or [msbrown16@hotmail.com](mailto:msbrown16@hotmail.com).
- **IBM employees** may now make charitable donations to M.E.N.D. through automatic payroll deductions. Choose Charity Code 0M562 from the *IBM Employee/Retiree Approved Charity List*.
- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.
- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D., visit [www.missionfish.org](http://www.missionfish.org) to find out how.
- **Top to Toe Designs**, owned by M.E.N.D. member Heather Klaassen, offers ???. She would like to donate 10 percent of purchases made at [www.toptotoedesigns.com](http://www.toptotoedesigns.com) that mentions our charity.