



M. E. N. D.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Generational Grief

My son Jonathan was stillborn in 1995 - a time when I feel the protocol for pregnancy and infant loss was just beginning to make a turn toward more parental and family involvement. I happened to be in the hospital on bed rest when my baby became entangled in his umbilical cord and died. An acquaintance who providentially worked as a labor and delivery nurse at the Dallas hospital where I was a patient gently informed me before my C-section that I should hold Jonathan after he was born and allow all my family members and friends to meet and hold him as well. And, in fact, I could have him as long as I wanted - even keep him in my room overnight.

We chose not to keep Jonathan in my room overnight, but we did have him in my recovery room for a few hours the night he was delivered, all day the next day, and for a short time the third day until the funeral home came to get him. We loved on him and took numerous pictures and video of him. Everyone who came to the hospital to express their condolences was given the opportunity to hold our sweet little baby. All of this, I thought was “normal”; it was what everyone did following the death of their baby.

However, several months later, I found out through a handful of hospital personnel that, at that time, having Jonathan with us for three days was actually not considered normal at all. Several of the older nurses were horrified and felt we were not accepting the reality that our baby was dead. Eventually the chaplain of the large hospital scheduled meetings with those who cared for us to discuss their feelings and thoughts regarding whether they felt our unusual way of responding to our baby’s death was helpful and healing or hurtful. The consensus was that it was a very healthy way of dealing with infant death. They were not used to this but felt it was good, nevertheless.

I’ve been told that because the staff saw how meaningful it was for our family to spend so much time with our baby, the guidelines in the hospital completely

changed. Now, every family (if possible) is encouraged to spend unrushed time with their baby. They are allowed to request the baby for as long as the mom is a patient in the hospital (unless an autopsy is ordered), and every family member and friend is encouraged to meet the baby as well.

Nineteen years later, a lot has changed in hospitals all over the United States. Most hospitals allow families to have the same experience my family had. It is now common for bereaved families to spend more than just an hour or two with their babies. Many hospitals will accommodate situations such as grandparents living out of town who want to see their precious little grandbaby but cannot get to the hospital for maybe another day or two. Rarely are parents denied photographs and/or discouraged from taking their own pictures.

What is now “normal” to this generation of young parents remains “un-natural” to those of another generation. Not that long ago, stillborn babies were whisked out of the delivery room. The mom was not even told if she had a boy or girl, and the idea of holding the baby would have been appalling. Certainly, it was taboo to ever speak of “it” again. Additionally, moms were told not to waste the chosen name, so the little one was thus stripped of being called anything. The aftermath of these old ways resulted in deeply repressed grief. Young mothers grieved silently, not daring to pour their hearts out to a soul lest they be labeled as unstable and weak.

Today, with the freedom that infant loss groups such as M.E.N.D. have made available, some of these moms who are now in their 50s and older are slowly starting to openly grieve and share their experiences. Older women commonly attend our support groups, talk about their babies for the first time, and participate in our remembrance ceremonies.

I truly cannot imagine going through life feeling like I am not allowed to talk about my Jonathan and my little

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Nota Española: La versión en español del artículo de Rebekah Mitchell no podrá ser impresa en este boletín. Sin embargo, si estará disponible electrónicamente. Si usted desea recibir una copia de este boletín, solo mande un e-mail a Yvette Grau a yvgrau3@verizon.net. Además, si usted desea que M.E.N.D. continúe la traducción de sus artículos en el futuro al español, por favor envíe sus comentarios a Yvette, al mismo e-mail. Gracias por su comprensión y participación.

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 at www.mend.org.

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

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The Heart of the Leader

I ALWAYS wanted three children. I was one of three. My mom and dad were both one of three. We already had a 4-year-old little girl, Avery, and a 2-year-old boy, Tate, but this time taking that leap of faith to have a baby was much harder. Tate was diagnosed with an extremely rare immune/blood disorder called Wiskott-Aldrich Syndrome (WAS) at 4 months old. Without a bone marrow transplant, he had a 30 percent chance to live to his first birthday. We were devastated, but *God had bigger plans*. Avery was a perfect match for her brother. Tate was successfully transplanted at 6 months old. The road wasn't easy, but by 2 and a half years old, he was a healthy, happy and rambunctious little boy.

Once we were back into a "normal" life, I started feeling the tugging on my heart for baby number three. Although hesitant, my husband agreed to try again after we went through genetic counseling. I became pregnant right away. We were so excited, especially with an almost zero chance of having another baby with WAS. It never occurred to me that the baby could die inside of me. At eight weeks, I thought I had a really bad stomach bug, but on Memorial Day weekend 2002, I miscarried at 10 weeks. My heart and my dreams were broken. Even though my family was so supportive and loving, they couldn't make this better. This wasn't how it was supposed to happen. After all we had been through with Tate, how could God let this happen? Again, *God had bigger plans*.



This time it took much more convincing and prayer to get my husband to try for another baby. There are some burdens a husband just cannot bear for his wife. He didn't know if he could do it again, or worse, watch me go through it again. Prayerfully, we decided to try again. Once again, I became pregnant right away with TWINS. Talk about bigger plans. After the shock wore off, excitement and planning took over. Everything was normal until our 20-week appointment. We found out two alarming things: they were identical boys, and they were showing signs of twin-to-twin transfusion.

WAS only affects boys. Even though genetic counseling gave little cause for concern, the "what-ifs" definitely played over and over in our heads. The

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baby I miscarried. They are just as much my children as my living son. I want to talk about them; I NEED to talk about them, even after so many years. Let's keep making efforts to move forward in openly grieving and acknowledging our little ones who are not with us. If you feel your family or hospital is still adhering to the older ways of grieving pregnancy and infant loss, I encourage you to be the one to step up and educate them. Teach those who disagree with open grief that many studies prove talking about the loss is much healthier than suppressing one's feelings and emotions. Explain that your baby has a purpose and is real, and in doing so, you will make sure your baby is always talked about and never forgotten.

♥ Rebekah Mitchell,
Mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell
M.E.N.D. President/Founder

Medical Moment



Increase of Rare Birth Defects in Washington State Has Experts Stumped

By Loren Grush

A rare birth defect is on the rise in Washington State, and the bizarre trend has health officials stumped.

The odd development was brought to light in 2012 by Sara Barron, who was working as a nurse at Prosser Medical Hospital in rural Washington at the time.

That year, Barron encountered two cases of babies born with anencephaly - a neural tube birth defect that causes infants to be born without certain areas of the brain and skull. A devastating condition that affects only one or two babies out of every 10,000 pregnancies, anencephaly occurs when the upper part of the neural tube doesn't close all the way during the first month of pregnancy. Almost all babies born with this condition die shortly after pregnancy.

"We had this first case, and it's horrifying," Barron, now a nursing instructor at Washington State University, told FoxNews.com. "And then less than a month later, we had another mother come in and have a baby with anencephaly... and it affected the whole hospital. But I thought, two in two months with a hospital that small - that's a lot."

Throughout her entire 30-year nursing career, Barron had only encountered this birth defect twice before. Then, when Barron heard of another case of anencephaly at a hospital 30 miles away, she decided it was time to inform the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).

"As a member of the infection control group [at Prosser], we all meet once a month at the health department with lead epidemiologists in our area," Barron said. "And I said, 'This isn't infectious per se, but I've become aware of three cases [of anencephaly] in two months. Has anyone else seen anything like this?' And another person from another tiny hospital said, 'Yeah, we just saw one.' It was way too many in this small of an area."

Barron's report eventually sparked a state DOH investigation. After looking over hospital and medical records spanning a three-county area in the state, health officials found that the birth defect was indeed increasing in the region.

According to the report, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were a total of 23 anencephaly cases in the Washington state region between January 2010 and January 2013, equating to 8.4 cases per 10,000 live births. Comparatively, throughout the country there were an average of only 2.1 anencephaly cases per 10,000 live births during the same period.

So far, state health officials do not know what is behind this localized trend. A state-led study looking into potential causes of this increase found "no common exposures, conditions, or causes." The state's department of health noted the difficulty of using medical records to figure out the problem.

"Medical record reviews might not have captured all information, preventing a cause from being identified," the Washington State Department of Health said in a press release.

While the exact cause of the Washington cases hasn't been determined, Barron said she believes the pregnancies might have something to do with the agricultural industry - since most of the mothers affected have been from rural communities.

"If I was going to have a theory, I would say there's something agricultural, like [new] pesticides or insecticides, which are known to cause neural defects," Barron

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September/October Topic

Counseling: Improving Quality of Life
Deadline: July 31, 2014

November/December Topic

Holidays
Deadline: September 30, 2014

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 website 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. Because our newsletters are posted online, please understand that your name will likely be attached to your submission when searched on the Internet.

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Letters to the Editor should be sent to jennifer@mend.org. All letters submitted to the editor are subject to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests that it not be published.

Birthday Tributes: M.E.N.D. publishes heavenly birthday tributes in the corresponding newsletter. Tributes must be submitted via the online form at www.mend.org.

Heavenly Birthday

January/February
March/April
May/June
July/August
September/October
November/December

Deadline

November 30
January 31
March 31
May 31
July 31
September 30



Birthday Tributes

Happy 1st Birthday, Tucker!

To our precious angel baby, Tucker, we miss you more and more every day. We will never forget you or the 45 minutes we spent with you. Fly high, sweet angel.

Tucker Gauge Stewart-Miller

August 14, 2013

Genetic syndrome

Parents: Justin Miller and Sarah Stewart

Siblings: Ensley Miller and Brantley Wolfe



Happy 1st Birthday, Matthew!

Matthew, you are missed by many. You are a true miracle and gave us seven months we weren't expecting to have. Every day with you was a blessing. Happy heavenly birthday, angel in heaven. Mommy misses your smile, your smell, your cuddles and your spirit. You were such an amazing fighter, and I am one day closer to seeing you again. We love you always, think about you daily and live in your memory.

Love,

Daddy, Mommy and big brother Timothy

Matthew Scott Bailey

December 1, 2012—July 25, 2013

Shone's Complex, premature birth defects

Parents: Timothy Bailey and Janet Willis

Big brother: Timothy Jr.



Happy 1st Birthday, Emma!

Happy birthday to our "Sleeping Beauty." We love you so much. Every step, every move we make, we miss you more and more.

Emma Renesmee Rodriguez

April 25—August 4, 2013

SIDS

Mommy: Lisa Rodriguez

Siblings: Fernando, Emiliano, Ricardo and Mariah



Happy 1st Birthday, James!

Happy 1st birthday, little one. You are so loved.

Thank you for teaching us patience and love.

Love,

Mom

James William Curtis

July 5-17, 2013

Extreme prematurity

Mommy: Nicole Myers



Happy 24th Birthday, Terrin!

Not a day goes by I don't think of "what could have been." My firstborn son gone to be an angel 12 hours and 53 minutes after taking his first breath. I miss him every day, especially when I see young men his age. What a beautiful little baby. Almost 8 pounds and 21 inches long. If only someone would have listened when I told them something wasn't right. My precious little angel, you will never be forgotten. You will be forever loved. I carried you under my heart for 37 weeks; you were safe there. You have a piece of my soul, just like your brother and sister. I look forward to the day I get to hold you again.

Love always,

Mom

Terrin Michael Lister

July 25-26, 1990

Septic shock from Group B Strep

Mommy: Raelene Steffens

Siblings: Caina and Graysen



Happy 1st Birthday, Eleanor!

We love and miss you every second of every day, sweet little Eleanor. Mommy and Daddy love you! Your sisters and brother love you! We know we will be together again one day for all eternity. Happy birthday to our sweet angel girl, Eleanor Jolene.

Eleanor Jolene Reed

August 1, 2013, at 23 weeks and 1 day

Early delivery due to previous uterine rupture

Also remembering 7 angels in heaven

Parents: William and Chasty Reed

Siblings Julie, Jonah and Chloe



Happy 2nd Birthday, Elizabeth!

The whole family loves and misses you so much. We never stop thinking about you and pray to you daily. We will never forget how much we love you, and how beautiful and precious you were. The day of your birth was the best and worst day of my life. It was the day I finally got to hold my gorgeous daughter whom I loved so much, but at the same moment, my heart shattered into a million little pieces. You've made your parents better, more patient people. We will love and miss you all the days of our lives.

Elizabeth Luke Matthes

July 25, 2012

Cord accident

Parents: Lance and Marianne Matthes



Happy 1st Birthday, Brinlee!

Brinlee was a joyously prayed for addition to our family! We were ecstatic when her existence was confirmed to us two days before Mother's Day. She was 6 weeks gestation, and I was privileged to hear her heartbeat for the first time.

She was only 21 weeks when I heard her heartbeat for the last time. At 22 weeks we were informed of her demise, and she was stillborn within the next few hours of our receiving the earth-shattering news.

We were comforted in knowing Brinlee was a gift given to us for a short period of time, but we will love, treasure and cherish her for a lifetime.

Brinlee Fallon Williams
August 27, 2013
Cord accident

Parents: Blake and Ashlee Williams
Big sister: Addalyn Williams



Happy 1st Birthday, Chandler!

To our baby boy, Chandler, Mommy and Daddy love you with all our hearts. You are on our minds and in our decisions daily. We will never forget the little boy who came in to our world as our miracle baby, and now you are playing with your Grandpa Perry, Grandpa and Grandma Groves, Great-Grandma Ellis and all the angels you have met. Chandler, the day we are joined with you again will be precious, just as you are. Our love to you and more.

Chandler Lee Michael
August 16, 2013
Premature labor, unknown cause
Parents: James and Teresa Groves



Happy 2nd Birthday, Case!

Happy 2nd birthday, sweet boy!
We love you and miss you so much!
Love you,
Daddy, Mommy, and little brother

Case Foster Thomas
August 29, 2012
Placental abruption
Parents: Cody and Elizabeth Thomas
Little brother: Crew



Happy 3rd Birthday, Aaron!

Happy birthday, sweet Aaron!

Aaron Daniel Rodriguez
August 13-24, 2011
Heart defect
Parents: Daniel Trejo and Sonia Rodriguez
Brother: Aadam Daniel Trejo



Happy 1st Birthday, Rafael!

Remembering our lovely angel, Rafael Armando. Just one week of life was enough for you to change ours forever. Waiting to see you again...

Rafael Armando Rodriguez-Ayala
May 18-25, 2013
Congenital heart disease
Parents: Rafael Rodriguez and Arlene Ayala



Happy 23rd Birthday, Allison!

Happy birthday, sweet girl. It's been 23 years, and we still miss you very much. We think you are very special, and we honor you often, especially on your birthday and at Christmas. Your sister and brothers love you, too. You are the big sister, and we look forward to seeing you in heaven some day. We know you must be loving on your grandparents and great-grandparents. We know Mom-Mom and Momo are giving you so much love, and we are thankful for that. We love you so much, Allison. We will hold you in heaven. Hugs and kisses!

Allison Nicole Polley
Stillborn August 5, 1991, at 24 weeks
Unknown cause.
Also remembering
Baby Polley 1
Miscarried May 1990, at 10 weeks
Unknown cause
Baby Polley 2
Miscarried October 1991, at 8 weeks
Unknown cause
Parents: Mike and Gina Polley
Siblings: Alyssa, Bradley, Joshua and Zachary



Happy 2nd Birthday, Will!

Happy birthday to our little angel. We miss you every day, Will, and we wish you could be with us here on earth. You are such a beautiful boy. We love you.

William Scott Adams
Stillborn July 3, 2012
Cord accident
Parents: Zachary and Brooke Adams
Siblings: Quincy and Reese



Happy 3rd Birthday, No-no!

Miss you and love you, precious boy! Your brothers think about you all the time. We will see you again soon!

Noah Sean Alvarez
January 1—July 3, 2011
SIDS
Parents: Nicholas and Sally Alvarez
Siblings: Nick and Abram



Happy 1st Birthday, Abigail!

Our precious Abigail, a year has passed. It's amazing how much you have changed our lives. You completely changed my heart! It is amazing how much you appreciate people and things in your life when you are forced to deal with losing a baby you waited for so long. You gave me the most incredible joy in my heart! I am so blessed to have at least known that joy for even a short time. July 7 was the hardest day in my life, but we did get to see your precious face. Thankfully we know we will be with you again someday.

We love you, our little pearl!
Mommy, Daddy, Erika and Courtney

Abigail Grace Webb
July 7, 2013, at 18 weeks
PPROM

Parents: Bill and Shayla Webb
Sisters: Erika and Courtney



Happy 1st Birthday, Jax!

To our precious and perfect little man, happy 1st birthday! From the moment I found out you were growing inside my tummy, I loved you. I dreamed of what you would look like and how proud you would make your daddy and me. The day you were born, we fell deeper in love with you! You touched our lives and so many lives around us who love and miss you very much! We continue to celebrate your life here on earth and wait patiently for the day to come when we can celebrate with you in heaven.

We love Jax!
Love,
Daddy and Mommy

Jax Edward Yerg
Stillborn June 28, 2013, at 24 weeks
Unknown cause
Parents: Bryan and Stephanie Yerg



Happy 4th Birthday, Livie!

Happy birthday, sweet Livie! My dear girl, I can't believe you would have been 4 this year. You are greatly missed and continue to be a big part of our lives every day. We see so much of you in the beautiful things we see and experience. We love you, Livie!

Love,
Daddy, Momma and Maxwell

Olivia Vivianne Vaughan
May 3, 2010
Premature birth
Also remembering
Noah Vaughan
Stillborn December 10, 2010
Parents: Andrew and Mary Vaughan
Brother: Maxwell



Happy 7th Birthday, Newton!

Happy birthday, baby Newton! We can't believe you are 7! May 18 will always be a special day for everyone in our family. We love you so much, and always will!

Love,
Your family

James Newton Cochran
Stillborn May 18, 2007
Parents: Stuart Cochran and Sallie Groves
Siblings: Alice and Betsy



Happy 1st Birthday, AJ!

If tears could build a stairway, and memories a lane,
I'd walk right up to heaven and bring you home again.

I can't believe it's been a year since we lost you. You may have been with us for a short time, but you made a huge impact on our lives. My heart aches for you and for all the memories we could have made. Not a day goes by I don't think of you. I imagine your little face and am sure you would have had little curls just like your sisters. I can't believe we never got to find out. You will always be in our hearts and minds.

Mummy, Daddy, Ava, Nora
and January (who I hope is taking care of you!)

Andrew Junior Mwirigi
May 13, 2013
Parvovirus infection
Also remembering
January Mwirigi
January 24, 2006
Unknown cause
Parents: Andrew Mureti and Nicola Gathaiya
Sisters: Ava and Nora



Happy 3rd Birthday, Skyla!

It's hard to believe you would have been 3 this year. It's been an inelephant journey at times, but to hold you once was the most amazing gift God ever granted us. Thank you for choosing us. We love you and remember you forever.

Skyla Olivia Burns Ennis
Stillborn May 21, 2011
Parents: Rodrique Burns and Tarsha Ennis



Happy 4th Birthday, Josiah!

We miss our sweet baby, Josiah, every day. People only get to dream of angels; we got to hold one in our arms. You will be forever loved and missed, our sweet baby boy!

Josiah Angel Flores
June 24, 2010
Multiple abnormalities, Dandy-walker
Parents: Hector and Karen Flores
Siblings: Christian, Anthony, Samuel and Victoria



Happy 1st Birthday, Mekhi and Imani!

My sweet, tiny babies, I wish I could see your little faces and kiss your tiny foreheads every moment of every day. Mekhi, when your daddy handed you to me, I was astonished how much you looked him. Except for your lips, which were from me. Imani, when the nurse put you in my arms, you tried to take a breath, but your tiny lungs were not ready for air. I had you wrapped snug in a blanket with your brother so you wouldn't be scared. I held you both in my arms until Jesus took you to heaven. Not a day goes by I don't think of you. Happy 1st birthday. Mommy and Daddy love you!

Mekhi and Imani Mupeti
June 7, 2013
Premature labor
Parents: Micky and Dianna Mupeti



Happy 1st Birthday, Myrin!

My little angel left me too soon. One day a new child will be born with a guardian angel watching over them.

Myrin Lenay McNeil
Stillborn June 19, 2013
Unknown cause
Also remembering
Baby Tizeno
Miscarried April 9, 2012
Mommy: Jolynn Tizeno



Happy 2nd Birthday, Jonna!

Baby girl, I'm sorry I could not hold you and bring you home. Your dad and I miss you a lot. You are now in heaven playing with the other kids, and I know you are giving the angels a run for their money. It's not "goodbye," but it is "see you in the morning." We love you, baby girl.

LaJonna T.R. Thomas
Stillborn May 20, 2012
Parents: LaQuita and Jonus Thomas



Happy 1st Birthday, Sophia!

My dearest Sophia, not a day goes by I don't think of you, and not a day will go by I will not miss you. On your birthday, I can only say, "Thank you." This past year has been so tough without you, but our family made it through with your blessing. I can only imagine how beautiful you would be dressed in your beautiful birthday dress, running around playing with Isabel and Iziah. We send our love and lots of momma bear hugs to you, my beautiful angel.

Sophia Botello
August 29, 2013
Cord accident
Parents: Pete Medina and Alyssa Botello
Siblings: Isabel and Iziah



Happy 2nd Birthday, Aylin!

Mommy, Daddy and your big brothers miss you! Please watch over your new sibling, Angel. We wish we could all be together, but until we are, please know that we love you very much!

Aylin Christian Cooley
July 1, 2012
Unknown cause
Also remembering
Baby Lappin 1
Miscarried 2004
Baby Lappin 2
Miscarried 2006
Baby Cooley 3
Miscarried 2008
Baby Cooley 4
Miscarried 2009
Angel Aralynn Cooley
April 30, 2014
Intrauterine fetal demise
Parents: Chris and Jessica Cooley
Brothers: Ryan, Riley and Christopher



Happy 1st Birthday, Arin!

Happy birthday, my sweet angel! We miss you, oh so much! Mommy has hard days, but it's comforting thinking about you being in God's arms. Great Memaw is now up there taking good care of you, I'm sure! I look forward to the day I'll hold you myself. You will always be my precious third miracle! We love you so much, Arin Caylor! Until we meet in heaven, you'll always be in our hearts!

Love,
 Daddy, Mommy, big brother and big sister

Arin Caylor Insall
Miscarried August 18, 2013
Unknown cause
Parents: Derek and Kaci Insall
Siblings: Kaden and Bethany



Happy 3rd Birthday, Jordan!

Our sweet Jordan, it's hard to believe three years have passed since that horrible day we discovered we lost you. Not a day goes by we don't think about you. You are our sweet baby and miss you each day. We love you, sweet peanut!

Love
 Mommy, Daddy and Baby Carter

Jordan Taylor Fugitt
Miscarried July 25, 2011
Also remembering
Rylie Peyton Fugitt
Miscarried November, 2011
Parents: Justin and Barbie Fugitt
Little brother: Carter



Happy 1st Birthday, Baby J!

Happy 1st birthday in heaven, Baby J! Even though the initial burn has slowly dissipated, our longing to have you home with us will never fade. Sadly, your time on earth was brief, but your impact on our lives will be everlasting. Thank you for teaching us so much. Most importantly, thank you for making us parents! We pray that we make you proud, and you are watching over your baby sister. To our sweet boy we say, "I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart). I am never without it (anywhere I go, you go my dear)." Thinking of you daily!

Love,
Daddy, Mommy and Em

Jason Paul Allen, Jr.

July 1, 2013

Incompetent cervix

Parents: Jason and Tara Allen

Sister: Emeree IlaRose

**Happy 5th Birthday, Ainsley and Averi!**

Happy birthday, little angels! It is so hard to believe it has already been five years since you were born. It seems like yesterday I held you both and kissed your cheeks. We are one year closer to being together again. We love you both so much. Enjoy your birthday party with Jesus!

Ainsley Kate and Averi Caroline Tichenor

Miscarried July 24, 2009 at 24 weeks

Parents: John and Angela Tichenor

Siblings: Claire, John Ryan and Hayden

**Happy 9th Birthday, Ryland!**

We think about and miss you every day!

Until we see you again...

We love you,
Daddy, Mommy, Sissy and Conor

Ryland Michael Dixon

Stillborn August 12, 2005

Infection

Parents: Bryan and Kelly Dixon

Siblings: Leighanne and Conor

**Happy 1st Birthday, Nicholas!**

Nicholas, our precious baby boy, we miss you so much. Although we never got to know you, you are one of the greatest gifts God could have ever given us. You are always in our hearts. We love you so much.

Nicholas Nathaniel Newton

August 31, 2013

Unknown cause

Parents: Dennis and Eugena Newton

Sibling: Morgan

**Happy 8th Birthday, Livi!**

Eight years have gone by. We miss you every time we see your brother and sister conquer the normal milestones that children do. Every time we see a little girl who is the age you would be today. Every Mother's and Father's Days. Time has allowed us to heal, but our hearts still long for you to be with us. We know we will see you again, and we will kiss and hug you over and over again when we get there. We love you and wish you a Happy 8th birthday.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Jaxson and Lauryn

Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker

July 24, 2006

Incompetent cervix

Parents: Robert and Liz Walker

Siblings: Jaxson and Lauryn

**Happy 1st Birthday, Abigail!**

To our sweet-tooth daughter, Abigail, it seems as though it was just yesterday when your Mommy was craving s'mores and brownies, truly anything with chocolate. When born you looked just like her, only sleeping. Words cannot express how we felt when they couldn't find your precious heartbeat at 36 weeks. We know your big brother would have kissed and hugged you as much as he did to Mommy's tummy while awaiting your arrival. Keep sending us those beautiful rainbows. We miss and love you so much, baby girl.

Abigail Renee O'Donnell

August 16, 2013

Placental abruption

Siblings: Matt and Diane O'Donnell

Big brother: Gabriel

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Alexis Twin 1!**

Happy 2nd birthday, my precious angel. Mommy and Daddy love you a lot. Not a day goes by I don't think of you. Every day I speak of you; I miss you so much, my little twin 1. Your brothers and your little twin 2 sister miss you dearly. Alexis, my angel, you will always be my Thing 1, and Emily is my Thing 2. Rest in peace, Alexis.

Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday, Alexis,

Happy birthday to you.

Always and forever in our hearts.

Love you and miss you, baby girl,

Mommy, Daddy, Jacob, Ethan, Kasey,

and your little identical twin sister, Emily



Alexis Evangelina Bonilla

July 6-17, 2012

NEC Necrotizing Enterocolitis

Parents: Geovany and Kristina Bonilla

Siblings: Jacob, Ethan, Kasey and Emily (Twin 2)

Happy 6th Birthday, Noah!

Happy 6th birthday to our dearest Noah. Not one day goes by we don't think of you or speak your name. We miss you so very much and love you even more.

Before we met you, I always knew I'd sing these words to you. Until we meet again...

"Out on the ocean sailing away, I can hardly wait to see you come of age, but I guess we'll both just have to be patient 'cause it's a long way to go, a hard row to hoe. Yes, it's a long way to go but in the meantime...Before you cross the street, take my hand. Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

Noah Powell

Stillborn July 22, 2008

Cord accident

Parents: Nate and Barb Powell

Sisters: Julia (twin sister) and Sydney



Happy 3rd Birthday, Jocelyn!

My sweet baby girl, I can't believe its already been three years since God called you home. It still seems like just yesterday. I still can't help but want you here with me and wonder who you would be today. Who would you look like? What color hair and eyes would you have? Would your hair be curly like your older sister's? Or would it be straight like your little brother's? I miss you more with every day that passes. I love you more than anything and would give the world just to hold you in my arms again. But until we meet again, happy 3rd birthday in heaven, my Jocelyn Rose! We love you!

Jocelyn Rose Lahr

July 29, 2011, at 18 weeks and 5 days

Fetal demise

Parents: Eric and Lisa Lahr

Siblings: Presley and Levi



Happy 1st Birthday, Justice!

Justice Michael, happy 1st birthday, big boy! We never dreamed we would say goodbye before we even said hello. It is hard for us to not have you with us, but we know you're celebrating in heaven with Jesus. Mommy and Daddy love you so much it hurts. We are very thankful we got to hold your little body and say goodbye. We have already seen your little short life touch others' lives; we pray it continues to do so. We will never forget—you will always be loved, now and forever.

Love,

Mommy and Daddy

Justice Michael Burgett

July 31, 2013

Cord accident

Parents: Carl and Daisia Burgett

Sibling: Little Burgett, due November 2014



Happy 10th Birthday, Noah!

Happy 10th birthday, sweet baby boy! Wow, 10 years old—feels like yesterday I held you in my arms. I know you are having the most glorious birthday ever with our Lord and Savior. Words can't explain how much Mommy and Daddy miss you. We love you so much, Noah! Until we meet again, you will forever be imprinted in our hearts.

Love,

Mommy, Daddy, brothers and sister

Noah Adam Barron

July 5-19, 2004

Hypoplastic lung syndrome

Parents: Lupe and Clem Barron

Siblings: AJ, Damien, Naomi and Nicholas



Happy 1st Birthday, Jaylen!

Mommy and Daddy want to wish you a happy 1st birthday! We are so in love with you, Jaylen—words can never express. I pray you're dancing and singing with the angels and watching over the family! Mari misses you; he asks about you daily. We are still saddened we don't have you here physically with us, but you are never forgotten, my sweet baby! Rest in peace, my sweet baby boy!

Love,

Mommy, Daddy and brother Jamari

Jaylen Wilson

Stillborn July 19, 2013, at 32 weeks

Nuchal cord accident with 2 true knots

Parents: Brittney Wilson and Jeremy Wilson

Brother: Jamari



Happy Birthday 4th Birthday, Henry and Sam!

Four years ago at this time, Mommy and I were making big plans for our sweet twin boys. We talked about all of the fun we were going to have with you! We thought you would come in the fall, but you were our first summer babies. I miss you every day. When I see twins or a pair of creatures, my thoughts drift to all of the fun we planned to have and all of the fun that awaits us in heaven! While your time on earth was short, you are with us forever! Emotions have run up and down these past four years, but knowing you are not hurting or suffering gives me peace. While we don't know why you left us so soon, I am a better person because of the two of you. You were Daddy's first best buddies. We love you very much!

Love,

Mommy, Daddy, Jack and Luke

Henry Franklin Forrest

July 24-25, 2010

Samuel Michael Forrest

July 24—August 8, 2010

Preterm labor/unknown cause

Parents: Peter and Julie Forrest

Brothers: Jack and Luke



Happy 1st Birthday, Angel!

Grandma remembers her sweet Angel, Grandma's Angel. Your swift presence made an indelible imprint on our lives. The touch of an Angel! Life as we know it changed, although you could not stay with us. You made us aware of how fragile life is. You left a void in our lives that can never be filled. Grandma's heart holds a very special place for her Angel. You touched Uncle Ben's life; although young, he will always carry you in his heart. Mommy and Daddy love you so much. You are our Angel! Besos from Grandma and Uncle Ben.

Happy 1st Birthday, Nugget!

My beautiful baby girl, my precious daughter, you are so loved and terribly missed. You stole our hearts from day one, and there isn't a day that goes by without you in our hearts and minds. I will always cherish our short but precious time together. It's so unbelievable—a whole year has gone by since I saw your precious face. It still doesn't feel real some days. I loved you then, I love you now and I'll love you until my last breath. Baby girl, thank you for blessing our lives and teaching us about a new love that surpasses any we've ever known. Mommy and Daddy love you and miss you!

Angel Batrez
Stillborn July 9, 2013
Cord accident
Parents: Stefanie and Tony Batrez
Grandma: Isabel Tristan
Uncle: Ben



Happy 1st Birthday, Richard!

Happy 1st heavenly birthday, Richard! Your mommy, daddy and sisters wanted you so badly! We were so excited to hear you were on your way. I wish you could have stayed. I'm glad you are with Jesus, your brother Luke, your Grampas and Uncle Tommy. We will see you soon. We love you and miss you very much!

Richard Joseph Widdifield
Miscarried August 22, 2013



Happy 2nd Birthday, Luke!

Happy 2nd heavenly birthday, Luke! Your mommy, daddy and sisters wanted you so badly! We ask Jesus to give you hugs and kisses all the time. Love you so much; wish we could tell you ourselves. We will see you soon. Say "Hi" to your Grampa and Uncle Tommy. We love and miss you very much!

Mommy, Daddy, Yaiya and Yizzie

Luke David Widdifield
Miscarried July 21, 2012
Parents: Mike and Nancy Widdifield
Sisters: Alainna and Elizabeth



Happy 1st Birthday, Evidence!

When we chose the name Evidence, I didn't know your name would signify something so great. I knew you were going to be someone great. However, I was oblivious to the plan. Now your name reminds me of the evidence of God's promises: the things that are hoped for but are not seen. Little lady, I dream about you daily. It absolutely amazes me at how much I would have sacrificed for you. I have never felt this way about anyone before. Mommy loves you so much. Happy 1st birthday, baby.

Evidence Bih Ngwa
July 30, 2013
Unknown cause
Parents: Clerisse Ewelike and Suh Ngwa



Happy 10th Birthday, Jordyn!

We can't believe it's been 10 years since you came into our lives. Our precious angel, not a day goes by we don't think of you. We miss you so much. We carry you in our hearts always. Forever sending you balloons in heaven.

We love you,
Mommy, Daddy, Jada and JR

Jordyn Lynae Johnson
July 13-16, 2004
Umbilical blood clot
Parents: Bruce and Debra Johnson
Siblings: Jada and Bruce Jr.



Happy 4th Birthday, Jason!

These four years have gone by so fast. Not a day goes by we don't think of you and thank God for you. Our hearts always long for your presence here in our arms. We wish we could have experienced some of the fun things of early life with you. However, we hold on to the truth you are living the best experience of all—to be in God's presence. We always miss you and look forward to being with you again in His Glory.

Jason Michael Murphy
July 29, 2010
Unknown cause
Parents: Michael and Diana Murphy
Brother: Trevor



Happy 5th Birthday, Baby Boy Stratton!

We can't believe it's been five years since you passed into the arms of Jesus. We miss and love you lots, our precious boy!

Baby Boy Stratton
Miscarried August 22, 2009
Parents: Jason and Miriam Stratton
Siblings: Soren and Sage



Happy 1st Birthday, Lola Grace!

We are so blessed by the moments we had with you and look forward to our everlasting reunion! You are forever in our hearts and on our minds. You will soon have a baby sister named Madalyn! We love you, baby girl.

Love,
Daddy and Mommy

Lola Grace Wood
Stillborn July 1, 2013, at 40 weeks
Unknown cause
Also remembering
Baby Wood
Miscarriage February 16, 2006
Parents: Corey and Tammy Wood
Little Sister: Madalyn Grace (due August 15, 2014)

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Isaac Eugene!**

Happy 2nd birthday, baby boy! We miss you and talk about you every day. We will continue to keep your memory alive and strive to help others in their loss(es). We look forward to seeing you one day in glory!

Love,
Daddy, Mommy,
Noah, Grace, Elijah, and rainbow baby Meagan

Isaac Eugene Vrba
August 26, 2012
Unknown cause
Parents: Jerry and Kristen Vrba
Siblings: Noah, Grace, Elijah and Meagan

**Happy 3rd Birthday, Brand and Colt!**

To my dearest Brand and my sweet Colt, I miss you both so much. I think about you two all the time and am excited to finally tell your little sister about her twin brothers. She is such a firecracker at times, and I often wonder which one of you she favors.

My sons, I have to thank you so much for blessings you have brought into my life—one of them being a great group of ladies who are now cherished friends.

Mommy and Daddy love you so very much and miss you every day. We are anxiously awaiting the day we can all be together again.

Love you dearly,
Mommy, Daddy and Clara

Brand and Colt Whigham
August 4, 2011
Cords knotted together
Parents: Chris and Beverlyann Whigham
Sister: Clara

**Happy 4th Birthday, Luke!**

Happy 4th birthday, my sweet Luke! As always I miss you dearly, and I wish you were here with us. I'm so thankful for the 23 weeks and 2 days we had together. I will treasure them forever until we reunite in heaven with our Heavenly Father. My sweet boy, I love you so much and I will see you soon.

Love always,
Mama

Luke Noe Johnson
July 26, 2010
Preterm labor
Also remembering
Hope Johnson
Miscarried October 30, 2009
Faith Johnson
Miscarried September 2, 2011
April Johnson
Miscarried April 10, 2012
Abril Johnson
Miscarried April 10, 2013
Parents: James and Merle Johnson
Siblings: Emma Grace and Aaron James

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Catherine Grace!**

My precious girl, the only thing more constant than my love for you are the blessings you bring. I feel your presence around me, in the people I've met because of your life, in the work I do in your honor, in the lives of others touched because of you, and in who I am becoming. I won't ever know in this lifetime why you had to die, but I know now why you lived. I'm keeping my promises to you, sweet girl. I miss you so very much, and can't wait for the day we are together. My love for you is eternal, and I thank God for you every day. Happy 2nd birthday.

Love,
Mommy

Catherine Grace Chapman
August 10-12, 2012
Extreme Prematurity due to H.E.L.L.P
Mommy: Kara Chapman



Happy 2nd Birthday, Sophie!

Happy 2nd birthday in heaven to our firstborn daughter, Sophie Jane. Sometimes it feels like yesterday we held you in our arms. Sometimes it feels like a lifetime ago. We welcomed your baby sister into the world on May 5. What a bittersweet moment that was. We are so thankful and happy she's alive and healthy, yet so sad we never got these moments with you. Your brother misses you so much, and we all yearn for the day we will see you again in heaven. Enjoy your birthday, precious baby. Birthday balloons are coming your way! Love, hugs and kisses forever!

Sophie Jane Darnell
Stillborn May 28, 2012
Unknown cause

Parents: Tommy and Brea Darnell
Siblings: Luke and Piper

**Happy 1st Birthday, Wyatt!**

Our sweet Wyatt, not a day goes by we don't think about you, miss you, and wish you were in our arms. Although you're in a better place, we still wish we had the chance to raise you on earth. Your little brother Shane arrived in April, and we know you helped get "our rainbow" here safely. Thank you for looking out for us and easing some of the pain on days that seem impossible. We love you.

Until we can hold you again,
 Mommy and Daddy

Wyatt Lockard
July 16-18, 2013
Bleeding on the brain

Parents: Chad and Julianna Lockard
Siblings: Braedyn, Sawyer and Shane

**Happy 3rd Birthday, Bentley!**

Happy birthday, my sweet Benny Bear. I can't believe you would be 3 years old! Time has flown by, and yet it still feels like I just had you in my arms. Words cannot express how much I miss you and yearn to have you back to love on and watch grow. I love you so much, my sweet boy. To the moon and back.

Bentley Andrew Click
August 20—November 18, 2011
Cystic fibrosis related SIDS
Mommy: Emily Pacheco

**Happy 2nd Birthday, William!**

We love and miss you very much, but know there's lots of family there celebrating with you. Happy birthday!

William Thomas
Miscarried July 7, 2012
Parents: Shaun and Amie Thomas
Sister: Sara Hope Bushway

**Happy 3rd Birthday, Aubree!**

You are 3 years old! Such a big girl! We miss spending this day with you like we have every day you've been gone. I continue to thank God for holding you in His arms until I can get back to you. You are our beautiful girl whom we miss and love with a tremendous passion. Have a wonderful day, love bug!

Aubree Faith Carmichall
August 18, 2011
Uterine rupture
Parents: Jeremy and Kelly Carmichall
Siblings: Ryan and Breean

**Happy 7th Birthday, Gabby!**

My mind is always clouded with thoughts of you. I can never begin to sort through them. A time will come to bring happiness and joy amongst those who have never seen nor met you. You will never be forgotten and always will be remembered. As for now, all I can do is imagine, pretend and love you. Happy birthday. We love you.

Gabriella Grace Garcia
Miscarried July 3, 2007
Also remembering
Abigail Garcia
Miscarried June 17, 2011
Parents: Adam and Alex Garcia
Siblings: Kylie, Adayna and AJ

**Happy 4th Birthday, Caelan!**

Caelan Matthew, we miss you every day. I can't believe you would be 4 this year. Sometimes I look at your sister, Finlea, and think of what you would look like. I miss being able to sing with you, play, roughhouse, go to t-ball games and have dinosaurs and trucks around our house. You are missed dearly and thought about daily. We hold you in our hearts until the day we are together again and can hold you forever. Please come and visit us soon.

We love you with all our hearts,
 Mom, Dad and Finlea

Caelan Matthew Wallace
July 30—August 3, 2010
Pre-term labor
Parents: Andy and Dana Wallace
Sister: Finlea Rose

**Happy 8th Birthday, Theo!**

My precious boy, you are so loved!

Love,
 Mom

Theo Fleurima Shannon
August 10, 2006
Neonatal stroke
Parents: Ted and Geri Shannon
Sibling: Ysabel



Grieving Across Generations

I remember as a child going to our small town's cemetery with my grandmother. We went to visit her parents' graves, and afterward, she let me wander among the headstones and ask as many questions as I wanted.

The babies' graves always fascinated me. I was a child myself, with younger siblings, and I wondered what it must have felt like for the big brothers and sisters who were left behind. I remember my grandmother, who had seven living children and had never experienced infant loss, telling me she could not imagine there could be a greater pain on earth than losing a child.

On the other side of the family, there had been a loss. My mom's oldest sister was a full-term stillbirth. The baby was not exactly a taboo subject, but I remember growing up not knowing much about her. There was one grainy, black and white photo of my grandmother holding a little white bundle. That was all I really knew of my aunt in heaven. She didn't even have a name, as far as I knew, so I decided I would secretly think of her as "Helen."

And then, my own son Joseph was stillborn in 1999. It was a time when the Internet was new, people still used phone books, cell phones didn't have cameras and M.E.N.D. only had one chapter, which was three hours away from me. Finding support was manageable, but it still wasn't a time of easy access. God led me to friends already in my circle who had lost children. My friend Tracee had a son who died when he was a few weeks old. Linda, a lady on my college alumni email list, heard about my loss and reached out to me since she had experienced a loss several years earlier. Those two women let me grieve openly, answered my questions, and helped me more than I ever thought possible. I connected with M.E.N.D. online, drove to a couple of meetings and found more people who understood what I was going through.

And then, there was my grandfather. His wife, the lady in the grainy photo, had passed away when I was in high school, so he was the only relative I knew who had experienced the pain of losing a baby. He and I had never talked about his unnamed daughter before, but a few days after Joseph's funeral, I found myself in the front yard, talking to a man who loved me more than I could realize about our babies in heaven. It wasn't a long conversation, but it was meaningful, and it was healing for both of us. He told me he was glad things had changed so much, that I could name my baby and have a nice service for him. My grandfather shared that my aunt had been born at home, like most babies in rural Mississippi at that time, and he had never forgiven himself for not taking his wife to a hospital for the delivery. He made sure that, even if it meant going into debt, all three of his subsequent daughters were born at a hospital. He said that even though he seldom talked about

his stillborn daughter, he thought about her almost every day.

Grief is hard, and it can be lonely. Even today, the idea of losing a baby is such a painful thing to consider that most of society doesn't want to think about it. We have come a long way in supporting bereaved parents, but I don't believe these parents will ever feel as free to grieve as they probably should. I wish it weren't that way, but I think I understand why. I can't really blame society at large. Who wants to face that reality? Much like the thought of starving children in third-world countries, or child abuse, or a hundred other horrible things that happen in the world we live, we don't usually embrace another's "cause" unless we ourselves have been touched by their pain and suffering. Even then, people who want to help don't always know how, especially if they haven't felt that sort of pain for themselves.

So, here's what I've learned: No matter what generation you belong to, and no matter how you choose to remember your baby or express your grief, it helps to find people who have been through it. Even years later (especially, years later), talking about a loss with someone who understands can help. Seeing people who have survived can help you, and helping people survive can help you. Wherever you find yourself on the grief road, don't walk it alone.

On my grandfather's death bed, he spoke about how he longed to see his wife, his mother, and then he talked about his daughter. He described her perfect hands and her curly black hair, and he said he knew she was waiting for him. As my grandfather passed in and out of consciousness, my mom and aunts cried and laughed through memories of their father, and they talked about their sister in heaven who would soon see him. I found they had gotten together and given her a name themselves: Peggy Sue. We all watched that kind man pass from our existence into hers, and we mourned and rejoiced together.

That's how we are meant to get through grief – together. No matter how society addresses infant loss, and no matter how views change throughout the years, don't ever accept the notion you are to "get over" losing your baby. Find someone who understands, whether it be through M.E.N.D., family or friends. Honor your baby's life by sharing it with someone who will appreciate its significance.

My grandmother was right as she spoke in that graveyard. There is no greater pain than losing a child. But my grandfather was right, too. Those children are waiting for us. We just have to help each other live this life, with love and support and the joy that comes with understanding, until we can see our babies again.

♥ *Sharlene Libby*
Mommy to Joseph

M.E.N.D.—Newsletter Volunteer

Brief: Evolving Through Generations and in our Journey

Generational grief is a topic I have struggled with over the past 14 months when I became a mommy to a child in heaven. First of all, the death of a newborn is not really discussed at any of your doctor appointments, conversations with friends, or around your family table on holidays ... unless you have been down that path. In my family, my grandmother had lost her 7-year-old son due to cystic fibrosis back in the 1950s, a time when infant and child death was less in the open and more swept under the rug. My family rarely talked about my uncle, and when they did, it was just about our genes and how I was a carrier of the disease. I recall as a child vaguely hearing about my aunt having a miscarriage in between my two cousins, but nothing more. Silence. No feelings were ever discussed, very few memories ever shared. I thought that would all change on April 16, 2013, when my sweet Lourdes left this world.

I was obviously feeling a whirlwind of emotions. I was confused because after my daughter was born, the doctors' prognosis always seemed to involve my daughter living, with physical disabilities and surgeries. Death was never an option. It was never even discussed. So needless to say, when the NICU staff called my room and had us come quickly, we were confused, scared and devastated when everything happened. I thought the only two people who would understand me and share in my grief fully would be my aunt and grandma because they had shared similar situations. Thank God nobody else in my family could fully understand what my husband and I were going through. Unfortunately, these were two people in my life who talked about Lourdes the least and went back to their way of handling grief - just simply not talking about it. That was so hard for me. What was harder was the fact that my parents shared this grieving style and frequently commented at first that "this was best for

everyone because Lourdes would have been suffering here." I felt this statement made it okay for them to not talk about her, to pretend this whole "situation" never happened.

I went to many M.E.N.D. meetings hurt, and I truly believe discussing this issue there saved my life. I saw how others were grieving and knew I wasn't alone. I learned one important lesson about people outside of our generation: every person deals with grief differently, and even though my family dealt with our problems that way, others did not. When Lourdes passed, my husband's two brothers and mother came to Texas. It was then I noticed how hard our loss was for them. I had learned that my mother-in-law, too, had lost a child 40 years ago. I learned how her child had defied the odds, back when medical technology was not what it is today. I learned technology only goes so far and then prayer and faith take over. I learned no matter how many years go by, you will never forget your child, and you will never get over the pain. I learned I was not alone.

On the whole, I believe generational grief is evolving, and we are far more open to discussing our feelings today than people were during our parents' or grandparents' time. However, I believe understanding what the "norm" back then was, but now keeping an open and forgiving heart will ultimately lead to your inner peace. My family is beginning to understand what I need to continue Lourdes's legacy, and just because she is not with us does not mean we don't acknowledge her. She will always be a part of our lives, and we all lost her. I hope we can gain a little piece of heaven together every day by remembering her and celebrating her life and the love she brought each of us.

♥ Kimberly Gil,
Mommy to Lourdes Angel
M.E.N.D.—Houston

"Increase of Rare Birth Defects" continued from page 3.

said. "It's a random guess, but all these women are so extremely rural. Maybe it's mosquito sprays, because the likelihood is high of them being in the fields or exposed to husbands in the field. Plus these were all upstream and way upwind, so it's not radiation from Handford – a big nuclear facility in the area."

Health experts believe that many factors including genes, behaviors and the environment may contribute to incidences of anencephaly. According to the CDC, a low intake of folic acid in the first month of pregnancy can increase a woman's risk of having a baby with neural tube defects – including anencephaly.

With so much mystery surrounding these anencephaly cases, Barron believes that more could ultimately be done to get to the root of the problem. She argued that health officials could utilize student researchers to conduct the investigation or interview mothers in the area.

"I wish they could have done more...I know the state looked at drinking water and well water, and they said there was no difference between healthy deliveries and abnormal deliveries," Barron said. "But because we didn't do any interviews with the women, we don't know for sure what water these women were drinking when they conceived. Even in medical records, we don't necessarily know how early they started taking folic acid. We don't know for sure what they were taking and when."

Don't Tell Grievers to 'Move On'

As the one-year anniversary of Matthew's death approaches, I have been shocked by some subtle and not-so-subtle comments indicating that perhaps I should be ready to "move on." The soft, compassionate cocoon that has enveloped us for the last 11.5 months had lulled me into believing others would be patient with us on our grief journey, and while I'm sure many will read this and quickly say, "Take all the time you need," I'm increasingly aware that the cocoon may be in the process of collapsing. It's understandable when you take a step back. I mean, life goes on. The thousands who supported us in the aftermath of Matthew's suicide wept and mourned with us, prayed passionately for us, and sent an unbelievable volume of cards, letters, emails, texts, phone calls, and gifts. The support was utterly amazing. But for most, life never stopped – their world didn't grind to a horrific, catastrophic halt on April 5, 2013. In fact, their lives have kept moving steadily forward with tasks, routines, work, kids, leisure, plans, dreams, goals etc. LIFE GOES ON. And some of them are ready for us to go on, too. They want the old Rick and Kay back. They secretly wonder when things will get back to normal for us – when we'll be ourselves, when the tragedy of April 5, 2013, will cease to be the grid that we pass everything across. And I have to tell you – the old Rick and Kay are gone. They're never coming back. We will never be the same again. There is a new "normal." April 5, 2013, has permanently marked us. It will remain the grid we pass everything across for an indeterminate amount of time ... maybe forever.

Because these comments from well-meaning folks wounded me so deeply, I doubted myself and thought perhaps I really am not grieving "well" (whatever that means). I wondered if I was being overly sensitive - so I checked with parents who have lost children to see if my experience was unique. Far from it, I discovered. "At least you can have another child," one mother was told shortly after her child's death. "You're doing better, right?" I was asked recently. "When are you coming back to the stage at Saddleback? We need you," someone cluelessly said to me recently. "People can be so rude and insensitive; they make the most thoughtless comments," one grieving father said. You know, it wasn't all that long ago that it was standard in our culture for people to officially be in mourning for a full year. They wore black. They didn't go to parties. They didn't smile a whole lot. And everybody accepted their period of mourning; no one ridiculed a mother in black or asked her stupid questions about why she was STILL so sad. Obviously, this is no longer accepted practice; mourners are encouraged to quickly move on, turn the corner, get back to work, think of the positive, be grateful for what is left, have another baby, and other unkind, unfeeling, obtuse and downright cruel comments. What does this say about us - other than we're terribly uncomfortable with death, with grief, with mourning, with loss – or we're so self-absorbed that we easily forget the profound suffering the loss of a child creates in the shattered parents and remaining children.

Unless you've stood by the grave of your child or cradled the urn that holds their ashes, you're better off keeping your words to some very simple phrases: "I'm so sorry for your loss." Or "I'm praying for you and your family." Do your best to avoid the meaningless, catch-all phrase "How are you doing?" This question is almost impossible to answer. If you're a stranger, it's none of your business. If you're a casual acquaintance, it's excruciating to try to answer honestly, and you leave the sufferer unsure whether to lie to you (I'm ok) to end the conversation or if they should try to haltingly tell you that their right arm was cut off and they don't know how to go on without it. If you're a close friend, try telling them instead, "You don't have to say anything at all; I'm with you in this."

None of us wants to be like Job's friends – the pseudo comforters who drove him mad with their questions, their wrong conclusions and their assumptions about his grief. But too often we end up a 21st century Bildad, Eliphaz or Zophar – we fill the uncomfortable silence with words that wound rather than heal. I'm sad to realize that even now – in the middle of my own shattering loss – I can be callous with the grief of another and rush through the conversation without really listening, blithely spouting the platitudes I hate when offered to me. We're not good grievers, and when I judge you, I judge myself as well.

Here's my plea: Please don't ever tell someone to be grateful for what they have left until they've had a chance to mourn what they've lost. It will take longer than you think is reasonable, rational or even right. But that's ok. True friends – unlike Job's sorry excuse for friends – love at all times, and brothers and sisters are born to help in time of need (Prov. 17:17 LB). The truest friends and "helpers" are those who wait for the griever to emerge from the darkness that swallowed them alive without growing afraid, anxious or impatient. They don't pressure their friend to be the old familiar person they're used to; they're willing to accept that things are different, embrace the now-scarred one they love, and are confident that their compassionate, non-demanding presence is the surest expression of God's mercy to their suffering friend. They're ok with messy and slow and few answers and they never say, "Move on."

Shared on Facebook by Kay Warren on March 13, 2014

*The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears.
If you are really my friend, let me hear the beautiful music of his name. It soothes my broken heart and sings to my soul.
-Author Unknown*

In Loving Memory**Malen Huck Anderson**

Stillborn February 4, 2008

Possible heart attack

Gifts given by

Parents Wes and Becky Anderson
and siblings Lenea and Nathan
Dr. Wesley Anderson, OD, PC

Angel Batrez

Stillborn July 9, 2013

Cord accident

Parents: Tony and Stefanie Batrez

Given by

Grandmother Isabel Tristan
and Uncle Ben

Sydney Lynne Brown

May 18, 2000

Cord problems/unknown conditions

Ashley MacKenzie Brown

May 18, 2001

Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome

Parents: Brian and Marilyn Brown

Little brother: Samuel

Gifts given by

Nana and Grandpa Brown
Nanny and Pappaw Wolfe

Grant Oliver Bybee

March 23, 2012

Born sleeping at 21 weeks

Parents: Jonathan and Kristy Bybee

Given by Melinda Kirkpatrick

Catherine Grace Chapman

August 10-12, 2012

Prematurity

Mommy: Kara Chapman

Given by Aunt Margaret McNally

Abigail Grace Crump

July 1, 2003

Trisomy 18

Given by parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump
and little sisters Cami and Karli

Brooke Sophia Daily

Stillborn March 11, 2010

Vasa Previa

Gifts given by

Parents Jeremy and Lisa Daily
and sisters Sarah and Savannah
Aunt Jennifer and Uncle Kollin Green

Joshua and Caleb Davis

April 14, 2000

Prematurity

Given by parents Monica and Shawn Davis

and siblings Landon and Kylie

Riley and Parker Davis

November 14, 2006

Prematurity

Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis

and little sister Annalise

Baby Dill

Miscarried May 2002

Cooper Graham Dill

Stillborn May 26, 2003

TTTS/cord accident

Given by parents Jim and Brandee Dill

and siblings Avery, Tate
and Paxton (Cooper's twin)

Kyler Paul English

Stillborn January 20, 2006

Cord accident

Parents: Laurie McPike and Bob English

Gifts given by

Jon and Laurie McPike and
brothers Kinser, Kelson and Kayden

Jacob Fukasawa

Stillborn February 8, 2010

Unknown cause

Given by parents Yoshi and Sarah Fukasawa

and siblings Ava and Noah

Anderson Maxwell Graham

Stillborn March 12, 2013

Placental abruption

Parents: Aaron Graham and DeAndrea Dare

Little sister: Maezey

Given by Kate Weis

Christian Michael Green

Stillborn April 2014

Parents: Jared and Danielle Green

Given by Joshua's Pest Control

Serenity Harrison

Miscarried December 3, 2009

Given by parents Curtis and Jennifer Harrison
and little brother Leviticus Aaron

Kathleen "Kate" Maxwell Herman

March 5-20, 2014

Parents: Jack and Amanda Herman

Given by Michael and Dawn Blackmar

James Jackson "Jack" Henvey

July 4, 2001

Tetralogy of fallot

Baby Henvey

Miscarried October 2003

Parents: Chris and Renee Henvey

Siblings: Evan and Luke

Given by grandmother Glenda McLeskey

Samuel Mark Hintz

October 29, 2008

Baby Joel Hintz

Stillborn June 2009

Baby Taylor Hintz

February 2010

Given by parents Greg and Sara Hintz

and siblings Louis, Caleb, Anna, Elijah,
Hope, Levi and Isaiah

Baby Grace Holmes

Miscarried August 3, 2013, at 19 weeks

Chromosomal abnormalities

Gifts given by

Parents Zac and Andrea Holmes
Grandparents Don and Debbie Davis
Grandparents Buzz and Cindy Holmes
Great-Grandma Mavis Judkins
Great-Grandpa Donald Davis
Uncle Dan and Aunt Julie Davis
Aunt Havala Holmes
Great-Uncle Bob and
Great-Aunt Melanie Dormaier
Great-Uncle Jim and
Great-Aunt Di Beers
Great-Uncle Chris and
Great-Aunt Kim Rothfus
Great-Uncle Rick and
Great-Aunt Desha Davis
Cousin Jereme Beers

Jude Hope Johnson

Miscarried October 30, 2009

MTHFR

Luke Noe Johnson

July 26, 2010

Preterm labor due to MTHFR

Faith Johnson

Miscarried September 2, 2011

MTHFR

April Johnson

Miscarried April 10, 2012

MTHFR

Abril Johnson

Miscarried April 10, 2013

MTHFR

Given by parents James and Merle Johnson
and sister Emma Grace

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!



Madilynn Kelley

Stillborn December 3, 2009

Cord accident

Gifts given by

Parents Jeremiah and Cherish Kelly
 Grandma Lisa Riley
 Mary Corlett
 Bailey Corlett

Emily

Stillborn August 5, 1996

Preterm labor

Mommy: Dana Kugler

Given by Maddy's Old Town Flowers

Patrick Martell

Given by Anonymous

Lillian Martell

Given by Carey Jansen

Elizabeth Luke Matthes

Stillborn July 25, 2012

Unknown cause

Given by parents

Marianne and Lance Matthes

Myrin Lenay McNeil

Stillborn June 19, 2013

Unknown cause

Baby Tizeno

Miscarried April 9, 2012

Given by Mommy Jolynn Tizeno

Baby Meeker**Baby Girl Meeker**

Given by parents Anthony and April Meeker

Chase Austin Miller

April 21, 2011

Incompetent cervix

Given by parents Greg and Stefanie Miller
and little sister Cora**Gideon Zeller Mitchell**

Stillborn May 17, 2011

Membranous cord insertion

Avery Mitchell

Miscarried May 2008

Given by parents Todd and Stormy Mitchell
and little brother Silas**Jonathan Daniel Mitchell**

Stillborn June 24, 1995

Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001

Gifts given by

Parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
 and big brother Byron, Jr.
 Grandparents Dennis and Sue Brewer
 Dentistry of Las Colinas/
 Byron Mitchell, DDS

Max Emmanuel Novik

May 10-11, 2011

Anencephaly

Given by parents Mark and Melinda Novik
and sisters Sam and Jenna**Abigail Renee O'Donnell**

August 16, 2013

Silent placental abruption

Given by parents Matt and Diane O'Donnell
and big brother Gabriel**Ryder Owen**

Stillborn July 13, 2013

Cord accident

Given by parents Richard and Lindsey Spears

Jacob Theodore Oxendine

April 29, 2001

PROM

Given by parents

Chip and Christine Oxendine
 and siblings Emily and Eric

Amar Padakandla

June 28, 2001

Multiple congenital heart defects

Given by parents

Bhaskar and Menaca Padakandla
 and siblings Aakash, Rumya and Seth

Margot Lily Perry

Stillborn June 10, 2013

Unknown cause

Gifts given by

Parents Brandon and Marisa Perry
 and siblings Adeline and Bennett
 Grandmother Marie Perry

Hannah Grace Sherman

August 12, 2005

Cystic hygroma

Given by parents Randy and Toni Sherman
and big sister Kaitlin**Mindy and Maggie Smith**

Stillborn November 4, 1997

TTTS and Polyhydramnios

Given by parents Scott and Karla Smith
and siblings Travis and Julia**Savannah Kate Stanley**

January 3, 2004

Prematurity/incompetent cervix

Baby Stanley

Miscarried November 10, 2004

Given by parents Joel and Calli Stanley
and siblings Colton, Danika, and Sara**David Steinruck**

December 14, 2005

Cord accident

Parents: Jeremy and Charissa Steinruck
Given by grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Rodgers**The Swanson Family**

Given by Melissa Kremer

Kyle Charles Walton

November 19, 1998

Group B Strep

and lack of proper nourishment

Parents: Kristen and Kyle Walton

Siblings: Jessica, Laura and Joshua

Given by Joshua's Pest Control

Ariel and Angel Wong-Eguiarte

June 26, 2013

Incompetent cervix

Parents: Ari and Emy Wong

Sibling: Little Wong due August 2014

Arie Witt

Stillborn November 5, 2013

Unknown cause

Given by parents Mike and Candice Witt
and big sister Brinley**Gifts of Support**

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
 West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe, TX
 Twigger/Farrar ABF
 Dr. Teresa Baker
 Prom Management Group, Inc.
 Max Vordenbaum

Legacy Giving

Losing a child has changed each of our lives forever. We appreciate all financial support of the services our organization gives to bereaved parents—no matter the size of the contribution. However, some of you may have the capacity and desire to give a lifelong gift to M.E.N.D.

If you're interested in creating a legacy gift or endowment in honor of your baby, M.E.N.D. would be happy to assist you in gathering the necessary information to remember our organization in your will or trust. For more information about legacy giving, please contact Rebekah Mitchell at rebekah@mend.org.

*Sweet little flower of heavenly birth
 You were too fair to bloom on earth.
 -Author Unknown*



From Silence to Communicating Through Art

In 2008, when Dharma passed away, it seemed like EVERYONE came out of the woodwork and told me they had also lost a baby at some point. Most losses I heard about occurred years before, even before we had VCRs. I would feel so drawn to women who had experienced loss and ask questions. I loved it when people asked me about my daughter; I assumed these women felt the same way about their babies. I would say, "What is your baby's name? What happened? Did your baby look like you?" Every one of those woman responded with, "Oh, we don't talk about those things," or, "It was just a miscarriage" (even if the loss was at six or seven months). None of them wanted to talk about it! It really offended me that they chose to not acknowledge their children. I felt so alone. I wanted to talk about my baby, brag about my beautiful daughter and share with other moms like me. I was not able to do that until I found M.E.N.D.—Houston. I felt so drawn to these women and loved hearing all about their kids! I was in my "new" element at meetings.

At a M.E.N.D. meeting in 2009, Brandy Wilson, one of the assistant directors, showed up with a beautiful tattoo on her wrist of her daughter Laney's name. It was so classy and was such a beautiful way to have your baby with you always. I always wanted a tattoo but never knew what to get that I would not regret later, so I waited until I was sure. Otherwise, I would have ended up with a blonde Backstreet Boy's name on my shoulder! My hair dresser had suggested I get Dharma's footprint, but Dharma was born at 36 weeks and had HUGE feet! So on Dharma's third heavenly birthday, my husband and I went to the best tattoo place in town, and I had Dharma's name and a butterfly wing tattooed on my wrist. I loved it! Now she will be with me always. I didn't feel guilty not wearing my remembrance jewelry everywhere I went. Of course, I said, "This will be my one and ONLY tattoo." But it is true - tattoos can be addictive!

A few years later on my friend Chiara's daughters' third heavenly birthday, she wanted to get their names tattooed, so I got one, too. It was so fun hanging out at the tattoo shop until 2:00 a.m. with a bunch of M.E.N.D. moms, talking about everything from breastfeeding to labor stories. I had "clothed with joy" (Psalm 30:11-12), a phrase from Dharma's headstone, tattooed on my right arm. It took about three years for me to finally be able to live and breathe this verse. God had removed my sackcloth and clothed me with JOY! This tattoo reminded me on the days my grief was all consuming and overwhelming that I was clothed with joy. My husband and I agreed that I would get no more, unless, God forbid, we had another loss.

Well, January 23, 2014, we lost Stella Darling. On Chiara's girls' fourth heavenly birthday, about eight of us M.E.N.D. moms went back to our tattoo shop, and I got "Stella" on my left arm, next to Dharma's name. Stormy, the Houston chapter director, had her son's name tattooed on her arm, too. While we were there, we overheard a man talking with an artist about getting a memorial tattoo for a baby, and we started talking to him about his son who was stillborn in November. We told him who we were with and had a bit of a mini-M.E.N.D. meeting with introductions and everything. We all pulled out M.E.N.D. information for him to give to his wife. After about an hour, he left nearly in tears because he thought he and his wife were the only ones this had ever happened to. He was so excited to connect with us! God even hangs out at Texas Body Art.

So comparing the way things used to be handled (not talking about it) to now (talking about it over tattoo sketches), I am forever grateful infant loss is not as taboo as it once was. I am proud of my girls and love to share their legacies with others. So when people ask about my tattoos, I gladly share my babies' stories and all God has done through them.

But here is a lesson learned: don't assume when someone has a baby foot print, hand print or angel wings around a name tattooed on them somewhere that it is a memorial tattoo. When you ask what happened to their baby, and they say nothing with a weird look ... things get awkward!



♥ Jennie Drude,
Mommy to Dharma and Stella
M.E.N.D.—Bryan College Station Chapter Director

A Life to Remember



Hope Monument at CHRISTUS St. Michael Hospital Serenity Garden



Sophie Greer blowing bubbles in memory of her sister Macey

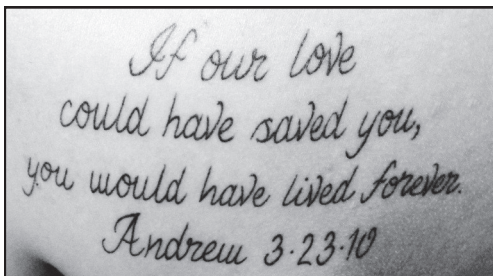


Tony Sherman, Monica Davis and Tania Greer



Antionette Peters and Monica Davis

M.E.N.D. Mom's Body Art



Melody Pittman for Baby Andrew



Brandy Wilson for Baby Laney



Stormy Mitchell for Baby Gideon



LeRhesa Johnson to remember Baby Kaiya

M.E.N.D.

Chapter Corner**Chapter Meeting****Information****M.E.N.D.—Houston**

Meets the 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
D. Bradley McWilliams YMCA at Cypress
Creek, Schindldecker Building
19915 SH 249 Houston, Texas 77070
Director: Stormy Mitchell
stormym@mend.org, (281) 374-8528

Subsequent pregnancy group meets
as needed on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Chiara Ott
(chiara@mend.org).

Daddy's group meets quarterly on the 3rd
Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Randy Dobbins
(cortdavis@aol.com)

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana

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

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
Director: Lisa Daily
lisa@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Project H.O.P.E.
1419 S. Enterprise
Springfield, Missouri 65804
Director: Heather Fann
heather@mend.org, (417) 818-0489

M.E.N.D.—Amarillo

Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
First United Bank of the Colonies/
Lonestar Room
One First United Bank Parkway
45th and Soncy
Amarillo, Texas 79119
Director: Becky Anderson
becky@mend.org, (806) 570-4344

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station

Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.
Hawthorn Suites
1010 University Drive East
College Station, Texas 77840
Director: Jennie Drude
jennie@mend.org, (979) 220-7851

M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates**Chicagoland**

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland hosted our first support group on June 3, 2014. Fourteen people attended this first meeting. We feel so honored to be able to offer care and support to hurting moms and dads in the Chicago area. We are thankful for Rebekah and her assistants for traveling from Texas to provide help and support. I would like to thank my assistants, Gretchen Hays, Kim Nyquist and Cheryl Cohen, for their help in getting M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland off the ground.

Sara Hintz

Bryan/College Station

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College is growing! God is using M.E.N.D. to reach more hurting families. We really enjoyed watching *Return to Zero* at our viewing party. It was refreshing to see a movie that really seemed to know us and our hurt so well. It was like they had heard us say many of those things in our meetings!

Jennie Drude

Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa continues to minister to grieving families in Tulsa county and the surrounding areas. We will be working on raising funds for our chapter to help us reach even more hurting families.

Lisa Daily

NW Washington

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington is excited to have our chapter be the focus of a local Christian radio show, KCIS AM. We had the opportunity to share about M.E.N.D. and my personal story. It was well received and hopefully it will spread word about M.E.N.D. here in Washington.

We are off to a great start this year with our fundraising and more to come! Our garage sale will be in August, which was a big success last year.

Several of us gathered to watch *Return to Zero*. They did an amazing job of portraying the reality of having a stillborn child. Let's "Break the Silence!"

Stacy McGhee

Amarillo

M.E.N.D.—Amarillo wants to thank each and every one of you who helped support our M.E.N.D. garage sale! It was a great success! We are now starting to gear up for BUNCO FOR BABIES in September. Watch for details.

Becky Anderson

Houston

M.E.N.D.—Houston is excited to announce we will be having two support groups each month. We meet the first Thursday of each month in Bellaire and on the third Thursday of each month in the Woodlands. These meeting locations will be able to meet the need of most of our mummies in the Houston area. Please see our website for maps and addresses to the locations.

We had a very special night together as a M.E.N.D. family watching *Return to Zero*. What a blessing to see a movie reflecting so many of the same emotions and events we have experienced. This summer, M.E.N.D.—Houston is also hosting fundraisers, including a game night, rummage sale and car wash!

Stormy Mitchell

Hot Springs

M.E.N.D.—Hot Springs continues to reach out to families in our community who have suffered a loss. We pray God continues to use us to minister to these families.

Amy Humphries

Texarkana

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana held “A Life to Remember” event at the CHRISTUS St. Michael Hospital Serenity Garden, which is the location of the Hope Monument. The event was a beautiful time of remembrance of our babies who died too soon. This event would not have been possible without the help of Stephanie Desjarlais, Tania Greer, Antoinette Peters, Toni Sherman and the spiritual care staff of CHRISTUS St. Michael Hospital. For more information about M.E.N.D.—Texarkana, contact me at 903-490-1210 or at monica@mend.org.

Monica Davis

Wichita Falls

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls recently held our seasonal trunk show fundraiser, and it was a success. We are grateful for the generous women who shopped and supported M.E.N.D. Our group continues to grow as we welcome new families every month.

Sarah Fukasawa

SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—Southwest Missouri hosted our second annual family picnic in June and had a great time watching our living children play at Nathaniel Greene Park in Springfield. We are already gearing up for plans for our two recognition events on Saturday, October 11, for the Balloon Release and Monday, December 8, for the Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. Both events are at Second Baptist Church. More details to come!

Heather Fann

“The amount of time on earth matters very little: a man can live in greed and pride 90 years and never find God, know Him or accomplish His Plan. A stillborn baby, on the other hand, teaches people to love, brings people to the Lord, teaches us the tenuous nature of life and teaches us a faith that those who have not suffered loss can never know. A child not even breathing for an hour can have an impact greater than a famous preacher. The purpose of life is not ours to decide nor in our hands: it is brought about by God.”

-Author Unknown

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington
Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m.
Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room
1800 Myhre Rd.

Silverdale, Washington 98383
Gig Harbor Meeting
Meets the 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.
St. Anthony Hospital/Greenpoint Dining Room
11567 Canterwood Blvd NW,
Gig Harbor, Washington 98332
Director: Stacy McGhee
stacym@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.—Hot Springs, Arkansas

Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
National Park Medical Center/Maurice Room
1910 Malvern Avenue
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901
Director: Amy Humphries
amy@mend.org, (501) 620-9930

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls, Texas

Meets the 2nd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.
Christ Home Place Ministries
1420 Twin Oaks Street
Wichita Falls, Texas 76302
Director: Sarah Fukasawa
sarahf@mend.org, (940) 642-3284

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland, Illinois

Meets the 1st Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
St Peter Lutheran Church
202 E Schaumburg Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194
Director: Sara Hintz
saraann@mend.org, (630) 267-9134

M.E.N.D. Support Group Meetings in the Dallas Metroplex

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings

are held the 2nd Thursday of
every month
from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Daddies group

meets the 2nd Thursday of
March, June, Sept. and Dec.,
from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

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

Subsequent pregnancy group

meets the 4th Tuesday
from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Led by Liz Walker: liz@mend.org
For families who are considering
becoming pregnant or are currently
pregnant after a loss.

Food and Fellowship

are held the 4th Thursday of
every month at 8:00 p.m.
at the Corner Bakery in
Southlake Town Center

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

Contact Brittney Fish:
brittney@mend.org

Infertility group

meets the 3rd Monday
at 7:30 p.m.

Contact Cheryl Davis for meeting
location and information at
Cheryl@mend.org
For families experiencing
infertility after a loss.

Parenting After Loss Playgroup

Meets monthly at various locations in the
Dallas / Fort Worth metroplex.
Contact Magen Kaye: Magen@mend.org
or call (214) 435-3870

**Mommies AND daddies are both
welcome at all M.E.N.D. meetings.
Unless otherwise noted, all support
group meetings are held at:**

**Wells Fargo Bank
800 W. Airport Freeway
Irving, TX 75062**
(Located in the Crystals Pizza parking
lot, between MacArthur and O'Connor)
Meetings will be in the bank board room,
located on the first floor.
For more information,
call (972) 506-9000.

“Heart of the Leader” continued from page 2.

determination of WAS would have to wait until after delivery. The more immediate risk was the twin-to-twin transfusion. The difference in size and fluid level between the babies was pretty significant. Our goal was to get them to 25 weeks. Then, it was 30 weeks. Finally, after weeks of the difference growing smaller and smaller, the specialist said he didn’t even need to see me anymore. We were so thankful to be able finish out this pregnancy normally. The C-section was scheduled for 38 weeks.

One week before my delivery date I went to see my regular OB. Everything looked good, but Baby B (Cooper) hadn’t grown as much as expected. I went for an ultrasound on Friday afternoon of Memorial Day weekend 2003 to double check their growth. It confirmed Cooper had not grown as much, but all the other tests looked normal. We would check again early the next week.

We never made it to that appointment. After church on Sunday, I noticed I hadn’t felt Cooper move since he was always REALLY ACTIVE during worship. I tried resting, eating ice cream and going for a short walk. Nothing seemed to make him move. We figured he was just cramped and tired after all the activity during church. To ease our worries, we went to the hospital. They hooked me up to the monitor and found Baby A’s (Paxton’s) heartbeat right away. It took a little longer to find Cooper’s. We were so relieved – at least for a few moments. We came to realize the monitor was picking up the echo from Paxton’s heartbeat as Cooper’s. Our hearts were sinking, but still we held onto hope. How could God bring us up and down on this crazy roller coaster to end like this? After the doctor performed a sonogram, our nightmare began. Cooper had died, and we needed to get Paxton out quickly before something happened to him. I was rushed for an emergency C-section. Paxton and Cooper were delivered just after 1:00 a.m. on May 26, 2003.

After I woke and some of the haziness wore off, I realized this was not a horrible dream but a heartbreaking reality. One of my babies was in the NICU hooked up to numerous monitors and tubes and being treated for a stroke and low blood and platelet counts. The other was lying quietly in my arms. We would never hear him cry or see him smile or lay him side-by-side with his twin brother. We held and loved on Cooper for hours and hours. When the time came to say goodbye, my heart shattered into a million pieces. How was I ever going to recover from this? How could this be part of God’s bigger plan?

Paxton was released from the NICU in time for his brother’s funeral. The funeral was the most unreal but all-too-real situation. I remember sitting there looking at the tiny casket holding my baby. This was my reality, and it was painful. I threw myself into taking care of Paxton. Due to his medical issues, we were constantly at the doctor and hospital. Paxton did test positive for WAS and had a bone marrow transplant when he was 4 months old. Big sister was a perfect match for Paxton, also.

After about a year, Paxton was getting better. That was when the serious, gut-wrenching grief hit. All the energy I had been putting into caring for Paxton was now surfacing as postponed grief, and it hit HARD. I thought I was going crazy. My emotions were all over the place. I was so glad to have Paxton home and healthy but then completely hysterical that Cooper was not here. I did not know how I was going to get through this.

One day I got a call from a “multiples” mom about a lady coming to speak at her MOPS meeting. She thought it might be helpful to me. Desperate, I went. DaLana Barsanti told her story about the loss of her twin boys and the support she received from M.E.N.D. She was so kind and compassionate. She listened to me cry and tell my story. DaLana strongly encouraged me come to the next M.E.N.D. meeting, which was the following night. I was a little scared but badly needed to connect with others who had walked this road and made it to the other side. I realized I wasn’t alone, and I wasn’t going crazy. I was heartbroken over the death of my son. I also desperately wanted to know when I would be my old self. I can still see Rebekah looking me straight in the face and telling me I would never be my old self. It was not in a way that was harsh but comforting. She talked about finding my new normal. It took such pressure off of my waiting for and trying to attain something that was not going to happen. I came home and told my husband about everything that happened and how I felt completely understood. He was so glad I had found M.E.N.D. but jokingly wanted to know what I was going to do the other 29 days of the month.

With the support of Rebekah and other dear M.E.N.D. friends, I did make it through to the other side. I still miss my Cooper, and that will never change. He will forever be part of our hearts and family. I have been active in M.E.N.D. for over 10 years now. I wanted to share the comfort and compassion I received when my world fell apart. I have served as playgroup director, participated on the Walk to Remember and Christmas Ceremony committees and been part of the advisory board. I currently serve on the board of directors. Even when we do not understand God’s plans, they are still bigger (and better) than our own. Jeremiah 29:11 says “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.” I know being a part of M.E.N.D. was part of God’s plan, and I am so blessed and grateful to be a part of this ministry.

♥ Brandee Dill,
Mommy to Baby Dill and Cooper Dill
M.E.N.D.—Board of Directors



Subsequent Births

Travis and Channon Soppe

of Hurst, Texas,
along with siblings
Adrian and Hadlee Hope,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Annabelle Grace,
April 4, 2014,
measuring 8 lb., 1 oz.,
and 20.5 inches.
The Soppes lovingly remember
Ainslee Ryan,
October 29, 2010 -
February 8, 2011,
SIDS

Darren and Meredith Fisk,

of Lantana, Texas,
along with siblings
Madison and Benjamin,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Margaret Caroline,
born April 15, 2014,
measuring 6 lb., 3 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Fisks lovingly remember
Cambren Edward,
stillborn June 28, 2010,
cord accident,
and Baby Fisk,
miscarried February 1, 2012

Brandon and Marisa Perry,
of Colleyville, Texas,
along with big sister Adeline,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Bennett Noah,
born April 30, 2014,
measuring 5 lb., 4 oz.,
and 18 inches
The Perry family lovingly
remembers
Margot Lily,
stillborn June 10, 2013,
cord accident

Ryan and Rachel Lewis,
of Bremerton, Washington,
along with big sister Madelyn,
joyfully announce the adoption
of their foster daughter
Leyla Irene,
finalized on April 15, 2014.
The Lewis family lovingly
remembers
Olivia Joy,
December 20, 2011,
ectopic pregnancy,
Caleb Michael,
miscarried October 5, 2012,
Elliott James
miscarried May 8, 2013,
and Sophie Grace,
miscarried March 10, 2014

**Aaron Graham and
DeAndrea Dare**
of Fort Worth, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Maezey DeAnn Graham,
born March 20, 2014,
measuring 8 lb., 2 oz.,
and 20.75 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Anderson Maxwell "Max" Graham,
stillborn March 12, 2013,
placental abruption

Jon and Jennifer Joyce,
of Irving Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Jameson Christopher,
born May 2, 2014,
measuring 3 lb., 10 oz.,
and 17 1/2 inches.
The Joyces lovingly remember
Caley Brianna,
November 12-26, 2007
severe preeclampsia-NEC

Tommy and Brea Darnell,
of Lakeside, Texas,
along with big brother Luke,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Piper Jane,
born May 5, 2014,
measuring 6 lb., 9 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The Darnells lovingly remember
Sophie Jane,
stillborn May 28, 2012,
unknown cause

A Walk to Remember

In 1988, former President Ronald Reagan declared the month of October as National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month. To commemorate this declaration, many infant loss organizations such as M.E.N.D. host what's called "A Walk to Remember." Unlike the name may imply, the Walk to Remember is not a "walk-a-thon" or a fundraiser; instead, it is a beautiful ceremony to remember our sweet babies in heaven. Although the ceremony does include a very short walk from the check-in point to the ceremony site, the main aspects of the event are acknowledging every baby represented, an inspirational speaker, special music and an unforgettable balloon release.

This year, M.E.N.D. will host two walk to remember ceremonies. Registration for both ceremonies will begin the middle of August, using the registration form on our website at www.mend.org. Please be sure to carefully choose which ceremony (DFW or Houston) you plan to attend.

Dallas/Fort Worth

Saturday, October 4, 2014
Check-in begins at 12:00
Ceremony begins at 1:00
Calvary Church
4401 N State Hwy 161
Irving, TX 75038

Houston

Saturday, October 4, 2014
Check-in begins at 12:00
Ceremony begins at 1:00
Bammel Road Church of Christ
2700 FM 1960 W
Houston, TX 77068

M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
 P.O. Box 631566, Irving, TX 75063
 USA
 (972) 506-9000
Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
 U.S. Postage Paid
 DeSoto, TX 75115
 Permit No. 614

“... 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, go to www.krogercommunityrewards.com and set up an account if you do not already have one. Once you receive the email after setting up your account, click on “My Account,” then go to “Edit Kroger Community Rewards” and input your Kroger Plus card number. You’ll see a screen with your information in boxes, at the bottom right, there is a box that says Community Rewards. Click that, then enter the M.E.N.D. number, which is 80513. Once that’s entered, you’ll confirm that M.E.N.D. is your charity of choice. This link will be good until the 2013-2014 program expires. You must link your card each year 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 contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- **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 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 to find out how.
- **Igive.com** will donate a penny a search and a portion of each purchase made through their website to M.E.N.D. Sign up today! M.E.N.D.’s cause number is 52025.



www.mend.org