



# M. E. N. D.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

## M.E.N.D. - Commemorating 20 Years of Ministry

Like many of you, I prayed for my babies before they were even conceived. I earnestly sought the Lord for His will for my husband Byron's and my family before any of our three babies were given life. Because each of our three children were conceived within the first month of trying to become pregnant, I assumed our quick success of baby-making was always a sign from God we were on track with His ordained plan for our lives. Our first son was born full-term and healthy. Sadly, my Jonathan and Baby Mitchell did not survive. But even through this, I've learned over the years we are on track with His plan; it's just my plans and His plans didn't and still don't always align. I know His ways are better, even if I don't always immediately like the path Almighty God has prepared for me.

As you can all relate, the first year following my Jonathan's stillbirth in 1995 was without a doubt, the worst year of my life. Not only was I deeply grieving the death of my "Precious Gift from God," I was incredibly confused spiritually. How and why did this happen? I truly believed God and I had a plan together, but the plan I had envisioned did not happen. I felt beyond betrayed by God the first several months after my baby's cord accident that resulted in his stillbirth. How could such a "fluke" have been allowed by God? Where was He? Maybe He didn't even exist...

But God never left me. He never abandoned me. He always heard my cries. Eleven months after Jonathan's death, on Mother's Day of 1996, I reconciled my relationship with the Lord. He was always there, waiting for me; I just blocked Him out because I was so angry and confused. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in May, several months after my devastating loss, I knew that indeed He had not forgotten me, and He very much had a plan for me - and for the suffering I had endured. I can't explain it. It was just imprinted on my heart and in my spirit that day. But what was His plan, and how and when was it supposed to begin?

A few weeks later as I was cleaning my house, I started to throw away the Sunday edition of what was then *The Dallas Times Herald*. I felt compelled to browse the obituary section just to see if perhaps there was a notice of a baby's death. Sadly, there was. The baby was Cailey Elizabeth Ottinger. Like Jonathan, she, too, was stillborn because of a cord accident. I wrote Cailey's mom, Laurie, a letter and mailed it to the funeral home listed in the obituary, hoping they would forward it to Cailey's family. Thankfully, they did. A few days later, Laurie and I became email friends and eventually met for lunch. We spent hours

together that summer afternoon sharing our babies and our emotions. At this lunch, she asked me if I had read about another family in the area whose baby, Michael Joseph, was stillborn because of Trisomy 18. At the time, I had never heard of Trisomy 18, and I nicely let Laurie know I was not in the habit of checking the obituary section for babies who had died. Laurie felt compelled to contact Michael's mom, Lynne, who, shortly thereafter, became a "member of our little club." We then met another mom, Stacey, who had just moved to the Dallas area from another state after the shocking stillbirth of her baby boy, Griffen Douglas. The four of us moms began to regularly meet and communicate with each other. Before long, I realized our little group was more than a "club." We were actually a support group. With the help of my attorney dad and a CPA friend who specializes in non-profits, I began M.E.N.D.—*Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death*. We obtained our recognition in the State of Texas on September 7, 1996, (coincidentally the one year anniversary of Jonathan's due date). We held our first official support group in November and published our first newsletter edition at the same time (like all of our newsletters, the first edition can be read on our website under Newsletter Archives).

I recall telling Byron I could feel this was going to be "big" - God has something really incredible up His sleeve. At the time, I'm sure Byron was thinking, "uh...okay - my poor wife...what in the world is she talking about?!" I began plugging along and obeying the legal and financial instructions my dad and CPA were providing. This was before most people had the Internet at their fingertips, and very few organizations had websites. So, we still depended on newspapers, the yellow pages and various publications to spread our name and purpose. Just months into our new ministry, friends of ours who were computer savvy, Max and Jody Friz, approached me and asked if they could create a website for M.E.N.D. I didn't really even know what a website was, but I trusted what Max was saying and obliged. He was right! The World Wide Web took our little organization to a whole new level. Before long, we had grieving families from all over the world subscribing to our newsletter, and communicating with one another on our site's guestbook. Every month at least one new family attended our support group, and within the first couple of years we began offering a variety of support, such as a

*Continued on page 11...*

**Nota Española:** El artículo de Rebekah Mitchell aparece en cada emisión de nuestro boletín para la audiencia latina.  
Para ver el artículo de este mes en español, por favor vea la pagina numero 22.

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 website at [www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org).

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

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Donations make the printing and distribution of this newsletter possible. Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and should be sent to the address listed above. If your gift is made in memory of a baby, please include that baby's name (if named), date of birth and/or date of death, the parents' names, and the name of the benefactor. You may also include the cause of death (if known).

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

## Did You Know....

M.  
E.  
N.  
D.



20<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

1,405

Newsletters

Distributed Bi-Monthly to

46 States

Including: Alaska & Hawaii

6 Countries

Including: Australia, Brazil,  
Canada, Ireland, Kenya & Nigeria

1,861  
Families have attended a  
M.E.N.D. support group

809  
Attended the  
Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter  
1052  
Attended other  
M.E.N.D. Nationwide Chapters



5050  
Facebook  
Group  
Members

## Where Are YOU From?

Our next issue, November/December 2016, is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the M.E.N.D. Newsletter. As we saw in the statistics above, we know many families receive support through our newsletter across the country and across the globe!

We would love to see pictures of our readers with their newsletters and include them in our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue! Take a selfie with this newsletter - "M.E.N.D.—Commemorating 20 Years of Ministry" - and post it to Instagram, Twitter and/or our Facebook pages using #MENDNewsletter and include your location. We will choose some to include in our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue.

Please post your selfies by September 30. We look forward to seeing all of you on social media and possibly in the next newsletter!

## Stay Connected!



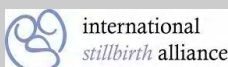
Follow M.E.N.D. on Twitter @MENDinfantloss



Like the M.E.N.D. Facebook page



Find us on Instagram at [m.e.n.d.1996](https://www.instagram.com/m.e.n.d.1996)



## Support M.E.N.D. on North Texas Giving Day (You can help even if you are NOT in North Texas!)

North Texas Giving Day is back, and M.E.N.D. is part of it! On September 22, every donation of \$25 and above will go further with the \$2.5 Million in bonus funds and prizes shared among participating nonprofits! Whether you are a regular donor or haven't taken the opportunity to donate to M.E.N.D. this year, this day would be the PERFECT time since your donation would provide bonus funds to M.E.N.D.

Take the opportunity to share your story with friends, families and coworkers and invite them to participate in this exciting day. M.E.N.D. is run entirely by volunteers, so every dollar given directly helps our mission of serving other grieving families, providing community awareness and educating others about the tragedy of losing a baby to miscarriage, stillbirth or other infant loss.

*From Washington to Florida and everywhere in between, everyone around the nation is encouraged to participate as all funds will impact every chapter of M.E.N.D.*

**When: September 22, 2015, 6:00 AM—Midnight CST**

### 3 Easy Steps to Donate:

1. Log on to your computer between 6:00 AM—Midnight. CST
2. Go to [NorthTexasGivingDay.org](http://NorthTexasGivingDay.org) and search for M.E.N.D.
3. Make a donation!

It's that EASY, and you will be making a huge difference in the lives of many grieving families.



## Fundraising Opportunity for Federal Employees, State of Texas Employees and City of Dallas Employees

M.E.N.D. proudly participates each year in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and in the State of Texas, the State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC) and the City of Dallas Charitable Campaign (DCCC). If you, a family member or friend work for one of these government organizations, you can donate to M.E.N.D. through one of these campaigns this fall. For the CFC, the designation code is 97896, and the designation code for the SECC is 283524. Check with your employer or campaign organizer to inquire about the process to donate.



### November/December Topic

M.E.N.D.'s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the Newsletter

Deadline: September 30, 2016

### January/February Topic

Keeping Your Marriage Strong

Deadline: November 30, 2016

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcome. 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](mailto: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](http://www.mend.org).

Heavenly Birthday	Deadline
January/February	November 30
March/April	January 31
May/June	March 31
July/August	May 31
September/October	July 31
November/December	September 30



# Birthday Tributes

## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Norah Maye!

Forever in our hearts and anxiously anticipating our heavenly meeting! Love you, our sweet Norah Maye!

*Norah Maye Sireci  
September 15, 2015  
Holoprosencephaly*

*Parents: Jonathan and Meghan Sireci*



## Happy 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Landon!

We miss you every day.

Happy birthday in heaven, our precious angel baby.

*Landon Michael Frank  
September 18, 2000  
Born to heaven at 22 weeks  
Also remembering  
Sarah Renae Frank  
August 26, 2009*

*Born to heaven at 16 weeks*

*Hannah Mikhail Embry*

*Miscarried March 2, 2013, at 10 weeks*

*Samuel Richard Embry*

*Miscarried February 12, 2014, at 7 weeks*

*Emma Hope Embry*

*Miscarried March 27, 2013, at 7 weeks*

*Daniel Alexander-Jackson and Abigail Blythe-Carol Embry*

*Miscarried July 26, 2014, at 12 weeks, 5 days*

*Parents: Alexander and Esther Embry*



## Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, Hannah Angel!

Happy birthday to our Hannah Angel.

Too beautiful for earth, and will be forever in our hearts.

*Hannah Angel Kaiser  
Stillborn October 29, 2013  
Unknown cause*

*Parents: Ryan and Tracey Kaiser*



## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Reese!

To our beautiful daughter, thank you for the precious gifts you gave us. Thank you for teaching us more about our Savior, ourselves, and each other. Although we have searched for reasons you are not physically here with us, we hold to Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us forever." Until we see you in heaven, we treasure you in our hearts daily.

Love you always,  
Mommy and Daddy

*Reese Parker Green  
Stillborn September 12, 2015  
Parents: Jesse and Ronya Green*



## Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, RaeChel!

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, our Angel. There is not a day goes by we don't wish you were here with us. We love you and miss you.

Love,  
Mommy and Daddy

*RaeChel Laniece Jones  
September 20, 2014*

*Parents: Reggie and Tiniece Hazel*



## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Madeline!

Happy birthday, baby. We miss you every day.

*Madeline Estes  
October 5, 2015  
Possible TTTS*

*Parents: Ryan and Rue Estes  
Sister: Keira*



## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Chance!

Forever in my heart and always on my mind.

*Chance Fuqua  
September 19, 2015*

*Unknown cause*

*Mommy: Brittany Fuqua*

*Sister: Lexi*



## Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Dalton!

Forever in our hearts. We think of you all the time and talk about you often. You changed our lives, and we are a better family for having known you. We love you, DRD!

*Dalton Robert Davis  
October 31, 2012  
Cord accident*

*Parents: Todd and Amy Davis*

*Siblings: Savannah, Drew, Drake and Clayton*



## Happy 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Sereana!

Naphtali feathers are on the rugged Mountain side.

Oh joy! that high-up Place where you hide.

There in Abba's wings where you abide

Comes forth, Beautiful. -

the Song of a mother's pride.

Happy 7<sup>th</sup> birthday, my firstborn beautiful daughter,

Sereana Joy. I love you.

*Sereana Joy Ratulele  
Stillborn September 9, 2009, at full-term  
Unknown cause  
Parents: Semi and Laura Ratulele  
Siblings: Noela Esiteri and Talei Jewel*



**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Alyssa!**

I can't believe it's been a year since I had you! You were born six days after Mommy's birthday. I couldn't have asked for a better present! In the 19 days you were here, you touched so many people's lives, and were loved by so many! Mommy and Daddy miss you so much, baby girl, and can't wait until we get to see you again!

Love always,  
Mommy and Daddy



*Alyssa Nikol Jackson*  
*September 17-October 6, 2015*  
*Necrotizing enterocolitis*

*Parents: Nathan Jackson and Kathleen McWilliams*

**Happy 44<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Ramea!**

Happy 44<sup>th</sup> birthday in heaven, my little Ramea Renee! I have missed you over my lifetime as I was 17 when you were born, and I am now 61. You are always in my thoughts and prayers as I go through the day. I know you are in heaven in your new and glorious form waiting with the others who have passed before me. My Love, someday we will be together, and I will understand why God chose you to be an angel in heaven so soon after birth. It will all be clear. I love you and miss you so much.

Always,  
Mom



*Ramea Renee*  
*September 14, 1972*  
*Premature birth*  
*Mommy: Marian I. Pruitt*  
*Brother: Jeffrey*

**Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Chayah and Christian!**

This year you both would have been 5 years old. We think about you so much, your personalities, likes and dislikes at this age and stage of life. What your reaction to your little sister would have been. She brings us joy! There's not a day goes by I don't think about you two! We love you always!

*Chayah Amiris and Christian Blaine Dorsey, II*  
*Stillborn July 29, 2011*  
*Premature birth*  
*Parents: Christian and Anita Dorsey*  
*Little Sister: Malaika*

**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Christian!**

We love you and miss you. We hope you have a great 1<sup>st</sup> birthday in heaven. We celebrate you, because you are always in our hearts. In those six days, you gave us so much love. We will hold on to that forever. We love you, Christian!

*Christian Alexander McCune*  
*August 15-21, 2015*  
*Pulmonary hypertension due to extreme prematurity*  
*Parents: Juan McCune and Jennifer Prince*  
*Siblings: Arianah, Gabrielle, Juan Jr and Mya*

**Happy 9<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Brandon!**

I still can't believe it's been nine years. I think about you always. I hope you're having nothing but happiness.

Love always,  
Mommy and brother

*Brandon Isaiah Alfaro*  
*October 19, 2007—February 7, 2008*  
*Spinal muscular atrophy*  
*Mommy: Jennifer Alfaro*  
*Brother: Ethan*

**Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Hadley!**

Hadley, our sweet baby girl, our angel, how softly you tiptoed into our world - almost silently. What an imprint your footprints left on our hearts, forever.

*Hadley Catherine Barr*  
*September 19, 2014*  
*Respiratory failure*  
*Parents: Jesse and Megan Barr*  
*Brothers: Jaxon and Tanner*

**Happy 17<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Ashley!**

~Remembering you today, loving and missing you always~

*Ashley Renee Dedear*  
*October 29—November 1, 1999*  
*Parents: Tim and Cindy Dedear*  
*Sisters: Laura and Katherine*

**Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, Angel!**

Happy heavenly birthday, my Angel! We remember you, Angel, on your 3<sup>rd</sup> heavenly birthday. We know Grandma Charlotte, Uncle TJ, Momo Tina and Popo Juan are with you celebrating and keeping you safe until we meet again. We miss you and send you hugs and kisses.

'buela, Uncle Ben, Andres, Mommy and Daddy

*Angel Batrez*  
*Stillborn July 9, 2013*  
*Parents: Tony and Stefanie Batrez*  
*Brother: Andres*

**Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, Keiran!**

My sweet baby bear! Not a day goes by I don't think about you. Your little toes and your little nose. Your soft blonde hair and those big blue eyes. I wonder about all of the things we would talk about if you were here, and I dream about the adventures you would have. Lost in the woods with Daddy or baking in the kitchen with Mommy, I know you wouldn't want to miss a thing. You are our whole world! I wish you were in my arms, but I know you're being held tight up in heaven. Until we see each other again. Happy birthday, my Shining Star!

*Keiran Cobler*  
*October 25—November 1, 2013*  
*NEC*  
*Parents: Brian and Kristina Cobler*



**Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Josiah!**

I can't believe it has already been two years. Daddy and I miss you every day just as much as we did when we first lost you. A lot has happened since then, but not once have we forgotten about the joy you brought to our lives. We love you so much, and we cannot wait to meet you one day and get the opportunity to hold you. Happy heavenly birthday, baby boy!

Love,  
Mommy and Daddy

*Josiah Samuels*  
*Miscarried October 23, 2014*  
*Also remembering*  
*Malachi Samuels*  
*Miscarried November 28, 2013*  
*Unknown cause*  
*Parents: Jonathan and Dara Samuels*

**Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Samuel!**

Dear sweet Samuel, happy 10<sup>th</sup> birthday in heaven! We can't believe it's been 10 years since we snuggled you and kissed you. It's crazy to think about what you would be like at this stage of boyhood. We're sure you and Landon would be the best of friends, probably playing basketball in our driveway any chance you would get. We know you would be such a great big brother to all your little siblings and that you would be so excited about your baby sister coming in September. Oh, how we can't wait to get to know you better in heaven. We love you, precious boy!

Love,  
Daddy and Mommy

*Samuel James Nienhuis*  
*October 14, 2006*  
*Premature birth due to Factor V Leiden and MTHFR*  
*Parents: Seth and Marcie Nienhuis*  
*Siblings: Landon, Olivia, James, Sarah and Baby Girl*

**Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Adam!**

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

-Jeremiah 29:11

Adam, you are forever in our hearts. I love you so much it aches, but I look forward to the day I get to meet you in heaven. Jaxson is 3, and he was born after you. When we pass the cemetery every day, he yells, “Hi Adam! You're my big brother, and I love you.” Please pray for us and be prepared for the big hug we will give you one day when we meet again.

Loving you always,  
Mom and Dad

*Adam John Paul Divin*  
*September 14, 2011*  
*Cord accident*  
*Parents: Todd and Janet Divin*  
*Siblings: Brandon, Trinity, Abby, Aidan and Jaxson*

**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Kennedy!**

As we come up to your 1<sup>st</sup> heavenly birthday, I find myself missing you more and more, but I know I'll see you again someday. I think with each passing day, I'll always wonder how you would have grown up, what you could have done. Mommy loves you with all her heart. Happy 1<sup>st</sup> angel birthday, sweetie.

*Kennedy Quinn Dormier*  
*Miscarried September 4, 2015*  
*Parents: Phillip and Haily Dormier*

**Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Liza!**

Not a day goes by we don't miss you, wonder who you would be or what you would be doing. We miss you so much.

Mommy, Daddy, Posie and Theo

*Liza Rose Schroeder*  
*September 30—October 10, 2012*  
*Suspected cord accident*  
*Parents: Chad and Kara Schroeder*  
*Siblings: Theo and Posie*

**Happy 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Kaiya Dawn!**

Happy 7<sup>th</sup> heavenly birthday, my sweet daughter. I love you and miss you daily. Gone from my arms, but never from my heart. Mommy loves you.

*Kaiya Dawn Walker*  
*October 23, 2009*  
*PROM*  
*Mommy: LaRhesa Johnson*  
*Sister: Kaiya Jamiel*

**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Hads!**

We miss you every day, baby girl. We can't wait to have you in our arms again. Happy 1<sup>st</sup> heavenly birthday, Hads! Mommy and Daddy love you!

*Hadley Kay Freimuller*  
*Stillborn October 17, 2015*  
*Parents: Taylor Freimuller and Kristin DeVille*

**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Ella Grace!**

Happy 1<sup>st</sup> heavenly birthday to our sweet Ella Grace! The last year without you has been the hardest year of our lives, but we have received so much comfort in hearing how your short life touched the hearts of so many. We long for the day when we can hold you in our arms again, and we can't wait to experience all of the wonders of heaven with you. We hope to use the rest of our lives to spread your light and make you proud of us. We love and miss you so very much!

*Ella Grace Hurlbut*  
*July 19—September 7, 2015*  
*MRSA sepsis*  
*Parents: Phillip and Katie Hurlbut*  
*Siblings: Luke and Anna (Ella's twin sister)*



### Happy 8<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Samuel!

Happy 8<sup>th</sup> birthday in heaven, Samuel. You were a gift from the day we knew you were growing...and you are a gift to us still today. We cannot wait for the amazing day when we will all be reunited in glory. God has been so faithful and continues to use your precious life for good. You are never forgotten, always mentioned and always loved.

Forever loving you,  
Mom and Dad  
Louis, Caleb, Anna, Elijah, Hope,  
Levi, Isaiah and Kaliyah Joy



*Samuel Mark Hintz*  
*Stillborn October 29, 2008, at full-term*  
*Unknown cause*  
*Parents: Gregory and Sara Hintz*  
*Siblings: Louis, Caleb, Anna, Elijah, Hope, Levi, Isaiah and Kaliyah Joy*

### Happy 6<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Isaiah!

I can hardly believe it's been six years already! Mommy still thinks of you often, and I want your siblings to know they have a brother in heaven.

*Isaiah Niekoley*  
*October 28-29, 2010*  
*Premature, Trisomy 13, 18 and 21*  
*Parents: George and Esther Niekoley*  
*Siblings: Danny, LuAnna and Ivan Pete*



## M.E.N.D. First Walk to Remember



These pictures were taken at the first M.E.N.D. Walk to Remember for 100 guests. The past few years this ceremony has grown to more than 1,000 guests, and this year, the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Walk to Remember, 1,200 - 1,500 guests are expected to attend.



### Happy 14<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Logan!

Happy 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, sweet boy. Not a day goes by I don't think of you and wonder what you would be like in this house full of teenage boys. Some days it seems like it was yesterday I held you and some days it seems like it was forever ago.

I read somewhere: "Grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith.... It is the price of love."

You, my sweet boy, were worth it. Though your life was short, I wouldn't trade one minute of that time for anything in the world. I'd do it all again...for you.

I miss you. I love you.  
~Until we meet again



*Logan Wayne Fish*  
*September 17, 2002*  
*Thanataphoric Dwarfism*  
*Parents: David and Brittney Fish*  
*Brothers: Landry and Hudson*

### Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, P!

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, sweet girl! It's hard to believe it's been two years since we were blessed with you. We think of you always and how special and wonderful of a daughter and sister you are. Thank you for being our sweet angel and watching over us and your little brother! We hope you are having the best birthday yet this year in heaven because we are celebrating your life here! We love you forever and always, Pieper! See you soon!

*Pieper Adelaide Martinez*  
*August 25, 2014*  
*Undetected IUGR*  
*Parents: Anthony & Lauren Martinez*  
*Little Brother: Doltan Garrid*



## M.E.N.D.-Bryan/College Station Painting Night



## Superheroes

Sitting here 5 years after our loss and seeing the Father's Day memes people share about fathers being superheroes got me to thinking. Every dad wants to be their child's superhero. I knew after I found out we were expecting that I wanted to be my kids' superhero. But after I lost my son, Chase, how could I feel like a superhero?

A superhero is supposed to protect their loved ones, but I wasn't able to protect my son. A superhero is supposed to be able to help those in need but I couldn't do anything to fix this for my wife.

Then I reached into that nerdy part of my brain (I didn't have to dig deep at all) and thought about what made some of the superheroes I looked up to as a kid.

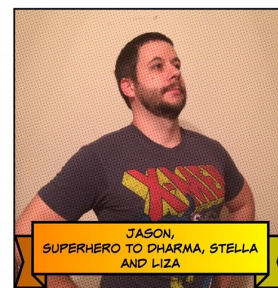
Some of the greatest superheroes, in my opinion, are the ones who are/were defined by their losses. Spiderman lost his uncle, Superman lost his planet, Batman lost his parents. These were all moments that impacted and made these characters into something more.

So losing Chase did make me into something more. I was made stronger by being made weaker, even though I'd prefer to not repeat the circumstances. Chase made me a father...but losing Chase and my actions after his loss have helped define me as a superhero. I didn't give up on my wife or on our marriage. I try my best to help other fathers and families who have lost children with their grief and to learn to live with and through their child's passing.

So...thank you, Chase, for making me a dad and for being my blessing and my guiding light.

♥ Greg Miller,  
Daddy/Superhero to Chase and Blueberry  
M.E.N.D.—Houston

"SOME OF THE GREATEST SUPERHEROES IN MY OPINION ARE/WERE THE ONES DEFINED BY THEIR LOSSES. SPIDERMAN LOST HIS UNCLE, SUPERMAN HIS PLANET, BATMAN HIS PARENTS. THESE WERE ALL MOMENTS THAT IMPACTED AND MADE THE CHARACTERS INTO SOMETHING MORE. LET YOUR CHILD DEFINE YOU, NOT YOUR LOSS."



JASON,  
SUPERHERO TO DHARMA, STELLA  
AND LIZA



CHARLIE, SUPERHERO TO  
CATHERINE



GREG, SUPERHERO TO CHASE  
AND BLUEBERRY

## M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station

I started attending M.E.N.D.—Houston meetings six weeks after Dharma died in May of 2008. I felt right at home in my "new normal" of loss moms. At the time, I was Assistant Manager of a maternity store. One year later after having my first subsequent baby, I wanted to have more time at home with him. I decided to work part-time so I transferred to a lower volume store which allowed me to do this. After only working in College Station for three months, I had talked to more moms with losses than I ever had at the bigger store.

At a M.E.N.D.—Houston meeting I mentioned to the then Chapter Director Jaimie Crump, "Y'all really need a M.E.N.D. chapter in College Station." She told me "Well, pray about starting one." So I did, and God led me through the whole process of getting it off the ground! I received amazing support from my friends, family and doctors. We had our first meeting March of 2010, and we had 10 moms attend.

To reach M.E.N.D. families, we love to utilize media outlets. Bryan/College Station is a "big" small town, so they have their own TV and radio stations, and newspaper. They love to welcome us on air to talk about what we offer to families and the community. We also love to participate in staff trainings at the local hospitals. We use our knowledge as former loss mom patients to share how to care for moms like us. One of my FAVORITE things to do is share with nursing students! They are so "fresh" and absorb everything I have to say.

My assistants and I have also had the privilege of going to the hospitals to visit moms who have just lost a baby and then later supporting them by attending their baby's funeral.

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



## M.E.N.D.—Houston

On May 17, 2011, at 33 weeks and 4 days pregnant, our son, Gideon, was born into the arms of Jesus. He was such a miracle to us because he came after years of infertility and after the loss of his older sibling, Avery, through miscarriage. Our hearts were totally shattered. My husband and I had to cling to God just to survive every moment. At the hospital, they gave me a M.E.N.D. brochure, and I knew I needed to attend a meeting.

From the moment I walked through the doors, I received love, grace, understanding and compassion. Sitting in a room with other parents who knew my pain brought comfort to my broken heart. God used M.E.N.D. to draw me closer to Him and to heal my pain. In 2013, I was honored to be asked to take over as Chapter Director for M.E.N.D.—Houston by the previous Chapter Director. I was so touched, and I knew God was calling me into this ministry. I know this organization is so special, and I can see how God moves and touches the lives of so many through M.E.N.D. God told me to step out in faith and say yes. So I did. After becoming the Chapter Director of M.E.N.D.—Houston, we lost a baby for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, Justus's twin, Joy. Our M.E.N.D. family supported and loved us through our grief once again. I am forever thankful for the relationships and compassion I received from those in M.E.N.D. As the Lord comforted me and used others to comfort me, God has given me a heart to come alongside other grieving parents and walk with them on their grief journey. As the director of the Houston chapter, I will always do what I can to provide support and love to hurting families in our community.

Other than our support groups, Walk to Remember, and Christmas Candlelight Ceremony, M.E.N.D.—Houston stays quite busy throughout the year. We provide educational presentations at hospitals, approximately 10 times a year, to share our stories and provide education to the hospital staff, nurses, social workers and chaplains. We have a relationship with multiple funeral homes throughout the Houston area, and are available to educate them on how to best care for families like us. Many of our moms in M.E.N.D. leadership have spoken at events like MOPS, Women's church events, and other Women's groups to share our experiences and to provide hope to those who have lost babies. There have been so many times in the last three years where I or one of my other M.E.N.D. moms have had a chance to share their story, and multiple other moms have come up and shared their babies with us. Some of these moms lost their babies years ago and have never been able to talk about them. Some of these moms are newly grieving, and God placed one of us in the right place at the right time to minister to them.

At one of our support groups, we had a young lady who had lost her baby. She brought along her grandmother who was not supportive of her granddaughter and did not understand her need to talk about her baby. The granddaughter brought the grandmother in hopes that the grandmother's eyes could be open to how real the pain is and how it is okay to openly express one's grief. As the grandmother listened to the hearts and stories of all the ladies in the room, she broke down in tears, openly weeping. She then shared about the baby boy she lost 50 years prior, a baby boy who was swept away before she was able to meet him, a baby who she loved but was not allowed to speak of. This grandmother found so much healing at the meeting being able to open up to our moms. It is moments like that, moments where God reaches down and touches the hearts of our families.

♥ Stormy Mitchell,  
Mommy to Avery, Gideon Zeller and Joy  
M.E.N.D.—Houston Chapter Director



## Praise in the Midst of the Storm: The Counselor's Corner

“Providing Guidance Through Life’s Storms”  
Written by Susan A. Adams, PhD, LPC-S, NCC  
www.drSusanAdams.com

Life is always full of twists and turns. As we approach the anniversary of M.E.N.D., many of you have days full of sad memories. This is the scene of my own life. You may remember last issue’s column was full of happy times and an expectancy celebrating my 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. However, life took a sharp detour just as many of yours have done over the years.

Our wedding anniversary was full of joy with a vision of 50 years, but this happy celebration ended full of fear and sadness. Instead of four days of a honeymoon, I spent them in the hospital in Kingman, Arizona. I experienced two TIAs (mini-strokes) as well as icy fear of what the future held.

After multiple days of testing, I came home to Texas. My growing list of doctors confirmed I was living in a home of unknowns. Many of you have faced those days of sadness, as you have faced a house filled with your own sadness, because death has slipped into your home. You have known the icy fear of a baby who died too young. For some, death entered too soon. For many, it left unanswered questions. For some, those memories are old memories, but for others, it is recent.

If your memory is recent, you have the opportunity to share a special tribute to the hole that remains in your heart. These 20 years are not only a celebration of a special little person who died; they are memories of someone who will never die. Each of us must find a way to remember through our own sorrow. It is through this journey and sorrow that gives honor to the change in our own life

Certainly for some, our sadness is a heavy pain that will never disappear. For others, we will bond together and share our sadness. Whatever causes your pain; remember that your sisters in M.E.N.D. will be there to stand beside you, so you do not have to walk alone. We are blessed when we have someone special who will walk along with us through our journey.

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

#### Painting Night



### M.E.N.D.-Wichita Falls

My husband Yoshi and I were introduced to M.E.N.D. by my OBGYN after we lost our second baby, Jacob, on February 8, 2010. She had heard of a group specifically for families who had lost babies through miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death. She didn't have a card so she scribbled the name and website on a piece of paper for me and put it in my folder to take home. That piece of paper stayed in the folder for 6 months.

After I returned home from the hospital, I was desperate for answers. I found myself Googling how and why this could happen. I somehow ended up on an online support group with 20,000 other women. I felt very overwhelmed to talk with such a large group but I found comfort in reading about others who were going through the same thing. Somehow I came across someone with a very similar story as mine. I reached out to this person and asked her a question through the private message. After that, we exchanged several messages, and a friendship formed. We spoke or messaged each other every day. We shared every detail of what was going on and how we felt, and we both found immense comfort in going through the trenches together. Her friendship was incredibly healing.

Six months passed, and I saw where a support group in Dallas (only 2 hours away) was holding a memorial walk. The group was M.E.N.D. I remembered I had heard of this group somewhere before and went back to the dreadful folder of pamphlets I had received in the hospital. Our family registered for the Walk and attended that October. I cannot remember who the guest speaker was at the Walk, but I will never forget her message. She spoke about leaving a legacy for our babies. Her message was to take our loss and make something better after it. When I heard these words, I knew I wanted to give others the friendship and support that was given to me. I wanted to start a M.E.N.D. chapter in my town so that families could find that bond with others to help them get through the trenches of grief.

Since I was only 6 months out from my loss, I was unable to become a Chapter Director right away. I spent the next 18 months talking to others about starting a group. I was introduced to two amazing women in my town who had also experienced losses. We worked together to start the chapter, and our first support group was held April 2012.

I was inspired to do something good despite our tragedy. The woman I met through the online support group was a gift, and she and I are still very good friends. We have met in person a few times, and we even ran a half marathon together on the anniversary of her baby's death in 2012. After I started M.E.N.D., she became a photographer for NILMDTS.

♥ Sarah Fukasawa,  
Mommy to Jacob

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls Chapter Director

*“M.E.N.D.—Commemorating 20 Years” continued from page 1.*

Subsequent Pregnancy Group, a Daddies Group, a Parenting After Loss Playgroup, an Infertility after Loss Group, and even a Ladies Night Out (a.k.a. Food & Fellowship).

Less than one year after starting M.E.N.D., we decided enough families were involved to host our first Walk to Remember. A few of us had attended one in the area the previous year and were confident we could coordinate one ourselves. We spent weeks planning this ceremony and did our best to ensure it would be a beautiful and memorable day for the expected 100 guests. However, in our event planning naïveté, we did not develop a Plan B in case of rain. It poured and poured that afternoon! One of our vehicles became stuck in the mud. Almost all of our balloons escaped before the event began. We had to make a last minute decision to hold the ceremony under a pavilion at the park rather than down the walk path by our donated tree, which was supposed to don all our homemade ornaments that had each of our baby’s names and birth/death dates inscribed on them. Our solemn walk to the ceremony site to watch our blue, pink and white balloons majestically float to heaven did not happen the way we planned. But, we lived and learned, and now we feel we’re experts in planning a successful Walk to Remember! In the past few years, we’ve welcomed more than 1,000 guests at each of our ceremonies the first Saturday in October. We know how to quickly transition to a Plan B if unfortunately needed, and we’ve developed a wonderfully efficient and organized system of registering and accommodating our crowd of grieving families. This year, for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Walk to Remember, we are expecting a crowd of 1,250 - 1,500! In connection with our 20<sup>th</sup> Walk this year, we are dedicating a Garden of Hope. The Garden’s centerpiece will be the beautiful Hope Monument, which is a life-size sculpture of Jesus holding a baby, sitting next to a grieving mother. The patio of the Garden will consist of memorial bricks that many of you purchased in memory of your baby(ies). Our Garden will be a place where people can visit anytime they want to pray, think or remember their loved ones. This is a project we have been working on for more than eight years and are thankful our dream is coming to fruition on this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

Similarly, each December we host a Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. Our first one was at the beginning of the holidays in 1997, a little over a year after M.E.N.D.’s formation. About 50 guests attended our first ceremony in a brightly lit fellowship hall at my church, Calvary Church in Irving, Texas. We have since learned that true candlelight and small clear Christmas lights and soft music sets a warm ambiance for the evening. This ceremony has remained intimate over the years with rarely more than 300 guests.

Over the next three years, our leadership team changed and grew. Area hospitals began inviting us to train their nursing staff on how to care for families when a loss occurs. We scored a few television and radio interviews, and even filmed a couple of training videos that were shown in hospitals across the United States. Our next stepping stone was huge and one we were not quite ready for: expanding M.E.N.D. to other areas in the United States. Nine years after our inception, we were contacted by three moms on our mailing list from different areas asking if they could open a chapter of M.E.N.D. where they lived. Our Board of Directors quickly developed some guidelines, an application form and process, and prayed we had not missed any important details. In the spring and early summer of 2005, our small non-profit in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex grew to having three additional chapters. We first opened in the NW Arkansas area, a couple of weeks later in Emporia, Kansas, and then in Houston, Texas. Over the years, we have opened a number of chapters across Texas and several other states. We’ve learned over time what works and what does not work, and have been given a good idea of where chapters will thrive, and where they will not. Today, there are eight additional chapters of M.E.N.D. in addition to our headquarters in the DFW metroplex. And beyond our wildest dreams, two years ago a mom in Nigeria contacted us about expanding M.E.N.D. to Africa. She happened to have business in the states so we flew her from her business meeting location to Texas to discuss this exciting expansion. We discovered the legalities of opening in another country were almost impossible, so we agreed to have her start a “sister chapter,” which is called FAMEND - Foundation of African Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death!

As our ministry grew into a national organization, I quickly realized the need for all of us to stay connected, so 10 years ago I began hosting an annual Leadership Conference. Each year all of the individual Chapter Directors and their leadership teams travel to the Dallas area. We spend two days together in training sessions and getting to know each other better. This time of fellowship is truly one of the highlights of my year.

As M.E.N.D. developed a trustworthy reputation amongst the healthcare providers in North Texas, I began receiving invitations to serve on various boards, panels, teams and even write and endorse a number of publications. Additionally, my calendar stays quite full with hospital trainings and various speaking engagements. I never take for granted the opportunity to speak and share how the ashes of my story have turned into something so incredibly beautiful.

These past 20 years have surely been an emotional adventure – an adventure I never dreamed I would take and a journey I never could have imagined the Lord had prepared for me. I am humbled by what God has done through my suffering, and it has been a privilege to serve all of you and offer you the same comfort I have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:4). I earnestly pray I am able to serve 20 more wonderful years bestowing the love, comfort and peace that can only come from our Heavenly Father as we remember and continue to miss our little babies who died too soon.

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

M.E.N.D.

**Chapter Corner****Chapter Meeting****Information****M.E.N.D.—Houston**Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

4500 Bissonnet, Ste 337B,

Bellaire, Texas 77401

Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

Lone Star College,

3200 College Park Dr, Room A228,

The Woodlands, Texas 77384

Director: Stormy Mitchell

stormym@mend.org, (281) 374-8528

**Subsequent pregnancy group** meets

every other month

on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,

led by Stormy Mitchell (stormym@mend.org)

**Daddy's group** meets quarterlyon the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,

led by Greg Miller (stephaniem@mend.org)

**M.E.N.D.—Texarkana**Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 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.—NW Washington**Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday at 6:30 p.m.

Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room

1800 Myhre Rd.

Silverdale, Washington 98383

Gig Harbor Meeting

Meets the 4<sup>th</sup> 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.—SW Missouri**Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Project H.O.P.E.

1419 S. Enterprise

Springfield, Missouri 65804

Director: Kathryn Gold

kathryn@mend.org, (417) 770-0600

**M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates****Wichita Falls**

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls continues to meet monthly as well as enjoy fellowship meetings at the end of the month. Details may be found on the Wichita Falls Facebook page. We are planning a fun evening for fundraising this fall, and looking forward to the DFW Walk to Remember. We continue to pray for our grieving families, and welcome those who need support.

*Sarah Fukasawa***Houston**

M.E.N.D.—Houston is excited to be holding our 11<sup>th</sup> annual Walk to Remember this year. We love providing our families with a time and place for peace and healing through the singer, speaker and balloon release. Reading the names of each of the babies and watching the families hang an ornament for each of their babies gives our M.E.N.D. leadership joy to know we are helping these families. We look forward to this event every year. I especially want to thank my Walk to Remember planning committee and the M.E.N.D.—Houston Advisory Council for all your hard work to make the Walk this year so special.

We are also in the process of planning our Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. It will be held on December 3, at 7:00 PM at Spring Baptist Church. Please keep an eye on the website and on our Facebook group for more information about that event.

*Stormy Mitchell***Texarkana**

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana held their first Painting with a Purpose at Painting with a Twist. It was a great night of painting. We had an overwhelming response from the area resulting in \$600 for M.E.N.D. Thank you to everyone who supported M.E.N.D.—Texarkana. If you would like more information, please contact Monica@mend.org or (903) 490-1210.

*Monica Davis***NW Washington**

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington had a successful yard sale to help raise money for a cuddle cot to donate to our local hospital. We are still accepting donations to hopefully place one this year. We will be holding another Seahawks ticket drawing in August/September; check our Facebook page for more details on how to enter the drawing.

*Stacy McGhee***Chicagoland**

What a huge blessing to be a part of M.E.N.D. as we celebrate 20 years of supporting hurting families as an organization. M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland is so blessed to have celebrated our 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary as a chapter this past June. We are thankful God is using us to provide to Chicagoland moms and dads the same comfort we received from others during times of our greatest hurt, after the loss of our children. We are excited to be able to be a part of the DFW Walk to Remember and the Dedication of the Garden of Hope this year. It is a privilege to serve God and others through the work M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland is able to do in our area.

*Sara Hintz***Tulsa**

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa will be hosting its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Balloon Release at our monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 18, at 6:30 PM to commemorate our babies during Pregnancy/Infant Loss Awareness Month. Please RSVP to lisa@mend.org and feel free to bring mementos of your babies to share/display.

*Lisa Daily*

**SW Missouri**

We continue to make progress in advocating for M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri. I had the privilege of speaking to three different groups recently: Greene County WMU annual meeting, Cox Bereavement training for new nurses and the Pregnancy Coalition organization. We have also become a member of United Way 2-1-1, an information network for Missouri. The Lord is providing ways for us to spread the word about M.E.N.D. and how we serve the community.

We are continuing to work with Klinger-Cope Funeral Home on our memorial bench. Klinger-Cope and M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri are partnering together to hold a dedication ceremony called Forever In Our Hearts. This event will be held on October 15, 2016, at 1:00 PM, at Eastlawn Cemetery, Springfield, Missouri.

We still need to raise about \$700 for our bench. Please join us for our Paddle Party fundraiser on September 25, from 1:00-5:00 PM, at Nixa Senior Center, 404 S Main St, Nixa, Missouri, to help raise the final funds needed. For more details or to become a vendor for the Paddle Party, or if you'd like details on how to make a donation toward our memorial bench, please contact me at [kathryn@mend.org](mailto:kathryn@mend.org).

*Kathryn Gold*

**Bryan/College Station**

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station has been really busy! We want to thank KBTX News of Bryan/College Station for inviting us to share about M.E.N.D. on the air so viewers would know who we are and what we do. We also had a great fundraising night at Painting with a Twist. We are currently in the middle of planning our annual Balloon Release for October. For up-to-date information please visit [www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org) and click on our chapter link. There you will also find a link for our Facebook group and Instagram!

*Jennie Drude*

**M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station**

Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.  
Texas Avenue Baptist Church  
3400 State Highway 6 S,  
College Station, Texas 77845  
Director: Jennie Drude  
[jennie@mend.org](mailto:jennie@mend.org), (979) 220-7851

**M.E.N.D.—Tulsa**

Meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.  
Canyon Crossing  
1651 E Old North Rd.  
Sand Springs, Oklahoma 74063  
Director: Lisa Daily  
[lisa@mend.org](mailto:lisa@mend.org), (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

**M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls, Texas**

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

**M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland, Illinois**

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
202 E Schaumburg Road  
Schaumburg, Illinois 60194  
Director: Sara Hintz  
[saraann@mend.org](mailto: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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

**Daddies group**

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

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

**Subsequent pregnancy group**

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

Led by Liz Walker: [liz@mend.org](mailto:liz@mend.org)  
*For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss.*

**Food and Fellowship**

are held the 4<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:brittney@mend.org)

**Infertility group**

meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Contact Cheryl Davis for meeting location and information at [Cheryl@mend.org](mailto: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](mailto: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.

*In Loving Memory***Noah James Barnette**

Stillborn January 22, 2015  
Given by parents Jay and Heather Barnette

**Angel Batrez**

Stillborn July 9, 2013  
Parents: Tony and Stefanie Batrez  
Given by  
Grandmother Isabel Tristan and Uncle Ben

**Asher Samuel Bennett**

Given by Rebecca Christians

**Levi Samuel Bowmer**

April 19, 2013  
Trisomy 13 and Tetralogy of fallow  
with absent pulmonary valve  
Given by parents Sam and Janae Bowmer  
and sister Evelin Jean

**Liam and Sebastian Callaway**

Stillborn August 5, 2011  
Unknown cause  
Parents: Rori and Zach Callaway  
Siblings: Miles and Aurella  
Gifts given by  
William and Norma Groce  
Grandmother Robin Rose

**Jackson David Crowe**

August 22—September 9, 1998  
Congenital heart defect  
Given by parents David and Marie Crowe  
and siblings Hannah and Andrew

**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

**Riley and Parker Davis**

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

**Paislee Ann Frette**

April 4-5, 2012  
Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome  
Parents: Brent and Courtney Frette  
Little sister: Colbie  
Given by  
Grandparents James and LuAnn Junkin

**Grace Irene Glos**

December 6-19, 2007  
Congenital heart disorder  
Given by Mommy Lindy Glos

**Caleb Dean Gramkow**

Given Anonymously

**CJ Gold**

Miscarried August 12, 2008

**Marina Gold**

Miscarried July 14, 2009  
Parents: Greg and Kathryn Gold  
Big sister: Emily  
Gifts given by  
Kevin and Elaine Roggow  
Tim and Jane Siebert  
Michael and Jennifer Wassenaar  
Ron and Pat Jones

**Serenity Harrison**

Miscarried December 3, 2009  
Given by parents Curtis and Jennifer Harrison  
and siblings Levi, Ziva and Evie

**Jack Henvey**

July 4, 2001  
Tetralogy of Fallot  
**Baby Henvey**  
Miscarried October 2003  
Given by parents Chris and Renee Henvey

**Easton Robert Herbert**

Given Anonymously

**Baby Mason**

Miscarried October 30, 2012  
Parents: Isaac and Nichole Mason  
Given by grandparents  
Derrick and Sharron Crandell

**Cooper Gauge Mercer**

June 2, 2016  
Parents: Nathan and Lyndsi Mercer  
Big brother: Parker  
Given by Obelisk Home of Springfield, MO

**Chase Austin Miller**

April 21, 2011  
Incompetent cervix  
**Baby "Blueberry" Miller**  
Miscarried May 4, 2015  
Given by parents Greg and Stefanie Miller  
and little sister Cora

**Jonathan Daniel Mitchell**

Stillborn June 24, 1995  
Cord accident  
**Baby Mitchell**  
Miscarried December 2001  
Given by Grandmother Marnie Mitchell

**Max Novik**

May 9-10, 2011  
Anencephaly  
Given by parents Mark and Melinda Novik  
and sisters Sam (Max's twin) and Jenna

**Rebekah Tikvah Nymeyer**

July 16, 2015  
Parents: Jonathan and Terri Nymeyer  
Given by Jennifer Fernandez

**Michael Stephen Parris**

April 9, 2009  
Infection  
**Madison Nicole Parris**  
March 5, 2010  
Infection  
**Baby Parris (Madison's twin)**  
Miscarried 2010  
Given by parents Sam and Stacey Parris  
and brothers Seth and Lucas

**Ramea Renee**

September 14, 1972  
Premature  
Given by mommy Marian Pruitt

**Garrison William Penley**

March 10, 2012  
**Callen Michael Penley**  
October 5, 2012  
Mommy: Kelsie Penley  
Given by Sanger Hardware, Inc

**Margot Lily Perry**

Stillborn June 10, 2013  
Cord accident  
Parents: Brandon and Marisa Perry  
Siblings: Adeline, Bennett and Noelle  
Given by grandparents Norman and Mary Lorentz

**Molly Faith Reed**

Given by Rayna Barefoot

**Mindy and Maggie Smith**

Stillborn November 4, 1997  
TTTS and Polyhydramnios  
Gifts given by  
Parents Scott and Karla Smith  
and siblings Travis and Julia  
Lisa Kastner

**Savannah Kate Stanley**

Stillborn January 3, 2004  
Premature/incompetent cervix  
**Baby Stanley**  
Miscarried November 10, 2004  
Given by parents Joel and Calli Stanley  
and siblings Colton, Danika and Sara

**Abigail Grace Story**

July 9-13, 2015  
Unknown cause  
Given by parents John and Faith Story  
and brother Tony

**Ariel and Angel Wong-Eguiarte**

June 26, 2013  
Twin to twin transfusion syndrome  
Given by Mommy Emyllin Wong and  
little brother Andre Eduardo

**Adrian Joseph "AJ" Zuckerman**

Stillborn March 30, 2007  
Cord accident  
Gifts given by parents Al and Amber Zuckerman  
and brothers Eli and Alex

**Gifts of Support**

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO  
West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe, TX  
Kitsap Community Foundation, Silverdale, WA  
The Cain Foundation  
HEB Grocery Company  
Kwik Kopy Printing, Dallas, TX  
Richard Dickerman, MD  
Janis Kidder

## The Hands and Feet of Jesus

On July 24, 2006, we lost our first daughter, Alivia Elizabeth-Grace, due to a pregnancy condition called incompetent cervix. The loss was sudden and never expected. At 10:30 AM, I was 5.5 months pregnant and doing as well as I could be. At 5:03 PM, I delivered a stillborn baby girl. I literally thought I was dreaming or had lost my mind, and it could not be true babies died before they even took a breath.

At the hospital I was in so much shock I did not even look at the information I was given until after the services and burial were done. I saw a brochure on M.E.N.D. and later talked to a lady who had a birthing store about my loss. She suggested I go to a meeting. In August of 2006, we went to our first M.E.N.D. meeting. I remember walking into the room with my husband not knowing what to think, and asking myself, "Will they think I am crazy because I don't want to exist without my baby?" When we walked into this little boardroom filled to capacity with chairs and other people looking just as shocked as I did; I thought, "Am I in the right place?" I was greeted by people who were nice and even sat across from a lady who was pregnant, but I was okay with it because she had suffered a loss, too.

They were all in some stage of grief because of the loss of their babies too. The meeting confirmed I was not crazy; my condition was not as uncommon as I thought, and it was okay for me to cry and scream as well as be mad that this happened. My husband met other dads and learned they were going through the same things he was.

It also gave me hope that I could make it to the next day. I learned ways to honor my baby, to give her a legacy because it was our responsibility as her mother and father to do so. It was okay to celebrate her and to smile again. The most important thing I learned was she could never be replaced. She had a purpose and I would see her again one day.

The purpose was hard to understand, but I know now I am to serve hurting people who suffer through losses and help them find hope again when there seems like there is none. I have been leading the Subsequent Pregnancy Group for the Dallas Chapter since July 2008. I love walking with the families through their pregnancies and see the sweet babies that God promised to come forth. The restoration of their trust and faith in God is amazing to see. I have served on the Walk Committee for several years. I love decorating the walk path and then seeing the parents' faces as they see their children's names on signs as they walk to the ceremony area. Lastly, seeing the display of hundreds of balloons going toward heaven makes me cry every time.

M.E.N.D. is a part of our family, and we love them. We love that they love the hurting and give hope when you need it most. I have come to love my friends I have met over the years, and our friendships are like no other. I even met my best friend at a M.E.N.D. meeting, Geri Shannon. Geri and her husband, Ted, lost Theo in August of 2011, and came to a M.E.N.D. meeting. Geri served on the Walk Committee for several years and loved M.E.N.D. Geri passed away on June 11, 2015. The way M.E.N.D. supported her family in their time of need was amazing, and they still reach out to them. They were the hands and feet of Jesus for that family and they will never forget it.

I say all of this about M.E.N.D. because it was heaven sent when I needed to know God had not forgotten me and He caught every one of my tears. I encourage you if you are reading this and have never attended a M.E.N.D. meeting or visited once and never again, go back and get the support you need or give support to someone else. Be the genuine hands and feet of Jesus in honor of your baby.

♥ *Liz Walker,*  
*Mommy to Alivia Elizabeth-Grace*  
*M.E.N.D.—Advisory Board*

## M.E.N.D.—Texarkana

When Joshua and Caleb died in April 2000, Texarkana did not have any support groups that met monthly. I knew this was a need in our area. In October 2005, I first met Kari Westbrook at a Walk to Remember event hosted by one of our local hospitals. I saw her at another event and Kari shared with me she would be opening a chapter of M.E.N.D. in June 2006. I knew I needed to be a part of this special group, so I attended the first meeting to support Kari and to share my story with other families so hopefully they would find peace and their "new normal."

In July 2006, Kari was led to another job opportunity out of town which meant M.E.N.D.—Texarkana needed a new Chapter Director. I knew immediately God placed this opportunity directly in front of me. Meeting Kari at those two events did not happen by chance. God placed both of us at the same events and at just the right time. In August 2006, I became the new Chapter Director and facilitated my first M.E.N.D. meeting. I am so thankful I did not miss this opportunity to be a part of this wonderful ministry.

♥ *Monica Davis*  
*Mommy to Joshua and Caleb*  
*M.E.N.D.—Texarkana Chapter Director*

## My Journey

### The Beginning

The year was 1972. I was 17, in my senior year of high school, and pregnant. I went into labor at 6.5 months, and my daughter was born. I named her Ramea Renee. She survived her new world for 28 minutes. I did not marry her father, my high school sweetheart, until 4 years later. We had a son together during our six years of marriage, but I had to leave him. He had become a violent man saddled with a drug addiction. Thankfully, I found a good and kind man. I've been happily married to him now going on 28 years.

The loss of a baby in 1972 was handled differently than it is now. Family did not gather around to hold or see the baby. No photos were taken. It was a different era. When Ramea Renee died on that day, my family expected me to pick up the pieces and move on. I did not speak of my experience often and did try to move on with my life. But every year on her birthday and Memorial Day, I have placed flowers on her grave. I have always missed her.

On October 6, 2014, I lost my dear brother, Arthur, suddenly and without warning, when he suffered a heart attack. I tried to be strong but the burden of grief from losing him was so heavy. I weakened day by day until it seemed I was broken. My immediate family had all passed before the loss of Arthur. He was all I had left. The emptiness and sadness clung to me and would not go away. I sensed I needed help but could not find the strength to pursue it.

As time went on, the grief of losing my daughter arose and hit me like a ton of bricks. Losing a child must be one of the hardest things a parent can go through. Her life only lasted 28 minutes, but to me, her mother, her life has always mattered. Now, many years later, the loss felt like it just happened. I felt a longing for a life I never knew. I became weepy thinking of Ramea, and I was struggling with it. My husband was the only one who knew what was going on with me. I consulted with my family doctor in July and asked for a referral. She recommended some grief counselors. I picked a name: the right name.

I visited the counselor in August and after an hour of questions, answers and many tears, she felt I had not properly grieved Ramea's death. I learned I must grieve my loss--even if it is many years later. She took me to a tool chest (symbolically) and showed me ways I could work through my grief. Her first suggestion, of several really good suggestions, was to write a letter to Ramea and send it off in a balloon to heaven.

That night I proceeded to write the letter. It took me 10-12 days. I cried as I wrote it. On day 6, I could write without crying so much. I found just writing the letter was healing and comforting.

I have always been a lover of the moon and stars. It can be 10 below zero, but if I see that the moon is in a beautiful place, I will venture out in the cold and simply stare. Looking up at the sky every night, I decided I wanted to release the balloons under the stars and moon. I picked a safe place within walking distance from home--a place near some woods away from the lights. There was a clearing so the balloons would not get caught in the trees. Full moons inspire me so I picked August 29, a full moon evening. I printed my letter to her on special pink stationary I purchased just for the occasion. I spoke with the balloon people. I was ready. The letter was rolled up and ready to go. I now waited for timing.

I was alone on my patio the night before I planned to release the balloons. I was listening to music and enjoying the summer evening. I looked at the weather prediction for the full moon Saturday, and it did not look promising. As I looked at a 99% full moon, I felt the urge to send the letter that night.

I grabbed my keys and the letter and headed for the balloon store, which was still open. I picked out my two pink helium balloons. One had white stars on it and the other one had hearts, baby things. It read, "It's a girl!" I came home, put on some beautiful music and read a copy of my letter out loud to her. I sent a text to my husband (he was out for the night) and to my son in Chicago that I was releasing the balloons. I grabbed my flashlight; everything was ready to go. All was falling into place.

### My Letter To Ramea Renee

*Dear Ramea,*

*Hello, little angel. I miss you. I have always missed you.*

*I was 17 when you were born. I was a very young girl really.*

*Now I am 60. I've always missed you; but now, more than ever, I feel the impact of not watching you grow into a woman. I missed you as a baby, I missed cuddling you, fixing your boobies, reading you stories, helping you get ready for the upcoming school years. I missed those toddler years.*

*I missed watching you as you went through grade school, making new friends, performing in holiday events, helping with schoolwork, giggling and playing, being mischievous, having fun. I missed those years.*



*I missed watching you grow into a young teenage girl, learning about herself, learning about young love, and going through the growing pains of those sometimes-tumultuous years. I missed the "eye rolls". I missed those years.*

*I missed watching you grow into an adult, the college years, the discovery, the freedom and the sometimes painful lessons of independence. I missed those years. I missed YOU!*

*I could write forever.*

*I knew from day one that you were a girl. That was it. I knew. It was all intuition. I picked your name very early. I really do not remember where I found your name, but I found it! And you were to be Ramea, my Ramea Renee! I didn't have much money but the few things that I bought ahead of time were for a baby girl. For you!*

*We both had the blessing of my Mother, your Grandma, with us on that Thursday in 1972. Her strength that day still amazes me. She took both of us in her arms. I hope your soul, even though life had left your little body, felt her mothering you. I did not have that strength as my body, mind, spirit, and soul were in shock. Grandma's experienced hands gently touched you, speaking to you and to me about toes, fingers, hair, lips, eyes, and all parts of you. She asked me if I would hold you, twice. I couldn't. I could do it now! My biggest regret is that I didn't hold you then, my little one. In hindsight, some 43 years later, it may have been too traumatic for that 17-year-old girl.*

*Within minutes of your passing, your thoughtful and ever so kind Grandma, moved by her strong Catholic faith, requested a small carafe of water and administered baptism to you by proxy. God bless her for thinking and acting so quickly. No matter what, you have always been a pure soul.*

*My intuition also tells me that someday all that happened on September 14, 1972 will be understood. Until that day, I will rely on God to help me love you the best way I can. The "missing you" will always be there. I pray for strength and wisdom and I feel my prayers are being answered. A little everyday, a little--a day at a time.*

*I miss you. I always have and always will, my little angel.*

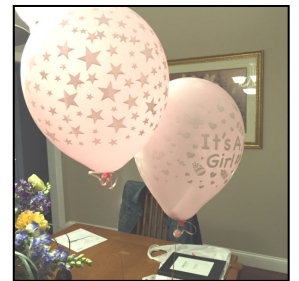
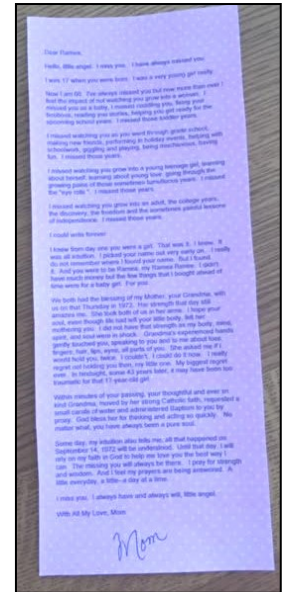
*With All My Love,*

*Mom*

**The Next Morning**

The next morning I wrote the following in my diary:

*I felt God's arms around me last night. The sky cleared around 9 o'clock and showed me the moon for at least 12-13 minutes. I sat on a berm in a clearing near the dark woods. I spoke my heart to her, to God and to the heavens. I cried my eyes out! How could I not! The clouds came and covered the moon, and I thought, "such a metaphor"--as this is like life and God, clouds will come and clouds will go, but the moon is still there. At 9:15 the clouds broke just so slightly but not enough to see the whole moon. I let go of the ribbon and watched the two pink balloons disappear almost immediately*



*Continued on the next page...*

Continued from previous page.

*into the sky--gone, gone so quickly. As I searched the sky, looking straight up above me, I saw the brightest star. Up to that point, I had not seen any stars. It brought the biggest smile to me! I felt it was a gift and reassurance that my body, heart, mind, and soul were receiving a blessing! It was more than I ever expected! I really can't explain it. It was one of the most beautiful moments of my life! God's gift to HIS "little girl!"*

### **Also on the Evening of the Balloon Release**

My husband was at the races in a nearby city when he received my text I was going to release the balloons. He arrived home not long after the release saying the races "got over early." I'm not sure about that. Bless him!

When I told him how it all took place, he said that the star was Ramea telling me "she got it!" We sat under the skies until late that night talking as I shared my exuberance. It was most fitting. He has been my angel here on earth.

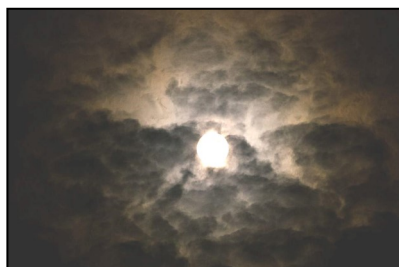
I downloaded the star app and went back to the spot. The app revealed that the star I saw is called "Vega." It is the 5<sup>th</sup> brightest star in the night sky and the 2<sup>nd</sup> brightest star in the northern celestials. The Vega star in some cultures means "life of heaven." *Life Of Heaven!!* It was the only star I saw as I released the balloons.



Vega Star

### **A Few Days Later**

The day after the balloon release, I mailed my grief counselor a copy of my letter to Ramea, and my notes before and after the balloon release. We met later the following week. When she called my name in the waiting room, she had the biggest smile on her face. I followed her down the hall to her office, and I couldn't keep it in. I said, "I found the right counselor with you!" She closed the door and said, "Wow, when I read your notes, I got goosebumps and tears at the same time!" We both laughed and then we preceded discussing how it all came about and the healing that came from this experience. She said I certainly took charge, and I made it mine. She said structures, traditions and ceremonies are important to humans; they can be very spiritual, and they give meaning to our lives. She said when we do not have those things, we miss them. She loved how I thought out every part without getting caught up in details. And then she said, "You finally bonded with Ramea." That is the word that really seems to fit. I bonded with Ramea.



This photograph of the moon was taken on August 28, 2015, by Dwayne Darnall and later posted to Facebook. I contacted Dwayne about how much the photograph meant to me. He shared with me while his son battled cancer, they spent many hours looking at the evening sky. After his son passed, he began photographing the moon and stars, and thankfully took this one on the evening of my balloon release.

After I left the counselor's office, I went to Calvary Cemetery to "Angels Row" where baby angels are buried, including Ramea. I was so surprised and delighted when I saw someone put a pinwheel on her grave. In all the 43 years I have put flowers on Ramea's grave on her birthdays and Memorial Days, no one (with the exception of my husband) ever put flowers or a decoration on her grave. So in 43 years, no one and now someone. I have inquired; no one knows anything about it. That makes me think maybe someone found her letter from the balloon, searched her name and found her grave so they could put a pinwheel on it. I do not know what else to think. I accept and give thanks!

This experience brought me closer to my living family and my friends. After my initial visit with my counselor, I decided to share my sorrow and my plans with them as they evolved. They were my circle, my team. In doing this, I soon realized I was not alone. I have a very loving family and the dearest friends. It seems there has been serendipity in every phase of this journey from the beginning. The grief I felt from the loss of my brother late 2014 resurrected the grief of my daughter, Ramea. In searching for answers and help, I found healing. I found my way. In a way, Ramea saved me. I am so happy my praying led me to the right counselor, her advice help me put my suppressed feelings of loss and love in a letter to Ramea, and I saw the Vega star that night, the star that represents "life of heaven." I know Ramea is truly in heaven. I felt her love, and it was real. By remembering and grieving her loss I soon realized all those who have gone before me are right there in heaven with Ramea in their new and glorious forms. And although they are gone, their spirits, their love will always be alive in my heart and soul. I am so grateful and blessed!

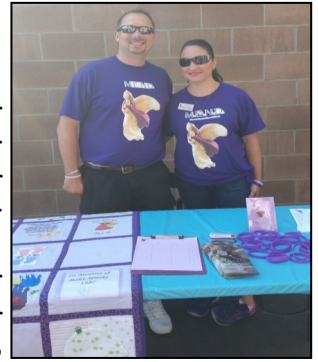
♥ Marian Pruitt,  
Mommy to Ramea

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

I started in M.E.N.D. as a member at the very first meeting in NW Washington in October of 2010. I took over in July of 2012, from the original director who was our nurse during our daughter's stillbirth. She saw a need for a local support group, found M.E.N.D., and started our chapter in 2010. When she moved out of the state, I felt led to step up and be the director of our chapter. It has truly been a great way to continue the legacy of my daughter, Sophia.

I have also been able to share about M.E.N.D. and provide support and comfort to other families. I have spoken to a local MOPS group about M.E.N.D., and what we do in our community, and was able to talk to local moms about the right and wrong things to say to someone after a loss. I was honored to be the guest speaker at a local Walk to Remember at Madigan Army Hospital for their first Walk. M.E.N.D.—NW Washington sponsored the local TEARS Foundation's Rock and Walk in 2015.

Sometimes we are called to difficult situations to provide support, one of which was by being with one of our M.E.N.D. moms during the delivery of her second stillborn, in less than a year, and help her document her daughter's short time here on earth. It was a very grounding experience to witness. It brought back a lot of feelings, but also allowed me to help in a way I have never done before. It truly was an honor to spend that time with her while her husband was deployed.



My husband and I when we sponsored the TEARS foundation Rock and Walk 2015



Original founding leaders:  
Susan, Carole, Tia, Michele



Current leaders:  
Joanna, Katherine, Lindsey, Stacy

♥ Stacy McGhee,  
Mommy to Sophia  
M.E.N.D.—NW Washington Chapter Director

**Jon and Jennifer Joyce,**  
of Dallas, Texas,  
along with brother Jameson,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Jacey Lynne,  
born June 7, 2016,  
measuring 8 lb., 8oz.,  
and 20.5 inches long.  
The family lovingly remembers  
Caley Brianna,  
November 12-26, 2007,  
NEC

**Ken and Lexi Moore,**  
of Dallas, Texas,  
along with big brother Thomas,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Daniel James,  
born July 29, 2016,  
measuring 4 lb. and 11 oz.  
The family lovingly remembers  
Isabella Carolyn,  
January 28—February 2, 2013,  
pulmonary issues

## Subsequent Births



**Brandon and Marisa Perry,**  
of Colleyville, Texas,  
along with siblings  
Adeline and Bennett,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Noelle Charlotte,  
born July 25, 2016,  
measuring 6 lb., 5.5 oz.,  
and 19.25 inches long.  
The family lovingly remembers  
Margot Lily,  
stillborn June 10, 2013,  
cord accident

**Richard and Katrina Pound,**  
of Arlington, Texas,  
along with big sister Judy,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Lincoln Isaac,  
born May 31, 2016,  
measuring 7 lb., 3 oz.,  
and 20 inches long.  
The family lovingly remembers  
Amos Arthur,  
June 30, 2013,  
Potter's Syndrome

**Curtis and Jennifer Harrison,**  
of Walnut Grove, Missouri,  
along with siblings  
Leviticus and Zivala,  
joyfully announce the arrival of  
Evalina Pearl,  
born June 21, 2016,  
measuring 9 lb., 4 oz.,  
and 21.5 inches long.  
The family lovingly remembers  
Serenity,  
miscarried December 3, 2009

## M.E.N.D.-SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—Southwest Missouri was established in 2009 by Heather Fann and her assistants, Ruth Sonnenburg, Heather Bass and me. Heather started advocating right away with the two local hospitals and the area OB/Gyn doctors. Our first support group meeting was held in September of 2009. Since then she started our annual Balloon Release and Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. Furthermore, she established relationships with area churches and ministries, which I have continued to develop and grow, as seen in the picture of me at the Pregnancy Coalition where I shared and networked with other organizations.



Currently our chapter is raising funds to provide a memorial bench for our members and the community as well. This will be a place for reflection and prayer as we remember and honor our babies. Our chapter also continues to appreciate the support of a local church, Second Baptist, as well as host a variety of fundraisers to reach our financial goals for us to continue to provide the much needed support to our local families. Our most popular fundraiser is our Craft Day, but we also have painting classes, a yard sale, letter writing campaigns and a paddle party.

We have also hosted family days at the park just to get together for fun. We try to provide a balance of activities and services to help families with their grief and include fun activities as well.

♥ Kathryn Gold,

Mommy to CJ and Marina

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri Chapter Director

## The Tears Behind the Camera Lens

I've suffered the loss of a child. I've cried on the inside and cried on the outside. I've cried with my wife and I've cried without her. I've cried with other families who have lost or I have cried for them if I wasn't able to be there with them. I've given my condolences, and I've had them given to me.

The biggest honor I've ever been given though from the people I call my second family, my M.E.N.D. family, is to have been asked to take pictures for them at their children's memorial services. I've done this twice now, and if asked, I would do it again, for them or any of the family. And yes, it is an honor.

The reason why it's an honor to me is because it shows the depth of trust they have for me and the level of love as well. How do you ask someone to photograph a ceremony where you are celebrating the life of the smallest souls lost and the impact their loss has on your family? It's a tough decision. It's one that we've made before. Even after you make the decision of asking someone to take those pictures for you, the questions become "Who do you want to take them for you? Who do you want to take a picture of you crying over your child's casket? Or get a picture of you laying a blanket on your child before you close the casket?"

I've sat there during these ceremonies, and I've moved around, feeling like an outsider looking in through the camera lens as I take photographs for these people. Crying at the beautiful words and gestures that are extended to the families. Looking on as I try to capture those heartfelt and often heart wrenching moments. Trying to ignore as people watch me walk around and take these photos for the family.

Those moments, where I've cried with the family, while still taking these photos are why I've been honored to do so. In one ceremony, the aunt of the baby who died was reading a selection for the mom and the M.E.N.D. moms started walking up and putting these flowers in a vase. The aunt was so moved by this show of support from these other loss moms that she stopped in the middle of her reading, crying and walked down to hug her sister. And it's something I caught, a moment of time paused forever; of the love of sisters, both sisters in blood and sisters in loss.

One other such moment was where the M.E.N.D. moms were reading things for a fellow M.E.N.D. mom, who had suffered another loss. There to hide her "sad eyes," as the mom would call them, the person reading pulled down her sunglasses and continued reading.

These are intimate moments, where souls are bared and egos laid low and I've been asked to capture these sensitive, emotional, uninhibited moments. Where tears are shed for the moms and dads, the grandparents and aunts and uncles and especially for the little souls whom we are there to remember. And who I've cried for, letting my tears fall behind the camera lens, even as I take the pictures. So if your pictures are out of focus during a moment like this, maybe someone's tears were in the way.



♥ Greg Miller,

Daddy to Chase and Blueberry

M.E.N.D.—Houston

## M.E.N.D.—Tulsa

I was about one year out from the loss of our first baby, Samuel. Our journey had been a lonely one up to this point. I “happened” to be placed in the same Bible study group as Michele Wilson in the fall of 2007. At our Bible study, we did our introductions and I mentioned our recent loss. Afterwards, Michele told me about M.E.N.D. and how she was working to start a chapter in Tulsa. I was on board immediately, so desiring to heal and to help others fresh in their grief. The Lord provided a beautiful location and our chapter opened in 2008, right around the time we had our rainbow baby, Landon. It has been such a blessing to be part of grieving with others and sharing the hope and comfort that we have received from Christ. I am so thankful for M.E.N.D. and that we have a chapter in Tulsa for moms and dads who are going through the loss of a baby.

♥ *Marcie Nienhuis,*  
*Mommy to Samuel*

*M.E.N.D.—Tulsa Chapter Assistant*

After our daughter, Brooke Sophia, was born at 38.5 weeks without a heartbeat on March 11, 2010, we were devastated. Our lives were turned upside down and forever changed. We planned a memorial service, contacted family/friends, and had to adjust to our new normal. We felt alone and isolated. In our hospital packet, that we didn't even want to look at, was a brochure for M.E.N.D. Additionally, we had a friend mention M.E.N.D. to us. The following month, we attended our first M.E.N.D. meeting. I remember bawling throughout the majority of it. However, the women there gave us hope. We knew we were not alone. There were other families walking a similar journey to what we would walk. I remember seeing a pregnant woman at the meeting who was subsequently pregnant after her daughter died at 3 months old. While it was certainly difficult to see a pregnant woman, she gave us hope for our future. We became regulars at the monthly M.E.N.D. meetings. M.E.N.D. was instrumental in our healing process.



When the founding Chapter Director who opened the Tulsa chapter stepped down, I stepped in to take her place in August 2011, because I saw of the importance of M.E.N.D. to me and others in our community. We are grateful God has blessed us with the ability to minister to grieving families and honor our daughter Brooke's memory.

♥ *Lisa Daily,*  
*Mommy to Brooke Sophia*

*M.E.N.D.—Tulsa Chapter Director*

## M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland

When we experienced the full-term stillbirth of our son, Samuel, in a brand new city in October 2008, we knew we did not have the support system in place to help us through such a tremendous loss. We were heartbroken and knew we needed some sort of help as we grieved our precious son. That help came in the blessing of a M.E.N.D. brochure in my grief folder from the hospital. I attended my first M.E.N.D. meeting just three weeks after Samuel's death. When I saw others had survived years after loss, I was given hope. I was still a hurting mess, but for the first time I thought maybe we will survive this. It was at M.E.N.D. I felt normal, I was cared for, supported, allowed to be exactly where I needed to be in my grief journey, and most importantly, it was a place where I could openly share about Samuel and others didn't shy away, but rather wanted to hear about his precious life. My life was changed through M.E.N.D.

I continued to attend M.E.N.D.—Tulsa meetings and served as an assistant in the coming years. When our family made a move to the Chicagoland area, I looked for a group similar to M.E.N.D., but found there wasn't anything that shared a ministry similar to M.E.N.D.'s. I knew God was calling me to bring M.E.N.D. to the Chicagoland area. We held our first meeting in June of 2014, and have been helping hurting families ever since. Besides our monthly support group meetings, we have had the opportunity to speak with local labor and delivery nurses, speak at state pro-life conferences, and been able to decorate a Christmas tree in honor of our babies at the Lincoln Park Zoo. It has been a gift to be able to use our loss of Samuel to share hope for newly grieving families in our area.

♥ *Sara Hintz,*  
*Mommy to Samuel*

*M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland Chapter Director*

## M.E.N.D. – Conmemorando 20 Años de Ministerio

Como muchos de ustedes, oré por mis bebés incluso antes de que fueron concebidos. Buscaba fervientemente al Señor por su voluntad para mi familia y mi esposo Byron antes de cualquiera de nuestros tres bebés fueron dados vida. Porque los tres de ellos fueron concebidos el primer mes de haber probado y porque nuestro primer hijo fue nacido a término completo y sano, asumí que nuestro éxito rápido de fabricación de bebés era siempre una señal de Dios que estábamos entre su plan ordenado para nuestras vidas. He aprendido con los años que, si estamos en camino con su plan, es sólo que mis planes y sus planes no y todavía no siempre alinean. Pero sé que sus caminos son mejores, aunque no siempre me gusta el camino de manera inmediata que Dios Todopoderoso ha preparado para mí.

Como todos ustedes pueden relacionar, el primer año tras el nacimiento sin vida de mi Jonathan en 1995 fue sin lugar a dudas, el peor año de mi vida. No sólo estaba lamentando profundamente la muerte de mi "precioso regalo de Dios", estaba increíblemente espiritualmente confundida. ¿Cómo y por qué sucedió esto? Verdaderamente creía que Dios y yo teníamos un plan juntos, pero el plan que yo había imaginado, no sucedió. Me sentí increíblemente traicionado por Dios los primeros meses después del accidente del cordón de mi bebé que resultó en su muerte fetal. ¿Cómo podría ser que tal "casualidad" sea permitido por Dios? ¿Dónde estaba él? Tal vez ni siquiera existía... Once meses después de la muerte de Jonathan, el día de la madre de 1996, reconcilie mi relación con el Señor. Lo digo en tal manera porque Dios nunca me dejó, él nunca me abandonó y siempre escuchó mis llantos. Fui yo la que lo había bloqueado porque estaba tan enojada y confundida. Pero en el 2º domingo de mayo, varios meses después de mi pérdida devastadora, sabía que de hecho El no se había olvidado de mí y que ciertamente tenía un plan para mí - y por el sufrimiento que había padecido. No puedo explicarlo. Fue solo impresionado en mi corazón y en mi espíritu aquel día. Pero ¿qué era y cómo y cuándo se iba a empezar?

Unas semanas más tarde yo estaba limpiando mi casa, estaba a punto de tirar la edición de domingo de lo que entonces, era el Dallas Times Herald. Me sentí obligada a navegar la sección obituario solo para ver si tal vez hubo un aviso de la muerte de un bebé. Lamentablemente, en realidad había. El bebé era Cailey Elizabeth Ottinger. Como Jonathan, también falleció por un accidente del cordón. Escribí una carta a Laurie, la mamá de Cailey, y la envié a la funeraria listada en el obituario, con la esperanza de que la carta fuera enviada a la familia de Cailey. Afortunadamente, lo hicieron. Unos días después, Laurie y yo fuimos amistades de correo electrónico y eventualmente nos reunimos para almorzar. Pasamos horas juntos esa tarde de verano compartiendo nuestras emociones y nuestros bebés. ¿En este almuerzo, ella me preguntó si había leído sobre otra familia en la zona sobre bebé, Michael Joseph, que nació también sin vida debido a la trisomía 18? Por supuesto, nunca había escuchado de trisomía 18 y delicadamente le informe a Laurie que no estaba en el hábito de revisar la sección de obituario para los bebés que habían muerto. Laurie se sintió obligada a contactar la mamá de Michael Lynne, que poco después se convirtió en un "miembro de nuestro pequeño club". Después nos encontramos con otra mamá, Stacey, que se había movido recientemente a el área de Dallas de otro estado después del impacto del nacimiento sin vida de su niño, Griffen Douglas. Los cuatro de nosotros las madres comenzamos a reunirnos regularmente y nos comunicábamos seguidamente. En poco tiempo, me di cuenta que nuestro pequeño grupo era más que un "club", éramos realmente un grupo de apoyo. Con la ayuda de mi padre abogado y una amiga de CPA que se especializa en sin fines de lucro, comencé M.E.N.D.—Mamas Endurano Muerte Neonatal. Obtuvimos nuestro reconocimiento en el estado de Texas en 07 de septiembre de 1996 (coincidentalmente el aniversario de la fecha según anotada del nacimiento de Jonathan), celebramos nuestro primer grupo de apoyo oficial en noviembre y publicamos la primera edición del boletín en aquel mismo momento (como todos nuestros boletines de noticias, esta primera edición se puede leer en nuestro sitio web en archivos de boletín).

Recuerdo diciéndole a Byron que yo sentía que esto iba ser "grande" - Dios tiene algo realmente increíble en su manga. En el momento, estoy segura de que Byron estaba pensando "uh... está bien - mi pobre esposa... ¿Qué en el mundo está hablando?" Comencé tapando a lo largo y obedeciendo las instrucciones legales y financieras de mi papá y CPA. Esto fue mucho antes de que la mayoría de la gente tenía Internet a su alcance, y muy pocas organizaciones tenían sitios web, por lo que todavía dependíamos de los periódicos, las páginas amarillas y varias publicaciones para publicar nuestro nombre y el propósito de nuestro grupo. Apenas unos meses en nuestro nuevo Ministerio, amigos nuestros que eran expertos en computadoras, Max y Jody Friz, me preguntaron si con mi permiso podrían crear un sitio web para M.E.N.D. Realmente, a ese tiempo yo no sabía lo que era un web pero totalmente confiaba en lo que decía Max. ¡Tenía razón! El Web del Mundo elevó nuestra organización a un nivel completamente nuevo. En poco tiempo, tuvimos familias alrededor del mundo suscribiendo a nuestro boletín de noticias y comunicando uno con el otro en el libro de visitas de nuestro sitio. Cada mes por lo menos una nueva familia atendía nuestro grupo de apoyo, y dentro de los dos primeros años comenzamos a ofrecer una gran variedad de apoyo, como un grupo de embarazos posteriores, un grupo de papás, un grupo sobre crianza después de pérdida, un grupo sobre la infertilidad después de pérdida e incluso una Noche de Damas (también conocido como alimento y becas).

Menos de un año después de comenzar M.E.N.D., decidimos que teníamos suficientes familias para alojar nuestra primera caminata de recuerdo. Algunos de nosotros habíamos atendido uno similar en la zona el año anterior y estábamos seguros que podríamos iniciar uno igual entre nosotros mismos. Pasaron semanas planeando este acto e hicimos nuestro mejor esfuerzo para asegurarnos de que sería un día hermoso y memorable para los 100 invitados que se esperaban. Sin embargo, en nuestro evento de planificación ingenuidad, no planeamos un Plan B en caso de lluvia. Fue un diluvio esa tarde. Uno de nuestros vehículos se atascó en el fango, casi todos nuestros globos se escaparon antes de que comenzara el evento,

y tuvimos que tomar una decisión de última hora para celebrar la ceremonia bajo un pabellón en el parque, en lugar de por el camino a pie en dirección a nuestro árbol donado, que se suponía mantener todos nuestros adornos caseros que tenían cada uno del nombre de nuestro bebé y las fechas de nacimiento/muerte inscritas en ellos. No vamos a poder caminar solemnemente a el sitio de la ceremonia, ni vamos a poder ver todos nuestros globos azules, rosados y blancos flotar majestuosamente al cielo. ¡Pero, hemos vivido y aprendido y ahora sentimos que somos expertos en la planificación de una ceremonia exitosa y memorable! Los últimos años, hemos recibido a más de 1,000 invitados en cada una de nuestras ceremonias el primer sábado de octubre. Sabemos rápidamente cómo ser la transición a un Plan B si desafortunadamente es necesario, y hemos desarrollado un sistema maravillosamente eficiente y organizado para registrar y acomodar a nuestra multitud de familias afligidas. ¡Este año, para nuestro 20 aniversario de la Ceremonia de Recuerdo, estamos esperando una multitud de 1,250-1,500 personas! Junto con nuestra celebración de 20 años de este recuerdo, estamos dedicando El Jardín de la Esperanza. La pieza central del jardín será el bello monumento de la esperanza, que es una escultura de tamaño natural de Jesús sosteniendo a un bebé, sentado al lado de una madre afligida. El patio del jardín se compone de ladrillos memoriales que muchos de ustedes compraron en memoria de su bebé. Nuestro jardín será un lugar donde la gente puede venir en cualquier momento que desean para orar, pensar o recordar sus seres queridos. Este es un proyecto que hemos estado trabajando durante más de 8 años y estamos agradecidos que nuestro sueño está llegando a una realidad en este año de nuestro aniversario de 20 años.

Similarmente, cada diciembre contamos con una ceremonia Navideña de velas. La primera fue al comienzo de la temporada navideña en 1997, un poco más de un año después de que se inició M.E.N.D. Tuvimos cerca de 50 invitados en un salón iluminada en mi iglesia. Hemos aprendido desde entonces que la verdadera luz de las velas y luces pequeños y claros de Navidad y música suave establece un ambiente cálido para la noche. Esta ceremonia ha permanecido íntima durante los años con rara vez más de 300 invitados, que disfrutamos.

En los próximos 5 años, nuestro equipo de liderazgo cambió y creció. Comenzamos a recibir invitaciones de los hospitales del área para entrenar a su personal de enfermería en el cuidado de las familias cuando ocurre una pérdida, aceptamos algunas entrevistas de radio y televisión e incluso filmamos un par de videos de capacitación que fueron demostrados en los hospitales de los Estados Unidos. Nuestro siguiente paso era enorme y uno que no fuimos absolutamente listos: ampliar M.E.N.D. a otras áreas en los Estados Unidos. Nueve años después de nuestro inicio, fuimos contactados por 3 madres en nuestra lista de correo de diferentes áreas preguntando si podían iniciar un capítulo de M.E.N.D. donde vivían y en sus lugares locales. Nuestra junta directiva rápidamente inicio algunas pautas, un formulario de solicitud y el proceso y oramos que no se nos había olvidado ningún detalle importante. En la primavera y a los principios del verano de 2005 pasamos de ser un pequeño sin fines de lucro en el metroplex de Dallas/Fort Worth a tener 3 capítulos adicionales. Primero abrimos en la zona NW Arkansas, un par de semanas más tarde iniciamos en Emporia, Kansas, luego en Houston, Texas. Con los años, hemos abierto una cantidad de capítulos a través de Texas y otros Estados. Hemos aprendido con el tiempo lo que funciona y lo que no funciona y tenemos buena idea de donde capítulos prosperarán, y donde no. Hoy en día, hay 8 capítulos adicionales de M.E.N.D. además de nuestra sede en el metroplex DFW. Y más allá de nuestros sueños, hace dos años una mamá de Nigeria nos contactó acerca de expansión de M.E.N.D. a África. Ella llevo a tener negocios en los Estados y le confirmamos planes para que ella llegara a Texas para discutir esta emocionante expansión. Descubrimos que la legalidad de la apertura en otro país era casi imposible, así que acordamos que ella inicie una "hermana capítulo", que se llamara FAMEND - Fundación de Mamas Africanas Endurando la Muerte Neonatal.

Mientras nuestro ministerio se convirtió en una organización nacional, me di cuenta rápidamente la necesidad de mantener la conexión y comunicación, así que hace una década que comencé a acoger una conferencia anual de liderazgo para todos nosotros. Cada año todos los directores individuales del capítulo y su equipo de liderazgo viajan a la zona de Dallas y pasamos dos días juntos en sesiones de entrenamiento y llegamos a conocernos mejor. Este tiempo de compañerismo es realmente uno de mis reflejos más apreciados del año.

Como M.E.N.D. había desarrollado una reputación digna de confianza entre los proveedores de atención médica en el norte de Texas, comencé a recibir invitaciones para servir en varios tableros, paneles, equipos e incluso escribir y aprobar una serie de publicaciones. Además, mi calendario se mantiene bastante completo con entrenamientos de hospital y varias platicas. Nunca doy por hecho la oportunidad de hablar y compartir cómo las cenizas de mi historia se han convertido en algo tan increíblemente hermoso.

Seguramente estos últimos veinte años han sido una aventura emocional. Una aventura que nunca soñé que tuviera - un viaje que nunca hubiera imaginado que el Señor había preparado para mí. Estoy, humilde ante lo que Dios ha hecho a través de mi sufrimiento y ha sido un privilegio servir a todos ustedes y les ofrezco el mismo consuelo que he recibido de Dios (2 Corintios 1:4). Sinceramente ruego que sería capaz para veinte maravillosos años más otorgando el amor, la comodidad y la paz que sólo puede venir de nuestro Padre celestial mientras recordamos y continuamos a extrañar a nuestros pequeños bebés que murieron demasiado temprano.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell,*  
*Presidente y Fundadora*  
*Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y bebé Mitchell*

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



Ground breaking on August 21, 2016, for Garden of Hope