



# M. E. N. D.

## Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

### When Your Loss is Your Last

When I was a little girl, I dreamed of having three children – all boys. I was ecstatic when our first son, Byron, Jr., was born, and I was beyond overjoyed when a sonogram revealed our second baby was also a boy, whom we named Jonathan Daniel. However, devastatingly, he was stillborn when I was 29 ½ weeks along because of a cord accident.

Two years before we conceived our first child, I was diagnosed with a kidney disease and was told I would ultimately need a kidney transplant. My pregnancies with both boys were very high risk because of my low kidney function, and after Jonathan was stillborn I was told by my doctors I should not get pregnant again until after a transplant. And even then, there were no guarantees I'd have their medical "okay" to try again.

More than four years after losing Jonathan, I had a kidney transplant. I was told I needed to wait 1 – 2 years after the surgery to become pregnant in order to ensure my new kidney was stable, so I waited 1 ½ years. Like our first two babies, we conceived the first time we tried, and I was convinced this third little one would be the "happily ever after" to our sorrow and suffering. But that sweet baby went to heaven too, just like its big brother Jonathan.

The miscarriage was not without complications, likely because of the loads of medications I am required to take because of my transplant. I needed two D&Cs, along with an extended hospital stay to be on triple IV antibiotics. Because the miscarriage was so hard physically and emotionally, we never felt a peace about trying again for a fourth that would hopefully have been our second living baby.

Never in a million years would I have guessed as a young girl that three pregnancies would result in only one child. And really, even after the miscarriage, I did not think

that was truly our last shot at having another baby. I thought we could and would try again, or maybe we would explore adoption. But neither of those options were to be. Even though we lost that third little one, I'm very glad we tried again. If we hadn't attempted to have another baby after losing Jonathan and after the transplant, I am confident the phrase, "I wish we ..." would continuously torment my thoughts.

Certainly, I feel I cherished being a mom to our first, and only, living son. But had I known bringing him home from the hospital, nursing him, changing his diapers, seeing him smile, watching him learn to walk, and all the other wonderful things that go into raising a baby were my only opportunities to do this – my first and my last – I'm sure I would have had a different perspective as a young mom. Maybe I would have embraced sleepless nights with less complaining. Perhaps I would have taken more than the hundreds of photos we did take. Possibly I would have played on the floor with him more, not worried about paint and Play-Doh staining the carpet, visited the zoo and played on the swings at the park more. Sure, we did all those things. But I didn't realize those years fly by in a flash and are gone forever and that I'd never get those precious opportunities again.

From my experience of founding and directing a pregnancy and infant loss organization for more than 20 years, the vast majority of moms who experience loss do indeed go on to have a living baby (or a rainbow baby as many moms say today). But there are some of us who did

*(Continued on page 13)*

# BIG GIVE HOUSTON

→ SEPTEMBER 13, 2017

**NORTH TEXAS GIVING DAY .ORG**  **Save the Date! SEPTEMBER 14, 2017**

*Nota Español:* 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 15.

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).

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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*



## #BetheBlessing

Has M.E.N.D. been a comfort to you?

Have you been blessed through M.E.N.D. and would love to help other families?

A way you can Be the Blessing to others is through Giving Days! North Texas Giving Day and Big Give Houston provide the perfect opportunity to give since donations of \$25 and above will receive bonus funds.

What does this mean?

If you donate **\$25**, you've covered the cost for

**2** families to be comforted by receiving our newsletter.

This also means M.E.N.D. will receive **bonus funds** because of *your* donation, which will help **more families** receive the newsletter and other services and resources from M.E.N.D.

Take the opportunity on these two dates, whether you are in Alaska, Hawaii, Florida, Maine, or anywhere in between,

**#betheblessing** to another family

who has suffered a loss similar to yours to provide comfort to them.

Share your story with family and friends, and ask them to donate in honor of your baby.

Visit [www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org) for the links to donate each day, or go directly to the sites listed below.

### September 13

<https://biggivehouston.org/npo/mommies-enduring-neonatal-death-houston>

### September 14

<https://northtexasgivingday.org/npo/mend>



## Mark Your Calendars!

Please watch your chapter's Facebook group for more details.

### September

September 13  
Big Give Houston

September 14  
North Texas Giving Day

September 16  
SW Missouri - Hillside Baptist  
Church Car Show

### October

October 7  
Dallas/Fort Worth Walk to Remember

October 14  
Houston Walk to Remember  
SW Missouri Balloon Release

October 15  
Wave of Light Ceremony  
(multiple locations)

October 17  
Tulsa Balloon Release

### December

December 2  
Houston Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

December 7  
Dallas/Fort Worth Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

December 8  
NW Washington Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

December 11  
SW Missouri Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

December 14  
DFW Star Wars Premier fundraiser

## 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

Holidays

Deadline: September 31, 2017

### January/February Topic

Face to Face v. Social Media

Deadline: November 30, 2017

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 17<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Claire DeLune!

Happy birthday, sweet!  
We miss you every day and think of you often.  
Love always,  
Daddy and Momma

*Claire DeLune Pilgrim*  
*September 30, 2000*  
*Fetal hydrops*

*Parents: Joseph and Modesty Pilgrim*  
*Siblings: Heaven, Joana and Joseph (Jojo)*



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

Happy 1<sup>st</sup> birthday in heaven, Rafael. You were born silent, perfect, beautiful. You are still loved and still remembered every day. Until we see you again.

“I’ll love you forever,  
I’ll like you always,  
As long as I’m living,  
my baby you’ll be.”

*Love you Forever* by Robert Munsch

*Rafael Charles Castro*  
*September 17, 2016*  
*Cord accident*

*Parents: Vladimir and Ruth Castro*  
*Brother: Fredy Andres*



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

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, baby girl! We miss you so very much. I’ve told your baby sister all about you, but I have a feeling she already knows. We hope your birthday is full of love, light and laughter! Until we can hold you in our arms again, we will hold your memory in our hearts. You are a blessing and a treasure to us, sweet one. We love you now and always.

Love,

Mama, Daddy, Isaac, Abby, Esther and Tirzah

*Rebekah Tikvah Nymeyer*  
*July 16, 2015*

*Extreme prematurity*  
*Parents: Jonathan and Terri Nymeyer*  
*Siblings: Isaac, Abby, Esther and Tirzah*



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

It’s hard to believe you would be 2 now! We think about you every day and hope you are having fun in heaven with your grandpa and great-grandparents!

*Madeline Leigh Estes*  
*Stillborn October 5, 2015*  
*Parents: Ryan and Rue Estes*  
*Sister: Keira*



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

Wasn’t it yesterday that you were a baby in my arms? I looked at your precious face then and wondered where all life would take you. Today, I look at the person you’re becoming...strong, kind, thoughtful, caring, gentle, optimistic, so many wonderful qualities... and I realize the dreams I hold in my heart, for you are alive in your beautiful spirit. I am so proud of you, and I love you with all my heart. Age 8 was my favorite year as a kid, and so I hope being 8 years old, for you, is like a dream... a dream made in heaven. I love you, Sereana.

Love,  
Your Mom

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



## Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Pumpkin pie!

Happy 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, my heart. I miss you every day. You are forever in my heart. Your brother will always know he has a guardian angel looking over him.

Love you always,  
Mommy and Lil Brother Ethan Alfaro

## Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Sweet Angel!

Happy 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, my angel. We love you dearly.  
Grandma and Grandpa

*Brandon Isaiah Alfaro*  
*October 19, 2007—February 7, 2008*  
*Spinal Muscular Atrophy*  
*Mommy: Jennifer Alfaro*  
*Little brother: Ethan*  
*Grandparents: Tim and Diana Seynaeve*



## Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, Andrew!

Happy birthday, Andrew! Three years ago we held you in our grieving arms for the first and only time. Saying “Goodbye” was the hardest moment of our lives. Your older sisters and younger brother have helped us heal in so many ways, but we’ve had to accept our family will never be complete. We wish more than anything to celebrate your birthday with you. We know you’re at peace, and we hope you feel the love we send up to you today and every day.

All our love until we meet in heaven,  
Mommy, Daddy, Leah, Hannah and Noah

*Andrew Robert Bateman*  
*October 7, 2014*  
*Unknown cause*  
*Parents: Tim and Laura Bateman*  
*Siblings: Leah, Hannah and Noah*



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

Happy 1<sup>st</sup> heavenly birthday, my love! Mommy and Daddy love you very much. We miss you like crazy. I look at your brother and sister and wonder what you look like. There is not a day goes by I don't think of you. Until we see you again... xoxoxo

Happy birthday!  
Love you,  
Mommy, Daddy, Parker and Mikayla

*Derek Anthony Doty*  
*October 24, 2016*  
*Potter's Syndrome and Bilateral Renal Agenesis*  
*Parents: Michael and Leigh Doty*  
*Siblings: Parker and Mikayla*

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

Happy 1<sup>st</sup> birthday to our sweet daughter, Julianne. Your mom, dad and brothers love and miss you very much.

*Julianne Rachel Watson*  
*Stillborn September 16, 2016*  
*Cord accident*  
*Parents: Will and Krisann Watson*  
*Siblings: Warner and Judah*

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

Alyssa, I can't believe two years has already passed since I had you! Not a day goes by we don't think of you and what life would be like if you were here. By now, you would be walking, talking and getting into everything! I am so thankful God chose me to be your mommy, and I am grateful for the 19 days we had with you!

We love you, Ally bear!  
Our angel baby "too beautiful for Earth!"  
Love,  
Mommy and Daddy

*Alyssa Nikol Jackson*  
*September 17-October 6, 2015*  
*Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC)*  
*Parents: Nathan Jackson and Kathleen McWilliams*

**Happy 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Keir Bear!**

My sweet little Keir Bear, how we have missed you so very much! I know you are having an amazing 4<sup>th</sup> birthday in heaven that is full of such joy it cannot be contained. One day we'll be with you again, but until then, take care of your little brothers. You are our shining star, and we love you beyond compare! You made us parents, and though our home is missing your laughter, our hearts are filled to the brim with your love. We love you. We miss you. Happy birthday, Keiran!

*Keiran David Cobler*  
*October 25-November 1, 2013*  
*Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC)*  
*Also remembering*  
*Fred and George Cobler*  
*Miscarried March 3, 2017*  
*Parents: Brian and Kristina Cobler*

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

Missing you every day, angel. We love you!  
"As long as I'm living my baby you'll be"

*Shiloh Hope Jalomo*  
*October 4, 2016*  
*Heart stopped beating at 15 weeks*  
*Also remembering*  
*Adaia Reign Jalomo*  
*February 28, 2017*  
*Heart stopped beating at 15 weeks*  
*Parents: John and Natalie Jalomo*  
*Siblings: Sophia, Paula, Jett, Samantha and Ameliah*

**Happy 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Kaden and Kinley!**

It's so hard to believe it's been a year since you were born and then went to heaven shortly after. Not a day goes by we don't think of both of you! Our lives were forever changed when we were blessed with you, and we will never be quite the same without you. Y'all will always be our first babies and will hold a very special place in our hearts forever! We hope y'all have a wonderful 1<sup>st</sup> birthday in heaven! We love you both so very much!

Love you always and forever,  
Mommy and Daddy

*Kaden Utah Whiteley*  
*October 18, 2016*  
*Kinley Jo Whiteley*  
*October 19, 2016*  
*Premature birth due to PPRM*  
*Parents: Rick and Alicia Whiteley*

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

You would be nearing 18 months old right now, and I think about what you would have been. Would you have Mommy's blue eyes or Daddy's beautiful brown eyes? I wonder about all the firsts - your first word, steps, favorite show, favorite lovey... Would you and Sam have been partners in crime? I guess all I can do is wonder. Mommy and Daddy love you with all we have and can't wait to see you again. Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> heavenly birthday, angel.

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

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

Happy 4<sup>th</sup> birthday, my sweet prince. I miss you every day. You are always thought of and greatly missed. Ellie can now say your name and will always know she has a big brother in heaven who watches over us all. Daddy and Mommy love you, sweet baby, and we think of you often. We love you now, forever, and always, EZ bunny.

Love,  
Daddy, Mommy and Ellie

*Elijah Zane Bastian*  
*Stillborn October 3, 2013*  
*Parents: Mathew and Lacey Bastian*  
*Sister: Elliott "Ellie"*



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

Happy 1<sup>st</sup> birthday to our precious Wyatt! We look forward to the day we are all reunited again. Until that day, our precious son, we know you are safe in the arms of Jesus. We love and miss you so much!

*Wyatt James Goforth*  
*October 24, 2016*  
*Bladder outlet obstruction*  
*Parents: Monty and Nichol Goforth*  
*Sister: Emersen Rianne Lippert*

**Happy 6<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Elizabeth!**

I hope you always feel how much you're loved and missed. You and Emma are everything good in life and after. We are so lucky to have you. Thank you, Baby Girl. I love you always and forever.

*Elizabeth Rae Siefken*  
*August 28-September 22, 2011*  
*Extreme prematurity/incompetent cervix*  
*Parents: Jim and Jennifer Siefken*  
*Twin Sister: Emma*

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

Our sweet baby girl, every day we think about how life would be if you were here with us. We trust in the Lord and the promise we will see you again! We love you. You are ours forever!

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

**Happy 11<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Samuel!**

Dear Samuel, we can't believe it's been 11 years since we met you and held you close. You were so tiny, yet so perfect. Every year on your birthday, we feel further away from you, more time has passed since that most difficult day. The truth is though, we're one year closer to seeing you again. We are looking forward to that day, sweet boy. Love you so much and happy birthday!

Love,  
 Daddy and Mommy

*Samuel Nienhuis*  
*October 14, 2006*  
*Prematurity due to MTHFR and Factor V Leiden*  
*Parents: Seth and Marcie Nienhuis*  
*Siblings: Landon, Olivia, James, Sarah and Annie*



## My Oldest Became My Only

My two miscarriages occurred after the birth of my daughter, Emily. As much as we wanted another child to raise along with her, it wasn't part of God's plan. I have three siblings, so I planned for Emily to be my "oldest," not my "only" child to raise. Raising an only child was a foreign concept for me. After 11 years, it still is.

There are advantages to having my losses after having Emily. First, I never had to face the question, "When do we tell her about CJ and Marina?" She was there. She lived it. She knows. Furthermore, I never had the anxiety of a subsequent pregnancy (yes, technically Marina was a subsequent pregnancy, but in my mind, I had my one statistical miscarriage and was not expecting to lose another). There may be other advantages, but I haven't recognized them yet. Maybe in time.

In my experience there are some special challenges to having my losses last. I have always hated the subsequent birth section of the newsletters. In fact, I never read them until I became a Chapter Director, when it became one of my responsibilities in proofreading the newsletter. For years after my losses, I wasn't happy for those who were expecting. Jealousy was a temptation I fought often. To this day, the phrase, "You can always have another one," hurts and angers me more than anything. I also remember the feeling of hope dying each month when the pregnancy test was negative. Once we finally made the decision to accept things as they were and close the door to having more children, the loss and grief was as great as my actual miscarriages. Emily asked for a sister daily for months and on occasion for a couple of years. Watching Emily with the understanding as a 2- and then 3-year-old grieve the loss of her brother and sister, along with not having a chance for more siblings, was most difficult. When she hurt, I also hurt for her, along with the pain I already carried.

The anniversaries of my two babies just recently passed. It's been eight years since my last loss, and I still wish they were here. I still wish I didn't have the challenge of raising a strong-willed only child, although I am now at a point in my grief journey where I can recognize some of the advantages of our situation. Even though there are some special experiences for having your loss last, I do believe I have something in common with those who had their losses before or in between their living children. I am thankful for who CJ and Marina have helped me become. I am grateful for the opportunity to use my experiences to help others on their grief journeys. I am honored to further the cause of M.E.N.D. and educate the community of infant loss. I'm guessing you can relate to some degree. I thank you for reading this and educating yourself to the uniqueness of "when your loss is your last." I've discovered over the last eight years being a part of the M.E.N.D., each of us have our own individual story, but we are all in this grief journey together.

♥ *Kathryn Gold,*  
*Mommy to CJ and Marina*  
 M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri Chapter Director

*In Loving Memory*

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

**Thank you so much!**

**Joshua Atreyu**

Stillborn December 11, 2011  
Parents: Joe and Dorothy Bridger  
Given by Sallie Nau

**Liam and Sebastian Callaway**

Stillborn August 5, 2011  
Unknown cause  
Gifts given by  
Parents Zach and Rori Callaway and  
siblings Miles and Aurella  
Grandmother Robin Rose

**Samuel Adan Contreras**

Stillborn November 11, 2010  
Cord accident  
Parents: Alfredo and Mercedes Contreras  
Given by Dr Delphinium Designs

**Jackson David Crowe**

August 22—September 9, 1998  
Heart defect/failure  
Gifts given by  
Parents David and Marie Crowe and  
siblings Hannah and Andrew  
Gail Bohdan

**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  
Given by  
Parents Jeremy and Lisa Daily  
and sisters Sarah and Savannah

**Riley and Parker Davis**

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

**Caleb Scott Fann**

December 1, 2003  
PPROM

**Baby August Fann**

Miscarried August 13, 2004, at 8 weeks  
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann  
Little sister: Madison Grace  
Given by Neal and Sara Elliott

**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

**Thomas Oliver Kaetzer**

Stillborn March 29, 2017  
Parents: Chad and Eileen Kaetzer  
Given by Neal and Sara Elliott

**Matthew Joel Mifflin**

Stillborn June 6, 2003  
True knot in cord

**Little One Mifflin**

Miscarried February 6, 2006  
**Lil' Rosebud Mifflin**  
Miscarried March 10, 2007

Given by parents Dennis and Janet Mifflin and  
siblings Thomas and Michelle

**Jonathan Daniel Mitchell**

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

**Jacob Theodore Oxendine**

April 29, 2001  
PROM  
Parents: Chip and Christine Oxendine  
Siblings: Emily and Eric  
Given by Paul Broussard

**Margot Lily Perry**

Stillborn June 10, 2013  
Given by parents Brandon and Marisa Perry  
and siblings Adeline, Bennett and Noelle

**Jaxson Kolt Scifres**

Stillborn November 27, 2016  
Cord accident and inverted placenta  
Parents: Justin and Melissa Scifres  
Gifts given by  
Grandfather Randy Vickers  
Regina Dusterhoft

**Allie Harper Shepherd**

Given anonymously

**Mindy and Maggie Smith**

Stillborn November 4, 1997  
TTTS and Polyhydramnios  
Given by parents Scott and Karla Smith  
and siblings Travis and Julia

**Jim Suggs**

March 17, 1952—September 20, 2016  
Car accident  
Given by Janis Kidder

**Jason Hunter Thomas**

Stillborn June 30, 2014  
PROM  
Parents: Melissa and Steven Thomas  
Sister: Hailey  
Given anonymously

**Emma Turner**

Stillborn June 1, 2017  
Placental hemorrhage  
Parents: Paul and Cherry Turner  
Sister: Kayla  
Gifts given by  
James and Jean Lamb  
Chris and Don Wyatt

**Lucas James Varady**

June 16, 2015  
Pentalogy of Cantrell  
Parents: Tom and Lisa Varady  
Brothers: Jacob and Owen  
Given anonymously

**Kateri Whitfield**

Stillborn July 22, 2016  
**Wenceslaus Whitfield**  
July 22-23, 2016

Incompetent cervix

**Baby Whitfield**

Miscarried May 19, 2017  
Given by parents Mikail and Anne Whitfield

**Ariel and Angel Wong-Eguiarte**

Stillborn June 26, 2013  
Twin to twin transfusion syndrome  
Given by mommy Emyllin Eguiarte  
and little brother Andre

**Adrian Joseph "AJ" Zuckerman**

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

**Gifts of Support**

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO  
West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe, TX  
Christ Church Assembly of God, Fort Worth, TX  
Kohl's Department Store Community Relations  
The Walmart Foundation  
Tierra Bailey  
Bonnie Wasson  
Janis Kidder

*Legacy Giving*

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

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

# Not Everyone Gets a Rainbow Baby

Written by Raeanne Frederickson  
 Appeared in Still Standing Magazine January 2014

As someone who's active in the online babyloss community, I know there is a lot of talk about Rainbow Babies. Who's having one, when to try, how to support someone who's carrying one, how to parent one, and so on. But what's overlooked in those conversations is the loss of Rainbow Babies. Or the fact that not everyone gets one.

Unfortunately, there is no "free pass" for babyloss parents to get a perfectly healthy little bundle of hope and healing after their heartbreaking loss. There is no line you jump back into after you've been mercilessly tossed out. Sometimes, the only child you have is the one who died. Sometimes, although I know it's unpopular to talk about it, Rainbow Babies die too. Just as much as any other pregnancy, the risks of miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects, and fatal conditions are still present. And secondary infertility (infertility after a previous pregnancy) is a very real condition, more common than you might think, that a lot of babyloss families are facing every day, many in silence.

We are a community breaking the silence of babyloss. We are making changes to the way people think and speak about grief. We are making a difference. Let's take that momentum and direct it towards this other area of loss. Let's explore these questions together: How do you cope with the knowledge that your baby who died was your last? What happens when there is no Rainbow Baby to bring hope and healing to your broken heart and empty life? How do you cope when your Rainbow Baby is diagnosed with a life-limiting condition? What do you do when your precious Rainbow Baby dies? How do you handle life when even the babyloss community that's supposed to be a safe place – free from hurtful pregnancy/birth announcements – has now become yet another place to hear the news

that cuts like a knife? How do you continue on when you feel like you're the only one without a Rainbow?

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## You are not alone.

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It's time to talk about this.

If you are a loss parent facing secondary infertility, or secondary loss, or simply cannot bring yourself to try again, you are not alone. Countless families in our community are deeply grieving both the loss of their precious baby and the loss of their dreams of ever holding a healthy alive baby in their arms.

I am one of them.

Since Samuel died, I have watched a lot of families in this community go on to have a healthy baby. I rejoiced with them – no one deserves a healthy baby more than someone who knows the hurt of babyloss! – but I also cried and hurt for myself. With each passing month of no new baby in our arms, my hurt has grown, while jealousy and confusion bubble up inside me. My soul screams out "*When is it my turn? Where is my hope and healing? Why don't I deserve that same new happiness?*" But just as with every other question I scream out into the universe, there is no answer. Only silence.

In a little over three months, it will be two years since Samuel died. As of this moment, I'm no closer to having a living child in my arms than I was three years ago when we decided to start our family. It's maddening and despair-inducing. I'm on the verge of saying "enough is enough" and facing the monumental task of making peace with the fact that I'll never be able to raise a baby of my own in this life. To give myself a break from the tiring monthly cycle of putting all my hope and love out there only to be denied once again. To never have a pregnancy end in heartbreak again. But with each

thought to give up, there is a spark of relentless optimism that says, "One more time, a baby to keep is worth it." To be completely frank, I'm exhausted from it all. I'm so mentally, emotionally and physically tired of this thing that's so easy for most, being so inexplicable hard for us. I'm worn down and empty and tired of hearing about all the Rainbows.

For a while, earlier in my grief, the news of a Rainbow Baby was something that gave me hope. I naively assumed that once I was ready to try again, I would get to say "Samuel's going to be a big brother!" I knew it would be scary, I knew pregnancy was never going to be the same, but I also believed there would be a renewed sense of hope and joy to bring some life back into our broken hearts. And I knew I wanted to keep one of my babies with me, more than anything in the world.

Now, after over a year of monthly disappointments on top of my existing grief, those Rainbow announcements I hear are no longer good news. Now, they're just another pregnancy announcement to pretend I didn't hear. Now, it's just another person to hide on my newsfeed. Especially when that announcement comes from a "newbie" in the loss world, the news now cuts deep into my already broken heart. I'm finding it hard to follow many of the babyloss blogs and pages I used to go to for comfort and support because so many of them are filled with Rainbow pregnancy and birth announcements. I feel the relentless pain of being a mother with completely empty arms, and I simply cannot continue to celebrate for these new babies in the way I wish I could. I know the anguish of watching person after person walk away with a patch over the hole in their heart and a tiny little bundle of joy in their arms. I know the eternal emptiness of never being able to say "I have a special little



someone to give me purpose and hope for the future again.”

My future is still empty, just like my arms. And there’s nothing I can do about it.

Let’s stop remaining silent about this. Let’s stand together and say loudly “Not everyone gets a Rainbow.” Let’s talk openly about the torture of each new month when we get negatives instead of

positives, the misery of seeing blood and knowing it’s the end of another life that’s only just begun, or soul destroying act of picking out another tiny casket. Let’s rally around the mothers who may never know the feeling of carrying a healthy baby in their wombs or of bringing a child home to keep. Let’s stop pretending the best way to heal is to feel the redemption of birthing a healthy baby and recognize that sometimes healing has to come solely from within.

If you are a loss parent and you are unable to have a Rainbow, have chosen not to try, or have experienced the death of your Rainbow, please share your story. Together, we can walk this uncharted path and find some hope and healing, even if our arms are unbearably empty. No one should ever have to face this life of loss alone.

Let’s stand together and say loudly “Not everyone gets a Rainbow.”

Retrieved August 5, 2017, from stillstandingmag.com

# The Most Wonderful Birthday Present

Celebrating birthdays as a grieving parent can be very emotional. I remember feeling so much anxiety about Lucas’s birthday several months before. I was struggling to decide how my family and I were going to celebrate it. Was there going to be cake? Candles? The birthday song? I wanted Lucas’s birthday to be so amazing, just like the day he was born.



My son, Lucas James Varady, was born on June 16, 2015. My husband and I knew our time with Lucas was going to be brief. Lucas was diagnosed with Pentalogy of Cantrell at 22 weeks, during the routine anatomy scan. We chose to carry him to term and prepared ourselves for the most difficult day of our lives. With the amazing support of our family, friends and the team of our nurses and doctors, Lucas’s birth was the most beautiful day that we will never forget.

As Lucas’s 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday was approaching, I knew I wanted to do something more than just cupcakes. A close friend had recently created a fundraiser through Facebook and was asking people to donate for her birthday. I thought that was so amazing! I decided that I was going to do the same for Lucas’s birthday, and I knew I wanted to donate everything to M.E.N.D. I was so excited to reach my goal of \$200 within 24 hours of posting the fundraiser. I thought people would stop donating once I hit my goal, but I was so wrong...the fundraiser raised a total of \$650! I was blown away by the generosity of my friends and family. Not only was I able to raise money for such an amazing organization, but I was also able to tell people about M.E.N.D. and the wonderful things they do to support families through grief as well as the positive impact M.E.N.D. has been in my life. To me, that is the most wonderful birthday present I was able to give to Lucas, and I can’t wait until we celebrate again next year!

♥ Lisa Varady,  
Mommy to Lucas  
M.E.N.D.—Houston



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 77401Meets 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: Chelsea Stroud

chelsea@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

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*****Bryan/College Station***

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station had a great time at our annual Painting with a Purpose evening at Painting with a Twist in College Station. A BIG thank you goes to Kohl's in College Station for volunteering assistance and providing our chapter with a grant to purchase new resources, materials and books among other things. We are working hard to provide FREE bereavement training to healthcare providers. If this is something you are interested in and would like to receive more information, please email me at [jennie@mend.org](mailto:jennie@mend.org).

Stay tuned for more details about our October Balloon Release! Be sure to join our Facebook page for up-to-date information.

*Jennie Drude****Houston***

M.E.N.D.—Houston is very excited for upcoming events. The first is Big Give Houston on September 13. M.E.N.D.—Houston will participate in this 24-hour online fundraiser designed to rally the Houston community around local non-profits. Please consider giving to M.E.N.D. on September 13 through [biggivehouston.org](http://biggivehouston.org)! See page 2 for details, and watch our Facebook page!

We are also preparing for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk to Remember. Thank you to the team of volunteers who are helping make this event successful. Without them, it wouldn't be possible. We look forward to remembering your babies with you on October 14, at the Walk.

*Stormy Mitchell****SW Missouri***

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri continues to minister to hurting families through our Facebook group, support group meetings and one-on-one time. We are looking forward to our upcoming events located in the "Mark Your Calendar" section of this newsletter. For more information, watch our Facebook page. We are also a sponsor for the Wave of Light event on October 15, from 7:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. at Northside Christian Church. More information can be found on the Facebook event "Springfield, MO Wave of Light" or contact me at [kathryn@mend.org](mailto:kathryn@mend.org).

*Kathryn Gold****NW Washington***

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington wants to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in our fundraisers this summer. To all the volunteers, and all the donations we received, we are truly grateful. We met a few new families the last couple months, and are thankful to the Lord for bringing them to us so we may help their grieving.

November 28 will be our last meeting at our Gig Harbor location. We want to thank everyone who has attended a meeting at that location. The attendance there has dropped significantly in the last year, and unfortunately is not cost-effective to continue this second location for our Washington Chapter. We look forward to continuing to support families at our Silverdale location.

*Stacy McGhee*

## Chicagoland

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland continues to welcome new families each month to our support group meetings. We are so grateful to the parents of Henry Morbert. They held a golf outing in August in his memory and raised money for M.E.N.D. M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland continues the ministry of walking alongside hurting families who have lost babies.

Sara Hintz

## Tulsa

In order to commemorate our babies during Pregnancy/Infant Loss Awareness Month, M.E.N.D.—Tulsa will be hosting our 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Balloon Release at our monthly meeting on Tuesday October 17, at 6:30 P.M. Please RSVP to lisa@mend.org and feel free to bring mementos of your babies to share/display.

Lisa Daily

Intense desire for something,  
coupled with  
the inability to fulfill  
that desire,  
is life's most  
PAINFUL combination.

-Author Unknown

## 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, (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, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

## 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, (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 fa-  
thers. 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  
*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

### 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

*For families experiencing  
infertility after a loss.*

**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.

## Healing Through The Shadow of the Storm

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

The storms of life certainly rock the boat when an individual or couple experience stress related to an infant death, as they adjust to the fact that this was the final (or perhaps only) baby. This stress creates a variety of internal reactions which requires a major life readjustment.

Any change in a person’s life-style can be a stressor; however, the death of an infant, no matter how the death occurs, often forces an individual or a couple out of secure expectations. Grieving may not be understood; therefore, it is often not accepted or supported. The emotional pain (e.g., sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, loneliness, etc.) can lead to physical difficulties as well (e.g., chest pain, heart palpitations, dizziness, nausea, too little or too much sleep or eating, etc.). All of these reactions and behaviors are normal grief waves.

Stereotypes exist that women are more expressive with their feelings, and men are more stoic. Many believe women need more support from others, while men tend to go it alone. Sometimes the stereotypes fit, and sometimes they don’t. Some women are more quiet and solitary in their grief, and some men are more expressive and emotional, desiring more support. It’s not a requirement of men being one way and women being another. It’s a matter of different people being comfortable expressing their grief in different ways, whether they are men or women. Allow space for your own sorrow, and give yourself permission to travel down your own grief pathway.

**Allow space  
for your own sorrow,  
and give yourself permission  
to travel down  
your own grief pathway.**

Some find it helpful to talk about their loss while others don’t. When a client comes to my office for counseling, I explain what we do is called “grief work,” because it is work to get through this storm in life. You can’t determine exactly what you will feel or when you will feel it, but you can take an active role in how your grief unfolds. You can be intentional about taking good care of yourself, including eating and sleeping well, getting plenty of exercise, and doing things you enjoy. You can choose the people to be around.

Recognize that not everyone will understand your painful loss, especially in regards to trying to bring more children in the family. The decision to have another child after a loss (called a rainbow baby) can occur as an outcome of the painful storm. Many parents are unsure of how to both love their new baby and also grieve the baby they lost. They may feel they need to choose which baby to be loyal to, and worry that if they become happy and engaged with the baby they brought home, they might be forgetting the one who is no longer here. This confusion and conflict can, in many instances, make it very difficult for parents to bond and connect with their new babies, no matter how much they have wanted them and no matter how much they know they love them.

However, you may choose not to have another child or may be unable to have another baby. There is a struggle in this storm as well. Often couples come to see me because they are struggling with a depression or anxiety that is unwanted, unwelcome and unexpected. And because these emotions are occurring at a time when the parents wanted so desperately to be happy and connected to their babies, feelings of guilt, shame and insecurity abound. Deep down, some felt another baby would help ease the pain, perhaps even take the place of the one who was lost. But when that door is closed, the struggle is compounded adding many more “whys” to the unending and sometimes unanswered questions.

Often life may be a disastrous, stormy struggle after an infant loss. This struggle may leave only more questions and raw emotions instead of answers. It can be difficult to deal with rapidly changing emotions or a unique sense of failure, yearning, guilt, or confusion. No matter how much others try to assure you that these are normal, common reactions, it is still difficult to embrace the intensity and duration of swiftly evolving moods. Parents may feel responsible for the death, no matter how irrational it may seem. They also might feel they have lost a vital part of their own identity.

The process of attempting to make sense of this particular storm of life is complicated and layered. It leaves many with uncertain, raw emotion. While these parents would give anything to have their babies with them and fulfill their dreams of what might have been, they are usually aware and accepting of this disappointment during this impossibly difficult time.

However, this storm can eventually become a healing journey. One day the pain will lessen; be patient. Make the effort to seek support and practice forgiveness – if necessary. Share the process with your spouse and other parents that are grieving similar losses. Recognize when you need to seek professional help. It is okay to miss the dreams, hopes and opportunities that are no longer here because of this loss.

**...the memory of this baby  
develops a new kind of bond -  
one of the heart and soul  
rather than a physical one.**

As the waves of sorrow tend to wash over or threaten to engulf the family, it is important to recognize that the little one who died is still part of a relationship. The relationship cannot grow and fulfill the dreams and hopes as a result of the loss, but finding healthy ways to incorporate the memory of this baby develops a new kind of bond – one of the heart and the soul rather than a physical one.

## Mourning The Last

My husband and I had an energetic and handsome boy. We had a beautiful, independent little girl. What more did we need? It took me a long time to make the choice. In fact, shortly after we had our little girl, we were planning to go forward with the procedure, but I had doubts. I thought we were making a rash decision. "Let's wait until we are absolutely sure," I said. So, that's what we did.

Months went by, and I started to become more and more content with our perfect little family of four. Besides, there were times I could barely handle the two I had, why would I want to add a third to the mix? A small part of me wanted one more, but my sanity outweighed the dream. So I finally told my husband it was time.

For a few months, he kept forgetting to call the doctor. Each month, we bit our nails, waiting to see if we had survived another month, baby free. Finally, the appointment was made, and we were sure we were home free. We made plans for the future, plans for our perfect family of four. We smiled, knowing there were so many possibilities.

A week before the procedure, one little test crushed all our plans. What were we going to do now? This wasn't supposed to happen! There was only one thing to do, go through with the procedure and move forward with one more addition to the family.

So we did. A week passed and my husband went in to end all chances of ever adding to our family again. At the time, we were sure this was what we wanted. I had my hands full with the two we had and now I was carrying yet another. I definitely didn't want four! My husband was perfectly happy with only two children, so why would he think twice?

The procedure was finished, we had made our choice, and now we have to live with it for the rest of our lives.

The pregnancy was hard. I was sick a lot and my body was not responding well to growing another life. It was almost as if my body had decided it was done as well. I was weak most of the time. I was emotionally unstable, and I had to be on a strict diet to help control my blood sugars. It

took me several months to even connect with the baby growing within me.

When I finally did accept that I was indeed going to have another child, I didn't realize how much I would fall for her and how little time I would have with her. I loved feeling her move within me. When we discovered she was a girl, I had to name her immediately! I wanted to love her as much as I could since I had disowned her for most of the pregnancy.

Only a month after I fell in love with her, I lost her. It took only a moment for God to open my heart to the possibility of having another baby, only to be left with the regret of a decision made in a moment of fear. Now, she is gone, and I will never be able to have another. We no longer have a "perfect" family of four, but a broken family of four. There is a hole in our family. A missing piece.

I feel as though my heart grew to love another life, but there is no life to fill that gap. My husband says he feels like for the first time, there is nothing he can do to give me what I want, what I need. He holds me, and we mourn the loss together.

I know God has a purpose. If we had never gotten pregnant, would we have made the choice we regret? If we hadn't made the choice, would we be pregnant now? Would that pregnancy be worse than the last? If we had made the choice sooner, would I regret it now? I don't know what God is teaching me, but I know that everything works together for our good. Someday I will look back and see how it all fits together. I will see God's purpose. I will see that it couldn't have happened any other way. In the meantime, all I can do is trust. All I can do is take each day as it comes and find every way to praise my God through the hurt, through the regret, and through the loss.

♥ Ana Leigh Jantz  
Mommy to Elizabeth Morgan  
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

*"When Your Loss is Your Last" continued from page 1.*

not. Either they chose not to try again for various reasons, or like me did try, but lost again and couldn't or didn't keep attempting. If I had been physically able, there is no doubt I would have persisted as many times as it took to get to take home another living baby. But, I guess that just wasn't meant to be, and honestly, that will always be very sad to me. Yes, we have a wonderful living son who gave us a beautiful daughter when he married a few years ago, and for that we are very grateful. But, I wanted a household of rambunctious little boys who would bring much laughter and adventure to our family. I wanted the "kids" to come home from college, holidays, and be in each other's weddings. I wanted them to be close and fiercely love each other. But none of that is. So, my husband Byron and I make as many memories as we can with Byron, Jr. and our daughter-in-law, Anna. We have learned not to take one day, or even one moment, for granted.

I'll never understand why our two losses were our last and why we didn't get to bring home another baby to raise. But I know they are in heaven, and we'll spend eternity with them. I'm not exactly sure how it works there, but I pray I'll get to mother them in some fashion one day when I join them. And maybe, just maybe, they weren't our last – who knows for absolute certain we can't have babies in heaven?

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

## A Different Kind of "Last Loss"

First off, you need to know I've been the mom of two babies in heaven for almost 14 years. So let's say that "I've seen and heard it all." I used to be the M.E.N.D. Newsletter Editor so "I've written it all, too...or so I thought." Our amazing editor, Jennifer Harrison, challenged me recently. For a few years I could write stories about being a brand new loss mom. Or perhaps as a mom with multiple failed, barely-started, domestic adoptions. I could write stories about being a mom of a miscarried baby or a loss shortly after birth. I could share my grief of being a mom with infertility and loss, or a mom of subsequent losses, or a mom with subsequent high-risk pregnancies. You name it; I could write it. At some point, by the grace of God and after the birth of our now 10-year-old daughter, I could say I am no longer qualified to write an article about "What if your loss is your last?" Sort of.

You see, when Madison was about 3 years old, we started to pursue an international adoption. God had clearly opened a door for us to adopt a child from the country of Colombia. We found an agency; we did the homestudy, even Skyping my husband during a deployment. We took the online interracial family courses. We spent the money--loads of it; and we gave our full hearts and minds to bringing home a baby to complete our family. Heck, I even got a tattoo of our "family tree" with our birthstone colors in leaves to include me and my husband, our two babies in heaven, Caleb and August, and our miracle baby Madison. I left a sixth leaf blank to fill in with the color of our Colombian baby's birthstone.

And then...as it had when my water broke with Caleb, or I began bleeding with August, or I was put on bedrest with Madison...everything changed. Three years into the process, we received a phone call. Colombia had changed the rules. They had worked out a system that would no longer allow a baby to enter our family, and they left a rule in place that said our biological daughter couldn't remain "the baby." That meant we had three choices: 1) Change age groups and try to adopt after Madison aged out of the category (a milestone we have only just recently surpassed, thus living in limbo for 5 years); 2) Change countries and start over losing time and money (more limbo); or 3) See this bureaucratic nightmare as God clearly closing the door He had previously opened and thus our "final loss."

After what felt like the Biblical description of "wailing and gnashing of teeth," we submitted to what we believed was the Lord's will. We said goodbye to the dreams of our new baby and Madison being a big sister. WHY?! It was all so familiar...this path of grief. After all, we'd traveled it numerous times before. The loss was so profound that I once again sought counseling for my grief and depression. This time I had the added burden of watching my daughter grieve (yet another article I was now qualified to write, and I was so angry at God about it!).

Like before, it took a while. My grief journey and that of my husband and daughter were all different. They still rear their ugly heads, like recently when Madison's teacher began to host orphans from another country and has the option to adopt them. "MOM! I didn't know people could do that! Can we adopt an orphan from Ukraine? PLEASE?!" Ugh. Why, God?!

Eventually, though, as with all our losses, we found our new normal. We began to accept the uniqueness that God designed in our "Triangle Family" here on earth. I completed my counseling and felt like we had "moved through." And then...I'd catch a glimpse in the mirror of that empty leaf. "God, none of this is a surprise to you. I had complete peace about getting the tattoo, but You knew this leaf would remain empty. What are you working out here, Lord?" So I began to pontificate.

*Maybe God knew that the leaf would be empty and that the 450+ students I began to love in my new job at Maddie's elementary school would fill it. Meh. Maybe it's to represent my three nieces and two nephews, all of whom, I love dearly. Nah...that seemed cheesy. Maybe it's for the domestic adoption for which we were interviewed for by the birthmom a couple years ago that no one knew about. Nope, that didn't work out either.*

So that tiny leaf remained a giant elephant in my mind. I can't remember when, but sometime in the last three years, one Sunday in church, a song was played during worship (I can't remember it, either). I do, however, remember a moment when I clearly realized that no child, no group of children, past, present or future, would fill that hole. I heard the Lord whisper to my heart that He allowed that leaf, that tattoo, these trials,



He allowed that leaf... as a reminder that only He could make me complete. Only my relationship with the one true God, Jesus Christ, would fill the void in my heart.

I had been a born-again, baptized believer since I was 16 years old, and only my initial conversion moment compares to the clarity and overwhelming grace I felt right then. God filled my heart...and my tattoo, a representation of my "last loss"...in that precious moment and for that, I'm grateful.

♥ Heather Fann,  
Mommy to Caleb and Baby August  
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

## Cuando su pérdida es su última

Cuando era una niña, yo soñaba con tener tres hijos, todos varones. Yo estaba extasiada cuando nuestro primer hijo, Byron, Jr., nació, y más allá estaba muy contenta cuando un sonogram reveló nuestro segundo bebé también era un niño, que hemos llamado Jonathan Daniel. Sin embargo, devastadoramente, fue nacido sin vida a las 29 semanas ½ a debido a un accidente del cordón.

Dos años antes de que concebimos a nuestro primer hijo, fue diagnosticada con una enfermedad renal y me dijeron que en última instancia necesitaría un trasplante de riñón. Mis embarazos con ambos muchachos fueron de muy alto riesgo debido a mi función renal baja, y después del nacimiento de Jonathan me dijeron mis doctores que no debo quedar embarazada otra vez hasta después de un trasplante. Y aun así no había garantía que mis médicos me dieran el 'okay' para intentarlo de nuevo.

Más de cuatro años después de perder a Jonathan, tuve un trasplante de riñón. Me dijeron que tenía que esperar uno a dos años después de la cirugía para quedar embarazada para asegurar que mi nuevo riñón era estable, así que esperé un año y medio. Como nuestros dos primeros bebés, concebimos la primera vez que intentamos, y estaba convencida de que este tercer pequeño sería el "feliz siempre después" a nuestro dolor y sufrimiento. Pero ese bebé dulce fue al cielo, igual que su hermano Jonathan.

El aborto involuntario no fue sin complicaciones, probablemente debido a los fuertes medicamentos que debo tomar por razones de mi trasplante. Tuve dos procedimientos de D & C, y además tuve que permanecer en el hospital durante varios días con antibióticos triple intervenal. Porque el aborto fue demasiado difícil físicamente y emocionalmente, nunca sentimos paz acerca de intentar de nuevo para un cuarto embarazo que posiblemente sería nuestro segundo bebé vivo.

Jamás en un millón de años habría imaginado de una chica joven que tres embarazos darían lugar a solamente un niño vivo. Y realmente, incluso después del aborto espontáneo no pensé que realmente era nuestra última oportunidad de tener otro bebé. Pensé que podríamos intentarlo de nuevo, o tal vez exploráramos adopción. Pero ninguna de estas opciones debían ser realidad. Aunque perdimos el tercer pequeño, me alegro que intentamos de nuevo. Si no intentamos tener otro bebé después de perder a Jonathan y después del trasplante, estoy seguro de que la frase, "me gustaría..." me atormentada mis pensamientos continuamente.

Ciertamente, siento orgullo ser madre a nuestro primer y único hijo vivo. Pero haber conocido los sentimientos de llevarlo a casa del hospital, cambiando sus pañales, verlo sonreír, verlo aprender a caminar, y todas las otras cosas maravillosas que hay en criar un bebé fueron mis únicas oportunidades para hacer esto, mi primer y mi último – estoy segura de que hubiera tenido una perspectiva diferente como una mamá joven. Tal vez habría aceptado más noches sin dormir con menos quejas. Tal vez habría tomado más de los cientos de fotos que tomamos. Posiblemente hubiera jugado más con él en el piso, no preocuparme por pintura y manchas en la alfombra de Play-Doh, hubiera visitado el zoológico y el parque más. Sin duda, hicimos todas esas cosas, pero no me di cuenta de que esos años vuelan como un flash y se han ido por siempre y nunca conseguiría esas oportunidades preciosas devuelta.

Por mi experiencia de fundar y dirigir una organización de pérdidas de embarazo e infantil de más de 20 años, la gran mayoría de las mamás que experimentan pérdida de hecho eventualmente tienen un bebé vivo (o un bebé arco iris como muchas mamás de hoy se refieren). Pero hay algunos de nosotros que no tenemos. O sea, optaron por no intentarlo por varias razones, o como nosotros, tratamos, pero lo perdimos de vuelta o decidieron no seguir intentando. Si yo hubiera sido capaz físicamente, no cabe duda de que habría persistido las numeras veces necesarias para poder llevar otro bebe vivo a nuestra casa. Pero, supongo que no estaba destinado a ser y sinceramente, esto siempre será muy triste para mí. Sí, tenemos un hijo vivo maravilloso que nos dio una hermosa hija cuando se casó hace unos años, y por eso estamos muy agradecidos. Pero, quería un hogar lleno de hijos traviesos que traerían mucha risa y aventura a nuestra familia. Quería que los "hijos" llegaran a casa del colegio, durante días de fiesta y que participaran en las bodas de uno al otro. Quería que fueran unidos y que se amaran ferozmente. Pero nada de eso existe. Así, mi esposo Byron y yo hacemos muchos recuerdos con Byron, Jr. y nuestra nuera, Anna. Hemos aprendido no tomar un día, o incluso un momento para concedido.

Yo nunca entenderé por qué nuestras dos pérdidas fueron nuestros últimos y no pudimos traer otro bebe a casa para criar. Pero sé que están en el cielo y pasaremos la eternidad con ellos. No estoy exactamente segura de cómo funciona allí, pero ruego por la oportunidad de ser madre a ellos de alguna manera un día cuando nos unimos. ¿Y tal vez, ojala tal vez no eran nuestros últimos – quien sabe absolutamente que no podemos tener bebés en el cielo?

## Subsequent Births



**Patrick and MaryAnn Majcher**, of Daniel Island, South Carolina, joyfully announce the arrival of Julianna Elizabeth Majcher, born on July 25, 2017, measuring 6 lbs., 8 oz. and 18.5 inches long. The family lovingly remembers Camden, Stillborn February 1, 2013, at 40 weeks, unknown cause

**William and Jamie Walters**, of Ozark, Missouri, along with siblings Kylee and Landon, joyfully announce the arrival of Liam Matthew, born July 28, 2017, measuring 7 lbs., 9 oz., and 20 inches long. The family lovingly remembers Aiden, miscarried May 2005, at 12 weeks, Sienna, miscarried January 2013, at 6 weeks, Lydia Analeigh, November 25, 2014, hydrops, Grace, miscarried August 2016, at 6 weeks

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

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- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, go to [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com) and set up an account if you do not already have one. Once you receive the email after setting up your account, click on "My Account," then go to "Edit Kroger Community Rewards" and input your Kroger Plus card number. You'll see a screen with your information in boxes, at the bottom right, there is a box that says Community Rewards. Click that, then enter the M.E.N.D. number, which is 80513. Once that's entered, you'll confirm that M.E.N.D. is your charity of choice. This link will be good until the 2015-2016 program expires. You must link your card each year to M.E.N.D.
- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please contact Rebekah ([rebekah@mend.org](mailto:rebekah@mend.org)) to obtain the Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.
- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D. visit [www.missionfish.org](http://www.missionfish.org) to find out how.
- **Igive.com** will donate a penny a search and a portion of each purchase made through their website to M.E.N.D. Sign up today! M.E.N.D.'s cause number is 52025.

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