



M. E. N. D.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Going Back to Work

Getting out of the house, going out in public, and certainly returning to work following the death of your baby can be very difficult, and even suffocating. Trying to resume normal activities is hard enough without the pressure of dealing with what your boss and co-workers expect from you. However, oftentimes women go back to work sooner than they are required just to get out of the house so they are not home alone, lost in their sorrow. However, many women who do this, later attest it may not have been the best decision, simply because they found they may have suppressed their grief by staying busy and not therapeutically mourning their loss.

There is probably never a “good time” to return. Even those who take their allotted and allowed maternity leave find it extremely hard to get back into the groove as an employee or boss. When my Jonathan was stillborn, I was working a few hours a week at my dad’s law firm. Thankfully, I did not have set hours, and my job description permitted me to come in and out when I wanted. I was one of those who needed to get out of the house in an attempt to resume my “old life.” Less than two weeks after Jonathan’s stillbirth, I went to the office on a Saturday afternoon and worked for a couple of hours. It felt so good to do something that was “back to normal” for me. I only ran into one other employee that day - an attorney who had also experienced a stillbirth 18 months prior. He had some very helpful advice and words of encouragement for me, which made me think that maybe my going in that day was providential.

Going back to work is a hot topic at our monthly

support groups. Many of the moms (and dads) ask for advice from fellow grieving parents about when they should return to the work force, what they should tell co-workers/clients/students, whether they should be able to place a picture of their baby on their desk, etc.

The answers and advice typically vary, yet one thing everyone agrees with is you need to do what is best for you! If you aren’t ready to go back, then if at all possible, don’t. If you think you are up to the task, then go for it, but just make sure you are still allowing time for active grieving. If you want your co-workers, clients or students to openly talk about what happened, it’s up to you to give them that guidance and permission. If you want to remain extremely private about it at work, that’s okay, too, as long as you have a support system elsewhere. Finally, if you feel comfortable putting a picture of your little baby on your desk, we dare anyone to tell you not to.

In this issue, you will read the personal accounts and advice of several of our families who have had good and not so good experiences with returning to work. They will also share ideas of how to survive the workday - especially during those first days and weeks back. As you read through their stories and words of wisdom, I pray you will gain some ideas of what will work best for you and what will help you as you slowly put the broken pieces of your life back together.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell,*

Mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell

M.E.N.D. President/Founder

Find times that you can cry and grieve during the day. Maybe on your lunch hour or small breaks where you can go somewhere, be alone, and just cry. Instead of getting through the whole day, you just have to make it to your “grief break.”

-Ashley, M.E.N.D.—Dallas

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 página número 19.

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

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The Heart of the Leader

On July 24, 2006, my world was turned upside down. After four and one-half years of infertility and three tries of artificial insemination, we found out we were pregnant, just before starting plans for IVF. Unfortunately, our baby was born too soon, and she died. Her name is Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker. She weighed 11.8 ounces. My body failed because I have a condition called incompetent cervix. No one told me this could happen; I had no idea, but that day, my world changed forever. My heart was broken, and I needed to reach out to someone who understood my extreme pain, physically and mentally. I asked God, "How could You let this happen to me? What is Your purpose?"

In August, I was told about a group for infant losses called M.E.N.D. by my counselor and my husband, so I went. There I sat saying, "God, this happens to other people, and they feel what I am feeling as well. I am not crazy; at least I can thank You for that." Joining M.E.N.D. brought forth a change in my heart for the hurting and grieving people in this world. The pain we as parents feel when we lose a child who will not take first steps, say first words or even have a first birthday is indescribable to people who have never walked in our shoes. Grief hurts no matter where it comes from, but my heart aches most for those who are like me, waiting to see my child at the gates of heaven with all the balloons we sent to her at the Walk to Remember or on her birthday.

In 2011, I lost an array of family members, four within six months (my father, mother-in-law, cousin and sister-in-law) from all different types of losses, sudden to tragic, but still none were like the loss of my baby. All of those people lived a life on earth, and she did not. Since I joined M.E.N.D. in 2006, I have felt nothing but love and compassion from all, which is why in 2008 I volunteered to become the Subsequent Pregnancy Group leader for the Dallas group. I have so enjoyed seeing these families trust God again by considering another pregnancy and having subsequent babies. M.E.N.D. subsequent babies are special because they are walking MIRACLES and fulfilled promises of God's love for each and every one of us. I look at the two MIRACLES God has given me every day and thank God for answered prayer.

If you are where I was in 2006 (depressed and heartbroken) or where I was in 2007 and 2012-2013 (with subsequent pregnancies), know God hears your prayers and catches every tear that falls from your eye. Do not give up; know that we as the leaders of M.E.N.D. are praying selfishly for your desires to be fulfilled. He has a plan for your life as it says in His Word, Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

I understand now the purpose of my "Livi" going to heaven so soon; it was to create in me a selfless spirit where I could see the hurt of others and embrace them with the Father's love. Because of my loss, I am pursuing a degree in counseling and hospice social work. Never could I have imagined before 2006 I would have a desire to work in that field, but I do because a little 11.8 ounce girl came into my world and changed me forever. M.E.N.D. is part of my heart and will always be.



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

Dallas/Fort Worth Christmas Ceremony



Rebekah Mitchell, M.E.N.D. President/Founder speaking to a crowd of 300



Nobel, Paula and Isaac Schear attending in memory of Mason

Christmas Ceremony sponsored by

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Advice for Going Back to Work

“Keep calm and go back to work.” If only it were that simple. Going back to work after a loss can feel overwhelming. We expect to show off ultrasound pictures or newborn pictures, but instead, we either have no pictures, or pictures of the child we placed in a grave instead of daycare’s cradle. Some of us are returning to work since “stay at home mom” role is no longer needed. Our hearts are so broken and lost in our pain that we sometimes desire to just stay in our homes, hidden away from others. Eventually we have to face the outside world, and many times going back to work is our first major interaction with people, people who we have to interact with on a daily basis, where there sometimes is no escape. We go back hoping to find normal and find the need to create a new normal.

As I began to write this article, I Googled tips for going back to work after losing a baby, because even I felt I muddled through my first few months. While I found some good articles, I had to weed through results on the first page of going back to work while breastfeeding or getting your body back after having a baby, as if we did not have enough reminders that we lost a baby and are struggling with our bodies returning to normal. A little over four years ago, I was going through this. I was trying to look and act like a professional, returning to work after my loss, but my business clothes did not fit, I could barely hold back the tears, and I really just wanted to remain in my always forgiving pajama pants and sweatshirts, hidden away from the world.



Continued on page 10...

March/April Topic
 Healthcare Providers Grieving
 Deadline: January 31, 2014

May/June Topic
 Mother's Day/Father's Day
 Deadline: March 31, 2014

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

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

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

<u>Heavenly Birthday</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
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 2nd Birthday, Elijah!

Every day I think of you, my sweet angel. You are always in our hearts and on our minds. Even though we never got to officially meet you, you made me a stronger and better person, and I thank you for that. Happy birthday, my beloved sweet angel. Take care of Grandma, and one day we will all meet again.

Elijah Rosales

Miscarried January 5, 2012

Parents: Fredy and Vielka Rosales

Siblings: Sasha and Elias



Happy 4th Birthday, Gavin!

We can't wait to hold you in heaven.

Love,

Dad, Mom and your big sister

Gavin James Meeks

Stillborn February 15, 2010, at 36 weeks

Cord accident

Parents: Mark and Jamie Meeks

Big sister: Gabrielle



Happy 2nd Birthday, Haven!

If I could hold you in my arms just one more time in this life, I would remember everything I planned on saying once you were born. You are the strongest and bravest girl I will ever know; you are our hero. Your baby brother looks at me with your eyes. I can't thank God enough for giving him your eyes so I can see you every day. We will all love and miss you. Never goodbye, see you soon!

Love,

Mom, Dad, Kristan, Marlei, Lainie and Cash

Haven Taylor Helm

February 21, 2012

Hypo-plastic left heart syndrome

Parents: Charles and Taylor Helm

Siblings: Kristan, Marlei, Lainie and Cash



Happy 4th Birthday, Axel!

God bless the tiniest of souls. May my baby's light shine within me always. Let my loss of hope be of service to others. In Your Name.

Axel James Hughes

Miscarried November 11, 2009

Parents: Jason and Renee Hughes



Happy 1st Birthday, Kyleigh!

Kyleigh, we cannot believe it has been a year since we welcomed you into our family. In the three months you were here with us, you brought us more joy than we could have ever imagined. Not a day goes by we don't miss you and think of you, but we know you are home safe with Jesus. We cannot wait to be home with you and get to see your beautiful smile again. We love you so much, sweet baby girl. Happy 1st birthday!

All our love,
Mommy and Daddy

Kyleigh Elaine Rabe

October 1, 2012—January 26, 2013

SIDS

Parents: Kyle and Kristen Rabe



Happy 1st Birthday, Baby Taylor!

Happy 1st birthday, my sweet angel! Through all of the pain and the tears, your loss has brought me closer to the Lord. Knowing that you are in heaven with your younger sister looking down on us all gives me the peace that my mother's heart so desperately needs.

Baby Taylor Dickerson

Miscarried February 17, 2013

Mommy: Tori Dickerson

Sisters: Lyla Rose and Maci Monroe



Happy 1st Birthday, James!

You lived your life and now it's done.

No more moonlight, no more sun.

We miss your voice, your laugh, your smile.

We miss those curls for the girls hair style.

Your absence is felt each and every day.

Your name is spoken when we pray.

As you look down upon us from above,

Green and blue balloons we think of.

Our sweet baby boy James Royal,

We miss you now and always will.

As you fly among the peaceful dove,

Always know that you are loved.

Nana and Grandpa

James Royal Topps

September 3, 2012-January 31, 2013

Twisted bowel

Mommy: Colleen Leshner

Grandpa and Nana: David and Karen Pace



Happy 5th Birthday, Kyle!

Happy 5th birthday, baby boy. We can't believe it has been five years since we held you in our arms. We think of you often and miss you very much. Your sisters would love playing with you. They are a mess. We love you, baby. We will be with you again one day. Keep your mamaws busy, bubba!

Love,
Mom, Dad, Khloey and Kynzlee

Kyle Wayne Clark II
Stillborn February 27, 2009
Parents: Kyle and Kristi Clark
Sisters: Khloey and Kynzlee

**Happy 1st Birthday, Mason!**

By remembering,
we keep what is precious and most special,
as treasures in our heart forever.
When someone comes into our lives
and they are too quietly and quickly gone,
They leave footprints on our hearts.
And their memory stays with us forever.
Our baby boy will be truly missed but never forgotten.
We love you so much and miss you every day.
Your life forever changed ours.
Love you baby boy,
Mommy, Daddy and siblings

Mason Artez Coleman Jr.
January 16, 2013
Prematurity and premature lungs (Twin A)
Parents: Demetric and Tina Coleman
Siblings: Tineequa, Rayshawn, DeVante, Demerius
and Nevaeh (Twin B)

**Happy 7th Birthday, Rance!**

To our sweet precious Rance! We miss you more than anything! Seven years ago we were blessed by your early entrance into this world. Never did we imagine that only 14 short hours later our world would come crashing down. But we had our faith to stand on and turn your loss into a way to help others! Your name will always live on through us and our outreaches to the community. You are a great big brother to the rainbow babies God blessed us with after you! One day we will all be together again! Until then, happy heavenly birthday!

Always in our hearts,
Love Mommy, Daddy and siblings

Rance Wade Leighton
February 17, 2007
Pulmonary hypertension caused by medical neglect
Parents: Jeb and Audra Leighton
Siblings: Stetson, Landry and Maizie

**Happy 9th Birthday, Cece!**

We love and miss you so much and hope you have an amazing birthday in heaven with your brother!

Celeste Kimberly Reid
December 7-8, 2004
Neonatal Hemochromatosis
Also remembering
Connor Reid
April 27, 2006
Trisomy 13
Parents: Skip Reid and Andie Boston
Siblings: Connor and Allyson

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Grace!**

Grace, it has been two years now since you have been gone. There is still not one day I do not go without thinking about you. Your short-lived life has taught me so much—true love, patience, kindness and an underlying strength I did not know was possible. I love you and miss you more than words can express, but I know you are sitting at the feet of Jesus as the angels wish you a heavenly birthday. I long for the day when I will meet you at heaven's gate and we will be together just as we left off, you in my arms smiling at me. Until we meet again...

Love,
Mommy

Grace Saniya Tisby
February 27, 2012
Premature birth
Mommy: Shauniesa Sisk

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Brianna!**

Happy 2nd birthday to our sweet angel baby.
We miss you every day. Until we meet again!

Brianna Taylor
Stillborn January 13, 2012
Parents: Joe and Laurel Taylor
Sister: Sarah Faith

**Happy 5th Birthday, Ella!**

Ella Grace, happy 5th birthday, baby girl. It's hard to believe it's been five years since we held you in our arms. Not a day goes by we don't think of you and miss you. You are forever in our hearts. Look for five pink balloons. We love you!

Mommy, Daddy and Brody

Ella Grace Ketch
December 15-16, 2008
Prematurity due to preeclampsia
Parent: Robbie and Celise Ketch
Brother: Brody



Happy 4th Birthday, Skylar!

Happy birthday, baby girl. Our sweet Skylar, it seems so unreal that four years have passed since you were born to us. We miss you like crazy every day. Four years ago we sat at the doctor's office hearing the worst news and entered the hospital that evening. What we would have given for you to be here with us and your brother and sisters. We love you with all our hearts and can't wait until we can reunite the whole family. You are a sweet angel who watches over your family. Shine bright, baby girl. Happy 4th heavenly birthday, Skylar Faith. We love you to the moon and back.

Skylar Faith Metcalfe

January 27, 2010

Unknown cause

Parents: Albert and Ashlee Metcalfe

Siblings: Baylee, Anastacia, Triton, Preslee and Zaylee



Happy 1st Birthday, Luke!

Our beloved Luke, we love you so much. We miss you, our precious son, and look with hope toward the day when finally, all will be made new, and together we will worship our Savior and King.

Love,

Mama, Daddy and Noelle

Revelation 21:4-5a: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"

Luke Anthony Sehmel

January 19, 2013 (24 weeks gestation)

Unknown cause

Parents: John and Rachel Sehmel

Big sister: Noelle Joy



Happy 5th Birthday, Landon!

Landon, how can it be five years since we learned you passed, since we held you, since we last saw you, since we had to say goodbye? We miss you so very much! I know you visit your baby sister; she talks of you often about what you look like and what you like to play, so don't ever stop. Thank you for watching over your big sister. She misses you beyond belief and feels you with her always, a bond that cannot be broken. Mom and Dad miss you most. Our heavy arms never go away. There will be a day, so save a place for me! Happy 5th angelversary, Bubba!

Love always,

Mom, Dad, Kylee and Vivian

Landon Blaine Schuchman

February 12, 2009

True knot and nuchal cord x2 (full-term)

Parents: Paul and Missy Schuchman

Sisters: Kylee and Vivian



Happy 4th Birthday, Michael!

Happy birthday, sweet boy! We can't believe it has been four years since we said goodbye! We wonder what you would be like. Would you like cars or music? Would you be shy or social? We tell Julianne all about her big brother Michael. She will even point to your pictures and say "Michael!" Sometimes our hearts ache when she cries to play with other kids. She should have a big brother to play with. We love and miss you! We try to take comfort in the fact that we will see you again one day! "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always; As long as I'm living, my baby you'll be!"

Michael Noah Wheeler

Stillborn January 27, 2010

Unknown cause

Parents: Jim and Larissa Wheeler

Sister: Julianne



Happy 5th Birthday, Jackson and Tyler!

Because of you, we are more accepting.

Because of you, we are more patient.

Because of you, we have stronger faith.

Because of you, we know how to forgive.

Because of you, we know how to love.

You have given us more than we ever deserved, and we honor you every day. May you be always proud of the parents you created in us. We love and miss you, and long for the day we will hold you again. Happy 5th birthday to our beloved sweet princes.

Mommy and Daddy

Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray Light

February 23, 2009

Placental abruption

Parents: Kirk and Diana Light

Siblings: Brayden and Alexis



Happy 2nd Birthday, Mac!

My angel child, Mommy and Daddy love you so. Not a day has passed since we lost you that I have not cried, but you have taught your dad and me so much. I cannot believe two years have passed since I held you in my arms. You were so perfect that God wanted you back, and we are trying to understand. I know you are having a blast! Give kisses to Pappy, Grandma Red and Great-Grandpa Mac. We will join y'all when the time is right. Mommy watches every rainbow you give me, and Daddy loves the sunsets you and your grandma paint!

Mac Hendrix

Stillborn February 3, 2012

Preeclampsia (34 weeks)

Parents: Tim Hendrix and Janis Collmorgen

Sister: Emily



Happy 3rd Birthday, Reese!

We think of you every day. Ryder and Reagan include you in everything they do! They love to shop for you, decorate for you and even occasionally set a place for you at dinner. You have made an impact on everyone who knows you. You teach us something new every day! We all love you and cannot wait to see you and learn your personality! God bless you, angel!

Love,
Your family



Reese Marie Coffey
January 9, 2011
Cord accident
Parents: Sam and Hope Coffey
Siblings: Ryder and Reagan

Happy 4th Birthday, Hudson!

It is hard to believe it has been four years since we last held you. We miss you very much! We know you'd be the best big brother. We look forward to the day we get to hold you again in heaven. Happy birthday, Hudson Parker!

Love,
Mommy, Daddy and Presley



Hudson Parker Jones
January 9, 2010
Lower bladder obstruction
Parents: Travis and Jennifer Jones
Sister: Presley

Happy 5th Birthday, Alexis!

You came into our family five years ago and left us far too soon. You have changed us forever, and we are so blessed to have had you in our lives. We love you and hold you in our hearts every day. You are our "Greatest Blessing."

Grandpa and Grandma Sonnenberg



Alexis Raine Sonnenberg
January 24—February 3, 2009
Complications diaphragmatic hernia
Dad: Alex Sonnenberg
Grandparents: Mark and Ruth Sonnenberg

Happy 4th Birthday, Tristin!

Happy 4th birthday, baby. We miss you and think of you every day, but know you are in good hands in heaven.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy and big brother, Kyle



Tristin Patton
Miscarried February 15, 2010
Parents: William and Christina Patton
Big brother: Kyle

Happy 2nd Birthday, Mason!

I can't believe it's been two years since we held you in our arms. You are a big brother now! I wish you were here to play with your big sister and little brother. I know you are happy in your heavenly home. We miss you so much and can't wait till we all can be together again! Happy birthday, Mason! We love you!

Love,
Mommy and Daddy



Mason Lee Shreve
January 15, 2012
Amniotic web
Parents: Gary and Stacy Shreve
Siblings: Lilly and Eli

Happy 2nd Birthday, Dayton!

Happy birthday to our baby boy, Dayton. It's hard to believe it has already been two years. We hope you are having the best 2nd heavenly birthday possible! We love and miss you each and every day.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy and Davin



Dayton Standridge
Stillborn February 11, 2012, at 37 weeks
Unknown cause
Parents: Jason and Jessica Standridge
Sibling: Davin

Happy 2nd Birthday, Avery Eve!

Happy 2nd birthday, princess. Mommy and Daddy miss and love you so much. We wish you were with us on earth, but instead God has you in His arms, and He's taking care of you. We will see you when it's our time. We have been so strong for you, baby, because we know you are watching over us and keeping us safe. We love you. Happy birthday, Avery Eve!

Avery Eve Saldana
December 24-29, 2011
Birth defect
Parents: Gerardo Garcia and Melisa Saldana



Happy 2nd Birthday, Angel!

My sweet angel, happy 2nd angelversary, baby! We miss you so much and think of you every day. Your brothers miss you a lot, too! They were so excited to meet you, but that day never came. I hope you are having a wonderful time in heaven with your Grampa Pedro! Love and miss you so much, little one!

Angel Ariel Hickmon
Miscarried January 14, 2012
Parents: Terrell and Ariel Hickmon
Siblings: Aaron Belmarez and Terrell Hickmon



Happy 2nd Birthday, Jacob!

Two years ago, we all waited happily for June, when you would make your arrival. We met you on February 10, 2012, instead, in a quiet room, full of somber faces. We miss you now more than ever, sweet boy. We love you so much. How I long to see your sweet face, kiss your blonde hair and hold you close. It is my wish that you have a wonderfully happy heavenly 2nd birthday.

I never got to hold you and bounce you on my lap, I never got to read to you or watch you as you nap. You slipped away so quickly, before I said your name. And yet I want the world to know I loved you just the same. - Anne Peterson

*Jacob Austin Berryman
February 10, 2012
PPROM*

*Parents: Paul and Jessica Dison
Siblings: Payton and Avery*



Happy 2nd Birthday, Jaiymiee!

Our little ladybug, I can hardly believe you would be turning 2. We should be watching you walk and learn to talk. Not a day goes by that Mommy and Daddy don't think of you. We can't believe that in March you will have been gone for two years. Although we wish every day you were here with us and your sisters and brothers, we know you are in a much better place. No harm can come to you, and you are safe from the evil of this world in the arms of Jesus. You give us reason to live for Jesus until the day we see you again. We will feel you when a ladybug lands upon us or with each breeze in the wind.

*Jaiymiee Alita Mcalpine
February 17—March 28, 2012*

*Arortic valve stenosis complication of heart condition
Also remembering six siblings in heaven
Parents: Michael and Bethany Mcalpine
Siblings: Naleia, Aierrionnia, Coleton and Ethan*



Happy 1st Birthday, Destiny!

To my sweet beautiful angel, my daughter, I love you with all my might. You are my sunshine and the best part of my life. You changed my life forever in a way that I never thought possible. I know that you are in heaven, you and your sister, both celebrating on this beautiful day. I know that you are also here with me holding me tight and giving me a bunch of kisses. I miss you like crazy, and I can't wait for the day that I get to hold you in my arms again. Thank you, my sweet baby girl, for being the best thing that has ever happened to Mommy. Happy birthday, my angel. I love you so much!

*Destiny Hope Hite
Miscarried February 25, 2013
Mommy: Caroline Perez*



Happy 2nd Birthday, Joseph!

I can't believe it has been two years since we have held you in our arms. My arms still ache to hold you. No amount of time will change that. We all miss you so much! Each of your brothers and sisters look for opportunities to acknowledge you in our family. It makes me so happy that you continue to be remembered. Even though through this second year, we still feel storms of grief, we are celebrating that we have remained anchored through them. We have remained anchored together and anchored in Christ.

Hebrews 6:19 "This hope we have as an anchor for the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast."

Our hope is in heaven, just as you are my sweet boy! Happy 2nd birthday in heaven, Joseph! We love and miss you!

Mommy, Daddy and all your brothers and sisters

*Joseph Parker Nelson
Stillborn January 30, 2012, at 31 weeks
Gastroschisis*

*Parents: Michael and Danielle Nelson
Siblings: Bert, Basilia, Sarah, Chase, Riley, Hunter, Abby,
Chloe, Phoebe, Rachel and Mary-Esther*



Happy 3rd Birthday, Ellie!

Happy 3rd birthday to our beautiful angel, Ellie! We are forever blessed that God chose us to be your parents, and we miss you more than words can express. We never knew you could love or miss someone this much. We love you! Matthew 19:14

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

*Ellie Barnes
Stillborn February 6, 2011
Unknown cause
Parents: Gentry and Rebecca Barnes*



When someone brings in a new grandbaby or baby pictures, it's okay to stay in your seat and keep working if you think it will make you cry. If you feel like you're being rude, email them a congratulatory note later or say something in private later.

-Kathryn

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Christmas Ceremonies for Our Babies

NW Washington



Tom Kessler, Rachel Lewis, and Kim Enloe, singing "I Know Who You Are"

NW Washington Christmas Ceremony sponsored by:
Starbucks-Harborside
Seattle Porcelain Company
Ashley Schneider - Beautiful Beginnings Photo Studio

Hot Springs



Adalyn remembering her brother Blake, Merritt remembering her sister Madison

Houston



Kara Chapman remembering her daughter, Catherine

Houston Christmas Ceremony sponsored by:
Taylord Gifts and Creations
Valassis Communications, Inc.
Kara Chapman
Margaret McAnally
Nancy Chapman
Shane Meyer
Stephanie and Adrian Estala
Ana Ayon and Herman Krymkiewicz
Todd and Stormy Mitchell
Earl and Karen Zeller

Bryan/College Station



Gabrielle Davis and her family remembering Catherine

SW Missouri



Brian, Melody, Clara and Carlos Long remember Alexandria, Baby May, Baby December and Baby October

SW Missouri Christmas Ceremony sponsored by:
Second Baptist Church
Mercy Hospital
Red Crow Marketing, Inc.
On Angels' Wings
Linda's Flowers
Jonathan and Heather Fann
Windsmore Studio
Mark and Ruth Sonnenberg
Ron and Patty Marshall
Patricia Ervin
Inspired Creations by ceo

Tulsa



Jeremy, Lisa and Sarah Daily remember Brooke Sophia

Tulsa Christmas Ceremony sponsored by:
Paper8
Liberty Church
Merritt's Bakery
Lisa and Jeremy Daily
Angi and Jeromye Jackson

Texarkana

Christmas Ceremony sponsored by:

AJ Frost Photography
Baker Bros. American Deli
BeautiControl, Mary Ann Jordan
Beech Street First Baptist Church and Staff
Beech Street First Baptist Church, Hub Kidz Ministry
Chick-Fil-A Restaurant
Jana Buchheit
Ellis Pottery

Geneva Concepts
Junior League of Texarkana
Lia Sophia Jewelry, Tara Daughtery
McAlister's Deli
Micah's Jewelers
Michael's Arts and Crafts
Mom's Corner
Mr. Speedy Car Care
Olive Garden Restuarant

Origami Owl Jewelry, Stephanie Desjarlais
Outback Steakhouse
Painting with a Twist
Red Lobster
Shear Country
Starbucks
TaMolly's Mexican Restaurant
Texas Roadhouse Restaurant
Thirty One, Tania Greer

“Advice for Going Back to Work” continued from page 3.

We announced we were expecting, and a week later, Serenity was gone. A few days before my 12-week appointment, I started spotting, but I remembered my doctor told me spotting might happen and it is normal. On Thursday, I left work early for my appointment to hear my baby’s heartbeat, but it could not be found. The doctor told me there was still a chance and to come back on Friday for more lab work to see if my hormones increased. I left a message with my boss on Friday, telling him what was happening and I wanted to take the whole day. Unfortunately, I was not able to find out the test results until the following Monday. I lost the feeling, though. You just have a sense of when you are pregnant, and when you are not, and I felt I was not anymore. I spent the weekend hiding in my bedroom, trying to lose myself in a world of movies and books and avoid the reality.

As much as I wanted to remain in my vegetative state and avoid reality, I knew I could not remain in there. Since I had lost the pregnancy feeling, I felt like I would be okay if I went to work, knowing that I would receive the call from my doctor with my test results. When I arrived at work, my boss was scheduled to be off, but he left me a message to take off if I needed. I needed to be there, needed to do something other than lie around. My co-worker, who sat directly across from me, gave me a hug and asked me if I was okay, and then let me be. I then sent an email to anyone and everyone that I had told about my pregnancy or that I knew I would have interactions with. I advised them what had happened and asked them that, while I appreciated their concerns, I’d rather be left alone. The last thing I wanted was to cry at work. Unfortunately, no matter how hard I tried, grief still came. So during the times when I lost control, I retreated to my file room, shut the door and let the tears flow. Once I felt back under control, I went back to my desk.

I remember sitting in a meeting, shortly after my loss, and we were discussing a deadline that would have been near my due date. One co-worker, who did not know about my loss, was becoming concerned how things would be handled since, assuming I would be having my baby, I would not be there during the deadline. Another co-worker came to my rescue, and told him we would manage and changed the subject. I was able to inform the other co-worker via email about my loss, which gave me more control over my tears.

I wish I could tell you when I had a day that I did not cry at work, but I do not remember when the day without tears finally came. It was a long time, though. I lost Serenity on December 3, and for some reason, my body could not figure out I was no longer pregnant. I had to visit the lab every week to see if my hormones had dropped to zero. I spent one day each week, arriving late or leaving early, making up time later, to be reminded of my loss. I had a wonderful boss who did not worry and let me go without explanation every time. In March, my hormones actually increased, although I knew I could not be pregnant, so the doctor scheduled a D&C for two weeks later. I had to then make arrangements to be off work for a few days, which required more explaining of my loss. A few days before my surgery, I finally had my period, and the doctor tested me again, to find my hormones had returned to zero. I felt a mixture of sadness and relief, as it was finally over, but that was truly the end of my pregnancy.

During all of this, I also had to endure watching another pregnancy before my very eyes. One of my co-workers found out she was expecting shortly after our loss, and there was no escaping since we sat across from each other. She was truly a kind friend, as she let me be the instigator when talking about her pregnancy. Sometimes I would email her asking her things, because I could take my time. If I was having a really good day, I would stop by her desk and visit with her. Some days things would bother me, like I remember seeing her rubbing her belly and my heart ached, so I stayed to myself that day, or if it was really bad, I retreated to my file room. I went day by day and was even able to visit her in the hospital. When she was on maternity leave, I covered for her, but I did not mind as the increase in workload made my days so busy, I did not have time to dwell on my own heartache. When she returned from work, we were able to return to the way things were. Sometimes I would email her about the baby; a lot of times I felt good enough to ask in person as it had been a year since my loss.

So for the working moms, it’s tough, but take it day by day. Let others know how you feel. Sometimes it’s good to have someone be your bodyguard, a nice person who can block those who may hurt you (usually unintentionally; we all say dumb things) and let those in who truly want to give comfort. Have an escape, but also have someone you can lean on and talk to, as that will help you get through the hard days. You will get through it, and one day, you will be like me and not able to remember the last time you cried at work. Sometimes we get sad when we find we don’t cry as much, but sometimes it is a relief when we don’t cry at the places where we want to hold our emotions in control.

♥ *Jennifer Harrison,*
Mommy to Serenity
M.E.N.D.—Newsletter Editor

You will find there are different ways for different people to answer the question,

“How many children do you have?”

-Laura, M.E.N.D.—Houston

First Steps to New Normal

Before Olivia, I was working part-time at an advertising agency and also building my own home-based business. Weeks before we found out we were pregnant with her, I was promoted in my home-based business, which would replace my income at the agency. And so, I gave the ad agency my two-week-notice. Life was just falling into place, and I was so excited. Unfortunately, that feeling of everything being so perfect did not last long.

A few days before my last official day at work, I was six and one-half weeks along, sitting in an office party when the cramping I had been feeling suddenly became awful. After about an hour of my crying on the bathroom floor, trying to get control of the pain, a friend decided she was taking me to the hospital. To make a very long story short, exactly a week after that ER visit (where nothing was conclusive), my fallopian tube ruptured. I was bleeding internally and required immediate surgery. They were able to repair my tube, but nothing could repair my broken heart.

I was grateful that I did not have to go back to my work right away—as I had just quit! However, I did go back after a few weeks to collect my things and have lunch with my friends. I was so nervous. It was as if I were a WHOLE new person entering that building. I was a broken, shattered soul with a put-together exterior. Normally outgoing, I was afraid of seeing anyone! I was afraid any wrong word would break me, but hearing no words that would speak to my pain would be infinitely worse.

I was also concerned about the trigger just being at that building would be. The very last time I was there, I was pregnant. My friends were gracious. They set up a table in very quiet corner of the building where no one would bother us and ordered take-out for all of us. We caught up—but I was feeling that internal pressure to just SPEAK about what just happened to me. I know they all were afraid of bringing things up, but I finally just said, “It’s ok to talk about it and ask me questions. I WANT to talk about it.”

They proceeded to let me speak and asked gentle questions, and the whole conversation went so much better than I could have anticipated. I ran into a few people I wasn’t planning on seeing. Some I told what happened, and to others I just smiled on the outside. I think having such amazing, thoughtful co-workers made coming back, even briefly, pretty amazing. My business, however, was a whole other story.

After we lost Olivia, I did not want to work at my business. I had no emotional or physical energy to pour into it. Not surprisingly, our numbers dwindled, and I became concerned I wouldn’t keep the promotion I just received for very long. And our rising hospital bills just added pressure to the grief.

A few weeks after our loss, I had a few home parties coming up. I didn’t WANT to do them, but I felt like I should, especially with the bills! My sponsor, who has had a miscarriage, told me she absolutely understood and supported me in whatever I decided. Then she asked me a key question. “Rachel, I know you don’t want to do the parties, and I wouldn’t either. But I just want to ask, at the end of the month, what would it feel like to have DONE them, and have a nice paycheck and some activity behind you?”

I thought about that a lot, talked with my husband, and decided to do the parties. I was a mess, an absolute mess, the night before the first party. I thought I was crazy for trying to hold the party, but with a ton of help from my husband, I did it! And it felt good to do something “normal.” Sure, I made a ton of mistakes. I dropped things during the presentation, forgot names and left half of my stuff I needed in the car, but I took one step toward “normal.” And eventually, that led to another, and another and another.

We have now had two subsequent losses since our ectopic pregnancy with Olivia. Ironically, both times I had a large presentation scheduled on the same day as the heaviest bleeding. Both times I did the presentation. Both times I was uncomfortable, my hormones were EVERYWHERE and I couldn’t help but tear up often. But I gave myself tons of grace and rested a lot once I was home.

For me, getting through that FIRST step after a loss is the hardest. And the sooner I was able to do it, the easier it was for me to keep going.

Another thing that helped was feeling “normal.” When the nurse called to let us know our HCG dropped and we would miscarry (with our second miscarriage), I chose to follow through with my work that night, even though I could have cancelled. But I just wanted something that would distract me from my pain for a few hours. I don’t think there’s any “right” way to go back to work. But I have found that being able to surround myself with supportive people, take that first step, let myself have a few hours of “normal,” and listen to and voice what I really needed was immensely helpful.

♥ Rachel Lewis,
Mommy to Olivia Joy, Caleb Michael and Elliott James
M.E.N.D. Assistant—NW Washington

In Loving Memory**Angel Batrez**

Given by Candice Youngblood

Emily Katherine Brooks

Stillborn August 19, 2011

Cord accident

Given by Mommy Katie McCrackin

Sydney Lynne Brown

May 18, 2000

Cord problem and unknown conditions

Ashley MacKenzie Brown

May 18, 2001

Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome

Given by parents Brian and Marilyn Brown
and brother Samuel

Liam and Sebastian Callaway

Stillborn August 5, 2011

Unknown cause

Parents: Rori and Zach Callaway

Little brother: Miles

Given by grandmother Robin Rose

Catherine Grace Chapman

August 10 - 12, 2012

Premature/HELLP Syndrome

Gifts given by

Mommy Kara Chapman

Grandmother Nancy Chapman

Aunt Margaret McAnally

Jowell Ivan Castro

July 12, 2012

Given by Miriam Garcia

Elizabeth Ellen Cox

October 25, 2001

Polycystic kidneys

Given by parents Scott and Kathryn Cox
and sisters Graceanne and Jillian

Abigail Grace Crump

July 1, 2003

Trisomy 18

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

Aidan Shaw Vander Cruyssen

October 2-December 3, 2005

PKD

Given by Mommy Shane Meyer

Brooke Sophia Daily

Stillborn March 11, 2010

Vasa Previa

Given by parents Jeremy and Lisa Daily
and sisters Sarah and Savannah

Sophie Jane Darnell

Stillborn May 28, 2012

Unknown cause

Gifts given by

Parents Tommy and Brea Darnell
and big brother Luke

Michelle Massey

Riley and Parker Davis

November 14, 2006

Prematurity

Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis
and little sister Annalise

Dharma Lucille Drude

Marcy 31 - April 1, 2008

Anencephaly

Given by parents Jason and Jennie Drude
and siblings Max and Molli

Kyler Paul English

Stillborn January 20, 2006

Cord accident

Parents: Laurie McPike and Bob English

Given by Jon and Laurie McPike and
brothers Kinser, Kelson and Kayden

Dylan and Trystan Estala

December 11, 2008

PROM

Given by parents

Stephanie and Adrian Estala

and siblings AJ, Olivia and Isabella

Caleb Scott Fann

December 1, 2003

PROM

Baby August Fann

Miscarried August 13, 2004

Gifts given by

Parents Jonathan and Heather Fann
and little sister Madison

Jeremy and Kristi Morris

Chris and Rebecca Bolick

Neal and Sara Elliott

Michael Garabedian, Jr

Stillborn February 2, 1998

Villamentous cord insertion

Adam Michael Garabedian

Stillborn July 25, 2001

Cord accident

Parents: Michael and Cindy Garabedian

Siblings: Victoria, Elizabeth,
and Catherine Rose

Given by Garabedian Properties

Janelle Marie Gibson

Stillborn November 17, 2006

Clot in placenta

Gabriel Gibson

Miscarried October 31, 2007

Ectopic

Parents: Scott and Jodie Gibson

Siblings: Will, Andrew, Isaac and Lilly

Given by grandparents

William and Joyce Esser

Baby Hackney

Miscarried July 31, 2012

Chromosome problem

Rayven Fayth Hackney

Stillborn April 3, 2013

Unknown cause

Given by parents

Will and Tanesha Hackney and

siblings Talea, Alexis, Lee,

Ramya and Terry

Serenity Harrison

Miscarried December 3, 2009

Gifts given by

Parents Curt and Jennifer Harrison

and little brother Leviticus Aaron

Lauren Ashton Hulsey

August 29, 1992

Complications due to amniocentesis

Baby Hulsey

Given by parents

Matthew and Nancy Hulsey

and siblings Rachel and Christopher

Elizabeth Abigail Jackson

Miscarried April 29, 2002

Trisomy 16

Isaac David Jackson

Stillborn June 24, 2013

Trisomy 13

Given by parents Jeromye and Angi Jackson
and sister Emily

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!

Logan David Iliff

Stillborn May 5, 2000
Placental abruption
Mom: Samantha Iliff
Sibling: Blake
Given in memory of

Jackie Odom (Logan's Grandmother)

February 8, 1950—August 29, 2013
Gifts given by
Judith Rubenstein

JJ Kojich

February 19—March 9, 1996
Omphalocele complications
Given by mommy Linda Kojich
and brothers Adam and Alex

Baby Girl Krymkiewiez

Miscarried June 13, 2008

Emma Krymkiewiez

May 5, 2009
Neonatal Hemochromatosis
Given by parents Hernan Krymkiewiez
and Ana Ayon and sister Isabella

Sophia Rose McGhee

Stillborn March 29, 2010
Unknown cause
Given by parents Matt and Stacy McGhee
and siblings Micah and Scarlett

Nathaniel McIntosh

May 24, 2012
Cord accident
Given by parents
Jason and Valerie McIntosh
and sibling Norah

Baby Girl McNeil

Miscarried December 31, 2009
Gifts given by
Mommy Meredith McNeil
Grandmother Nancy Middlebrook

Miranda Micaela Medrano

October 1, 2008
Prematurity
T.F. Medrano
Miscarried March 22, 2013
Given by parents Jose and Marvelia

Gideon Zeller Mitchell

Stillborn May 17, 2011
Membranous cord insertion

Avery Mitchell

Miscarried May 2008
Gifts given by
Parents Todd and Stormy Mitchell
and little brother Silas
Grandparents Earl and Karen Zeller

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December 2001
Gifts given by
Parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
and big brother Byron, Jr.
Grandparents Dennis and Sue Brewer
Grandmother Marnie Mitchell

Lily Joy Moore

Miscarried March 2, 2011
Early pregnancy loss
Parents: Jeremy and Kathleen Moore
Big brother: Isaac and Judah
Given by Grandfather Ray Neely, Jr.

Skylar Morrison

Stillborn February 14, 2013
Cord accident
Parents: Matt and Janet Morrison
Siblings: Blake and Audrey
Given anonymously

Carter Patrick Outen

Stillborn November 6, 2000
Unknown cause

Baby Outen I

Miscarried April 3, 2001

Baby Outen II

Miscarried October 5, 2001
Parents: Chris and Shannon Outen
Little sisters: Erin and Charlie
Gifts given by
Grandmother Patricia Boedeker
Grandparents J.L. and Judy Outen

Margot Lily Perry

Stillborn June 10, 2013
Parents Brandon and Marisa Perry
Given by "Grammie" Marie Perry

Karen Rohde

Given by Jennifer Rohde

Elena Marie Rusert

May 23, 2011
Premature
Given by parents Tina and Michael Rusert
and siblings Liam and Asher

Maximus Samples

Stillborn December 7, 2011
Unknown cause
Given by parents
Nicholas and Deborah Samples
and siblings Alexander and Abigail

Mindy and Maggie Smith

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

Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker

July 24, 2006
Incompetent cervix
Given by parents Robert and Liz Walker
and siblings Jaxson and Lauryn

Caelan Matthew Wallace

July 30—August 3, 2010
Premature
Given by parents Andy and Dana Wallace
and little sister Finlea

Livvy Diane Wood

Miscarried March 1993

Elliot Joseph Wood

Stillborn December 21, 2011
Cord accident
Given by parents Ron and Halee Wood
and brother Reese

Trenton Kohl Woody

December 3, 2009—May 30, 2010
Hypoplastic left heart syndrome
Parents: Jered Woody and Marissa Martin
Given by Grandmother Carole Henry

Gifts of Support

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe, TX
iGive
First Presbyterian Church Foundation,
Wichita Falls
Argyle United Methodist, Argyle, TX

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.

M.E.N.D.

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

Meets the 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m.
D. Bradley McWilliams YMCA at Cypress

Creek, Schindedecker Building
19915 SH 249 Houston, TX 77070

Director: Stormy Mitchell
stormym@mend.org, (281) 374-8528

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

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

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana

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

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa

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

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

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

M.E.N.D.—Amarillo

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

M.E.N.D. Chapter Updates***Bryan/College Station***

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College had a beautiful Christmas ceremony. Big thanks to Ashlea and Justin Schroeder, Larhesa Johnson, melody Pittman, Jason Drude, and Janet Divin for all their help with this event. I would also like to thank Texas Avenue Baptist church for hosting us. Thank you all for being the hands and feet of God and serving. We are looking forward to what God had for our chapter in 2014.

*Jennie Drude****Tulsa***

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa recently held our 2nd Annual Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. We had 45 people in attendance and honored 19 babies in heaven. This ceremony was made possible by our generous sponsors and volunteers. Thank you to my assistant Marcie Nienhuis for all of her hard work and Jennifer Harris for organizing all of our desserts and refreshments. Additionally, thank you to Paula McDaniel for her inspirational message, as well as Doug and Marcie Demaree and David Graves for the beautiful music they provided. We hope God continues His work through our chapter as we minister to grieving families in 2014.

*Lisa Daily****NW Washington***

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington held its Christmas Candlelight Ceremony on December 14, 2013. We had 100 people join us to remember our babies, with Joy Dunlap sharing the story of the short lives of her two daughters and how God brought them through it all. We were blessed to have Tom Kessler, Rachel Lewis and Kim Enloe sing "I Know Who You Are" at this special ceremony.

We had our first meeting at our new Gig Harbor location. There were eight in attendance. We are excited to see what the future holds for M.E.N.D. in that community. We were honored to be selected as the beneficiary of all donations collected at a local golf tournament that provides Thanksgiving meals for local families, in honor of Drew Daniel Ericson.

*Stacy McGhee****Amarillo***

M.E.N.D.—Amarillo has stayed busy making visits to hospitals and doctors in the surrounding area. We are also gearing up for our yearly M.E.N.D. Leadership Conference in Dallas in February.

*Becky Anderson****Texarkana***

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana hosted our 7th Annual Candlelight Ceremony at Beech Street First Baptist Church. It was a beautiful ceremony for us to remember our babies in heaven. Thank you to Tania Greer for allowing God to use her through sharing of her testimony! This ceremony would not have been possible without a generous donation from the Junior League of Texarkana and area businesses who provided donated items to the raffle. A special thank you to Deni Smith for organizing all of our refreshments, and to Craig and Melanie Jenkins and the entire staff of Beech Street First Baptist Church for their continued support of leadership and ministry in this year's event.

*Monica Davis****Hot Springs***

M.E.N.D.—Hot Springs wants to thank everyone involved for making our Christmas Candlelight Ceremony a beautiful, healing time for all who attended. We would also like to thank everyone who attended our Holiday Ideas M.E.N.D. fundraiser. It was a success, and Nancy and I both feel so blessed with the support our small community gives to M.E.N.D.

Amy Humphries

SW/Missouri

Despite the unusually snowy December, M.E.N.D.—Southwest Missouri, still had more than 75 people attend our 4th Annual Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. Families honored their babies in heaven at this event, hosted in our new venue at Second Baptist Church. Thanks to our chapter leadership for their tireless efforts all year! A special thanks to founding assistant and one of my best friends, Heather Bass, for four great years of service to our chapter. Heather stepped down in December to pursue other volunteer opportunities with her children's school and church activities. We wish her well and pray that all our M.E.N.D. families look toward 2014 with renewed determination through their grief journey.

Also, please consider joining us in support of M.E.N.D. at our 4th annual Scrapbook & Craft Day on Saturday, February 15 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20.00. Email heather@mend.org to purchase!

Heather Fann

Houston

M.E.N.D.—Houston had a healing and beautiful Christmas Candlelight Ceremony on Saturday, December 7, with harp music, poetry, beautiful music, especially the gorgeous rendition of "Silent Night" and sign language in worship to the Lord with the song "You Wouldn't Cry (Andrew's Song)." Rebekah Mitchell, M.E.N.D.'s president and founder, brought a touching and inspiring message to our families. Thanks to Spring Baptist Church and all of our M.E.N.D. mommies who dedicated their time and effort to make this night special for all. The ceremony would not have happened without the selfless service and hard work from so many volunteers.

We are looking forward to 2014 as God continues to bring healing in hearts and lives of bereaved parents. We are honored to serve families in the greater Houston area.

Stormy Mitchell

Wichita Falls

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls has been hard at work on fundraising. We have been blessed this year to receive support from our community and reach out to so many families. We pray for all of our families this holiday season.

Sarah Fukasawa

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station

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

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington

Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m.
Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room
1800 Myhre Rd.
Silverdale, Washington
Gig Harbor Meeting
Meets the 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.
St. Anthony Hospital/Greenpoint Dining Room
11567 Canterwood Blvd NW,
Gig Harbor, Washington
Director: Stacy McGhee
stacym@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.—Hot Springs, Arkansas

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

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls, Texas

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

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

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings

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

Daddies group

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

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

Subsequent pregnancy group

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

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

Food and Fellowship

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

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

Contact Brittney Fish:
brittney@mend.org

Infertility group

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

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

Parenting After Loss Playgroup

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

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

Wells Fargo Bank

**800 W. Airport Freeway
Irving, TX 75062**

(Located in the Crystals Pizza parking lot, between MacArthur and O'Connor)
Meetings will be in the bank board room, located on the first floor.
For more information, call (972) 506-9000.

Baby Elias

At the tender age of 27, I was on my third pregnancy, but this pregnancy was completely different from my other pregnancies. For the first time, I knew what it was like to have morning sickness, cravings and sleepless nights. I felt so miserable that my older children, 6 and 5 at the time, had to help me. I grew bigger than the Kool-Aid man, which caused many people to think I was having more than one child or a huge child since I am only 4'11". I would try to reassure them that ultrasounds showed Elias measuring at three pounds, but I was having a hard time reassuring myself. My other two children were small babies at 6 and 7 pounds, so I had never grown in size like this. All of my prenatal appointments were normal, though. All testings were positive. All ultrasounds were normal. Everything was normal. Until 29 weeks.

At 29 weeks, I went to my prenatal appointment. I told the nurse I was a little worried because I was feeling contractions, and I didn't really feel baby Elias move. She asked me if I wanted to be put on the baby monitor while the doctor finished with his other mommies. I accepted, of course, and was moved to another room. She strapped the baby monitor on me, and the nurse had me with my heart in my hand until she finally found the baby's heartbeat. I offered a quick prayer of "Thank you, Jesus." Even after his heartbeat was found, Elias gave the nurses a hard time since he would not stay still and kept moving away from the heart monitor. My contractions were also getting closer together and stronger. The doctor finally came in and told me I was in preterm labor. They had done all they could to hold him in there a little longer, but I needed to get to the hospital. It wasn't time, though. I still had 12 more weeks until Elias was supposed to be born.

While trying to hold back the tears and keep the fear out of my voice, I called my husband to let him know the baby was going to be born that day. Unfortunately, my husband couldn't rush to the hospital to be with me due to his work. He told me to call him if or when I went into labor. Once I was admitted into the hospital, they placed me on the baby monitor again with Elias still bouncing around, giving the nurses a hard time. They drew blood and performed a vaginal exam and told me I already dilated to one centimeter. I stayed in the hospital for several days while the doctors worked to figure out what was happening and to keep Elias in me longer. I was tested for preeclampsia and had other tests and blood work, medication and two shots of steroids to help Elias's lungs. I also had an ultrasound, during which my doctor told me my baby had some blockage, but he would need to send in a specialist in maternal fetal medicine.

When they released me from the hospital, I felt like Bambi learning to walk again after being on complete bed rest for three days. I saw the specialist a few days later, who did a 3D ultrasound, which was a first for me. He told me something looked wrong, that he thought my Elias may have Down Syndrome or some blockage in his mouth. He also told me I had Polyhydramnios, which means excessive amniotic fluid. I was supposed to have 25 cm of water, but I had 47 cm of water; my belly should have been 30 cm, but I was double that amount. The doctor told me I could have an amniocentesis reduction, and they conduct genetic testing on the fluid. But he also said that could make me go into labor since I was so far along in my pregnancy. Or we could do the testing once Elias was born.

After a few days, I decided to have the amnio reduction, so I was sent to the hospital again because of my contractions and due to baby Elias's special needs. Later that evening, three doctors came to my room with big jars and a needle and an ultrasound machine. I was amazed how much water came out and my stomach going back to normal. Now the waiting game started to see if I went into labor in the next 48 hours. A few hours had passed, and then, like flood gates opening, my water broke. I called my husband to rush to the hospital, because the baby was ready to be born. The doctors, though, had other plans and wanted to keep me pregnant in the hospital for another four weeks. I didn't know that it could be possible, but the nurse told me as long as Elias kept producing fluids, I can stay pregnant for a few more weeks.

Elias chose not to stick with the doctors' plans. Elias arrived 10 hours later, nine weeks early, at 3:24 PM, weighing 3 pounds and 2 ounces. The NICU nurses rushed in like bees protecting their queen, trying to get my newborn to breathe. They almost lost him in the process. I don't know how much later, but it felt like forever when I finally got to see him. Then they had to rush him to another area. The doctors told me my baby had a mass in his mouth and that they were going to operate on him by making a hole in his windpipe so he could breathe right. I agreed to the operation that would save my baby's life. We made it through this procedure, and Elias endured many more during his stay at the hospital. Unfortunately, my body healed and the doctor had to release me from the hospital, which hit me like a ton of bricks. My doctor assured me Elias was in the best care and to not worry, but I just couldn't imagine leaving him there. I was filled with so much guilt, and I wanted to spend so much time with him before my husband, other children and in-laws came to pick me up from the hospital.



In my son's short life, he went through so much, being in premie operations, testing, blood work, MRI, CAT scan, tracheotomy, but through it all, he was doing okay. The doctors were ready to remove the mass, but one day he became really sick with a lung infection, which gave him a blood infection. Elias needed to receive blood a few times. He had a low iron count and low blood pressure, and his kidneys were shutting down. My baby, Elias, only lasted a week more. At 12:00 AM, his heart stopped, and he went home to our heavenly Father. I received a call from the hospital, but I didn't let the doctors tell me anything, not even that he was already gone. I simply told them I was on my way. I woke everyone up, took my kids to my sister-in-law's house, and rushed to the hospital. When I saw him, I didn't realize he was not connected to any machines, that my baby was gone, until minutes later, and then I held my son's lifeless body in my arms. I stayed at the hospital until 11:00 AM, and then left to make funeral arrangements for my almost 1-month old. Two days later, I laid my sweet baby, Elias, to rest. During his funeral, my father-in-law did a calling to whoever wanted to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It was in that moment many realized tomorrow isn't promised to us. Baby Elias was born with great purpose, to bring several family members to Christ. I felt so alone in my pain until my father-in-law told me that the Lord is with me, and it brought so much peace to my heart. I know that even if I don't understand or even agree with His plans, I know there is something bigger and better coming my way. I trust in the Lord. He has wiped my tears away and wrapped me in His arms. He gives me tons of strength to keep going, as He says in Jeremiah 29:11. "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."

♥ *Crystal Reyes,*
Mommy to Elias
M.E.N.D.—Houston

Open the curtains or blinds and let the light in. Light is good for the soul.

-Keri, M.E.N.D.—Houston

My thoughts on this: Don't push or rush yourself to go back too soon, and when you do, remember that you are still grieving and may be very distracted and unproductive at work for awhile, and that's okay.

-Miranda, M.E.N.D.—Houston

I just avoided talking about it. People around me seemed to respect my wanting privacy. If I decided to talk about it, they listened but never asked questions.

-Wakie, M.E.N.D.—NW Washington

I had one lady who kept trying to feed me a cookie and said the baby needed it. She didn't know of my loss. My co-worker spoke before I could and said I had lost the baby. Then it got awkward and the lady apologized. I simply replied, "It is ok, I just send my hugs and kisses to heaven." It really depends on you. This is a loss only a mother mourns. I lost Leland in my 2nd trimester and gave birth to a baby I later buried. My miscarriage took place on a Friday, but I was back on Monday. You have to pick up the pieces and go on. Talk to the Lord and give Him your heart. He is there holding you and wiping your tears away. You will know when that time is.

-Amanda, M.E.N.D.—Houston

Before my actual return I sent an email to my co-workers thanking them for their support during my time away and letting them know that I would be returning, but I was not ready to discuss my situation at this time. It worked wonderfully with the exception of one particularly clueless co-worker.

Jennifer, M.E.N.D.—Dallas

Don't be afraid to talk about your child, the memories, good or bad. I felt worse when I wouldn't talk about him. Also, try to remember not everyone will have been through this loss, so be prepared to turn the other cheek to bad advice; coworkers are just trying to help.

-Elizabeth, M.E.N.D.—Tulsa



Subsequent Births

Julie and Peter Forrest
of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma,
along with big brother Jack,
joyfully announce the arrival of

Luke Reed,
born August 17, 2013,
measuring 7 lb., 9 oz.,
and 19.5 inches long.

The Forrest family lovingly remembers

Henry,
July 24-25, 2010,
and Sam,

July 24-August 8, 2010,
preterm labor, unknown cause

Scott and Jodie Gibson

of Ponder, Texas,
along with big brothers
Will, Andrew, and Isaac,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Lillian Katherine,
born October 29, 2013,
measuring 6 lb., 9 oz.,
and 19.5 inches long.

The Gibsons lovingly remember
Janelle Marie,
stillborn November 17, 2006,
and Gabriel,
miscarried October 31, 2007

Kristi and David Palmer

of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
along with big sister Penelope,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Ariani Celeste,
born December 1, 2013,
measuring 8 lb., 7 oz.,
and 19.5 inches long.

The Palmer family lovingly remembers

Ezra Grey,
October 5, 2009,
ectopic pregnancy,
Leilani Rose,
August 25, 2012,
ectopic pregnancy,
Nathaniel Ellis,

miscarried October 20, 2012,
and Jude Michael,
miscarried December 30, 2012

Ashlee and Albert Metcalfe

of Mannford, Oklahoma,
along with siblings
Baylee, Anastacia, Triton and Preslee,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Zaylee Grace,
born November 11, 2013,
measuring 7 lb., 14 oz.,
and 21 inches long.

The Metcalfes lovingly remember
Skylar Faith,
stillborn January 27, 2010

Stacy and Gary Shreve

of Tulsa, Oklahoma,
along with big sister Lilly,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Eli Michael,
born November 10, 2013,
measuring 8 lb., 10 oz.,
and 20.25 inches long.

The Shreves lovingly remember
Mason Lee,
stillborn January 15, 2012,
amniotic web in cord

Nicholas and Deborah Samples

of Denton, Texas,
along with big brother Alex,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Abigail Joy,
born November 11, 2013,
measuring 5 lb., 10 oz.,
and 18 inches long.

The Samples lovingly remember
Maximus Frederick,
stillborn December 7, 2011
unknown cause

Melissa and Chad Bailey,

of Grapevine, Texas,
joyfully announce the adoption of
Addison Lynn,
born December 2, 2013.
The Baileys lovingly remember
Emma,
stillborn April 23, 2008,
Baby Bailey,
miscarried May 1, 2009,
triplets Brooklyn, Jillian and Sydney,
January 1 and 2, 2010,
and Isabella,
February 12-September 16, 2013

Tia and Ross Swearingen

of Owasso, Oklahoma,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Sadie Olivia,
born October 28, 2013,
measuring 7 lb., 12 oz.,
and 20 inches long.

The Swearingens lovingly remember
Lucille Paige,
stillborn May 1, 2012

A Different Child

A different child,
People notice
There's a special glow around you.
You grow
Surrounded by love,
Never doubting you are wanted;
Only look at the pride and joy
In your mother and father's eyes,
And if sometimes
Between the smiles
There's a trace of tears,
One day
You'll understand.
You'll understand
There was once another child
A different child
Who was in their hopes and dreams,
That child will never outgrow the baby clothes,
That child will never keep them up at night,
In fact, that child will never be any trouble at all.
Except sometimes, in a silent moment,
When mother and father miss so much
That different child.
May hope and love wrap your warmly
And may you learn the lesson forever.
How infinitely precious
How infinitely fragile
Is this life on earth.
One day, as a young man or woman
You may see another mother's tears,
Another father's silent grief,
Then you, and you alone
Will understand
And offer the greatest comfort.
When all hope seems lost,
You will tell them
With great compassion,
"I know how you feel.
I'm only here
Because my mother tried again!"

For Madoka Marietta Rosalie, from your mother,
Pandora Diane MacMillan, March 4, 1999.
Remembering with love, not sadness, our Special
Angel, Rhiannon Roxane,
Who left this world 2 years ago today.
Retrieved from <https://www.fictionpress.com/s/87202/1/A-Different-Child>, December 14, 2013

Regresando al Trabajo

Salir de la casa, salir en público y sin duda regresar al trabajo después de la muerte de su bebé puede ser muy difícil y hasta asfixiante. Tratando de reanudar sus actividades normales es muy difícil, sin la presión de lidiar con lo que su jefe y compañeros de trabajo esperan de usted. Sin embargo, algunas mujeres regresan a trabajar antes de lo que es necesario para poder salir de la casa pero no estar sola, perdida en su dolor. Sin embargo, muchas mujeres que hacen esto atestiguan más tarde que realmente no fue la mejor decisión simplemente porque han encontrado que podrían haber suprimido su dolor mientras estar ocupadas y no haber tenido tiempo terapéutico de procesar su pérdida.

Sin embargo, probablemente no hay un “buen momento” para volver. Incluso aquellos que toman su tiempo de maternidad asignado y permitido resulta en que es extremadamente difícil de regresar a trabajar como un empleado o jefe. Cuando mi Jonathan nació muerto, estaba trabajando unas pocas horas a la semana en la oficina de abogados de mi padre. Afortunadamente, no tenía horas y descripción de mi trabajo y me permitió entrar y salir cuando quería. Yo era uno de los que necesitaba salir de la casa en un intento de seguir mi “vida vieja”. Menos de dos semanas después del nacimiento mortinato de Jonathan, fui a la oficina un sábado por la tarde y trabaje un par de horas. Me sentí tan bien haciendo algo que era más o menos ‘normal’ para mí. Sólo me topé con un otro empleado ese día - un abogado que también había tenido un hijo que nació muerto 18 meses más antes. Tenía algunos consejos muy útiles y palabras de aliento para mí, que me hizo pensar que tal vez mi visita a la oficina ese día fue providencial.

Volver a trabajar es un tema candente en nuestros grupos de

apoyo mensuales. Muchas de las mamás (y papás) piden consejos de los compañeros del grupo de apoyo de que cuando sería mejor regresar a trabajar, que deben decirles a los compañeros de trabajo, clientes, o estudiantes, y si deben ser capaces de poner una foto de su bebé en su escritorio, etc..

Las respuestas y consejos varían típicamente, sin embargo, una cosa que todos están de acuerdo con es que tiene que hacer lo mejor para usted! Si usted no está lista para volver, entonces si es posible, no regrese. Si cree que está capaz de regresar, hágalo, pero asegúrese de que se permita tiempo para que activamente pueda lamentar. Si desea que sus compañeros de trabajo, clientes o estudiantes hablen abiertamente sobre lo que pasó, asegúrese de darles esa orientación y permiso. Si quiere seguir siendo extremadamente privada de ello en el trabajo, eso también está bien, mientras usted tiene un sistema de apoyo en otros lugares. Por último, si usted se siente cómoda de poner una foto de su bebé en su escritorio, no podría haber nadie que le pueda decir que no.

En este boletín, usted leerá las cuentas personales y consejos de varias de nuestras familias que han tenido experiencias buenas y no tan buenas con volver a trabajar. También compartirán ideas de cómo sobrevivir el día de trabajo -especialmente durante los primeros días y semanas de regresar. Mientras usted lee estas historias y palabras de sabiduría, oro de que usted obtendrá algunas ideas de lo que funcionará mejor para usted y para que encuentre lo que le ayudará poner devuelta las piezas rotas de su vida.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell,*
Presidente y Fundadora

Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y Mitchell bebé Mitchell

My advice is don't go back to work until you feel you are ready. Also, as hard as it is, if your co-workers knew you were expecting, make sure they are aware somehow that you have suffered a loss so you don't come back to people saying congrats and asking about the baby. Most of my co-workers knew but some didn't and it was devastating to get congrats multiple times and then have to tell them I had a loss and explain repeatedly what happened.

-Cherish, M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

To those who look away when I grow teary-eyed in the baby department, look a little deeper. Surely you have some compassion in your heart.

To those who change the subject when I speak my sons' names, change your way of thinking. It just might change your whole life.

To those who roll their eyes and say that we barely had them at all, how could we miss them so much. In our hearts we have seen them live a thousand times. We have seen their first steps, first day of school, their weddings, and their children.

We have had them forever in our minds.

To those who say we can have another, we did. I thank God for her everyday, but even if I have twenty more babies, I will forever have two in the grave, and that is two too many.

To those who say to get on with my life, I have. It is a different life, the life of a grieving mother. One with a tremendous amount to be thankful for, but also one with a lot to mourn the loss of!

Do not judge the bereaved mother. She comes in many forms.

She is breathing, but she is dying.

She may look young, but inside she has become ancient.

She smiles, but her heart sobs.

She walks, she talks, she cooks, she cleans, she works,

She IS, but she IS NOT, all at once.

She is here, but part of her is elsewhere for eternity.

Do not dismiss us: we have shaped more than just the future generation.

We have released all the tiny angels who are watching over you.

Open your eyes to US, and you just might see THEM.

Author Unknown, retrieved from bearsofhope.org, December 14, 2013

M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
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“... that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

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

- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, go to www.krogercommunityrewards.com and set up an account if you do not already have one. Once you receive the email after setting up your account, click on “My Account,” then go to “Edit Kroger Community Rewards” and input your Kroger Plus card number. You’ll see a screen with your information in boxes, at the bottom right, there is a box that says Community Rewards. Click that, then enter the M.E.N.D. number, which is 80513. Once that’s entered, you’ll confirm that M.E.N.D. is your charity of choice. This link will be good until the 2013-2014 program expires. You must link your card each year to M.E.N.D.
- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.
- M.E.N.D. can now earn funds through **i.think inc.**, an online marketing research firm. You can help by signing up as a survey panel member and designating us as the recipient of your fee. Just go to the Web site at <http://www.ithink.inc.com> and choose “Sign up to become an i.think inc. panel member.” Fill out the sign-up survey. Under the “Funds for Charity” section, select M.E.N.D. from the list of names.
- **IBM** employees may now make charitable donations to M.E.N.D. through automatic payroll deductions. Choose Charity Code 0M562 from the *IBM Employee/Retiree Approved Charity List*.
- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to www.goodsearch.com and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.
- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D., visit www.missionfish.org to find out how.
- **Igive.com** will donate a penny a search and a portion of each purchase made through their website to M.E.N.D. Sign up today! M.E.N.D.’s cause number is 52025.

