



M.E.N.D.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

Keeping Your Marriage Strong

My husband, Byron, and I have been married for 28 years. We fell in love as teenagers, dated a few years and didn't see a reason to wait, so we married young - when I was only 19 and he was just 22. We have had a strong marriage from the beginning and have always kept the Lord the center of our lives and our home. We started our journey together confident that our household of faith would give us the desires of our hearts; we naively assumed we would never be shaken or have to work through any sort of trial or tribulation.

We should have known better when Byron was diagnosed with stage 2 melanoma just months before our fairytale wedding. Surgery removed the cancer from his skin, and we chalked the close call up to already getting our suffering over with before we even got started as a married couple. However, a few months after our wedding, I was diagnosed with a degenerative kidney disease. Two years later, we endured a high-risk pregnancy, but it resulted in our giving birth to a healthy full-term baby, even though the cord was wrapped around his little neck three times. At that point in our lives, we thought we had gone through the worst of the worst. Little did we know our faith and our marriage would be tested to the core three and a half years later.

We conceived our second child just after our living son turned 3 years old. Because of the kidney disease I have, the pregnancy became tumultuous early. The ebbs and flows of doctor reports were stressful. The baby was thankfully doing great, but my health was declining due to the pregnancy. Once we made it past viability, I thought we were home free. I wondered if we may have to endure a baby in the NICU for a while, but death never crossed my mind. I was put on bed rest, then admitted into the hospital for careful watch so my doctors could quickly deliver the baby if it looked like my diseased kidneys could not withstand another day of pressure from the pregnancy. Being in the hospital for an indefinite length of time was very hard. Byron was in the early years of building his dental practice and could not take a lot of time off, so he spent every night with me and delayed his patient schedule every morning until my doctors made their morning rounds and assured us we were "safe" for another day. Additionally, I desperately missed our little son. While he was well taken care of by my parents, he didn't understand why Mommy had to be in the hospital for so long.

On the morning of June 24, 1995, at 29.5 weeks along, our baby boy, Jonathan Daniel Mitchell, became entangled

in the umbilical cord and slipped from living inside my womb into his heavenly home. The expression on Byron's face that afternoon as a team of medical personnel desperately tried to find our baby's heartbeat will be forever etched in my mind. In those first few days of hot, shocking, fresh, raw grief, it seemed as though Byron and I took turns deeply grieving. When he cried, I comforted him; when I cried, he comforted me. Rarely did we cry together. Instantly we became more of a team than we already were. We were not often at odds with each other during those first few months. We learned to read each other's unspoken words and body language and recognize the source of each other's moodiness. We respected one another's need to be alone at times, yet made sure we weren't lonely. Together we declared we would grow stronger as a couple because of this, and nothing could happen now that would tear us apart.

A number of years ago, a book was written about couples who experience the death of a child. The author writes that 90% of parents like us will experience marital strain. She does not use the word "divorce" yet she was often quoted in numerous periodicals predicting 90% of couples who lose a child will divorce. Thankfully, additional researchers came along and debunked this percentage as a myth, especially since the author was unable to cite her source for this extremely high number. However, many people still believe she is right and continue to quote this statistic to grieving couples. It happened to us. Just days after Jonathan's stillbirth, a well-meaning person recommended we start marriage counseling, "just in case."

In my 20 years of directing M.E.N.D., admittedly I have seen a number of couples divorce. I'm not a marriage counselor and have no professional training in counseling, but my personal opinion is that these marriages may have been in trouble to begin with and the death of their baby was the final straw. This is really sad to me. I often tell parents: you made this baby together, you lost this baby together, and now you need to grieve this baby together. Sure, men and women grieve differently, but that does not mean grief should drive us apart.

At all our M.E.N.D. support groups, we end the session with opening the floor to parents to share something good or positive that has resulted from the loss

Continued on page 2.

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 18.

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.

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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



"Keeping Your Marriage Strong" continued from page 1...

of their baby. We never imply our babies died so this good could happen. Rather, we encourage our families to recognize at least one little good thing that has come from the death, so not every aspect of the baby's death is a negative. In essence, we are asking parents to create a legacy for their baby. When it comes to this segment of the support group, I love hearing what parents have to share. Oftentimes it's that they have become more sensitive and compassionate toward others or maybe they have discovered a talent like painting or writing. My favorite "positive" is reconciled or deepened relationships, especially when it pertains to a husband and wife. Our little ones in heaven would never want their mommy and daddy to separate over their untimely death.

So I urge you, if you and your spouse are on the precipice of divorce, fight for staying together. Your fresh grief may not allow you the energy to fight. If that's the case, then do not make any major decisions in that direction until your grief is not quite as raw and you can think a little more clearly. Determine that the death of your baby will not be the culprit of your failed marriage. Challenge yourselves to be a team, not opposites in this journey of grief. Let your baby's legacy be that he or she helped strengthen your bond and determine that nothing - not sickness or death - will tear you apart.

♥ *Rebekah Mitchell,*

Mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell

M.E.N.D.—President/Founder

M.E.N.D.—Dallas/Fort Worth Christmas Candlelight Ceremony



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



What If Your Blessings Come Through Raindrops...

Through the raindrops and tears of sorrow, have you seen the blessings? Found something positive you would not have expected?

In our M.E.N.D. Support Group Meetings, we end each meeting sharing something positive we have learned or seen as we travel the journey of our loss or losses. We are excited to start including these in our M.E.N.D. newsletters!

We would love to hear from YOU! If you would like to share something positive or a blessing to be included in the newsletter, please send it to jennifer@mend.org.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you!

March/April Topic

Loss as a Single Parent
Deadline: January 31, 2017

May/June Topic

Mother's Day/Father's Day
Deadline: March 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. All letters submitted to the editor are subject to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests that it not be published.

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

Heavenly Birthday	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 7th Birthday, Kavya!

Kavya, you are 7 years old...Wow, you are a big girl now, my beautiful, precious baby girl. I was just telling your Auntie Lau about you last night. It was beautiful for Mor to share that with her.

Your sister and brother talk about you and how you are in the sky. They leave treasures at your picture from time to time. You are, beyond words... missed, loved and treasured by all of us every day. I have no doubt your birthday in the sky is the most amazing party ever. Appu is there, too, to celebrate you and will always take care of you. Please take good care of my Appu baby too.

Love and kisses

Kavya Marie Kurishungal
December 17-31, 2009
Complications from omphalocele
Parents: Pravin and Tina Kurishungal
Siblings: Kyra and Jacob



Happy 3rd Birthday, To Our Baby Girl!

Happy 3rd birthday, princess. We can't believe you're 3 already. Wow. What fun we wish we were having with you. Bows and tutus, laughing and dancing for sure. I am sure heaven is having quite the party for you, though.

We honor you today, and we celebrate your life. We celebrate you and all you are. You have marked us in a way we are never the same. We are forever "Lily-marked." Forever changed by you and all you teach us. We thank God for your time here with us and for giving us you. We love you more than you may ever know. So much...all in the world. Miss you like crazy.

Daddy, Mommy, Arrow xo

Lillian Ember Stewart
November 23, 2013
Parents: Derek and Bethany Stewart
Little brother: Arrow Ryland



Happy 1st Birthday, Mac!

Happy birthday to the brightest blooming rose in our garden! Thank you for picking us to be your parents, and for picking Dylan to be your little sister. We miss you so much, Mac! You changed our world forever, and continue to do so every day.

Mommy, Daddy, Brandon, Dylan,
 and your Fur-Sisters (Khali and Arya)

Mackinzie Brooks Crowell
February 19, 2016
Cord accident
Parents: Chris and Madie Crowell
Siblings: Brandon and Dylan



Happy 1st Birthday, Dakota!

Dakota, I will cherish the time we spent together and forever love you with all my heart, sweet child.

"But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 19:14

Dakota Williams
Miscarried February 5, 2016
Parents: Deion Williams and Sierrah Brown



Happy 2nd Birthday, Logan!

Every day we remember you, honor you and cherish your memory. But on your special day, we celebrate! As you grow in heaven, we are so lucky we got to have you! Until we meet again, our sweet boy! We love you bunches!

Happy Birthday!

Logan Brock Looney
Stillborn February 11, 2015
Umbilical thrombosis
Parents: William and Latisha Looney
Sister: Sophia



Happy 1st Birthday, Aubrey!

Happy birthday, my sweet angel! I can't believe it has been a whole year already. I can't wait to see you in heaven, but while Daddy and I are still here, please watch over us always. You are missed so much by your whole family, and you are always on our minds and in our hearts. We love and miss you so much!

Aubrey Maria Bohman-Schirmer
January 17-31, 2016
Micro-Premie/Infection
Parents: Michael Schirmer and Anna Bohman



Happy 5th Birthday, My North Star!

Oh how we wish you could be here with us, our sweet baby boy. This would be your 5th birthday. This one is really getting to Mommy this year. I know you're happy and whole in heaven and not suffering. Your baby sister talks about you. She says you're her best friend. I want so badly for you to know my love for you. I want so badly to kiss your sweet head just one more time. I will one day when we reunite in heaven. For now I cling to your memory book and your pictures. You're my heart. you're my moon, you're my north star. Love you so much, baby.

Happy 5th birthday!
 Mommy, Daddy, Sissy

Aidan Wayne Anderson
Stillborn January 2, 2012
Parents: Zachary and Ashlie Anderson
Sister: Journey



Happy 1st Birthday, Bradley!

Happy 1st birthday to our sweet baby Bradley! We love you and miss you more than we can ever say. Not a day goes by we don't think of you and remember the precious time we had with you here. Your big sister, Mikayla, is taking good care of our Bradley Bear here on earth, while you watch over her from heaven. Happy birthday, our sweet son. You are forever missed.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, and Big Sister Mikayla

Bradley James Alexander Lipka

February 10, 2016

Unknown cause

Parents: Justin Lipka and Victoria Coats

Big sister: Mikayla

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Alison!**

We love you, Alison!
Happy birthday to our beautiful daughter!

Alison Marie Norton

Stillborn December 30, 2014, at full term

Parents: Kevin and Wendi Norton

Brothers: Matthew and Joshua

**Happy 5th Birthday, Grace!**

Wishing you a happy "heavenly" 5th birthday!

Love,
Mom

Grace Saniya Tisby

February 27, 2012

Premature

Mommy: Shauniesa Sisk

**Happy 8th Birthday, Alethia Joy!**

We can hardly believe it has been eight years since we held you in our arms in the wee hours of the morning. We sang "Jesus Loves Me" to you. I think of you every time I hear that song. You will always be our firstborn, our beautiful girl. The Lord knit you together so perfectly, and we can't help but wonder what you would look like today at 8 years old. I'm sure you would be a wonderful big sister to your siblings. We think of you every day and miss you always. So thankful for the hope we have of heaven through our Savior Jesus Christ.

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Hannah Beth, Anthony and Elliot

Alethia Joy Myers

Stillborn February 3, 2009, at 39 weeks

Unknown cause

Also remembering

Baby Grace

Miscarried July 2009

Baby Myers

Miscarried August 2011

Baby Seven

Miscarried October 2016

Parents: Tony and Charity Myers

Siblings: Hannah Beth, Anthony and Elliot

**Happy 9th Birthday, Dharma!**

I cannot believe it has been nine years since I heard you cry, held you in my arms, and kissed your warm cheeks. You started it all. You made me a mom! I used to miss my "baby," but now I miss my "would be 3rd grader." I wish you were here so we could talk about boys, sing along to Taylor Swift, and do make-overs on each other. I love you so much.

Dharma Lucille

March 31—April 1, 2008

Anencephaly

**Happy 3rd Birthday, Stella!**

How is it that you would be 3 now?! Time is moving too fast! It feels like just yesterday you were kicking my tummy and demanding funnel cake. Boy, do I wish you were here. Seeing your sweet face and your tiny feet is one of my favorite memories. I am so thankful I get to be your mom and see you again some day. I love you so much.

Stella Darling

January 23, 2014

Anencephaly

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Liza!**

2?! You would be 2!?! I still remember you waving your little hand at me and Stormy at my last doctor visit I saw you alive. That is one of my most special memories I have. I imagine you having curly blonde hair, getting into your brother's LEGOs, but blaming the baby. I love and miss you so much.

Liza Belle

February 23, 2015

Unknown cause



"Then he turned my sorrow into joy! He took away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy so that I might sing glad praises to the Lord instead of lying in silence in the grave. O Lord my God, I will keep on thanking you forever!" Psalms 30:11-12

Parents: Jennie and Jason Drude

*Siblings: Maxwell Malachi, Mollie Michelle
and Milo Theodore*

Happy 6th Birthday, Prince Royce!

Happy 6th birthday, Royce! You are definitely your mommy's big boy at heart, and your baby sister has been your keeper since the very start! Thank you for being the best guardian angel watching over your mom! Your love truly gives her the reason to become the woman who God has called her to be! We love you and we all miss you! (P.S. Thank you for looking after Baby Jaxon!)

Love,
Amber (Mommy's best friend)

Royce Lamont Adams

December 31, 2010

Unknown cause

Mommy: Raegan Helm

Little sister: Drue Adams



Happy 1st Birthday, Jax Jax!

No words, nor tears, can express just how much we truly miss you! We thank God for you, especially for your pure love you still leave with us today! Because of you, Jaxon, our family is becoming stronger day by day, praying and hoping to remain in God's will so one day we'll get to see your face! We often reflect on your growth and how you would be walking by now and getting into stuff around the house. Although we'll never get to experience those days, we thank you anyway for every piece of memory you left with us! We love you! Happy 1st birthday, King!

Love,
Mommy and Family

*Jaxon Kingsiah Shaw
December 29, 2015
Hydrocephalus
Parents: Brandon and Amber Shaw
Siblings: Braylon and Melasia*

**Happy 2nd Birthday, Ethan!**

Happy 2nd heavenly birthday to our beautiful angel. There is not a day that goes by when you are not on our hearts and minds. Your baby sister is your twin. We love and miss you and hope you continue to watch over us.

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

*Ethan Nathaniel Keener
Stillborn November 10, 2014
Parents: Eric and Carlia Keener
Siblings: Bryson, Arian and Layla*

**Happy 7th Birthday, Hudson!**

Hudson, happy 7th birthday, Hudson Parker! We love you and miss you. We can't believe it has been seven years. We will never forget you.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Presley and Grayson

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

**Happy 9th and 10th Birthday, Jordan!**

My darling, Jordan, happy 9th and 10th birthdays, my love! It's definitely been a journey. We miss you so desperately, but understand this is all in God's hands. With this in mind, as always, we must remember we have to trust God's Plan, endure this temporary separation and I will continue celebrating all the love that you are!

Mommy loves you, Jordan, my beautiful son!
Our Eternal Love,
Mommy and Jazz (Your Sweet Puppy Dog)

*Jordan Alexander Booker
January 11, 2007
True knot in cord
Mommy: Norma Jordan*

**Happy 7th Birthday, Angel Noael!**

Happy 7th birthday, sweet baby love! I bet heaven has the best birthday parties ever!

I wish you were here to play with your brothers and sisters; you would love them so. We hope you enjoy the balloons and notes we send up - they come with lots of big hugs and kisses! Momma and Daddy miss you so much, precious girl. We are so thankful and blessed to have held you, even if for only a moment. Our hearts will hold you until our arms can once more.

Love you past forever, and then again! See you soon, doll!
P.S. Give Grandma and Grandpa love for us
and enjoy spending time with Jesus.

*Angel Noael Torres
December 18, 2009
Anesthesia complications at birth
Also remembering
Aaron Valentine Torres
Miscarried March 21, 2010
Parents: Gerald and Jennifer Torres
Siblings: Gidean, Malaki, Kaleb, Tytus, Asher,
Selah and Eva Grace*

**Happy 6th Birthday, Khloe!**

Happy 6th birthday/angelversary, our beautiful Khloe! You're always in our hearts and never forgotten. We love and miss you so much, mija! Sending you a big hug and lots of kisses your way, baby girl.

With lots of love,
Mommy, Daddy and Baby Brother (Konner)

*Khloe Peyton Calderón
December 21, 2010
Potters syndrome
Parents: Erik and Angie Calderón
Brother: Konner Memphis*

**Happy 7th Birthday, Jacob!**

Happy heavenly birthday to our sweet boy. It's hard to believe you would be 7 this year. My heart aches to think of the seven years we've been without you, but I am thankful for an eternity we will spend making up for lost time. We think of you every day and miss you more than words can describe. We carry you in our hearts every day.

*Jacob Yoshiaki Fukasawa
February 8, 2010
Unknown cause
Parents: Yoshi and Sarah Fukasawa
Siblings: Ava, Noah and Grace*

**Happy 1st Birthday, Charles and Hudson!**

How we miss you and what could have been. Happy 1st birthday to you, our sweet boys! We love you so much!

*Charles Arturo and Hudson Raul Aguirre
January 12, 2016
Twin to twin transfusion syndrome
Parents: Nick and Cassandra Aguirre
Siblings: Nicholas Jr*



Happy 7th Birthday, Tomas Andres and Isabela!

Happy 7th birthday, our precious twins, our guardian angels, Tomas Andres and Isabela! We love you and miss you so much! It is hard to believe it has been seven years since we held you in our arms. Even though it was only for a very short time, that moment will live with us forever! We send you lots of hugs and kisses!

Love you always!

Mommy, Daddy, Tomas Eduardo and Andres Ignacio

Tomas Andres Castillo

January 11, 2010

Isabela Castillo

January 18, 2010

Premature at 20 and 21 weeks

Parents: Jesus and Marisela Castillo

Little brothers: Tomas Eduardo and Andres Ignacio



Happy 7th Birthday, Michael!

Happy birthday, sweet boy! We can't believe you have been gone for seven years. We love and miss you so much. Julianne talks about you all the time and tells strangers all about her brothers and sisters in heaven. Every time she sees a picture of baby feet she thinks of you. You will always be a part of our family

Michael Noah Wheeler

Stillborn January 27, 2010

Unknown cause



Happy 2nd Birthday, Everly!

Sweet baby, we miss you so much! It would have been so much fun to have twins! We see twins and wish our twins were here. It would have been double trouble, but we could have handled it! It makes me sad Evelyn is missing part of herself. We love and miss you!

Everly Hope Wheeler

January 2015

Vanishing twin syndrome

Also remembering

Baby Wheeler

Miscarried March 2009, at 8 weeks

Abigail Mercy Wheeler

Miscarried June 3, 2014, at 14 weeks

Cystic hygroma

Parents: Jim and Larissa Wheeler

Siblings: Julianne and Evelyn



Continued on page 8...

Happy 1st Birthday, Baby Mann! Happy 5th Birthday Baby Dickerson #1!

Although we never held you in our arms,
we will forever hold you in our hearts.
Mommy and Daddy love you, little one!

Baby Mann

Miscarried January 13, 2016

Baby Dickerson #1

Miscarried February 8, 2012

Also remembering

Lyla Rose

May 15, 2012

Missed late miscarriage

Parents: Brandon and Tori Mann

Siblings: Cash, Maci and Westin



M.E.N.D.-Chicago Land Tree Decorating



“Birthday Tributes” continued from page 7.

Happy 2nd Birthday, Lydia!

I can't believe it has been two years since we looked upon your beautiful face. Our hearts ache to hold you, kiss you and love you, but we know you are happy dancing and playing in God's heavenly kingdom. Our lives have been forever changed and blessed by you. You will be forever loved and remembered. Happy birthday, my darling!

All our love,
Mommy, Daddy, Sissy and Bubby

Lydia Analeigh Walters
November 25, 2014
Hydrops
Also remembering
Aiden Walters
Miscarried May 2005, at 12 weeks
Sienna Walters
Miscarried January 2013, at 6 weeks
Grace Walters
Miscarried August 2016, at 6 weeks
Parents: William and Jamie Walters
Siblings: Kylee and Landon



Happy 2nd Birthday, Ry-pie!

Happy 2nd birthday to the most beautiful girl in the world! Dance with the angels on your day, baby girl. Mommy loves you and misses you dearly!

Ryleigh Amoy Wiggins
February 25—March 15, 2015
Type II Lissencephaly
Mommy: Sanita Wiggins



Happy 1st Birthday, R.J.!

We love you, R.J., and we know you are in the arms of Jesus. You will always be in our hearts. You are our sweet, innocent, angel boy who never experienced any pain here on this earth.

Ryan Thomas Blake Jr.
Stillborn February 23, 2016, at 34 weeks
Placental abruption
Parents: Ryan and Mary Beth Blake
Sister: Alexis



Happy 2nd Birthday, Abram!

Happy 2nd birthday in heaven, my sweet angel Abram! I can't believe time is passing so fast. I stop and wonder at times what you would look like now and who you would become when you grew up. We thank God every time we think of you. Know that your family loves you and misses you so much. Mommy and Daddy will see you one day, and we will finally be able to hold you and this time never let go. Happy birthday, baby boy!

Love you to the moon and back!
Mommy and Daddy

Abram Ponce
Stillborn January 18, 2015
Parents: Ramiro Jr and Dora Aurelia Ponce
Siblings: Giovanni, Ramiro III, Romeo,
Ashley and Stephanie



MEND-Tulsa Christmas Candlelight Ceremony



Sponsors:
Anthem Church
Merritt's Bakery
The Vintage Pearl
Camille Bennett, Young Living Independent Distributor
Brian & Kristina Cobler
Jeremy & Lisa Daily
Phil & Katie Goodson
Katie Justus
Rick & Paula McDaniel
Seth & Marcie Nienhuis



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

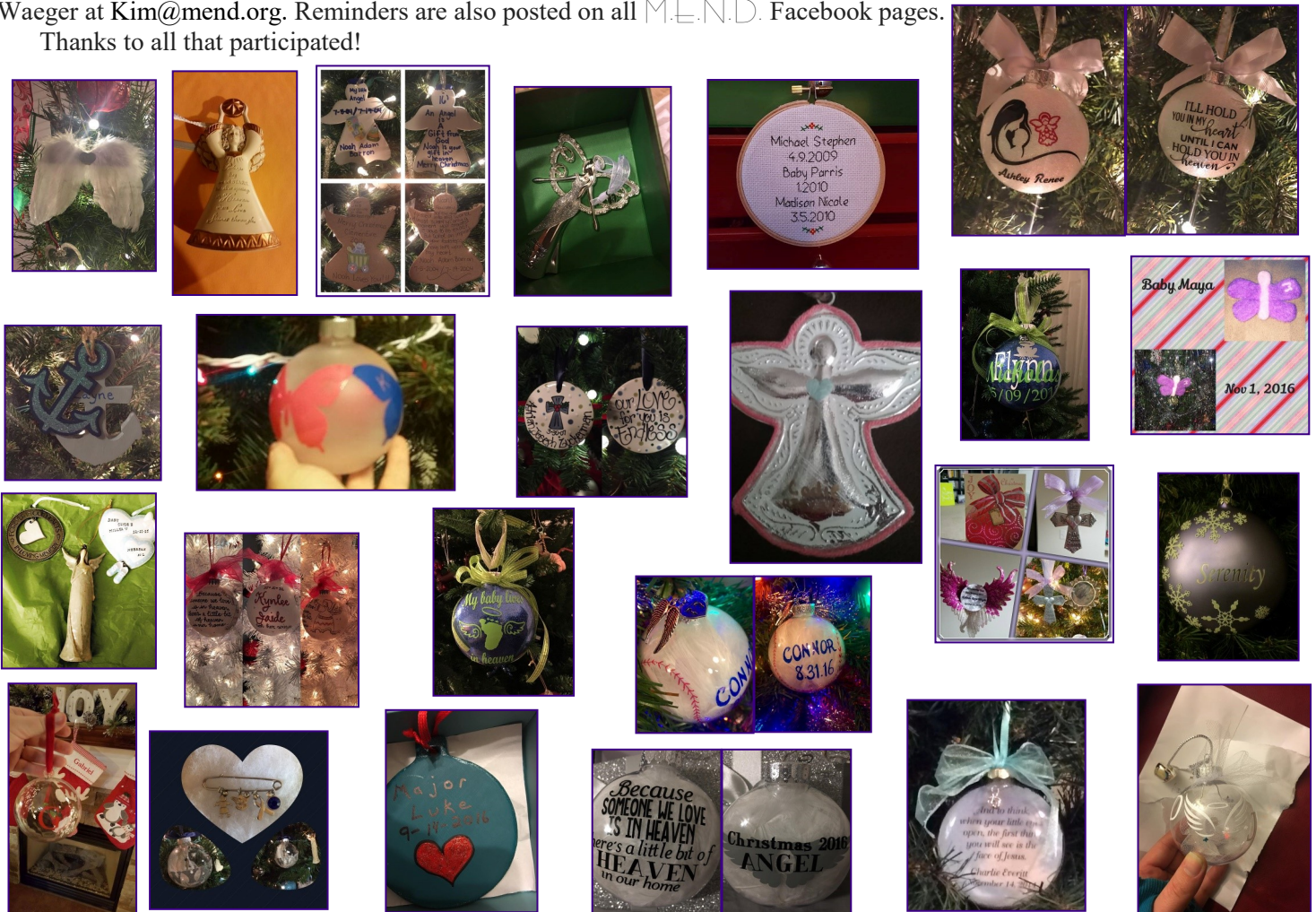


M.E.N.D.-Ornament Exchange

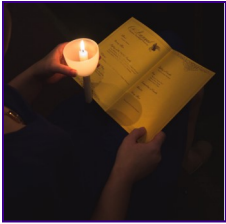
The 2nd Annual M.E.N.D. Holiday Ornament Exchange was an even bigger hit this year than our first year. Registration began the first week of October and closed mid-November. All those who registered were assigned another mom to create or purchase an ornament in memory of the baby provided on that registration form. We had 104 families participated remembering more than 140 babies from 16 states and 2 APO.

If you have not participated in one of the ornament exchanges the last two years, but would like to be included on the distribution list for registration reminders for the 2017 M.E.N.D. Holiday Ornament Exchange, please email Kimberly Waeger at Kim@mend.org. Reminders are also posted on all M.E.N.D. Facebook pages.

Thanks to all that participated!



M.E.N.D.-NW Washington Christmas Candlelight Ceremony



M.E.N.D.-Bryan/College Station Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station had a wonderful Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. We had more than 80 people in attendance! Thank you to M.E.N.D. daddy, Kyle Rabe, for reminding us of the true meanings of peace and hope through Jesus. We are so grateful to Texas Avenue Baptist Church for hosting our event. I also want to thank KBTX News for supporting and promoting our event and chapter. Last, we also want to thank Kohls associates, store #1071, for attending and working at our ceremony as volunteers. I'd also like to give a special thank you to Stefanie Miller for capturing all the beautiful moments in pictures.



A Walk We Will Remember Forever!

October 1, 2016, the M.E.N.D. Walk to Remember was a wonderful, unforgettable day for my husband, Ross, our son, Bennett, and me. Not only were we able to celebrate the life of our son, André, who was stillborn at 29 weeks on May 29, 2016, due to Trisomy 18, but also our families, who don't live near us, were able to join us in this celebration.

In one of the M.E.N.D. support group meetings, a couple mentioned they were planning to coordinate with their families overseas to do the balloon release at the same time as the Walk in Dallas. Since most of my husband's family is in Louisiana and most of mine is in Peru, we thought it was a great idea and decided to follow their lead. The original idea was to reach out to our close family, but we ultimately decided to invite our extended relatives to participate in the balloon release. We told them all about M.E.N.D. and the Walk to Remember event. We told them they could join us by releasing a balloon for André to honor his life, and we would also take this opportunity to remember the life of all our relatives who are in heaven. It didn't take long to start receiving responses from our family members: "Of course! With all our love, André will receive a balloon from us!" "Dear cousin, Will do!" "We'll be with you and Ross in this special day" "Of course, we will join you on this day!"...and many more of these messages came through. Our hearts were filled with love! Our relatives had not forgotten our son; André was more present than ever in all their hearts and ours!

The day of the Walk, we started to receive pictures and videos of the balloon release from each of our family members. What was most impactful was that our relatives released their balloons from wherever they were located that day. There was Tia Sonia, who was attending the procession of the Lord of Miracles in Lima, Peru, who released her balloons in the middle of the procession. There was my sister-in-law, Robin, who lives in San Francisco and took the time to drive to the Golden Gate to release her balloons right there. There was cousin, RoRo, and her husband, Richard, who live in South Korea, who released hand-made sky lanterns, instead of balloons, since it was midnight for them during the time of the walk. There was Aunt Vanessa, who was vacationing in Florida, who released her balloons at the beach. Some of our parents, siblings, and relatives also gathered together in a house and released balloons, too. The result was family members in Peru, Louisiana, Florida, California, Connecticut, South Korea, Pennsylvania, and Texas were all united in one single thought and connected through our son, André. Thanks to the M.E.N.D. Walk to Remember, we were all together in our thoughts and prayers, releasing balloons for André and our loved ones in heaven. It was such a special, impactful and memorable experience for all of us that our families agreed to make it a new family tradition to release the balloons the day of the M.E.N.D. Walk every year from now on. This experience has connected our families spiritually in a way we never connected before and has made us more united. It has also strengthened our relationships.

We are forever thankful to M.E.N.D. Thanks for all you have done and continue to do to provide support to our family and many families who are suffering from the loss of a baby. Thank you for organizing activities and events like the Walk, monthly parents support group meetings and special daddy group meetings, which are helping us understand our new "us" and live through our grieving. Finally, thank you for creating awareness on pregnancy and infant loss. It allows friends and family to better understand what we are going through and allows them to be part of our new journey.



Lima, Peru



California, USA



South Korea



Pennsylvania, USA



Florida, USA



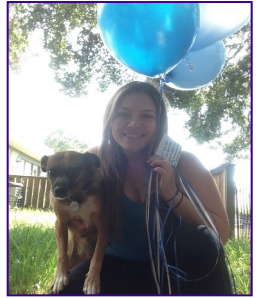
Lima, Peru



Lima, Peru



Lima, Peru



Louisiana, USA



Connecticut, USA



Dallas, Texas



Florida, USA



Texas, USA

♥ *The Broussard Family
Family to André*



M.E.N.D.

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

4500 Bissonnet, Ste 337B,

Bellaire, Texas 77401

Meets the 3rd 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 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,

led by Stormy Mitchell (stormym@mend.org)

Daddy's group meets quarterlyon the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,

led by Greg Miller (stephaniem@mend.org)

M.E.N.D.—TexarkanaMeets the 3rd Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehab Hospital

2400 St. Michael Drive

Texarkana, Texas 75503

Director: Monica Davis

monica@mend.org, (903) 490-1210

M.E.N.D.—NW WashingtonMeets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m.

Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room

1800 Myhre Rd.

Silverdale, Washington 98383

Gig Harbor Meeting

Meets the 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

St. Anthony Hospital/Greenpoint Dining Room

11567 Canterwood Blvd NW,

Gig Harbor, Washington 98332

Director: Stacy McGhee

stacym@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.—SW MissouriMeets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Project H.O.P.E.

1419 S. Enterprise

Springfield, Missouri 65804

Director: Kathryn Gold

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

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

M.E.N.D.—Wichita Falls held a special meeting for the Christmas season. For the second year in a row, we met for our support group followed by a candle lighting ceremony to honor and remember our babies. Each mother in attendance also received a keepsake gift to acknowledge each baby she has in heaven. We enjoyed holiday snacks and fellowship as well.

We welcomed new members this fall, and continue to pray for all of our families. Our Food & Fellowship meet-ups have been successful in 2016, and we look forward to continuing to get together the last Monday of each month. Details for this meeting can be found on our Facebook page. We started our letter writing campaign for fundraising and look forward to the Leadership Conference in February.

*Sarah Fukasawa****Houston***

M.E.N.D.—Houston has started our 12th year! We are honored to serve the families of the greater Houston area every year. We ended 2016 with a wonderful Christmas Candlelight Ceremony honoring the lives of so many of our babies. I want to especially thank those who volunteered their time to make the CCC a success.

We are opening this year with prayer, prayer for our chapter, prayer for our current families, and prayer for those who will join us this year. One of the ways we are looking to help families is to get more connected with hospitals and doctors' offices. We currently do educational presentations at a handful of hospitals in the greater Houston area, but we would like to expand over the coming years. If you know of a doctors' office or a hospital who might benefit from education from M.E.N.D., please contact me at stormym@mend.org. We know how much impact a doctor, nurse and hospital staff can have on our healing after the loss of a baby and we want to be here to help them know how to best care for moms like us.

As always, we host two monthly support groups in the Houston area. We are hoping to open a quarterly Spanish Speaking in-person M.E.N.D. support group this year. We are here for you any time, and know we are praying for you.

*Stormy Mitchell****Bryan/College Station***

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station had a great year! We welcomed many new families, hosted several successful fundraising events, and more than doubled our attendance at our Balloon Release in October! I want to thank KBTX News for inviting us on the air again to invite the community to our annual Candlelight Christmas Ceremony. I would also like to thank Peace 107 for airing daily PSAs about M.E.N.D. and our events. We are looking forward to what God has in store for our chapter in 2017! Be sure to join our Facebook group to stay current with meeting times and events.

*Jennie Drude****Chicagoland***

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland had a chilly but very special day decorating our M.E.N.D. Christmas tree at the Brookfield Zoo Lights Display. It was a beautiful way to remember and honor each of our precious babies during this Christmas season. We are so thankful that because of the baby Jesus born at Christmas we can have the hope of seeing our babies again in heaven. What a gift to share with those hurting families in the Chicagoland area.

*Sara Hintz****NW Washington***

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington had a blessed Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. We had nearly 80 people in attendance, and remembered more than 20 babies. Thank you to everyone who donated time, items and money to ensure our ceremony was a success. Our leadership team is excited to travel to Texas in February for the annual Leadership Conference. We look forward to fellowship and training with all the M.E.N.D. leadership from all over the country.

Stacy McGhee

Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa recently held our 5th Annual Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. It was a beautiful and meaningful time of remembrance for more than 60 attendees. The ceremony was made possible by our generous sponsors and volunteers. Thank you to my assistant, Marcie Nienhuis, for all of her hard work and Mary Clare Mansfield for organizing all of our desserts and refreshments. Additionally, thank you to Erika Huff for her inspirational message, as well as Bethany Reyes and David Graves for the beautiful music they provided. We look forward to seeing God's plans unfold for our chapter in 2017.

Lisa Daily

SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri continues to grow as a chapter, not only in new members at our support group meetings, but also in our Facebook group. If you'd like to join our group, please visit www.mend.org where you will find links to all our Facebook pages.

We celebrated our babies in heaven with our beautiful 7th Annual Christmas Candlelight Ceremony. We had 103 in attendance remembering 40 babies. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success. Save the date for our Craft Day fundraiser – April 1, 2017. More details to come.

Kathryn Gold

Texarkana

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana held our 10th Annual Christmas Candlelight Ceremony on Friday, December 16, at Beech Street First Baptist Church, Texarkana, Arkansas. We were blessed to be able to minister to families. It was a beautiful ceremony in which Steve Minter shared his testimony. I would like to extend a special thank you to all of our sponsors who supported us either through a monetary gift or by giving an item to be raffled. The ceremony would not have been possible without the help of Dawn Kennedy, Toni Sherman, Tina Wharton, our event coordinator, Chelsea Stroud, our hostess, Deni Smith, and the staff of Beech Street First Baptist Church. I appreciate each of you.

Monica Davis

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station

Meets the 2nd 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 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.—Wichita Falls, Texas

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

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland, Illinois

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

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

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. main chapter meetings

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

Daddies group

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

A time for dads to meet together and discuss topics relevant to them as 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.

In Loving Memory**Baby Bennett I**

Miscarried August 2011

Baby Bennett II

Miscarried May 2012

Baby Bennett III

Miscarried August 2013

Baby Bennett IV

Miscarried March 2014

Given by parents Jason and Camille Bennett

Keiran David Cobler

October 25—November 1, 2013

NEC

Given by parents Brian and Kristina Cobler

Abigail Grace Crump

July 1, 2003

Trisomy 18

Given by parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump
and little sisters Cami and Karli**Brooke Sophia Daily**

Stillborn March 11, 2010

Vasa previa

Gifts given by parents Jeremy and Lisa Daily
and sisters Sarah and Savannah**Riley and Parker Davis**

November 14, 2006

Premature

Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis
and little sister Annalise**Baby Dill**

Miscarried May 2002

Cooper Graham Dill

Stillborn May 26, 2003

TTTS/cord accident

Parents: Jim and Brandee Dill

Siblings: Avery, Tate and

Paxton (Cooper's Twin)

Given by Michael and Judy Showalter

Hadley Kay Freimuller

Given by Anonymous

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
Daniel and Summer Smith**Airrington Hope Fumagalli**

Stillborn December 22, 2013

Unknown cause

Jakoebi Michael Fumagalli

Miscarried November 22, 2011

Ectopic pregnancy

Parents: Michael and Kirsten Fumagalli

Sibling: Gable

Given by Papa Mark and

Nonnie Maureen Fumagalli

CJ Gold

Miscarried August 12, 2008

Marina Gold

Miscarried July 14, 2009

Parents: Greg and Kathryn Gold

Big sister: Emily

Given by Corner Construction, Republic, MO

Cydney Grimes

Parents: Byron and Christi Grimes

Given by Matthew Bergmann

Charlotte Grace Harrison

December 28, 2011—January 4, 2012

Complications at birth

Gifts given by

Parents Luke and Amanda Harrison

and little brother Evan

Grandmother Cathy Ledet

Caswell Thomas Lloyd

Given by Kalan Chapman

Scarlett Jean Lovejoy

November 24, 2006

Unknown cause

Given by parents Jeff and Emily Wallwin

and brothers Ben and Henry

Baby Markert 1

Miscarried January 11, 2001

Baby Markert 2

Miscarried September 16, 2011

Mommy: Valerie Markert

Given by VIP Bridal

Sophia Rose McGhee

Stillborn March 29, 2010

Unknown cause

Given by parents Matt and Stacy McGhee

and siblings Micah and Scarlett

Clyde Edwin Miller, V

December 11, 2015

Preterm labor

Given by parents Clyde Miller

and Paola Calderon

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995

Cord accident

Baby Mitchell

Miscarried December 2001

Parents: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell

Given by Dentistry of Las Colinas /

Byron L. Mitchell, DDS

Carter Patrick Outen

Stillborn November 6, 2000

Unknown cause

Baby Outen I

Miscarried April 3, 2001

Baby Outen II

Miscarried October 5, 2001

Given by parents Chris and Shannon Outen

and sisters Erin and Charlie

Melissa Brockman

Grandparents J.L. and Judy Outen

Aveline Owens

Given by Natalie Robinson

Margot Lily Perry

Stillborn June 10, 2013

Cord accident

Gifts given by

Parents Brandon and Marisa Perry

and siblings Adeline, Bennett

and Noelle

Grammie Marie Perry

Grandparents Mary and Norman Lorentz

Douglas James Poirier

February 8, 1986—April 3, 2010

Parents: John and Terisa Poirier

Given by grandparents Dick and Georgia Loy

Kyleigh Elaine Rabe

October 1, 2012—January 26, 2013

Given by parents Kyle and Kristen Rabe

Celeste Kimberly Reid

December 7-8, 2004

Neonatal hemochromatosis

Connor Boston Reid

April 27, 2006

Trisomy 13

Given by parents Skip Reid and Andie Boston

and sister Allyson

Mindy and Maggie Smith

Stillborn November 4, 1997

TTTS and Polyhydramnios

Given by parents Scott and Karla Smith

and siblings Travis and Julia

Ryder Owen Spears

Stillborn July 13, 2013

Cord accident

Given by parents Richard and Lindsey Spears

and sister Sophia

James McKay "Jim" Suggs, Jr

March 17, 1952—September 20, 2016

Gifts given by

James and Jackie Walters

William and Joan Reichwald

Case Foster Thomas

August 29, 2012

Parents: Cody and Elizabeth Thomas

Siblings: Crew and Cory

Gifts given by

Case Energy Services

Bethco Contracting

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!

Emily June Watson
Stillborn June 29, 2013
Hope Amethyst Watson
Miscarried February 20, 2015
Annabeth Lula Watson
Stillborn January 2, 2016
Given by parents Duane and Jennifer Watson

Cora Anne Watts
Stillborn February 10, 2015
Cord accident
Gifts given by
Parents Alan and Kenzie Watts
and little sister Briehn
Grandmother Carol Fitch

Ryleigh Amoy Wiggins
February 25—March 15, 2015
Type II Lissencephaly
Mommy: Sanita Wiggins
Given by Reva Soyemi

Arie Ronald Witt
November 5, 2013
Unknown cause
Baby Witt
June 27, 2014
Unknown cause
Parents: Candi and Mike Witt
Siblings: Brinley and Ryder Witt
Given by grandmother Roberta Causley

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

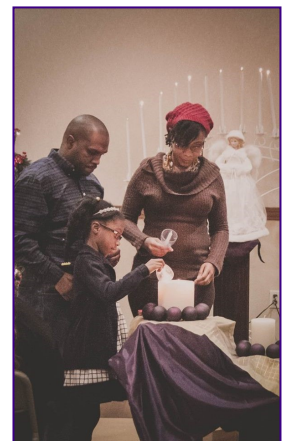
Gifts of Support
Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
West Conroe Baptist Church, Conroe, TX
Christ Church Assembly of God, Fort Worth, TX
Keane Fedosky, DDS
The Vintage Pearl
Dr. Jennifer Quimby, MD
Amy and Derek Meyer
Kohl's Department Store Community Relations
Kaitlyn Waggoner

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.-SW Missouri Christmas Candlelight Ceremony



Focus on Love

Talking about sex makes people uncomfortable in general. It doesn't really seem that way though because we are a highly sexualized nation, where sex sells. People joke about sex often and movies all seem to have crude humor in them. However, as Christians and the church, overall, we shy away from discussing healthy sexuality. So, if someone really wants to talk about sex, to be open and honest about their fears, problems or emotions, for some reason, we can't handle it. We like to make jokes about it, but it seems as if we are not able to be real. We may even pretend Christians don't have sexual issues if they are married and faithful to each other. We struggle to be real because deep down, it makes us uncomfortable.

I think most married people (and I speak from a Christian standpoint) truly love their spouse and want to have a fruitful, loving, respectful sex life.

So, what happens when you lose your baby? What happens when you and your husband have a loving, respectful, fun sex life and then your child dies? What does that do to your intimacy? What if you had a complicated sex life with your husband before, and now it is worse? Who do you talk to? People in general are already uneasy with talking about infant loss. People are uncomfortable with getting real about intimacy. Where do you turn?

It is hard to open up to friends who haven't been through this. Complicated grief on top of complicated emotions regarding sexual issues. It's too much to wrap our heads around, let alone explain it to someone else. So what do we do?

I hope that possibly you can relate to this. When we lose our baby, either during pregnancy or after pregnancy, our feelings toward sex can be complex and complicated. Sex created this baby you loved so much. An act of love created love within your womb. Does this make you want to be more or less intimate with your spouse? For some of us, it makes us retreat and not want to be physically close with our spouse. Others of us desire to be close with our spouses as soon as possible after our loss. The closeness makes us feel safe and loved. It can also help us to focus on something else for a little while and not just our grief. It can reaffirm our love for each other. Personally, I know I wanted to be close with my husband. He and I were experiencing the worst thing imaginable after the stillbirth of our son and we needed each other. We needed to be close and to express our love for each other. Because, in those moments, aside from the Lord, we had each other. No one else understood what it was like to lose our son. My husband was the only one who truly knew what the loss of our son meant for our lives. He felt the absence of our son the same way I did. So, I needed to be close to him.

I knew we may never be able to have any more children, but I needed to express my love for him because no matter what happened, it was always me and him. But frankly it was hard. It was hard for me to let myself go and even for a little while, let go of the all-consuming grief and allow myself to enjoy our intimacy. And honestly, right after the first time we were intimate after losing our son, I cried. I cried because of all of the emotion. I cried because the last time we had sex, he was still alive. I cried because it was all so normal, to be having sex again. I cried because I missed him and EVERYTHING felt so wrong. Even when it was something that was right. I cried because I enjoyed myself, and I felt guilty. My husband is so sweet and understanding. He never questioned why I was so emotional, he just held me and told me, "I miss him, too." After time, I no longer felt guilty for enjoying my relationship with my husband; I felt joy and love. Love, because that is what it all comes down to. I truly would enjoy our time together and enjoy the love we express with each other. Being close truly helped us both on our road to joy after we lost our son.

But what happens when you don't mesh well? What happens when one of you wants to be intimate and the other does not? What happens when the last thing you want to do is touch your spouse? What if that is the last thing on your mind? For a time, that truly is ok. I do not think we have to immediately be ready to jump into the sack with our spouses after we experience a traumatic loss. But it will come and, at some point, it will be time for intimacy. In that case, I would say, pray about it. I don't say that to be flippant. I honestly think you should pray. Tell God exactly why you don't want to be intimate, or how it hurts because you want to be intimate and your spouse doesn't. Really talk to Him. Talk to Him about your grief, if you are feeling lonely, or if you are feeling overwhelmingly depressed. He truly understands. He loves you extravagantly. He wants you to experience peace in this world. Call on Him.

Some of us start trying for a subsequent baby right away, some of us wait awhile, and some of us never are able to try again. All of which come with challenges of their own, especially when it comes to intimacy. Knowing you will never have another baby again, or can't have another baby again, has an impact on sexual intimacy, especially when it is complicated with grief. On the flip side of that, the process of trying after a loss adds on top of grief the pressure of trying to get pregnant again. My husband and I started trying right away, once I was cleared medically. I have infertility, and getting pregnant with Gideon was a very long road, so we knew that it could be a long time for us to conceive a little sibling for him. We had to focus on each other, even in the midst of grief and infertility. We made our relationship with God front and center. And second to that, we put our relationship next. While it didn't take away the stress and exhaustion that grief causes, it kept our hearts and minds in the right place. And if by chance we never were able to have biological children, our focus was exactly where it needed to be: on the Lord first and on each other second.

No matter if you are on the same page in your grief or in your intimacy, the key is to focus on love. Put your mind and heart on the love you have for the Lord and how much He loves you, the love you have for each other, and the love you have for your baby or babies in Heaven.

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

Helping Family Understand

I was desperately searching for someone or something to belong to. To fit in. Struggling to survive. After birthing our firstborn, Lillian, and leaving the hospital without her in my arms, I didn't feel like a Mommy yet I was still one. Right? Did others feel this way? Am I alone?

It's when I stumbled (more like God directed my path) across the M.E.N.D. newsletter. I still remember reading my first one. It was during the holidays. Our first Christmas as a family. First Christmas without her. Almost every article felt like it was written for me and by me. I related and cried and felt a sense of fitting in with all of you mummies out there. I belonged.

My mother and mother-in-love struggled as they watched their own children suffer greatly from child loss. It's hard as they grieve for you as your parent not being able to fix or mend your brokenness, and also grieve for their granddaughter. The promise of her coming and all the joys of being a grandma, shattered. They desperately wanted to be there for me and celebrate with me.

I felt if they read the M.E.N.D. newsletter, they could better understand me - as a mommy to a daughter in heaven. To read about how to be there for me and to help in ways maybe they didn't know how. It opened their hearts to see from my eyes. And gave them permission to grieve as well.

I signed them both up to receive their own copy of the newsletter, and they have been reading it along with me now for two years and counting. Our favorite part is every November when we see her name! Our Lillian, their granddaughter, in the birthday section.

It's been a blessing to share this together. Both my own mother and my mother-in-love have been so wonderful to us. Celebrating Lillian with us. Saying her name. Honoring her in unique ways. And being the best support anyone could ever ask. And I believe M.E.N.D. helped pave the way to make that possible. Both agree it has helped in understanding more and even in their own healing.

With grateful hearts,
Bethany, Sharla and Brenda
(Lillian's Mommy, Gramma and Grammy)



Bethany holding Lillian's treasure box with her mother-in-love on the left and mother on the right.

♥ *Bethany Collier,
Mommy to Lillian*

Angelita and Nonye Nwaokemeleh
of Arlington, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Anaya Hope,
born November 21, 2016,
measuring 9 lb., 10 oz.,
and 21.5 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Eden,
May 1—June 6, 2015

Victoria and Aaron Alcorn
of Murphy, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Emerie Hope,
born November 8, 2016,
measuring 7 lb., 11 oz.,
and 20.5 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Ayedan Thomas,
December 14, 2015

Subsequent Births



Brian and Robyn Hoover
of Burleson, Texas,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Everley Hope,
born September 6, 2016,
measuring 6 lb., 12 oz.,
and 19.5 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Hendrix Gray,
stillborn on July 19, 2015,
cord accident

Rachel and Ryan Lewis
of Bremerton, Washington,
along with big sisters Madelyn and Leyla,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Eleanor Grace,
born December 2, 2016,
measuring 6 lb., 7 oz.,
and 19 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Olivia Joy,
December 20, 2011,
ectopic pregnancy at 7 weeks
Caleb Michael,
miscarried October 2012, at 8 weeks,
Elliot James,
miscarried May 2013, at 5 weeks,
Sophie Grace,
miscarried March 2014, at 5 weeks,
Baby Lewis,
miscarried September 2015, at 5 weeks

M.E.N.D. – Manteniendo su Matrimonio Fuerte

Mi esposo, Byron, y yo hemos estado casados por 28 años. Nos enamoramos de adolescentes, fuimos novios por unos años y no veíamos ninguna razón por esperar, así que nos casamos jóvenes - cuando yo tenía sólo 19 años de edad y Byron tenía apenas 22. Hemos tenido un matrimonio fuerte desde el principio y hemos mantenido siempre el Señor al centro de nuestras vidas y nuestro hogar. Comenzamos nuestro viaje juntos y seguros de que nuestro hogar de fe nos daría los deseos de nuestros corazones; asumimos ingenuamente que nunca seríamos conmovidos o tener que trabajar a través de cualquier tipo de prueba o tribulación

Deberíamos haber comprendido mejor cuando Byron fue diagnosticado con melanoma etapa 2 pocos meses antes de nuestra boda tipo de cuento de hadas. Cirugía removió el cáncer de la piel, y marcamos la llamada de cierre nuestro sufrimiento antes de que fuimos una pareja casada. Sin embargo, unos meses después de nuestra boda me diagnosticaron una enfermedad degenerativa del riñón. Dos años después, sufrí un embarazo de alto riesgo, pero resultó en dar a luz a un bebé sano y a término, a pesar de que el cordón estaba envuelto alrededor de su cuello tres veces. En ese momento en nuestra vida, pensamos que habíamos pasado por lo peor de lo peor. Poco sabíamos nuestra fe y nuestro matrimonio sería probado a la base de 3 años y medio más tarde.

Concebimos a nuestro segundo hijo, justo después de que nuestro hijo vivo cumplió 3 años de edad. Debido a la enfermedad del riñón que tengo, el embarazo se convirtió tumultuoso muy temprano. Los reflujos y los flujos de informes médico fueron muy estresantes. El bebé, afortunadamente, estaba muy bien, pero mi salud estaba declinando debido al embarazo. Cuando pasamos la temporada de la viabilidad, pensé que llegamos al punto gratis. Me preguntaba si tal vez tengamos que soportar un bebé en la UCIN durante un tiempo, pero la muerte nunca cruzó mi mente. Me pusieron en reposo en cama y luego fui admitida en el hospital para que mis médicos podrían rápidamente entregar mi bebe si parecía que los riñones enfermos no podrían soportar otro día de la presión del embarazo. Estar en el hospital por un período indefinido de tiempo era muy difícil. Byron estaba en los primeros años de la formación de su consultorio y no podría tomar mucho tiempo fuera, así que pasaba cada noche conmigo y retrasaba su horario de pacientes cada mañana hasta que mis doctores hacían sus rondas por la mañana y nos aseguraban que estábamos “seguros” por otro día. Además, extrañaba desesperadamente nuestro pequeño hijo, que fue bien cuidado por mis padres, pero no entendía por qué mamá tuvo que pasar tiempo en el hospital.

En la mañana del 24 de junio de 1995, de 29 y una semana media, nuestro niño, Jonathan Daniel Mitchell, se enredó en el cordón umbilical y se deslizó de la vida dentro de mi vientre a su hogar celestial. La expresión en la cara de Byron por la tarde mientras un equipo de personal médico intentaba desesperadamente encontrar el latido de nuestro bebé será grabada por siempre en mi mente. En esos primeros días del calor, el impacto, la frescura, de pena cruda, parecía que Byron y yo nos turnábamos en aflicción profunda. Cuando yo lloraba, el me consoló y cuando el lloraba, yo lo consolaba. Rara vez lloramos juntos. Al instante nos convertimos en más de un equipo de lo que ya éramos. Nosotros no nos encontramos en contrarias durante los primeros meses. Aprendimos a leer palabras y lenguaje corporal y reconocer la fuente de mal humor del otro. Hemos respetado las necesidades de estar solo a veces, sin embargo, que no estábamos solos. Juntos declaramos crecer más fuertes como pareja debido a esto y que nada podría suceder que nos causara separarnos.

Un número de años atrás, un libro fue escrito sobre las parejas que experimentaron la muerte de un niño. El autor escribe que el 90% de los padres como nosotros experimentan tensión marital. Ella no utiliza la palabra “divorcio” pero ella fue citada incorrectamente en numerosas publicaciones periódicas predicando que 90% de las parejas que pierden a un hijo se divorcian. Afortunadamente, los investigadores adicionales vinieron adelante y desacreditaron este porcentaje como un mito, sobre todo porque el autor fue incapaz de citar su fuente para este número extremadamente alto. Sin embargo, muchas personas todavía creen que es correcto y continúan citar esta estadística a las parejas en aflicción. Nos sucedió a nosotros. Pocos días después del nacimiento sin vida de Jonathan, una persona bien intencionada recomendó empezar consejería matrimonial, “por si acaso”.

En mis 20 años de dirigir MEND, admito, que he visto un número de divorcio de las parejas. No soy una consejera de matrimonio y sin formación profesional en el asesoramiento, pero mi opinión personal es que estos matrimonios podrían haber tenido problemas antes de la muerte de su bebé y la tragedia de la pérdida fue la página final. Realmente, esto es triste para mí. Frecuentemente les digo a los padres: hicieron este bebé juntos, han perdido este bebé juntos, y ahora tiene que sufrir este bebé juntos. Sin duda, hombres y mujeres lamentan diferentemente, pero eso no significa que la aflicción nos separara.

En todos nuestros grupos de apoyo M.E.N.D., terminamos la sesión con la intención de permitir los padres compartir algo bueno o positivo que ha dado como resultado de la pérdida de su bebé. Nunca se implica que nuestros bebés murieron para que podría suceder algo bueno. Por el contrario, animamos a nuestras familias a reconocer al menos una pequeña cosa buena que ha venido de la muerte, así que no todos los aspectos de la muerte del bebé es un negativo. En esencia, estamos pidiendo a los padres a crear un legado para su bebé. En cuanto estamos en este segmento del grupo de apoyo, me encanta escuchar lo que los padres tienen que compartir. A menudo es que se han convertido más sensibles y compasivos hacia los demás o tal vez han descubierto un talento como pintura o escritura. Mi favorita “positivo” es relaciones reconciliados o profundizadas especialmente cuando se refiere a un esposo y una esposa. Nuestros pequeños en el cielo no desean que su mamá y papá se separaran a deber de su muerte prematura.

Así que pido... Si usted y su cónyuge están en el precipicio del divorcio, luchen para permanecer juntos. Su dolor fresco no le permitirán la energía para luchar. Si es el caso, entonces no hagan ninguna decisión importante en esa dirección hasta que su dolor no es tan crudo y puedan pensar un poco más claramente. Determinen que la muerte de su bebé no será el culpable de su fracaso matrimonial. Desafíen ser un equipo, no contrarios en este camino de dolor. Dejen el legado de su bebé ser que él o ella ayudó a fortalecer su vínculo y determinar que nada - no la enfermedad o la muerte - los separen.

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

To The One Whose Arms Are Aching

Sweet friend.

I have to tell you. You're doing an incredible job. I know it doesn't feel like it. I know you feel like you can barely function and I know you think that you are failing at life, but listen. You're still standing. You're still breathing, and from someone who knows the pain, I know how hard even that is to do some days.

You shouldn't have to be here. It shouldn't be this way. Your arms shouldn't be aching, and your heart shouldn't be broken into the thousands of pieces it now beats in. You shouldn't have to know this pain. You shouldn't have to will yourself to breathe. You shouldn't have to function like a normal human being when nothing about this is normal. Nothing about it is fair. Nothing. Nothing. **Nothing.**

I'm so sorry you're here. But look at you. You are so strong. You are so brave. You are holding on.

I know you feel fragile. I know you feel broken. I know you feel jaded because life didn't treat you nicely. No one should have to say goodbye to the child they carried. No one should know the pain when their child leaves this world before them.

I know this is hard. I'm right here beside you.

I know you feel angry sometimes. It's understandable. You watched as your perfect dreams shattered. And you would have settled for far less than perfect. You would have settled for anything if only they could just stay and not be in pain.

On the days that it's too hard, and you find yourself at 2am sitting cross-legged on the bathroom floor, tissues crumpled in a pile beside you, whispering love and praying that they hear. In those moments, when the pain feels like it could swallow you whole, remember this: you are never, ever alone. There are few consolations in the darkest situations, but there is this: there are those who have gone before you, who are beside you, and who will come after you. People survive this. They hold on, just like you are. They grit their teeth, just like you are. They cling like hell to hope, just like you are. They claw for joy, just like you are. And they breathe in and out, moment by moment, day after day, year after year.

The pain will never subside, but a day will come when you will breathe easier. At least, that's what I have heard. I'll hold out for that day with you.

And as you face day after day without them, remember this: You're still standing. You're still breathing. You're surviving. And this is this big one: **you're still mothering them with that strength and love, even though they are no longer in your arms.**

Between the two of you is a love of which some only hear rumored. A love that spans across worlds, through time, and never wavers or falls. This is the love of a mother for the child she aches to hold. The love that keeps you holding on.

You're still their mom, and nothing can stop that.

I know this is hard. You shouldn't have to be here. But look at you. You're still breathing. You're holding on, and even with a shattered heart, nothing can stop your love.

I know they are so proud to have you as their mom.

A Momma Who Knows

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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 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) 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 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.

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