



Mother's Day/Father's Day

Volume 23, Issue 3

May/June 2018



Testimonies of love in this issue:

3 Dads...telling their stories...
of the life who loved others...
of the life who inspired his...
of the life who defined his...

Memories of lives gone too soon, and
not just our children, but our friends,
fellow **M.E.N.D. moms.**

Remembering our own, **Kirsten**, of
M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland, how we miss
her but rejoice in her reunion.

A mama, sharing her story of her deep,
aching wounds of grief and sorrows of a
death many of us have experienced, the
dreaded word “**miscarriage.**”

A mommy gently relating to us,
reminding us in some way, we are all
alike, all together in this journey, for she,
too, was preparing for arms full of love
and laughter on **Mother's Day**, only to
find them empty...aching...longing...

July/August Topic

Surviving Twins
 Deadline: May 31, 2018

September/October Topic

Moments and Dates Stamped
 Forever in Our Hearts
 Deadline: July 31, 2018

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published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests that it not be published.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.

<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



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

On Mother's Day, We Remember...

Traditionally, Mother's Day is a Sunday in May when children of all ages honor their moms. In our world of infant loss, for many, Mother's Day is a horrible day of sorrow as moms grieve the absence of children who are not here to serve them breakfast in bed, draw precious stick people cards or pick a lovely bouquet of flowers from the backyard.

This year, my heart is heavy on Mother's Day for a different reason. I'm overwhelmed with sadness as I remember three M.E.N.D. moms who, in my humble mortal opinion, died too soon and left behind six children, collectively. When I founded this ministry 21 years ago, I knew I would continuously walk alongside families who traumatically lose their babies. It never occurred to me I would also face the death of some of our M.E.N.D. leaders and watch their families grieve another tragic loss.

On Thanksgiving Day, 2012, we said goodbye to Pam Morren, who fought a tough battle with breast cancer. Pam served on our Board of Directors in Dallas before she and her family moved to NW Arkansas, where she then became assistant director of our first expansion of a M.E.N.D. chapter. Our headquarters leadership was rattled again in 2015, when one of our regular volunteers, Geri



Pam Morren

Shannon, died after a brief illness. Then this year....the shockingly quick death of our M.E.N.D.-Chicagoland assistant director, Kirsten Fumagalli. Kirsten spent the first weekend in February at my house, along with 37 other members of our M.E.N.D.



Kirsten Fumagalli

leadership team. She sat through two days of training with us, worshiped with us at the M.E.N.D. Garden of Hope, and even bowled and played laser tag with us as we ended the Leadership Conference participating in team-building activities. She never said a word about not feeling well. Less than two weeks later she was fighting for her life in the ICU, just days after being diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer that had already ravaged her liver. Exactly 6 weeks after our leadership team gathered for a weekend of training in Dallas, we found ourselves in Chicago attending Kirsten's funeral.

As I sat at each of these three services, there were many references of these young moms now being with Jesus and reunited with their beloved babies who had died. Admittedly, there has been a sense of envy amongst us M.E.N.D. moms, yet more of a realization of how permanent death is and how horrendously sad, life-changing and heartbreaking for those left behind, especially the children.

I was honored to have been asked to speak at Pam's funeral that cold November morning in Arkansas. Her family asked me to share Pam's story of accepting Jesus as her Savior, alone in her car one night after a M.E.N.D. support group. I feel like my tribute went pretty well, under the circumstances, other than I wish I could have those few moments back to address her three children, who sat politely, yet grief-stricken on the front row. I love that Pam's baby, Skyler, who died of SIDS; Geri's son, Theo, who was stillborn after having a stroke in the womb; and Kirsten's full-term daughter,



Geri Shannon and Liz Walker

Continued on page 8.



Birthday Tributes

Happy 1st Birthday, Olly!

Our sweet Olly Bear,
We miss you so very much.
Not a day goes by we don't think of you.
We know you are happy and safe with Pumpkin Seed.
Please be good, my precious babies.
Happy 1st birthday, Olly Bear!
"Be brave,
Be strong and courageous,
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.
For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

Oliver Joseph Rodriguez
June 28, 2017
Thanatophoric Dysplasia
Also remembering
Baby Rodriguez (Pumpkin Seed)
Miscarried February 24, 2016
Parents: Juan and Amanda Rodriguez
Siblings: Gabby, David, Steven
and Sugar Plum (due September 2018)



Happy 3rd Birthday, Blueberry!

Our sweet Blueberry, it's hard to believe it's already been three years since we found out about you, saw your heart beating and lost you. Right now you would be about 2.5 years old and surely getting into a ton of mischief! We still have so many questions about you - are you a girl or boy? Would you look like your sisters? Brother? Would you be wild or calm? Quiet or loud? But regardless, I know you are in heaven with your big brother, and we will be together one day. So until then, sweet baby...we love you!

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

Baby "Blueberry" Miller
Miscarried May 4, 2015
Also remembering
Chase Austin Miller
April 21, 2011
Incompetent cervix
Parents: Greg and Stefanie Miller
Sisters: Cora and Hazel



Happy 9th Birthday, Emma!

Happy birthday, dear Emma! We wish you were here with us, but we can't do anything about it. The only thing we can do is always remember you and love you every day more and more.

We miss you, and we wonder all the time what our lives would have been like if you were here.

Happy birthday; we love you so much! Your sister thinks about you all the time.

Always remembering,
Mommy, Daddy and little sister Bella

Emma Krymkiewiez
May 5, 2009
Neonatal hemochromatosis
Also remembering
Baby Girl Krymkiewiez
Miscarried June 13, 2008
Parents: Hernan and Ana Krymkiewiez
Little sister: Isabella



Happy 15th Birthday, Matthew!

Happy birthday to my sweet and special boy! How can it be 15 years since I last held you in my arms? And this year you would have entered high school. You are growing up and are now a young man. I'm sad to miss out on watching you grow and mature. Yet I'm joy-filled you are safe with Jesus, our Savior, and I thank God for you. You are truly God's gift to me. You took the short-cut Home. I am taking the longer road. But you will always be my special baby. There are no words to describe how much I love you! Happy birthday, Matthew, with all my love!

Matthew Joel Mifflin
June 6, 2003
True knot in cord
Also remembering
Little One Mifflin
Miscarried February 6, 2006
Lil' Rosebud Mifflin
Miscarried March 10, 2007
Parents: Dennis and Janet Mifflin
Siblings: Thomas and Michelle



Happy 1st Birthday, Genesis!

My baby boy, it's been a year since I first laid eyes on you. A year since my heart kept beating without you. A year since I originally dreamt of doing many things with you, but now only thinking of what I am supposed to do without you. Daddy and I planned your 1st birthday while you were in my womb. Now I plan your 1st birthday in heaven! I wish we could spend your birthday together, and I could hold you in my arms and never ever let go. But I know when my time comes, I'll get that wish of never letting you go. Happy 1st birthday, my baby! Mommy and Daddy love you always and forever! Ofa lahi atu!

Genesis Luke Toutai Ungounga
Stillborn March 13, 2017
 Also remembering
Sky Alexandra Ungounga
Miscarried June 15, 2016
 Parents: *Sililo and Ciera Ungounga*
 Sibling: *Ha'anilyn*



Happy 4th Birthday, Jason!

I finally stirred up enough courage inside to try and have another baby, but ended up miscarrying in January. Even though it hurt so much to lose another baby, I have a sense of peace knowing "June" is with her big brother. So enjoy your heavenly birthday with your little sis. Sending hugs and kisses until we see you again.

Love,
 Mommy, Daddy and Hailey

Jason Hunter Thomas
June 30, 2014
PPROM
 Also remembering
June Thomas
Miscarried January 15, 2018
 Parents: *Steven and Melissa Thomas*
 Sister: *Hailey*



Happy 5th Birthday, Ariel and Angel!

Happy 5th birthday in heaven, my sweet boys! I'm sure you are enjoying God's presence, and one day we will all be together to celebrate our love. Thank you for watching over us. Mommy misses you so much, but loves you more.

Ariel and Angel Wong-Eguiarte
June 26, 2013
Twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome
 Mommy: *Emy Eguiarte*
 Brother: *Andre*



Happy 9th Birthday, Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray!

Happy 9th birthday, sweet princes! Gone is the deep pit of sadness your absence left, replaced with wonder of what your life would be like today. We strive to honor you in our lives, and pray you are proud of the parents and people we are because of our great love for you. God has blessed us with peace and hope knowing we will be together again, but today we ask our hearts be filled with a measure of the joy you feel listening to the angels sing birthday wishes to you. We remember you always, love you always.

Mommy and Daddy



Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray Light
February 23, 2009
Placental abruption
 Parents: *Kirk and Diana Light*
 Siblings: *Brayden and Lexi*

Happy 18th Birthday, Lil Bit!

Happy 17th Birthday, Mac!

We love and miss you very much.
 May all your tea parties be together.
 Until we meet again...

Sydney Lynne Brown
May 18, 2000
Unknown cause
Ashley Mackenzie Brown
May 18, 2001
Premature due to APS
 Parents: *Brian and Marilyn Brown*
 Brother: *Samuel Brown*



Happy 2nd Birthday, Kynlee!

Happy 2nd birthday, my princess Kynlee Jaide! My how time has flown by. Not a day passes we don't miss your sassy self like crazy. I always wonder what you would be doing at this age and what a big personality you would have. But I know that even without you here with us, you are doing big things. You touched so many lives in your short three months with us, and you will continue to touch lives with every person I tell your story to. Mommy can't wait to see you again and hear about all your amazing stories. I hope you have the best of birthdays in heaven, my sweet girl. We love and miss you!

Kynlee Jaide Thornton
June 28—October 2, 2016
 CHD
 Parents: *Naaman Thornton and Crystal Croy*



Happy 8th Birthday, Arianna Elizabeth Wilkinson!

I hope you have a big party with lots of family and friends. I wish you could be here and not there. We want to see how pretty you are, to see how much you have grown, too. We miss you very much. Give hugs to Grandpa for us!

Love,
Grandma Jeannie

Happy birthday, Arianna, from your aunts and uncles Sylvia, Artie, Christy, Miguel and Stephanie and cousins Alexis, Issac, Samuel, Leah and Xavier. Wish you were here. You left too soon. We didn't get to know you. We love you and miss you.

Arianna Elizabeth Wilkinson
Stillborn April 12, 2010
Parents: Leroy and Monica Wilkinson
Grandma: Jeannie Garcia

**Happy 15th Birthday, Cooper!**

Wow... I cannot believe you and Paxton are turning 15 years old. I so wish you were here for me to hug and kiss your peach fuzzy face. I wish you were here to help wrangle your crazy brother, or would you be even nuttier than Pax? I wish you were here to see Avery graduate from college, Tate graduate from high school and me ugly cry through it all. We miss you every single day, and we carry you in our hearts every single moment.

Love forever and always,
Daddy, Mommy, Avery, Tate and Paxton

Cooper Graham Dill
May 26, 2003
Cord accident/Twin-to-twin transfusion
Also remembering
Baby Dill
Miscarried May 2002
Parents: Jim and Brandee Dill
Siblings: Avery, Tate and Paxton (Cooper's twin)

**Happy 1st Birthday, Draven!**

We love you, baby boy, and we would give anything to be celebrating your 1st birthday here on earth with you. But we will remember you every year, month, week, day, hour, minute and second of our lives until we hold you again in heaven.

Draven Xavier Dennis
March 23—June 14, 2017
Unknown cause
Parents: Rakwon Dennis and Miracle Layman

**Happy 7th Birthday, Gideon!**

Our little love, you would be 7. Your green eyes would light up the room when you smiled. Your laugh would fill the air and add music to the joyful cacophony of sound in our home. You would obsessively watch Star Wars, Avengers, Harry Potter and The Flash. You would jam out to NKOTB, 90s music and classic rock with Mommy. You would watch sports with Daddy. You would protect your little brothers and love them endlessly. Even though you aren't here to do these things, we feel you in our home and in our hearts. Celebrate today with Jesus and have lots of cake. We love you beyond the moon and the stars.

Gideon Zeller Mitchell
Stillborn May 17, 2011
Membranous cord insertion

**Happy 10th Birthday, Avery!**

To our first baby, we had you and lost you 10 years ago. An entire decade has passed since you were in my womb. I imagine you would have curly hair, big round blue eyes, a wide smile and a loving fierceness that was hidden by your shyness. You would love taking walks with Mommy and going to Target. You would smile, and Daddy would melt. You would be a caring and silly big sister to Silas and Justus. We miss you, but are so thankful for eternity! You, Gideon and Joy get to celebrate with Jesus every single day! Wow. I cannot wait to hold you all in my arms. We love you all so very much.

Avery Mitchell
Miscarried May 2008
Unknown cause
Also remembering
Joy Mitchell
December 2014
Vanishing twin syndrome
Parents: Todd and Stormy Mitchell
Brothers: Silas and Justus

**Happy 7th Birthday, Jaxson!**

Happy birthday, Jaxson! We think of you every day and talk about how things would be if you were here with us.

All our love,
Mommy, Daddy, Bella Mae and Norah Beth

Jaxson Wynn Harmon
June 26, 2011
Trisomy
Parents: Jason and Sarah Harmon
Sisters: Bella Mae and Norah Beth



Happy 7th Birthday, Elena!

"How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." A. A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh

Our dear Elena, you are such a sweet blessing to our family, and we look forward to the day we will hold you again. Until then, we love you so very much and miss you every day. Happy birthday in heaven, our beautiful princess.

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Liam, Asher and Gavin

Elena Marie Rusert

May 23, 2011

Premature birth

Parents: Michael and Tina Rusert

Brothers: Liam, Asher and Gavin



Happy 1st Birthday, Forest!

Your absence is a bitter wind. It blows across the landscape of my soul carving strange forms, cracking the earth. The garden of my life is uprooted. Among the crags, between the fractures I seek refuge, and I carry you. For it is your life that breaks the wind. It is you that rains upon my soul. My love for you brings me to life. It is with your richness that I plant my garden anew. And you grow. Until we are together again, as long as the wind blows, I will carry you. I will protect you, and your garden will grow. Happy 1st birthday, Forest. We love you.

Forest Abraham Lewman

May 28, 2017

Premature birth

Parents: Jeff Lewman and Jacqueline Tovar



Happy 3rd Birthday, Caleb!

Three for a little boy is Tonka trucks and Spiderman, dirt underneath the fingernails from playing in the sand, the smell of outdoors on him when you hold him close, giggles that can be heard around the house, an imagination as big as a dinosaur, and always a little sparkle of mischief in his eyes.

Missing you at 3 today, and all that you would've been, anticipating the day I can hold you in my arms again and kiss your sweet cheeks, and most of all, celebrating the wonderful gift of you. Happy birthday, Caleb, sweet baby of mine! You are forever loved and forever ours.

Caleb Anthony Haynes

May 5, 2015

Cord accident

Parents: Anthony and Robyn Haynes

Siblings: Cody, Camryn and Connor



Happy 1st Birthday, Elliot!

Oh, our precious boy, how we miss you on what should be your 1st birthday. We still have a hard time believing you are really gone. You are so alive in our hearts and memories! Mommy and Daddy and your big sisters talk about you every day. We love to look at your pictures. Sylvia and Valerie hug "Elliot Bear" a lot. You have caused us to grow in love, little boy, and to cherish each day we have together. We talk often about how we'll all play together in heaven. You are the most precious thing that has ever entered our lives. You have changed us for the better. We love you!

Elliot William Treibel

May 29—June 3, 2017

Pulmonary hypoplasia caused by PPRM

Also remembering

Avery Rose Treibel

Miscarried January 19, 2016, at 9 weeks

Everett James Treibel

Miscarried August 8, 2016, at 6 weeks

Parents: Dustin and Heidi Treibel

Sisters: Sylvia and Valerie



Happy 3rd Birthday, Aubriy!

Happy 1st Birthday, Aria!

Not a day goes by I don't think of my angels. They say time heals all wounds, but I've come to find that isn't true. Time doesn't heal it, but instead it helps you figure out how to cope with the pain. Mommy loves you.

Aubriy Caprice Funderburk

May 10, 2015

Placental detachment

Aria Rose Matney

June 13-14, 2017

Trisomy 13

Also remembering

Greyson Maddox Matney

October 14-16, 2017

Unknown cause

Funderburk Twins

January 16, 2018

Unknown cause

Mommy: Victoria Matney



Happy 1st Birthday, Levi!

Always our first baby, we miss you every day. We always wonder what life would be like if you were here with us. We're glad our grandparents are there to watch over you as you watch over us. You may not be with us physically, but you're here in our hearts. We hope we can make you proud and create a legacy for you that you deserve.

Forever, we will love you always,
Mommy and Daddy

*Levi Michael Gonzalez
Stillborn June 23, 2017
Unknown cause*

*Parents: Michael and Meagan Gonzalez
Little brother: Isaac Levi due August 2, 2018*



Happy 3rd Birthday, Eva!

Our sweet sunshine, three years have passed, but not a single day passes we don't miss you and ache for you. We wonder who you would be and what it would be like to love you this side of heaven. Each day that passes, we try to live our lives in a way that would honor you, because we know that as each day passes it is one day closer to holding you in our arms again. We love you, Eva Juliette. You are our sunshine, our only sunshine. Look for the bubbles we are blowing for you in heaven, baby girl.

*Eva Juliette Talavera
May 7, 2015*

*Cord accident
Parents: Miguel and Lexie Talavera
Sister: Mia*



All I Could Do...

All I could do
Was stand in silence
As we got the news
That things weren't right

All I could do
Was stand in anticipation
As they took you both away
To try to save him.

All I could do
Was stand and support
As I watched you in pain
And no comfort could I give.

All I could do
Was stand and cry
As you gave birth
To our son.

All I could do
Was stand and hold you
Trying to take away the pain
As we both grieved.

I felt powerless and lost
Without hope and prayer
As we both cried
In each others arms.

I felt useless and adrift
As the thoughts
That our son is gone
Finally took hold.

All I could do
Was sink down and cry
Hold my head in my hands
As I questioned "Why God?"

All I could do
Wasn't enough
My child is gone
You're all I have left

All I can do
Is rely on you
Try to be your strength
As you try to be mine.

All I can do
Is keep loving you
And keep asking
That you love me also.

All I can do
Is try to encourage
And grow our faith
Into something bigger and new.

Written by Greg Miller, Daddy to Baby Blueberry and Chase Austin, M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area

"On Mother's Day..." continued from page 3.

Airrington, who was stillborn due to an unknown cause, were mentioned at length at these mom's funerals, but my heart broke for these moms' living children who will now grow up without their mothers. I wish I could go back to Pam's funeral and tell those three beautiful blonds that their mommy did not choose to be with their older brother in heaven over staying here with them. I wish I could make sure Geri's beautiful little daughter, Ysabel, knows her mommy loved her very much and wanted to stay here on Earth to see her grow up. I hope and pray Kirsten's two living sons, Gable and Maverick, are told their mommy fought like crazy those 27 days to stay here with them. None of these mommies chose to go to their babies in heaven over staying here with their beloved living children.

The death of a young mom who leaves behind little children is a hard, confusing kind of grief. I hate it, and I don't understand it. But I know one thing for sure....God is God, His ways are higher than our ways, and the secret things belong to Him. So, on Mother's Day 2018, I know I will think of my two children in heaven, but I am confident my heart will be oh so heavy for the children who wish their mommies were here to love on, kiss, and say, "I love you." Will you commit to keep these children in your prayers on Mother's Day, as I will? Ask God to give these kids supernatural peace, joy and comfort as most assuredly they will miss their mamas so much on this day. And as you pray for them, it is my hope the Lord will in turn fill your grieving heart with peace, joy and comfort as well.



More Than an Assistant

Written by Sara Hintz
Mommy to Samuel
M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland Director

When I reflect on the gift that Kirsten was in my life, I am filled with thankfulness to God. How he orchestrates and creatively weaves our lives together with those we hold dear is always something special to reflect on and shows His goodness in difficult times.

After our son Samuel was stillborn in 2008, my husband and I were blessed to have a rainbow baby, Levi Ryan, in 2012 through the miracle of embryo adoption. The embryos were available to us because their bio dad had passed away due to Cystic Fibrosis. A mother had lost her 27 year old son... and we had lost ours. So we had a common bond in death and in new life. Through God's great working, this mom, our Levi's biological grandma, had become a dear friend and one of my biggest cheerleaders. I will never forget her emailing me about a sweet young mom with whom she met at church on a regular basis to pray together. This young mom had shockingly just delivered her stillborn daughter, Airington Hope. The three of us met a month later to talk and share stories over lunch. And so my friendship with Kirsten began... A friendship born out of a rainbow baby and the bond of 3 moms missing their children.

Kirsten came to our first M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland support group in June of 2014 and was a vital part of the ministry from that day forward. It was easy to recognize her deep faith, her constant reliance on the Lord, and her sincere compassion toward others. Kirsten had a reserved way about her and thought through her words carefully when she spoke. They were always kind, tender and understanding. She was an absolute delight to serve with here in Chicagoland, and I am so thankful God made her a part of our team. Our annual M.E.N.D. tree decorating at the Brookfield Zoo was always spearheaded by Kirsten and her husband, Mike, and gave our chapter members a wonderful way to remember each and every M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland baby. It also gave us a beautiful, touching, and incredibly special way to celebrate their precious lives together as we hung ornaments in blizzards, and in frigid temps, but our hearts were always warm.

I cannot tell you how much Kirsten's warm down-to-earth life will be missed in M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland. Because we got to know one another around conversations revolving around our babies, death and heaven, the bond and friendships we share are deep. We don't have superficial friendships, but rather relationships revolving around the most intimate and tender parts of our lives, our babies. Knowing this part of Kirsten's life is ALWAYS something I will cherish. We shared a lot of laughs and wonderful times, but we also were there for one another through tears and the painful parts of life.

As Kirsten was passing from this life and her husband's arms right into Jesus's arms, I was walking out of the NICU holding my newly adopted baby... I don't think I have ever prayed harder for someone's healing than I did for Kirsten's. Perfect healing had come, just not how I had desired. There was such absolute joy and pain in the same moment. This new life I now hold, this precious little one, will forever be a reminder of Kirsten's amazing life as she is named for Kirsten. We named her Oakley June... Oakley because we love and have clung to Isaiah 61:3 through our own loss, healing, and through Kirsten's illness... it states...

"And to provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called Oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor..." I witnessed God working beautiful healing in Kirsten's life in the years following her losing her daughter, Airington. June was Kirsten's middle name. She certainly displayed the Lord's splendor in so many beautiful ways and as she served grieving families in our area through M.E.N.D., before going to her heavenly home after her brave 27-day battle with cancer. My prayer is that Oakley June will boldly follow Jesus and serve Him all the days of her life, like Kirsten did.

While the missing here is painful, and her absence leaves a huge hole, causing the tears to fall, my heart also rejoices that heaven is a very real place where Kirsten is experiencing the FULLNESS of God's love and has already experienced the sweetest reunion with her babies. Every day is another day closer to meeting my creator, being reunited with my babies and my dear precious friend, Kirsten Fumagalli... Every day is another day closer to heaven... ♥



Perfect healing
had come,
just not how
I had desired.



In Loving Memory

Thank YOU for your support

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. For more information on how you can support M.E.N.D., please see page 26.

LeRoy Armstrong

Gifts given by

Lorene White
Don and Kathi Morgan
Gerald and Debra White
Wes and Becky Anderson
Will and Kelisha Murray

Ava Rae Arce

Stillborn January 11, 2017
Parents: Austin and Kelli Arce
Little Siblings: Cooper and Kamden
Given by Heather Cahill

Abigail Grace Crump

July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Given by parents
Gerald and Jaimie Crump
and little sisters Cami and Karli

Brooke Sophia Daily

Stillborn March 11, 2010
Vasa Previa
Given by parents
Jeremy and Lisa Daily
and sisters Sarah and Savannah
Sandy and Ed Rybicki

Riley and Parker Davis

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

Paislee Ann Frette

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

Sarah Catherine Harris

December 6, 1986
Parents: Don and Brenda Harris
Given by brother and sister-in-law
David and Anna Harris

The Hubbard Family

Given by Jason Ludy

Max Humphreys

Given by Amber Humphreys

Hadley Jackson

Gifts given by
Brett Hoelting
Schneider Electric
North American Foundation

Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray Light

February 23, 2009
Placental abruption
Given by parents Kirk and Diana Light and
siblings Brayden and Lexi

Joslyn Estelle Markham

February 12, 2015
Parents: Trevor and Carrie Markham
Given by Naomi Markham

Baby McGeever

Miscarried February 20, 2017

Jonathan Reed

Stillborn August 14, 2017
PROM
Given by parents
Emmett and Allison McGeever

Gideon Zeller Mitchell

Stillborn May 17, 2011
Membranous cord insertion

Avery Mitchell

Miscarried May 2008
Unknown cause

Joy Mitchell

December 2014
Vanishing twin syndrome
Given by parents Todd and Stormy Mitchell
and brothers Silas and Justus
Grandparents Earl and Karen Zeller

Stella Leigh Palmarez

Stillborn June 13, 2014, at 18 weeks
Parents: John and April Palmarez
Siblings: John Paul, Nathan, and Sadie
Given by Aunt Rosa Castillo

Margot Lily Perry

Stillborn June 10, 2013
Cord accident
Parents: Brandon and Marisa Perry
Siblings: Adeline, Bennett and Noelle
Given by Grandmother Marie Perry

Winnie Peterek

Stillborn May 27, 2009
Daisy Peterek
January 23—July 1, 2013
Heart defect
Given by mommy Heather Peterek

Alexander Seely

April 30, 2010
Cord accident
Given by parents Ron and Raquel Seely
and siblings Abraham and Leah

Mindy and Maggie Smith

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

Ariel and Angel Wong-Eguiarte

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

Adrian Joseph "AJ" Zuckerman

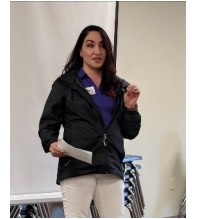
Stillborn March 30, 2007
Cord accident
Given by parents Al and Amber Zuckerman
and brothers Eli and Alex

Gifts of Support

Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
Christ Church Assembly of God, Fort Worth, TX
Joshua Glesener
Ashley Jean Hazlewood
HEB Grocery Company
Janis Kidder
Enterprise Holdings



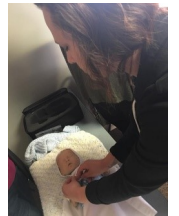
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri held its 8th Annual Craft Day on April 20-21. Ladies spent Friday evening and Saturday designing scrapbooks, sewing quilts or curtains, cross-stitching, wreath making and a variety of other activities. Each person was also able to create her own frame to hang pictures or notes. This fun-filled activity raised more than \$1,000 for this chapter.



M.E.N.D. leadership experienced a busy month in training for better ways to serve families and our communities. Members of leadership traveled to Irving, Texas, for Secrets of Exceptional Speaking, presented by Stephanie Hendrie and her daughter, Alyssa. This training provided us with better ways to connect to our audiences, whether it is one-on-one with a parent in loss, or presenting to nurses and doctors on how to better care for families in their loss.



Shortly after this training concluded, Jennie Drude and Jenae Bowmer traveled from Texas to Ohio to attend Sufficient Grace Ministries Perinatal Loss Support's Bereavement Training at Liberty Center. The ladies learned how to care for families as bereavement doulas, helping moms through the pregnancy from after diagnosis to birth to laying the baby to rest, and continuing support as we do with all M.E.N.D. families during the days, weeks, months and years after the loss of a baby.



Grieving Hearts

“Providing Guidance Through Life’s Storms”

Dr. Susan A. Adams, LPC, NCC

Psalm 5:3 “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.”

Last Sunday I listened to the words of the songs about joyful prayer. I questioned myself about “joyful prayer” especially when I was grieving and in a time of sorrow. How should I pray correctly while I still struggled with allowing prayer to sink deep into the depths of my soul? We are novices in our journey of a grieving prayer life.

However, the spiritual benefits are tremendous. Living out the strong bumps and potholes make grief a tough time. Perhaps my time with God is a short sentence or two each morning or it is thanking God for His protection. Just as if a light bulb goes off in my mind, sometimes it is difficult to put my whole being into prayer. However, I am filled with sadness because our baby fills a place in our heart we never knew was empty.

Sometimes all there is time for is to share the grieving tears of a heartbroken mom and dad. “Lord, bless the works of my hands,” while at other times, the words, “Abba Father” is all I can choke out to keep my mind from plunging into the dungeon of depression. These prayers count... If I put off prayer until my life is perfect, then I will never pray at all.

It is normal to feel shock, grief, depression, guilt, anger and a sense of failure and vulnerability when you lose a child during or shortly after pregnancy. You may simply feel withdrawn and moody or unable to concentrate or sleep. It may be difficult to accept sympathy from others because they do not know exactly how you feel. There is no right or wrong journey through grief.

However, don’t pressure yourself just to simply get past the sadness quickly. Take time off from work if you need this escape. Don’t forget; men and women grieve differently. Women tend to express their feelings; men tend to hold their feelings inside. Men may find healing by taking care of the woman in his life. Everyone needs to have the freedom to experience the loss in his or her own way.

Many people need a professional counselor to help resolve emotions and ultimately come to terms with grief and the empty hole in their heart. Because “a baby fills a place in your heart that you never knew was empty.”

“A baby fills a place in your heart that you never knew was empty.”

M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES

Greater Houston Area

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area is so excited to be opening two new satellite chapters in the Greater Houston Area! We will have support groups in Katy and Kingwood in addition to our current support groups in The Woodlands and Houston. If you would like to help or attend the support groups, please contact Kessi for the Katy support groups at kessi@mend.org and Nikisha at nikisha@mend.org for Kingwood.



We had a very successful Bears for Babies fundraiser! Thank you so much to everyone who gave and sponsored a bear. More than 175 bears were sponsored that we will provide to local hospitals for the mommies who lose a baby. If you would like to give toward this ministry, please email stormym@mend.org. Because of you, many mommies will not have completely empty arms as she will have a bear to hug as she leaves the hospital without her baby.

Stormy Mitchell

SW Missouri

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri continues to reach out to the families in our area to meet their needs by working with community organizations such as Lost & Found to equip them to help their living children with their grief. We are also expanding our influence by partnering with new organizations in the area.

We had a great time at our Craft Day Fundraiser the weekend of April 20-21. We had 25 in attendance and raised \$1,070 for our chapter! Thanks for all who helped make this a success! Save the dates: Balloon Release-October 13 and Christmas Candlelight Ceremony-December 10



Kathryn Gold

NW Washington

Our leadership continues to welcome new families to our monthly support groups, as well as our Facebook group. We are busy planning our annual Rummage Sale. Date and time will be announced soon. If you are interested in volunteering for our fundraisers, please contact Stacy McGhee at stacym@mend.org.



Stacy McGhee

Chicagoland

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland continues to thank God for the gift Kirsten Fumagalli was to our chapter and hurting families in our area. She will be deeply missed and her absence leaves a big hole in our ministry... But we will continue to carry on and share care, love, compassion, understanding and God's love with grieving families in the Chicagoland area.



Sara Hintz

Bryan/College Station

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station had a nice time of painting memory boxes for local hospitals. I want to thank Outback Steakhouse of College Station, Texas, for hosting this event. For more information about our monthly support groups and fellowships, please email jennie@mend.org.



Jennie Drude



Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa wants to wish all of our M.E.N.D. families a gentle Happy Mother's Day and Happy Father's Day. May the Lord surround you with peace, love, and comfort as we remember our precious babies.

Lisa Daily

MidMichigan

My name is Karen Kilbourn, and I'm the new Chapter Director of M.E.N.D.—MidMichigan. I am the mom of five; three in my arms and two in my heart. My heart's desire for M.E.N.D.—MidMichigan is to bring comfort and peace that passes understanding to the families walking the journey of neonatal and infant loss. There is excitement and anticipation from people in the area and our team is dreaming about how we can better serve this sisterhood! I'm excited to see what God has in store for the Tri-Cities area!

We have raised half of our start up funds and are actively seeking donations and monthly support. We are also searching for a free, private place to meet for our monthly support group. If we have all our funding and a location secured, our anticipated launch date will be later this year! We plan to participate in the Wave of Light on October 15. If you're in the MidMichigan area, please connect with us on our Facebook page for more updates on our launch date and the Wave of Light, plus help spread the word!



Karen Kilbourn

Palm Beach, Florida

M.E.N.D.—Palm Beach, Florida, is coming soon! "When a need becomes a call." Our President/Founder's words couldn't be more true for our chapter. We recognized countless families in our area who are currently enduring pregnancy and infant loss with little or no support. Now our team is actively preparing to answer the call by bringing M.E.N.D. to Southeastern Florida in order to care and comfort the grieving families in our community. With planning to launch our first support group later this year, we are fervently working to secure the necessary funds, a free and safe place to host our monthly support groups, and caring volunteers to assist with this labor of love. We are looking forward to serving the families in our area by offering our support! Please watch our Facebook page, which can be found at www.mend.org, for more updates on our chapter.



Jessica Gaddie

A Letter to My Sisters in Loss...

Written by Heidi Treibel
Mommy to Elliot

Dear Sisters In Loss,

You, mothers of babies in heaven, mommies whose babies left too soon due to miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant death, are precious to me. Your children are precious to me. I wish I could have known them all.

This Mother's Day may not be what you hoped for or expected. I know it's not for me. I don't know what to do with the words, "Happy Mother's Day." I *am* so happy and blessed to be a mother. But so, so aching for the children who are not with me. "Happy" is just not the word I'd use to describe it.

Last year on Mother's Day, I was pregnant with my sweet Elliot. I was about 28 weeks along, and had been on hospital bedrest since 23 weeks, after my water broke at 20 weeks. That Mother's Day weekend, I was in Labor and Delivery, hooked up to an IV of magnesium to keep me from going into labor, and chewing on ice chips and the occasional popsicle since I wasn't allowed to eat. My two little girls visited me and we played the best we could while I lay in bed. It was hard, but I remember thinking how it would all be worth it, because next Mother's Day, Elliot would be in my arms.

Elliot was born two weeks later on May 29, 2017. He died unexpectedly five days after that, on June 3, 2017.

Mother's Day 2018 is not how I wanted or pictured it. I know it's not for you. I've been thinking about you all a lot, and how even if we don't know each other, we do in a way. You may feel like life has moved on, the world has moved on, and like no one sees you.

But I see you.

I see you, sweet mama, as you rub your abdomen, remembering the kicks you felt from your little prince or princess. Sometimes you are so sure you still feel her kick.

I see you, weary mama of the infertility journey. Once upon a time we all just thought, *I'll have two or three kids someday!* Never did you expect it to be this hard. No answers. No pregnancy. Then, when pregnancy comes, just the devastation of loss. I'm so sorry.

I see you, aching mama of a miscarried baby. The world never saw your belly grow. Maybe friends and family didn't even know you were pregnant. Or maybe they know and act like it didn't mean anything. I see you, and the way you picture what could've been. What should've been. You don't know if it's okay to name your baby since you didn't know the gender. But a part of you feels like you *do* know.

I see you.

I see you, precious mama of a stillborn baby. I see you in that cold doctor's office when they couldn't find a heartbeat. I see your dreams shattering, and your whole body going cold. The reality hits you: you will have to deliver your baby. But you will never hear her cry. How did your dreams turn into this nightmare?

I see you.

I see you, brave mama of the baby born alive but died shortly after. Maybe you had minutes. Or hours. Or days. Or weeks. Or months. Maybe you knew, that horrible day at a 20-week ultrasound when the doctor said, "Not compatible with life," that your baby would never be coming home. But you carried him anyway. You are *so brave*. Or maybe, like me, you had every expectation your baby would grow up in your home and heart. And then suddenly, unbelievably, your baby was just...gone. "He's gone," Elliot's doctor said. I hate those words.

I see you.

I see you when you can't fall asleep, or when you wake in the middle of the night remembering. I see you when you do sleep, but fitfully in nightmares. In your dreams, you are always running to your baby. But he's never there.

I see you as you rub your arms. They hurt! They really hurt to be empty! How can empty arms hurt so badly?

I don't know
what to do
with the words,
"Happy Mother's Day."

With Loss, a New Story Began

Every mom who has experienced a loss knows, remembers and treasures moments and dates in her heart. In the early days after losing our Evelyn at 18 weeks in April of 2015, I journaled so I would remember everything. Most entries are written during the difficult first year of experiencing painful moments

I journaled so I would remember everything... Tomorrow's moments yet to be written.

without our baby, but it continues through today with tomorrow's moments yet to be written. It was during that year of "firsts" I started attending M.E.N.D. Instead of delivering our baby in September of 2015, my story of knowing Kirsten Fumagalli began. Time is strange. I have lived almost three years without our daughter, and it seems so long. I have known Kirsten for about 2.5 years, and it

is not nearly long enough. I miss both dearly. If I did not lose our too tiny one, I would not have known Kirsten. Knowing Kirsten has truly been a blessing from God. I know I will see them all, someday in heaven! What a joyous day that will be! I will love, remember and treasure her always. I share a few journaled and treasured moments with you now.

September 1, 2015 - "A general sense of sadness hovered all around me the entire day.... Early emotions are returning now that it is my due date month. In the evening, I went to M.E.N.D. for my first support group. I have not cried in a while, but being with women who truly understand was heartwarming. Tears come when I still talk about it. Talking, saying what's in my heart, out loud, is not easy. So many women, so many stories. The sharing was difficult yet helpful. Ending with good was hard." Kirsten was there, sharing her story and listening to mine. Listening to her share her story helped me tell mine. Her presence was so very comforting.

November 3, 2015 - "When the first Tuesday of the month approaches, I find myself looking forward to the M.E.N.D. support group. I go all month talking so little of my experience but thinking so much. But at M.E.N.D. I can talk without people feeling weird or judging me. Others have stories that I can listen to and pray for them. This support group came at the right time. It's so good." I looked forward to seeing Kirsten at M.E.N.D. support groups. She always sat on that one side of the circle, and I loved listening to her share her story and insights. I will always remember her sweet, quiet and gentle ways. She spoke of Jakoebi and Airtington as a part of her family. She helped me realize it is okay to love, remember, talk about and have our Evelyn be a member of our family and always in our hearts. I learned

Written by Becky Luedtke
Mommy to Evelyn
M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland Assistant



from her that grief is personal, and however it is expressed and however a life is remembered by a family is loving and honorable. She spoke with wisdom, love and encouragement.

September 30, 2016 - "I am getting on a plane today. To Dallas, TX, for a Walk to Remember; with M.E.N.D., as an assistant, with Sara Hintz and Kirsten Fumagalli." What a lovely weekend that was. I had never been to any remembrance walks or any memorial or service to honor our baby. Kirsten and I served together preparing for the event. We walked with so many; it was emotional, moving and healing. I sat with Kirsten during a beautiful service that honored and remembered so many babies in an incredibly loving and spiritual way. We spent time reflecting and remembering in the Garden of Hope. We were there together, joined together because of our babies, and our ornaments were placed on the same tree.

Kirsten always reserved and coordinated the Brookfield Zoo Tree. I love this tree. All the babies of M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland have an ornament on that tree. For the month of December, I have a place to visit to honor our baby. I have decorated the tree alongside Kirsten for three years, talking about sweet and precious babies, loving how the tree looks, and always thanking her for the tree. We always discussed what kind of tree topper to get, but never was one decided. I have undecorated the tree with her for two years now, after the New Year. We generally had cold fingers taking (or cutting) the ornaments off of the tree and carefully putting them in the box until the next year. I loved those times with just her. Since we cut off the ribbons in January, ribbons had to be replaced in November in order to hang the ornaments again. I offered to help her this past year, and she gladly accepted. She came to my house and sat at my table, tying ribbons one after another on each ornament. She commented on how slow she was tying compared to how quickly I was tying. I told her we each have our own gifts.



Kirsten shared her amazing gifts with M.E.N.D., for which I am forever thankful. I miss her dearly and will love, remember and treasure her always! I am grateful our babies made us friends. I anticipate with joy seeing her someday in heaven, with our babies in our arms!



Coping with Miscarriage

Written by Melissa Hoyle
Published on March 3, 2018

I feel that it is appropriate on this day, the four year anniversary of losing my daughter, to bring up the topic of miscarriage. It is something that is not often talked about and even hidden. I wonder if part of this is because of the shame that comes with a miscarriage. The shame of being in a room full of people, wondering if they can look at you and know you are incapable of carrying a healthy baby. Do they know that your womb is a failure? This grief stains a woman for the rest of her life. It is a deep sorrow that she will carry for the rest of her days. It affects so many and yet is talked about so little.

It's been four years and yet I still sit here and cry. As the tears flow, I think about where I was four years ago compared to where God has brought me to today. I want to bring you words of hope. I remember sitting at my

“Will the parts of me that I lost with you ever regrow?”

computer when I was freshly home from the hospital with my empty arms and my empty womb. I looked to the future and thought it was an impossibility I would ever feel whole again. See, when you lose a baby, a

part of you also dies. When I was two entire years out from losing her, I wrote in my little letter that I sent to heaven attached to our balloons, “Will the parts of me that I lost with you ever regrow?”

It was such a hard time in my life. It still is a hard time in my life, but I have been completely changed by God. It is so hard to explain how God has worked in my life through this. I am at a loss; I just can't find the words to do God's awesome work any justice. But know this, that if God were to have me go through this again, I would say, “Yes, Lord!” I would rather go through this pain than still be the person I was four years ago. If we aren't allowing God to change us and hack away at all the little rough spots in us, then, well, that just seems like unfulfilling life to me.

Romans 7:24-25a “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord...”

Let me talk for a little bit about my healing process. I have had two miscarriages. My first one was when I was 23 years old. It was my first pregnancy, and I had waited my entire life to be a mom. My world was soon shattered when

I went to my first ultrasound and determined that my “pregnancy was not viable.” Of course, they didn't tell me this, but I could tell something was not right because my ultrasound did not look like all the other pictures of 9-week babies of which I had been obsessing. That part of me that died, I tried to bring back with alcohol. It was an embarrassing part of my life, and it is hard for me to talk about it. I tried to fill that emptiness by numbing the pain with drinking all day. Alcohol was a tiny little band aid on a gaping wound and soon it began to fester. It came to the point I told my husband one night I wanted to write in my arm with a razor blade “I hate my life” so it would scar and I could always see it.

How awful is that? When something is hurting, there is only One who can bring healing; who can take away that pain and bring true restoration. There is a God-shaped hole there in that emptiness, and when we try to fill it with alcohol or drugs or relationships or food, it just leaves us hollow; it amplifies the pain and cuts the wound open even deeper until we are spilling ourselves everywhere, blood flowing all around us. We slowly seep out until there is nothing left.

My second miscarriage was four years ago. I lost my precious and long-awaited-for daughter at 20 weeks. We were anxiously awaiting to see our baby at our 20-week ultrasound when my midwife could not find the heartbeat. When you are 20 weeks, you think you are in the safe zone; that you have passed the time when you can lose a baby. It's when you start planning nursery themes and discussing names. No one ever thinks it will be the time when you have to labor for 10 hours to deliver your lifeless daughter. No one ever thinks it is a time when your 4-year-old son will help dig his sister's grave.

A few weeks before we lost her, I remember standing in church one day and praying in earnest, “Lead me where Your trust is without borders.” Jesus came to my side that day in the hospital as I labored. When I left with empty arms, He was holding my hand. Instead of turning to alcohol, I turned to the One who saves; the One who could fill that gaping hole. I decided I would avoid any type of alcohol so that I could feel all the pain in its entirety. My mom and my husband took care of my other children so I could have time to grieve. I poured over hundreds of other women's stories of their losses; I allowed myself to cry and cry until my insides felt dry. I was able to spend lots of time praying and reading Scripture. I allowed God to use this time to quiet all the background noise so I could hear Him.

There is no timeline for grief and healing. I did not magically feel no more sorrow after that first week, but I will say that because I allowed myself to feel so raw that first week, it made the following weeks and months easier. I have never in my life felt so close to my Heavenly Father. I

was weak. He came in, picked me up, carried me and, for the first time ever, I felt what it was like to be safe in His arms. My trust is without borders; anything that comes our way, I know He is there, and He has got this! I know that without that time in my life, I would not be here today writing this blog. I would not be the person I am today; I would be of weak character, floating through my life like a dead fish.

If you are fresh in your loss or if it's been months or years, and you still feel like a shell of a person going through life in emptiness, if the sorrow is still so great you are overcome or even if you are going through something else that is hard, can I just encourage you to turn to Jesus? Allow Him to pick you up and carry you through. Allow Him to fill that God-shaped hole. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you..." (James 4:8a). I sit here today, and can tell you He has regrown the parts of me that died. Not only that, but I feel like those parts are more beautiful than they were before.



Melissa's blog may be found at <https://thislifeabundantly.wordpress.com/2018/03/03/coping-with-miscarriage/>

"A Letter..." continued from page 14.

I see you.

I see you when you've thought about harming yourself. When you've daydreamed that you had died instead of your baby. Or with your baby. I know.

I see you when you force a smile around others, maybe at your child's school or at church or at the grocery store. People think you are "better." Inside, there is no better. It even kind of hurts to smile.

I see you when you are trying to be grateful for all you DO have. Your other children. Or another baby growing in your belly. Or a loving husband, a good job, a cozy home. *I have so much to be thankful for!* In a way, the loss of your precious baby has made you *more* grateful for those things. But nothing changes how deeply you hate the fact that your child died.

I see the ways you remember your child. Your tattoo. Your necklace. Her picture on your desk. His handprint in a frame. Her name proudly displayed. Or maybe you remember more privately. In a place in your home or your heart that only you know. You carry a whole life in your remembrance. What a holy thing!

I see you reaching out to others in your hurt. You invite the world into opportunities to be better because of your baby: to give, to live with no regrets, to help others who are hurting. Or you do it quietly. You take extra time for your children, or your parents, or your friends. You realize there is no reason to rush life so much. We never know how many days we have with our loved ones.

I see you. I see you because I *am* you.

But I can't see you each in your individual journeys. Our lives are different. Our stories are different. Our babies were different. What makes us the same is on the inside. If we could see our hearts, I think they'd look the same: bruised, battered and with one or more pieces clearly missing. But with a glow so strong, shaded in the color of love for our babies. I see you there. Yet I can't carry your story for you, and you can't carry mine. In that way, no one can see any of us all the time. Except for One.

God sees you. And He sees me.

He sees us even as we doubt He's there. How could a God who loves us have allowed this to happen?

He sees us when we ask that question. He sees us when we scream, "WHY?" He sees us (I have to believe it or I'll go crazy) when we kneel at our babies' graves or caress the urns that hold their ashes. He sees us when we feel sick, knowing our little ones went down the toilet. He sees us when we've pulled chunks of our hair out or hated the pretty pregnant lady for a split second or when we just feel like the world is caving in!

"I see you," He says.

"You have kept count of my tossing; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" David writes in Psalm 56:8.

I don't know why this journey became ours. I want Elliot in my arms this Mother's Day. I want my two miscarried babies, Avery and Everett. I want your babies to be in your arms. As you remember your babies this Mother's Day, know you are loved and you are seen.

And maybe there will be a special day in heaven, a day beyond all compare, when all babies gone too soon will be placed back in our arms. That is a day I will love to hear the words, "Happy Mother's Day."



Heidi's blog may be found at rawandfiltered.com.



A Deeper Love Through Grief

Kirsten Fumagalli served as the Assistant for M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland. She and her husband served hurting families with beautiful, willing hearts. After a short battle with cancer, Kirsten was reunited in heaven with her daughter and her son, leaving behind her husband, Mike, and sons Gable and Maverick. Following is a few words from the heart of Kirsten’s husband.

To be honest, I don’t know how to go about writing a tribute piece for Kirsten. What I do know how to do is tell you about how much she loved M.E.N.D., how it ministered to her and me, strengthened our marriage, built a network around us to laugh and cry with, and became an epicenter of Kirsten’s personal ministry here on Earth.

Kirsten and I both read every newsletter from M.E.N.D. We would pray for the families celebrating heavenly birthdays and discuss ways we could strengthen the organization, build support for grieving families in the Chicagoland area and reach out to families we knew needed us. Just yesterday I was going through the calendar as Kirsten always would at the beginning of the month, color-coding all of our different activities and places to be over the course of the coming weeks. As I flipped to April, then May, then June and all the way through the end of 2018, I realized Kirsten had already filled in “M.E.N.D.” for the first Tuesday of every month the remainder of the year. Amidst being a full-time working mother of two amazing boys, my precious and beautiful wife, and the best hockey mom there is, Kirsten prioritized M.E.N.D. She did that because she had experienced first-hand the ministry of M.E.N.D., enjoyed how it strengthened her and our relationship, and rejoiced in the restoration that M.E.N.D. and grief recovery played in the role of us having our rainbow baby, Maverick Carver, on June 22, 2017.

One of the things Kirsten struggled with when we learned she had cancer was why God would allow this, inhibiting her ability to care for our rainbow child. We both adore Gable and Maverick to the same degree you adore your children, but Maverick played a special role as he was born on June 22, 2017, following the stillbirth of our daughter, Airrington Hope, on December 22, 2013. In our journey following the loss of an ectopic pregnancy in November of 2011, and Airrington in December of 2013, and the ministry of M.E.N.D., we finally were able to get

to a place where we could love another child for who they were, instead of who they weren’t. So, we began to explore if God would bless us with another child, which He so graciously did.

What Kirsten was experiencing at that time was something we all can relate to. In the wake of tragedy and unexpected loss, we tend to ask God-sized questions that will never be answered on this side of heaven. Yet, amidst of all of it, we are called to love more completely, rely on God more heavily, and trust more deeply even though uncertainty overwhelms us. Unfortunately, there is no prescription for how to navigate those things. Although loved ones and friends pile books in front of us to somehow provide some reading remedy for what we are going through, there is no set routine or series of activities that has the capability to uniformly navigate these hurdles in life. Grief is a very individual thing. What I will share with you is how M.E.N.D. inspired Kirsten to live, and die, in such a way that radiated her love for serving others, passion for M.E.N.D., and unbridled commitment to me and our boys.

There are no words that can do the sadness and tragedy of what we are experiencing justice. Kirsten was in Dallas for the M.E.N.D. Leadership Conference the first weekend in February. We learned Kirsten had colon cancer that had metastasized to her liver two weeks later on February 16, 2018. She died 27 days later on March 14, 2018, making me a single dad with a 7-year-old and 9-month-old. As crazy as those three weeks in the



hospital were, I truly cannot imagine how much more difficult it would have been to let her go had she not been going Home to be with our children. It's interesting how we look back on what we experience as tragedies in life and see them as blessings later on where God meets us exactly where we need Him. Losing Airington before Kirsten has also provided our son, Gable, peace and comfort knowing they are together. After not saying much for the last week or so, I asked Gable before bed the other night if he had been thinking of Mom. He looked at me as obviously as he could and simply said, "Of course." I asked him what he was thinking about, He went on to describe all the fun and amazing things Kirsten and Airington are doing in heaven. Had we not lost her, his understanding and grief in the death of his mom would likely not contain the comfort he has at that current point in time.

I think the most defining thing I can share about Kirsten and her involvement in M.E.N.D. was her ability to love more deeply, serve more fully, and counsel more effectively not amidst her own trial and hardship, but even more so in her trial and hardship. The more pain Kirsten was in grieving the loss of our daughter, the more she loved and served others. The more sick Kirsten became as the days wore on, the more kind and gentle she became (if that was even possible for her). Her faith never wavered. Her fear never trumped her understanding of eternity. Her pain never caused her to be short-tempered or frustrated. In the wake of the most significant trials of her life, Kirsten radiated more of God than she ever had. That's inspiring.

That is the challenge for me and for all of you. When we face unspeakable grief, loss and unexpected illness, how will we respond? Will we shake our fists at God and desperately beg for answers? Or, will we be like Kirsten and radiate love and service of others *especially* when hardship comes? It does not mean we won't hurt. It does not mean we won't be sad. It does not mean we won't have difficult days where the acute pain is seemingly more than we can bear. What it does mean is in the wake of those moments, we can be inspired by the life, and death, of a woman who served God and others the way He intends. That is what changes the world, one life at a time.

As we all know, we do not get to choose the circumstances of life. If we did, you probably wouldn't be reading this newsletter right now and I certainly wouldn't be writing this. What we do get to choose is how we respond. Kirsten's living testimony is one we can aspire to. Our bed is still empty in the morning when I roll over. The passenger seat is still empty when our family goes to dinner. Her glasses are still sitting on the bathroom counter and her rings still at our bedside. Her physical absence is strong and my heart is heavy. However, I am encouraged and inspired by the life my wife lived, and you should be too. When your heart hurts and tragedy strikes, be like Kirsten. Love more deeply, rely on God more heavily, and serve others more completely. The world is waiting on you to change it for the better. Use your trial to do that.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers,
when you face trials of many kinds
because you know the testing of your faith
develops perseverance."

James 1: 2-3.

"For he knows the ways that I take,
and when he has tried me,
surely I will come forth as gold."

Job 23:10.

In blessings and hardship,
Mike Fumagalli

Husband of Kirsten Fumagalli, M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland Assistant

Father of Gabriel Anson (7), Maverick Carver (9 months), Airington Hope (stillbirth), Jakoebi Michael (ectopic pregnancy)



1,800 people viewed Kirsten's Celebration of Life as it was live streamed and nearly 15,000 additional people have viewed it since. It is an inspiring and encouraging tribute to her personal ministry on Earth. You can view the video posted on the Crossroads Community Church Facebook page.



Jubilance Divine

An interview with Matt Griswold
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri
Written by Jennifer Harrison
M.E.N.D.—Newsletter Editor

Matt Griswold is Daddy to Jubilance Divine. I met Matt a few years ago as we worked for the same company, and later found we had something more in common, M.E.N.D. Matt has shared his story of Jubilance in his church and other speaking engagements, including the M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri October Balloon Release in 2017. We will share his wife's story in a future newsletter.

Let's start with your family. Tell me about your family.

My wife, Rheanne, and I have been together for almost 10 years, and will be married for 8 years this coming July. Rheanne stays at home with kids. I have a job because home is chaotic (laughing). I have a 17-year-old son named Jace, a 13-year-old named Kaden, a 5-year-old son named Hutson, a 3-year-old daughter named Annallin, and a 1-year-old daughter named Clarcy, and they are all over the map.

And your son in heaven, his name is Jubilance?

Yes, Jubilance Divine. I was up all night googling what we would want to name him, what defines him, and I remember in one of the ultrasounds we had he was all arms and legs, just moving. We made the reference that he was dancing already. When we lost him, that ultrasound stuck in my mind. I tried to capture that dancing in a word. We found Jubilance, which is abundance of joy, and Divine, devoted to God. So it's Jubilance Divine:

abundance of joy devoted to God.
So tell me more about him...from the beginning.

He was my wife's and my first pregnancy together, first baby. I remember she met me at Walmart for lunch one day, with a card saying "You are going to be a Dad again." It was exciting. We started the routine doctor's appointments, made it through the first trimester, made it to week 18, past the danger zone... My whole mindset was you get pregnant and you have a baby. That's the way it works. I'd never experienced anything other than that.

On the day of one of her appointments, I had a class to train that started at the same time, so I was unable to attend with her. My wife asked one of her girlfriends to go with her. As soon as my training began, my phone began vibrating in my pocket, but I couldn't answer it...I couldn't even look at it. My boss was in the room observing at the time. My phone continued to go off. I began thinking something is not right. After a few minutes into the training, a co-worker and mutual friend of my wife and mine stepped in and said, "Matt, your wife is trying to call you." I knew immediately something was not right. I turned to my boss and said, "Rheanne is in a doctor's appointment right now, and my phone has been blowing up the whole time. So I really need to take this."

I stepped out and called my wife's cell phone. It was not my wife calling, but her friend, because my wife was a mess at that time. She said, "Can you please come here to the doctor's office?"

I immediately asked, "What's happening?" She just said, "I need you to come here." "That's not good enough; I need to know what is happening." "They can't find his heartbeat."

When I told my boss this, she just said to go, cancelling the class.

There were things that stuck out at me when I got there. Walking into the doctor's office: My wife was standing there. She'd already been



to the doctor's office and told they couldn't find a heart beat. They'd just finished the ultrasound, being told again, they couldn't find a heartbeat. And that's where I found her, leaving from the ultrasound and returning to the doctor, crying, just crying.

What seemed off/weird, it was all happening right in the middle of this doctor's office, where everybody is there for regular, happy appointments too. It was odd that we had to sit there and have that moment in that waiting room with everyone else.

The doctor called us back to a room and explained everything. He told us to go pack a bag, and he'd meet us at the hospital. This evening, we were going to have a baby. At 18 weeks, we were not ready for what that looks like. It was a numbing, surreal, an almost out-of-body experience trying to process what you are hearing.

As we drove home, it hit me. I had spent the morning setting up the nursery to surprise my wife.. for a baby we

were going to deliver, but not bring home. I wasn't sure how she would react to

that, so I had her wait in the car while I took everything down. We were all

I had spent the morning setting up the nursery to surprise my wife... for a baby we were now going to deliver, but not bring home.

ready sad, and I didn't want to make it worse.

After I finished, we both went in, grabbed the bag, and went back to the hospital.

They put us in a room, just like anyone else having a baby. It struck me again as odd, that we are in the same area as people having babies, and we know why we are there. We are about to have a baby that we will never ever get to take home.

I remember sitting outside the door of the delivery area, pacing, processing, and this couple came by and said "Congratulations." I said, "Thanks." Because they didn't know. I thought again, "Why do they have us right here?"

That's when I had this epiphany. We have a horrible situation right here, and how are we going to react to this situation? Probably with sadness, probably with bitterness, maybe some anger, but how am I going to outwardly respond to how this is going to look like? I knew I would need to call my friends and family, since we shared the joy of our pregnancy with them, and now had to tell them we lost him, which is a hard phone call to make. But I knew how I would react, especially to my friends who were weak in faith. I needed to be stronger in that moment for them.

It was a weird situation that happened...as people visited the hospital, I was the one encouraging them. They were very solemn, and very sad, and I was telling them, "It's going to be okay. We're going to be okay." How awesome of a testimony do we have to share the perseverance and faith God gave us. Rheanne and I made the decision we were not going



to *not* talk about it. We would be vocal about it and use it as a testimony that we have in God's goodness.

So many people were telling me, "Man, you're handling that better than I would have." Or "I can't believe you actually appear kind of happy in this moment." That was impactful for me, and encouraging for me. I think Jubilance was already sharing a testimony through me of how I was reacting to the situation.

So we had Jubilance; he was born October 5, 2011. My wife was in labor for 18 hours or something like that. I remember when they said it was time to push. She's crying. I'm crying. We knew. The cord was wrapped around his neck. It happens all the time, but babies normally get out of it. It was at that moment, I realized how fragile the process is.

They brought Jubilance to us, and [the hospital] gave us all the time in the world. They even have an awesome ministry of providing us with a box to keep his things. Until you're in a situation like that, you don't even know that side of the world exists. I didn't even know M.E.N.D. existed until that happened.

I read him a book. I sang him a song. I rocked him. I did all of those things. I never would have forgiven myself if I wouldn't have. We took pictures with our older boys there. Then we released him to his grandpa, who was the county coroner and also owned the funeral homes. Pa took him back to Steelville, and we began to prepare for his funeral, which was awful, but awesome.

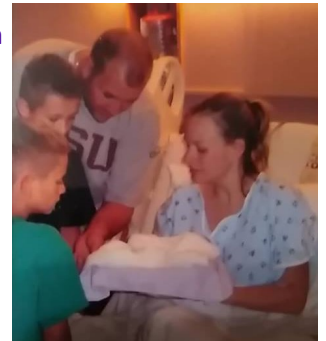
You mentioned you had two older sons. How did they handle everything in this time?

I remember Kaden, who was 6 at the time, had a soccer game that night. We tried to explain to him before he went that we lost the baby. As he got out of the car, he tells us "I hope you find the baby." And it was just a moment we needed. We heard later

he went over to the soccer huddle and just simply said, "They lost the baby." This is how they process... through the eyes of a child.

We began talking to Kaden and Jace, who was 10, about the funeral. I asked Jace and Kaden if they wanted to do something at the funeral. Kaden said, "Yeah, I'll probably sing a song." He's very much like I am, jump in, feet first and see what happens. Jace is much more methodical, and he wrote out what he wanted to say. Kaden did not end up singing a song, but decided to start the service with prayer. Being Kaden, he got up there, tapped the microphone to test it, and then started his prayer, standing in front of Jubilance's small casket.

We had so many people drive from our church, about a three hour drive. I spoke at the funeral. And as I was speaking, I realized I was smiling. I was crying, but I was smiling. In this moment, I shared with all those, "I know you are looking at me as I'm crying, talking about my son, and I'm smiling.



I know the nonverbal doesn't match my words right now. But I can't *not* smile. We are going to use Jubilance's short life as testimony for other people who are going through the same thing. My wife and I are going to be okay. We are strong. We are going to be okay. Does it hurt? Yes. But we are going to be okay.

I remember after the service, as everyone was coming through the line, my dad came up and gave me a hug, and that was only the second time in my life I've seen my dad cry. And he told me, "You're stronger than I am." I know that everyone kept saying that, but for me it wasn't an option. I knew I

(Continued on page 22)

"Jubilance Divine" continued from page 21.

wouldn't have forgiven myself if I hadn't stood there and spoken for my son. And how God was going to use that. We went to the cemetery, and we didn't have pallbearers, it had to be me. I had to carry him.

We have a gravestone with a picture of Jesus and a boy walking hand in hand, and then we have another picture of Jesus and a little boy walking with Jesus hanging in our home. When I saw the picture we have in our home, the boy in that picture looked to be about the same age that Jubilance would have been at the time, and I immediately bought it. To me, it's sad



and it makes you want to cry if you dwell on it, but at the same time, if you are a person of faith, that's his reality right now. And I wanted to capture that. I

don't think of him in his death, how I set his casket in the grave; I want to think of him and what he is doing with Jesus, because that is my assurance.

What was the hardest part?

Two parts – having to call all the family, even when we don't know anything, other than we lost him. Having to make those phone calls. The other part was the subsequent pregnancies. We had three healthy pregnancies after Jubilance. I did not tell anyone except for my boss since I had to take time off for appointments. The only appointment I missed with Jubilance was that one, and I had a lot of guilt for that. I never missed an appointment with the other pregnancies. I also never told anybody until we were at week 32 or 33. We kept it off Facebook. Our family knew, but no one else did.

My wife's guilt, which she might share more in her interview, for the next three pregnancies, or at least for the next two, was pins and needles. Every

appointment, pins and needles... and my wife to this day probably holds a lot of guilt for not allowing herself to be happy in those pregnancies, because she was happy and scared at the same time.

What, if anything, do you see as good that came from this?

We have had the opportunity to share Jubilance through our testimony and the number of people, even strangers, this little baby impacted.

We went back to the same OB/GYN doctor when we were pregnant with Hutson, who was born October 15, 2012, just one year and 10 days after Jubilance. As we walked into the



waiting room, there was a woman sitting in the chair, just melting down. Her husband was sitting next to her, blank staring at the floor. We knew immediately the cause of those reactions, because we had been in those same seats. My wife said, "I know why they are upset, and we should go talk to them," to which I replied, "I know why they are upset too, and we should just leave them alone." But my wife could not do that. She made eye contact with a complete stranger across the room, and motioned for her to come over by us. This complete stranger got up from across the room, walked over and sat next to my wife. Now she is sitting by us, and my wife just hugged her, and asked her if she is okay. And they became friends. That year we attended the M.E.N.D. Christmas Candlelight Ceremony, which was the second time for us to attend, and they also attended.

That's just another example - without having gone through what we did, without enduring through that pain

like we did...

How am I going to react to the situation like it is? We are going to use this as a testimony to help other people going through this. Because again, you don't know anything about that side of the world until you've walked through that world. Without having that experience, would my wife still talk to her? Yeah. Would my wife be able to relate to her? I don't know if she would have as well as she does because now they have this mutual pain they've experienced.

You have these moments where you handle things differently, but it's also in one of those moments where we make a decision. Outwardly some people may have thought we seemed happy. That's not the case. It was hard, it was sad. It's still sad. We think about him all the time. You don't ever not think about him. Everyone we know is well aware of Jubilance and our circumstance. People come out of the woodwork when they hear your story. It's almost therapeutic to share, so let's be outspoken about it.

How do we take that? How does God still get glory during the most excruciating times in your life? How do you find a way to glorify God in that moment? I think that is hard for people, and I want to be that for other people. It is awful, but it is awesome, at the same time. It's hard for people to translate, but for me to share my faith many different times because of Jubilance, it is awesome every time I share our story. Yeah, I cry about it, especially when I am speaking about it. And people get sad, but then I say, "No, this is good. I'm glad. It moves me to tears, and I don't think that's a bad thing. It's a good thing."

When we were at Mercy Hospital, I was leaving the nourishment room with a cup of coffee. Right across the hallway Mercy had Matt 19:14 on the wall. "Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Do not hinder them." I thought, "Man, that's

awesome.” That is on his gravestone. You read pages of the Bible or words of the Bible, but when you read things like that [in a public place], that’s impactful. Everyone has a decision to make on how they are going to handle it, and we want to be the support and minister to people who are going through that too. It’s hard to get to that place. I don’t know how people do it without faith, without that assurance.

What were other things you did to support your wife?

Just being present. This is a situation when a lot of people retreat, but being present is impactful. It was important for me to take that time away from work. My boss was awesome; she said “I’ll see you when I see you.” It allowed me to be present for my wife. To be present and to be patient. It’s not the time for a motivational speech. Allow them to process; allow both of you to process since we do it differently, as a husband and wife and as a mom and dad. A lot of people say for the dad, it’s not real until the baby gets here. For the mom, it’s real the moment you find out. Being the support for my wife, that really brought us together. We grew a lot in those weeks I took off and stayed home after the funeral. That was impactful for our relationship. As the dad, needing to do the best to anticipate how your wife is feeling, and being mindful to that. Yes, even though we are going to look at this in a positive light, you still have the moments where you slip, and you are sad or you are upset or you are asking these why questions, and it’s hard to say, “Wait a second, I thought we were going to look at this positively? I thought this was going to be a testimony?” But it’s all good; you have to have those moments too. I think how moms and dads process differently is also hard, and as the dad, it was hard to anticipate what I need to be for her right now.

What was the first Father’s day like without Jubilance?

I don’t know that it was necessarily

different; I’m sure it was for Rheanne. I know I was more sensitive, more aware. I guess Father’s Day my senses are more heightened, but Mother’s Day is more impactful on Rheanne. Mother’s Day and October 5, his birthday, those are ... she’ll probably wake up crying. She brought up the due date the other day. That’s the difference between dads and moms, because I said, “It’s not his birthday; his birthday is in October.” But her reply was, “This would have been his birthday.” And I got it. So there are a few days throughout the year I know she will be more sensitive, more emotional.

Was there anything you remember about her first Mother’s Day?

A lot of crying, and it’s kind of a helpless feeling for dads. Because dads are the fixer of problems for things, but... be patient, let them process, be present, I think those are the things you can do to help them.

Is there anything else you would tell dads going through this?

Don’t put so much pressure on yourself to be strong in that moment necessarily. Allow yourself to process and be patient with yourself. The guy in the waiting room blank staring at the floor. I think that’s a common reaction. And I am not saying that’s a bad reaction, but I think for dads we have so much pressure to be the fixer of things and to be strong. Being strong doesn’t really mean I can’t cry about it, I can’t ask they why question, I can’t show my vulnerability to my wife. All those things are also being strong. Be willing to support your wife, but also be willing to share your story too. Dads will relate better to other dads, way better than moms could relate to dads. You don’t see many dads posting about it on social media, but I do. I went Facebook live because I wanted to share his story, what happened and how God is using that. I don’t want to hide behind the date or people to feel sorry for me. Yeah, it stinks but this is our outlook on it.

How has Jubilance’s life impacted your marriage?

It’s built an additional common bond. I think it’s one of those things no matter what we are talking about, or what the most recent struggle is in our life right now, we can always go back to this situation you don’t want any parent to go through ever, and know we have endured through that. We flourished through that. We embraced what that was. This is what God had intended for it. I think no matter what is going on in our lives, we can look back on it and say, “Man, if we were able to do that, we can do anything.” I tell my wife that I promise sometimes you are not going to like me, and I may not like you, but I am not going anywhere. I think that is a testament we endured through it, we persevered through that, nothing can take us out, it was something that brought us closer together.

If you could ask God one thing about Jubilance, what would it be?

A few years after Jubilance died, Rheanne lost her Grandpa rather abruptly to cancer. He was an awesome man of God, a pastor for 50+ years. And I wonder, was Jubilance there to welcome him? I would love to know what is he doing. What connections of the family were there to embrace him? And like that picture in our home, how often do you get to take a walk with Jesus? We know when we get to heaven we will be glorifying God. How does he like to do it? Is he still dancing? Does he sing? How does he glorify God?





Artículo de M.E.N.D. Presidente y Fundadora,
Rebekah Mitchell, Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y bebé Mitchell

En el Día de la Madre, Recordamos...

Tradicionalmente, el día de la madre es un domingo en mayo, cuando los niños de todas las edades honran a sus madres. En nuestro mundo de pérdida infantil, para muchos, el día de la madre es un día de tristeza horrible mientras las mamás lamentan la ausencia de los niños que no están aquí para poder servirles el desayuno en la cama, dibujar tarjetas preciosas de la gente de palillo, o escoger un hermoso ramo de flores del patio trasero.

Este año, mi corazón está pesado en el día de la madre por una razón diferente. Estoy abrumada por la tristeza mientras recuerdo tres madres de M.E.N.D. que, en mi humilde opinión mortal, murieron demasiado adelantado dejando atrás 6 niños, colectivamente. Cuando fundé este ministerio hace 21 años, sabía que iba a caminar continuamente junta con las familias que traumáticamente perdieron sus bebés. Nunca se me ocurrió que también enfrentaría la muerte de algunos de nuestros líderes de M.E.N.D. y ver a sus familias sufrir otra trágica pérdida.

El día de gracias del año 2012, nos despedimos de PAM Morren, que luchó una dura batalla con el cáncer de mamas. Pam sirvió en nuestra Junta Directiva en Dallas antes de que ella y su familia se mudaran al NW Arkansas, donde ella entonces se convirtió en director asistente de nuestra primera expansión de un capítulo de M.E.N.D. Nuestra sede de liderazgo fue sacudida de nuevo en 2015, cuando uno de nuestros voluntarios habituales, Geri Shannon, murió después de una breve enfermedad. Entonces este año... sorprendentemente el fallecimiento de nuestra M.E.N.D.—Asistente Directora de Chicago, Kirsten Fumagalli. Kirsten pasó el primer fin de semana de febrero en mi casa, junta con 37 otros miembros de nuestro equipo de liderazg de M.E.N.D. Ella participo durante dos días de entrenamiento con nosotros, canto alabanzas con nosotros en el M.E.N.D. Jardín de la esperanza, e incluso rodó y jugó láser tag con nosotros, ya que terminó la conferencia de liderazgo participando en las actividades para edificar el equipo. Ella nunca dijo una palabra sobre no sentirse bien. Menos de dos semanas más tarde ella estaba luchando por su vida en la UCI, sólo días después de ser diagnosticada con cáncer del colon en estadio 4 y que ya había devastado su hígado. Exactamente 6 semanas después de que nuestro equipo de liderazgo se reunió para un fin de semana de entrenamiento en Dallas, nos encontramos en Chicago asistiendo al funeral de Kirsten.

Mientras me sentaba en cada uno de estos tres Servicios, había muchas referencias de estas madres jóvenes que ahora están con Jesús y reunidas con sus amados bebés que habían

fallecido. Es cierto que ha habido un sentimiento de envidia entre nosotras mamás de M.E.N.D., incluso más de una comprensión de cómo es la muerte permanente y terriblemente triste, cambiante de la vida y desgarradora para los que quedaron atrás, especialmente para los niños.

Fue gran honor cuando me pidieron hablar en el funeral de PAM esa fría mañana de noviembre en Arkansas. Su familia me pidió compartir la historia de PAM de cuando acepto a Jesús como su Salvador, solita en su coche una noche después de un grupo de apoyo M.E.N.D. Siento que mi homenaje fue bastante bien, bajo las circunstancias, aparte de que me gustaría poder tener esos momentos de vuelta para dirigirme a sus tres hijos, que cortésmente estaban sentados, aun afligidos en la primera fila. Me encanta que el bebé de Pam Skyler, quien murió de SIDS; Hijo de Geri, Theo, que nació sin vida después de un derrame cerebral en el útero; y la hija de Kirsten, Airrington, que nació muerto debido a una causa desconocida a término completo, fueron mencionados en largo durante los funerales de estas mamás, pero mi corazón se rompió por los niños vivos de estas mamás que ahora crecen sin su mamá. Me gustaría poder volver al funeral de PAM y decirle a esas tres hermosas rubias que su mamá no eligió estar con su hermano mayor en el cielo sobre quedarse aquí con ellos. Me gustaría asegurarle a la hermosa hija pequeña de Geri, Ysabel, que su mamá la amaba mucho y quería quedarse aquí en la tierra para verla crecer. Espero y rezo por los dos hijos vivientes de Kirsten, Gable y Maverick, se les dice que su mami luchó como loca esos 27 días para quedarse aquí con ellos. Ninguna de estas mamás eligió ir a sus bebés en el cielo por quedarse aquí con sus amados hijos vivos.

La muerte de una madre joven que deja hijos pequeños detrás es un dolor difícil y confuso. Lo odio, y no lo entiendo. Pero sé una cosa con certeza.... Dios es Dios, sus caminos son más altos que nuestros caminos, y las cosas secretas le pertenecen a él. Así, en el día de la madre 2018, sé que voy a pensar en mis dos hijos en el cielo, pero estoy segura de que mi corazón será oh tan pesado para los niños que desean que su mamá estuviese aquí para amar, besar, y decir, "te amo". ¿Se compromete usted a mantener a estos niños en sus oraciones en el día de la madre, como lo haré? Pídele a Dios que les dé a estos niños paz sobrenatural, gozo y consuelo, ya que seguramente extrañarán a sus mamás tanto en este día. Y al orar por ellos, es mi esperanza que el Señor a su vez llenará su corazón doloroso con la paz, la alegría y la comodidad también.



Defining Moments

Written by Greg Miller

Daddy to Baby Blueberry and Chase Austin

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area

There are defining moments in everyone's lives. Some of these moments only last that long, a moment; while others may affect a whole day or multiple days, sometime months or years.

For instance, I'm sure a lot of people remember the first time they met or went on a date with their significant other. And if someone were to ask you what you were doing or where you were when 9/11 happened, I'm sure most everyone could describe those in detail.

Losing a child, sadly, is another defining moment. It's a moment where your world stops, your heart breaks, the idea of "control" is wrested from your fingertips and some of your dreams die along with them. Even when time starts back up for you, it's never quite the same. There are some days where you can provide details of what happened that day, while in others you aren't sure how you got to work or got home.

There are parts of those days, leading up to the death of our son, that are crystal clear and forever etched in my memory, while others are a blur, as though I'm scared to remember it all.

I can remember the doctor's office where the doctor told us that my wife couldn't move and that she was calling an ambulance. I can remember the room where the doctor explained the surgery that they had had to do, the timeline milestones that we were aiming for, the risks, and the potential problems.

I can remember parts of the day that my son was both born and died. I can remember holding my wife's hand; I can remember seeing him born and watching his chest rise and fall. I can remember going out to the waiting room to tell our family we had lost him. I can remember sitting down in a small room off a hall, between two chairs and banging my head against the wall as I cried.

I can remember making phone calls to funeral homes...

There are so many parts of our journey since we lost Chase that have been defining moments for me. A big one was one that happened that day. As I sat there, in that small room, banging my head against the wall and crying, I realized that as much as I wanted to, there was nothing I could do to fix this.

Not for myself and not for my wife. Yes, I could be there for her, hold her as she cried, prepare food for her and in general, do what all husbands are supposed to do. "To have and to hold, in sickness and in health,



until death do us part." That's what I had agreed to when I married her. But there was still no fixing this. I couldn't turn back time, I couldn't buy something that would make this better, I couldn't get tools and beat a solution into or out of it.

There. Was. No. Fixing. This. Not for her, and not for me either.

Regardless, I tried a couple of things. None of them worked. I focused on my wife though, constantly asking stupid questions like, "Are you ok?" or "How are you feeling?" God, how I wish I could go back and change that. Not the taking care of my wife but the stupid questions part.

At the same time though, I was going about my business and ignoring an important thing. I was ignoring or pushing aside my own grief. So much so that one night, my wife turned to me and point blank told me, "Will you please tell me how you are feeling. Are you upset that he died or are you not? Has this affected you at all?"

My wife needed, desperately, to see me grieve.

At that moment, I had to face a couple of things. One was that I wasn't dealing with my grief in a healthy manner. I was pushing it down while trying to take care of my wife. Another thing, and one of the most important I learned, was that my wife needed, desperately, to see me grieve. She needed to know that I felt something about losing our son. She needed to know that I felt broken inside, just as she did. She needed me to acknowledge our loss, as it also acknowledged the life of our son.

Again, a defining moment. It was also an important one. By sharing our grief, the burden that it had become was lessened somewhat. My wife and I have said several times that losing Chase could have had two different outcomes; one would have destroyed our marriage while the other would have reformed it and made it stronger.

A hard part for me was trying to define my love for a little boy whom I never got to meet. I also had to defend mine and my wife's love of our child against others. There were people who would say, "He never lived. He never breathed. He hasn't accomplished anything. There are no memories to cherish." My replies back were sometimes short and terse and at other times patient and understanding. It generally depended on the person with which I was speaking. When told he never lived or breathed, I would reply Chase breathed and ate before he was born. And Lord knows his heart was beating. He did accomplish things as well, which also gave us memories to cherish. He grew for as long as he could. He created special dreams of our future, defining moments. He made us parents; a mother and a father. And that is one of the greatest definitions of them all. ♥



About M.E.N.D.

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 support groups, this newsletter, and our website at www.mend.org.

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

M.E.N.D.

P.O. Box 631566

Irving, TX 75063

Phone and Fax: (972) 506-9000

(Please call before faxing)

E-Mail: rebekah@mend.org

jennifer@mend.org

www.mend.org

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).

M.E.N.D. is a member of

First Candle/SIDS Alliance

International Stillbirth Alliance

Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance



international
stillbirth alliance



• Helping Babies Survive & Thrive •

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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 Information

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington

Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 p.m.
Harrison Medical Center/Iris Room
1800 Myhre Rd.
Silverdale, Washington 98383
Director: Stacy McGhee
stacym@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Project H.O.P.E.
1419 S. Enterprise Ave
Springfield, Missouri 65804
Director: Kathryn Gold
kathryn@mend.org, (417) 770-0600

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station

Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.
Hawthorne Suites
1010 University Drive East
College Station, Texas 77840
Director: Jennie Drude
jennie@mend.org, (402) 704-6363

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa, Oklahoma

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.—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.—MidMichigan

MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!

M.E.N.D.—Palm Beach, Florida

MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area

Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
Easter Seals
4888 Loop Central Dr.,
Houston, Texas 77081
Meets the 2nd Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
GlassDoctor Lobby
5150 Franz St, Ste 800
Katy, Texas 77493
Meets the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.
Lone Star College,
3200 College Park Dr, Room A228,
The Woodlands, Texas 77384
Coming soon: Kingwood Area
Support Group on 4th Thursday
Greater Houston Area Director:
Stormy Mitchell
stormym@mend.org, (405) 529-6363
Katy Director: Kessi Wilhite,
kessi@mend.org
Kingwood Director:
Nikisha Perry, nikisha@mend.org
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 quarterly
on the 3rd Thursday at 7:30 p.m.,
led by Greg Miller
(stefaniem@mend.org)

M.E.N.D. Support Groups in the Dallas Metroplex

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

M.E.N.D. chapter support groups

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

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

Held the 4th Thursday of
every month at
different locations and times
across the DFW metroplex.
Contact Brittney Fish
for the details each month:
brittney@mend.org

Infertility group

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

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

**Mommies AND daddies are both
welcome at all M.E.N.D. support groups.**

**Unless otherwise noted,
all support groups are held at:**

Wells Fargo Bank

800 W. Airport Freeway

Irving, TX 75062

(Located off 183,

between MacArthur and O'Connor)

Support groups will be in

the bank board room,

located on the first floor.

For more information,

call (972) 506-9000.

M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
P.O. Box 631566, Irving, TX 75063
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(972) 506-9000
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Would you consider providing comfort to families by donating to M.E.N.D.?

Mother's Day and Father's Day, two of the hardest holidays for families missing little ones in heaven. **1 in 4** families are experiencing these missing pieces of their hearts. M.E.N.D. provides comfort for these families during these holidays, and every day in between.

Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death (M.E.N.D.) is a non-profit organization funded solely by private donations and fundraisers. All leaders of M.E.N.D. are volunteers, from the President, Chapter Directors and even the Newsletter Editor.

We provide comfort through support groups, leaders being available to families, providing information and training to hospitals and other groups, and through our newsletters like this one which are sent to about 1,500 subscribers worldwide every other month, all completely free.

We do have costs to run the organization including materials and newsletters, equipment and leadership training.

Would you consider giving a special donation to support M.E.N.D.
and in memory of your baby or a friend/family member's baby?

A donation of **\$50** would cover the expenses of providing the Newsletter for **1 year** for at least **2 families**.

How many families can you support?

Any amount is welcome, as all donations are used to provide support for hurting families.

Donate online at
<https://www.mend.org/donate-online/>

Mail donations to
M.E.N.D.
PO Box 631566
Irving, TX 75063