

Angel Whispers

SPRING, 2013

Hello to all of our Angel Whispers families,

*Angel Whispers
Newsletter is a resource
for parents who have lost
a baby during pregnancy
or shortly after birth.*

*Meetings are held in
Sherwood Park and Fort
Saskatchewan.*

*For meeting information,
or to receive our
newsletter or a special
care package, please call
780.998.5595,
ext. 225.*

*You can also reach us by
email at
angelwhispers@
familiesfirstsociety.ca
or visit our website at
www.angelwhispers.ca/
angelwhispers.*



www.familiesfirstsociety.ca

I sit here writing this today on what is officially the first day of spring and yet I look out the window questioning how that is possible, when we still have several feet of snow outside with up to 20 cm more forecasted for the next few days. I look forward to spring each year as I'm sure many of you do as well. Spring is like the dawn of a new day and the promise of a fresh start. Spring provides hope and relief from the dreariness that can often accompany a long cold winter.

The grief journey can be much like the seasons; just when you think that the snow is beginning to melt and soon the flowers should be in bloom, we can often times be struck with what we refer to as a "grief burst" which is like that spring snowstorm, making us question if the snow will ever be gone. The emotions that you experience when you grieve will cycle like the seasons; you never get over losing a baby. The seasons repeat themselves, but with time the emotions will soften much like your tolerance to winter. You accept that this is your reality and find that "new normal". You expect those seasons to change and know that at any time the weather can change unexpectedly like those "grief bursts" we journey through.

Many things can trigger "grief bursts", perhaps a milestone or an anniversary or your baby's birthday. Sometimes there is no specific trigger which can make those moments more surprising. It is normal for the grief to feel more overwhelming as holidays and occasions approach. Mother's Day and Father's Day are just around the corner, a difficult time for parents that have lost a baby. For families who don't have other children, these dates can be almost unbearable and have them questioning their roles when their baby is not with them. Please know that you are still parents, you deserve that acknowledgement. Your angels are with you and are celebrating you in heaven with the

other angel babies. Honor your babies as they honor your role as their mommy and daddy.

This newsletter is dedicated to all of our Angel Whispers mommies and daddies. Please know that you are in our hearts and we understand your journey; we are here to walk it with you.

We are also honored to include Maddie's story in the spring newsletter. Maddie is the daughter of Melissa and Blair Kondro. Melissa is one of the Angel Whispers co-founders. Part one of Maddie's story is included in the following pages and the second part to their story, their healing journey will be included in our summer edition.

Our annual fundraiser, the Madison Memorial Golf tournament is planned in Maddie's memory. Information on this important upcoming event is included for you. We would love to have you join us as you golf in your baby's memory. Or consider volunteering or perhaps provide a donation or sponsorship for the tournament.

Wishing you all peace, love and hope this spring! May you feel the love of your angel babies with you this Mother's and Father's Day!

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

*Lori-Ann Huot
Program Coordinator
Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program
(780)998-5595 ext. 225
angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca*



Maddie's Story

by Melissa Kondro

November 9, 1998 was one of the happiest days of my life. My doctor confirmed for me that there was a new life growing inside me. Blair, my husband, and I were so excited. I read all the books, followed all the doctors' directions and took care of myself. No smoking, no drinking, no drugs, not even any caffeine. I wanted to have the healthiest baby to ever to be born.

Blair attended all my pre-natal appointments and was as overwhelmed as myself when we first heard the baby's heartbeat on December 7, 1998. Blair catered to all my needs and cravings including a trip to 7-11 around 11:00 p.m. one evening for Sunny Delight. My cravings included orange juice, garlic and spicy nachos. I would steal garlic bread off anyone's plate and could eat a bag of spicy Doritos in no time at all!!!

What a wonderful Christmas 1998 was. I was enjoying the feel of our baby growing inside me, as well as the anticipation of Christmas 1999. I imagined all the toys under the tree and of course the first family portrait. We, including all of our family and friends, had so much love just waiting to shower on our newborn baby.

My sister-in-law, 3 of my cousins, and 3 of my friends were also pregnant at the same time. How wonderful it was to have so many people to share and reflect on this wonderful time. All we could think about was the wonderful year to come and the memories we would all make together. I always think it is wonderful to have cousins and friends close in age to grow and learn with.

On January 28, 1999, Blair and I woke up very excited; today would be the first day we would see our little baby on ultrasound. Baby was lying in a way that the ultrasound technician felt she couldn't see the entire heart. She requested that we come back for another ultrasound in a month. I was a little nervous but other expectant mothers, as well as my Doctor ensured

me that this was normal, and they just want to be sure all is well!

February 2, 1999, was another exciting morning; we were going to see our baby again today. A day we anticipated to very joyous was both joyous and a little stressful. They still couldn't see our little one's whole heart. Everyone reassured us and told us they were just being cautious by sending us to the Royal Alexandra Hospital peri-natal

*Both of our eyes filled
with tears, inside my
belly, was our baby girl,
Madison Louise.*

clinic for a more in-depth ultrasound. But in my heart at that point, I knew something was wrong with my baby, no matter what anyone told me.

On March 9, 1999, Blair and I were at the RAH peri-natal clinic having more ultrasounds. It was there that Dr. Okun confirmed that our baby had a very serious heart defect. She wanted us to go for a fetal echocardiogram at the University hospital for a final diagnosis. We had an amniocentesis done that day as well to rule out any other abnormalities. This was at 26 weeks gestation and our little one weighed approximately 2 lbs. 5 oz.

An echocardiogram was scheduled for March 11, 1999. It was then that Dr. Robertson at the echo lab at the University Hospital confirmed that our baby had Hypo-plastic Left Heart Syndrome. Blair and I were devastated. We met with our families and explained our options.

First option was compassionate care, which allows the baby to die peacefully after it was born. Second was to have baby have a heart transplant. The third option was a series of surgeries called the Norwood Procedure.

Blair and I went to the mountains

for a few days to absorb all we'd been told and to decide what we would do. It didn't take us any time at all to decide we would do whatever it took to help our little one. We read a lot about the difficulties in finding a donor heart for an infant. We also read a lot about the Norwood Procedure and how lucky we were to have Dr. Ivan Rebeyka here in Edmonton at the Stollery Children's Hospital. The Norwood procedure is a three step surgery which basically reconstructs the heart to function without the left ventricle. We read several stories from parents who also had to choose one of these three options. For us personally, compassionate care was not an option. Not after hearing of Dr. Rebeyka's success rate with the Norwood Procedure. We respect all parents of heart babies and realize what difficult choices we need to make; for us it was the Norwood.

Once our decision was made, Blair, I and our families adopted a very positive attitude. A very wise friend of mine helped me realize that I had cried enough. How could my baby believe in itself, if I didn't believe in him/her? From that day on we concentrated on positive thoughts and supported each other completely.

On April 7, 1999, at 30 weeks gestation, our baby weighed approximately 3 lbs. 9 oz. At the peri-natal clinic, Dr. Demianczuk, who would deliver our baby, explained to us that the amniocentesis results were back. Our baby had a heart defect, but that was all. He also told us at our request that we were having a baby girl. Dr. D had to tell us a couple of times, everyone thought, as we did, that we were having a baby boy. It took a few moments to register in our heads. Both of our eyes filled up with tears, inside my belly, was our baby girl, Madison Louise.

At the echo lab that day we were excited to tell Lori the technician that she

Continued on page 3

didn't have to just say "baby" and we introduced her to Madison. So on April 7, though still in my belly, the world met our little Madison Louise. All of our family and friends knew about Maddie and her heart defect. They knew it would be an uphill struggle, but we were positive that she was going to be just fine.

We continued to have ultrasounds every two weeks from that point on to ensure that Maddie was continuing to grow. Often times with HLHS, the babies will stop growing in utero. We had a pool going with our family and friends to see how much she would weigh each time we had an ultrasound. Madison continued to grow and fill our hearts with hope. We prepared to greet Madison and truly believed that we had made the right decision choosing surgery for her. We met with all the doctors, nurses, neonatologists, social workers, everyone that would be involved with her care during her time at the Stollery.

The staff at the Stollery were truly amazing. The care they provided us in preparation for Madison's birth was unbelievable. They made us feel like family and ensured that we would be completely comfortable at the hospital when she was born. They even allowed our doctor to book a surgical suite for June 9 at the University Hospital for Madison's birth, even though they usually don't deliver babies at that hospital and haven't for years.

We decorated the nursery in one of our favorite characters, Winnie the Pooh, and had everything all ready for Maddie. My mom had a baby shower for Maddie and I, and lots of our family and friends joined us for a celebration and help us prepare for her arrival.

We continued to play music and nature sounds to Madison with headphones wrapped around my belly. Blair and I would take turns each night reading her bedtime stories and talk to

her continually. We made plans and explained to her everything that was going to be happening when she made her grand entrance. Grandma Smith kept up with the sewing and I was always outfitted in maternity overalls that she has made and she made sure to always make our four-legged baby Brandy a matching bandana. We were styling!!!!

On June 6, 1999 we decided to go golfing with my mom and dad. I rode around on the cart while the three



of them golfed and it was beautiful out. We were having a bit of an early anniversary celebration. Our second anniversary was the next day and we had so much to get ready for the ninth when we were to have Madison. We had a wonderful evening and were in bed at a good time. We slept, greatly anticipating a wonderful second anniversary together preparing for our lives to change in such a wonderful way in just a couple of days.

Around 5:00 a.m. I awoke with a bit of a jolt and for some reason rushed to the en suite off our bedroom. I got just inside the door to the bathroom and a gush of water started and I slid across the floor. I sat down and called Blair. We decided to have a quick shower and when he was getting out, I suggested that he might call the hospital to let them know that we would be coming in a couple days early. About five minutes later Blair came in to get me out

of the shower and told me we needed to hurry. Blair explained that he called the Royal Alexandra maternity ward and told them that my water just broke and it was our first baby. They told him to relax and come on in whenever we could. He said he then asked them to punch my name into a computer just to see if there were any notes at all. They came back on the line and said "Okay, Mr. Kondro, we need you to get here as quickly and as safely as you can."

We called our families and then it set in. We were nervous and excited all at the same time. We couldn't believe that our second anniversary would be Madison's birthday. Two blessings to celebrate together each year.

We arrived at the hospital and were immediately put into a room and had an ultrasound to see how Maddie was doing. Maddie, at that time of course had her heart defect, but

she was also breach, and had the cord around her neck. They decided at that point that they would do a caesarean section due to being breach and the cord position.

By 6:30 a.m. we were ready to go to the delivery room. I think my mom and dad must've flown to the hospital as they arrived shortly after us. I'm sure the traffic seemed to be standing still at the speed we all got to the hospital that morning. We had already decided that Blair would stay with Maddie and my mom would stay with me after she was born. We wanted to ensure that Madison was never alone.

Madison Louise came into the world around 6:50 a.m. on June 7, 1999. She was beautiful. She weighed 8lbs. 3 oz., and 21 ½ inches long, and with Apgar scores of 10. Dr. Demianczuk said not to worry, that she was perfect and a

good weight to handle the surgery she would have in a couple days. They would give her prostaglandins to keep her duct open until surgery could be performed. I remember being so excited to hear her little voice as she cried out. She was wrapped in a blanket and they brought her over quickly to see me before the transfer team whisked her off to the NICU.

I will never forget the moment they showed me her and said "Let mommy give her a kiss before we take her". From that moment on my life would never be the same. I don't recall a lot of details of the morning, I just know my mom stayed with me and around 10:30 a.m. Blair suddenly was in my room saying he was leaving with Maddie and the transfer team. I didn't let him explain and just said okay go, I'm fine, I'm with my mom and Maddie needs you.

The next time I saw my husband and daughter she was at the University Hospital NICU and I came around the corner on a stretcher and I knew something was not right. My little peanut was very dark in color, and everyone was crying. There was a chaplain there singing to her. I was so confused. What was happening? What was wrong with Maddie? Why was everyone crying? My daughter was going to be fine wasn't she? She was 8lbs. 3oz. with Apgar scores of 10 just a few hours ago. I was here to see her before surgery.

Blair explained to me that there was nothing they could do. She had another defect which was an Atrial Septal Defect, and the blood was backing up into her lungs. She was down

to 19 beats per minute and that is why they had rushed me over there from the other hospital.

I made it just in time to have them hand her to me. We were led to a room in the back of the NICU. My mom arrived at that time, Blair's mom, sister and brother in law, and my dad were there as well. I held my Madison for the first time as she took her last breaths, donned her golden wings and made her way to heaven.

I was in shock; I couldn't believe I was holding my baby girl as she died in my arms. Our family looked on as Maddie took her last breath.

We played the music to Maddie that we had played to her in my belly. We washed her, cuddled her and spent time with her as we came to terms that her short little life was over already. Everyone was able to hold her and say their hellos and good-byes at the same time. I can't begin to explain how heart wrenching it was. My baby girl we had been praying for was gone to heaven already.

Yes, that changed our lives forever. We grieved for a long time and realized life would never be the same. We had a new "normal". Life had a different look to it. Things appeared to change overnight. For a long time the depth of our sadness seemed like our only future. But alas, I can tell you, 14 years later, we feel truly blessed to have had Madison physically in our lives for such a short time, but her legacy and the healing that she assists others through is truly miraculous.

A short little life as well as other short little lives created Angel Whispers. Their legacy lives on and I look forward to sharing our journey of healing with you in the next newsletter.

We will continue Melissa and Blair's story of healing in our Summer, 2013 newsletter which will be completed in June.

We invite you to join us at our fourth Annual Madison Memorial Golf Tournament in memory of Maddie on Friday September 6, 2013 benefiting the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support program.

Father's Day

A gift for you on Fathers Day,
What on earth could it be?
I know the gift you really want,
Is to once again, have me.
Or perhaps the gift of understanding,
To make sense of a senseless loss.
I'm sorry, my dearest Daddy,
But for those gifts, you must talk to
the boss.
The gifts that I can give today,
Are memories, both sad and sweet.
From the touch of your hand on Mum-
my's tummy,
To my tiny little feet.
Remember the joy you felt inside,
When you found out you would be my
Daddy?
The great big smiles upon your face,
You were over the moon, you were so
happy.
Remember when you felt me move,
The wonder and love you'd feel?
Remember it today Daddy,
It just might help you heal.
Remember the little cuddles we had,
And the moments that we shared.
Remember my little nose,
And the colour of my hair,
I love you dearest Daddy, you know
that this is true.
Just keep your memories of me alive,
And I will always live in you.

©Sharon Swinney 1995

Donations

*AngelWhispers accepts
donations.*

*A \$10 donation will sponsor
a care package for an Angel
Whispers family.*

*Donations can be made through
the Canada
Helps website -
www.canadahelps.org*

*Find us under Fort Saskatchewan
Families First Society, find
Angel Whispers under Fund
Designation.*

Dear Mommy, On Mother's Day

By Donna Aurora

*You have created every part of me; You put me together in my mother's womb... When I was growing there in secret, You knew that I was there.
Psalm 139:13-18*

Today I celebrate you mommy, but I do this from up above;
I know this day is sad for you, but may it be full of Love.
You need not worry for I am safe in God's warm embrace,
I am happy here and play all day with all my angel friends.
As you sit and cry in daddy's arms, some may not comprehend
That your tender heart will forever miss the child you grieve, that's me!
But know that you are a mom, MY mommy you will always be...

On this day it may feel cold when others seem not to care;
I wish I could take away the lasting pain you seem to bear.
I cherished every day we had and if you only knew,
The kicks and flutters you often felt were the feet and tiny wings I grew.

When you close your eyes at night and begin to dream,
Know that I am with you, though I cannot be seen.
Feel the little kisses on your cheek, and listen to the prayers that I speak;
And in the stillness of your heart, hear my wee voice sing,
Songs of love and peacefulness mark the gifts I bring.
Know that I wait at heaven's gate patiently for you and dad,
We'll all be together again, so try not to be too sad.

Thank you for giving me the gift of life, and taking good care of me,
On this Mother's Day remember that I Love You for Eternity...

With Love and Hugs,
Your Heavenly Ange

Am I Not A Mother?

by Gail Fasolo

Am I not a mother
On this Mother's Day?
I had a baby, but she's gone.
Death took her away.
Hopes and dreams have vanished
a happy time turned cold.
My motherhood-where is it now?
Gone? Or put on hold?

Am I not a mother
even though my child died?
Does anyone know my heartbreak
or the anguish felt inside?
Special gifts and flowers
but who'll remember me?
As I stand and shed some tears
at your graveside where I'll be.
Mother's Day-so painful
but I will make it through.

Yes, I am a mother!
but God takes care of you.

*In Memory of Christina
stillborn February 5, 1991.*

Thank you!

- to Strathcona Family and Community Services for allowing us use of their meeting space.
- to Betty Dean for helping with our newsletter!
- to Allison Smith for her assistance with our website!
- to the mommies who decorate our memory boxes and to all our volunteers!

and for the following donations:

- Sam & Barb Bundt in memory of baby Emma
- Carole Beaunoyer-Reid and Philip Reid
- Government of Alberta for the Community Initiatives Program Grant
- Melissa and Alan DeLeon and Courtney and Tye Barnes for the donation of Angel Wings

Thank you to everyone for your generous donations which help to sustain the services provided by Angel Whispers.

Upcoming Meetings:

Baby Loss Support Group - for families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive. April 7, May 5 and June 2

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Meetings are held from 7-9 p.m. at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park. April 14, May 12, June 9.

Healing Hands Workshop - an opportunity to remember your baby through healing activities such as scrapbooking, card making and other crafts. From 1-3 p.m. April 20, May 25, June 22 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park.

For all meetings and workshops please contact Lori-Ann to register (780) 998-5595 ext. 225.

Healing Opportunities

3rd Annual Rainbow Baby Reunion Sunday May 5, 2012 - 1-3pm

This is an opportunity to remember our Angels and celebrate our Rainbow Babies. FCSS offices - 2001 Sherwood Drive. Please come through the library entrance and proceed to the second floor. For more information or to register, please call Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225.

Spring Memorial Service Sunday May 26, 2012 - 1pm

Every spring the funeral homes, hospitals, cemeteries and support groups in the Edmonton area collaborate to hold a special memorial service for families who have lost a baby.

This year's service will be held at Park Memorial 9709-111 Ave. If you are unable to attend but would like to have your baby acknowledged, please call Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225

Yoga for Grief Support:

Yoga specifically designed for people who have suffered the death of a loved one. Classes involve yoga postures, breathing and meditation along with educational and supportive topics related to bereavement support. Guided by Sandy Ayre, and Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor. For more information & upcoming class dates, please visit - www.yogaforgriefsupport.com.

Peace Country Walk to Remember

A day to remember those little ones lost - through miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal and infant death and SIDS. They have touched our hearts forever. First annual Peace Country Walk to Remember is Sunday, October 6, 2013 at Muskoseepi Park. For more information visit the Walk to Remember website - www.peacecountrywalktoremember.com

You might want to check out these web sites:

- www.facesofloss.com
- www.grieveoutloud.org
- www.nationalshare.org/creating-memories.html - nationalshare.org serves those who have experienced the death of a baby due to early pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or in the first few months of life.
- www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers - find information on worldwide baby loss support programs and resources under the support tab.

Congratulations!

Olivia Anne Clair

Born on December 6, 2012 weighing 7lbs 2oz to loving parents Karen and Michael Clair - Big Brother Gabriel is celebrating with the angels!

Lochley Lisa Borys

Born on January 30, 2012 weighing 6lbs 15oz to proud parents Kelly Smart and Kris Borys - Lochley has several angels watching over her!

Danica Analise Reid

Born on February 19, 2013 weighing 5lbs 15oz to excited parents Carole Beaunoyer-Reid and Philip Reid - Danica has an angel smiling down on her from heaven!

Ruari Jase Pilkington

Born on March 12, 2013 weighing 8lbs 15oz to proud parents Jodie and Ryan Pilkington and excited big brother Malachy - Ruari has an angel in heaven to watch over him!

Tyler Metro Bodker

Born on March 22, 2013 weighing 8lbs to loving parents Teresa and Randy Bodker and excited big sister Faith. Tyler has several angels, including his twin watching over him and celebrating his safe arrival.

To My Second Child

~Author Unknown~

*I stand and watch you sleeping
so peacefully in bed.
I pat you on your back,
and rub your little head.*

*I should be feeling happy,
and part of me is proud,
but somewhere deep inside me,
there is a very dark cloud.*

*I know I wouldn't have you
if she had lived instead.*

*The confusion that I've dealt with...
Oh, the tears that I have shed.*

*But you are my gift from God,
as she was mine to Him.
And the confusion in my heart
has gradually grown dim.*

*I will love you forever,
as God will love your sister,
for you and she are precious gifts
we have given one another.*

*In loving Memory of Heaven-Leigh - Angelversary March 23, 2010
With love - Mommy, Daddy and Eilithyia*

4th ANNUAL MADISON MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

~an opportunity to golf in memory of your baby~

Friday, September 6, 2013

Details will be announced in the Summer Newsletter!

All proceeds will go directly to Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program. For updated information on the Madison Memorial or to get information on sponsorship and donation opportunities, please visit www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers.

ABOUT MADISON

Madison Louise Kondro was born on June 7, 1999. For loving first-time parents Blair and Melissa Kondro, this was both an incredibly joyous day, as well as the saddest day of their lives. Unfortunately, Maddie was born with a critical heart defect. She lived for only 5 ½ hours before she passed away peacefully in her parents' arms. Maddie's mommy is cofounder of Angel Whispers, and both Blair and Melissa are avid golfers. So to celebrate Maddie's 10th birthday they began hosting an annual golf tournament at the beautiful Goose Hummock Golf Resort! All proceeds from this event will fund the programs of Angel Whispers, under the umbrella of Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society.



Calling Daddy From Heaven

Author Unknown

I'm calling you Daddy, from Heaven
Because we are apart,
But the phone won't ring on earth today;
In heaven we call heart to heart.

I just want to say, "I love you,"
And I think of you each day.
I hear you say you love me
Each time you kneel to pray.

Sometimes I watch you working
At a job you do so well.
I tell all my friends in Heaven,
"That's my Daddy, and ain't he swell!"

I'm working on a project
To send you as a gift,
And when you finally see it,
Your spirits will really lift.

I'm painting lots of colors
All across the sky,
And after rain you'll see them
And know we never die.

I'll also paint some flowers
And send them down to you.
They'll look so fresh and pretty
In the early morning dew.

But best of all, I'll take some notes
Of all the things I love,
So you can read my journals
When you meet me here above.

Your name will cover pages
Of my moments to be shared;
You'll see how much you've meant to me
And how very much I cared.

Then, I'll have story time with Jesus
And he'll tell me stories of you.
I'll listen with a smile
Of all the things you do.

He'll tell me of your kindness
And the smile upon your face,
The way you make the world
A really nicer place.

Of all the things I ever do,
This will be the best;

I'll ask the Lord to Bless you,
My very own request.
And tonight when you are resting
From the day you've spent so well,
I'll whisper in your ears
All I have to tell.

And as I hold you through the night,
This is what I'll say,

"I'm proud to call you Daddy
on this special Father's Day."

Love, Your Little Angel

Visit us on Facebook!

Facebook is a fast and easy way for us to send out meeting reminders and notifications about our healing hands workshops, as well as what is new in our community.

You are also able to make a donation to our program in memory of your baby through facebook.

Please visit:

www.causes.com/angelwhispers or <http://www.facebook.com/loriannangelwhispers>

Angel Whispers receives some funding from the Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Program, as well as from many generous individuals.

Thank you for your continued support.

Spring ...

Spring, a time for rebirth, a time for renewal. For some, a renewed anticipation of things to come. A rebirth in the wonders and awe of nature and events. For others however, may just be a dreaded reminder, a return of things best forgotten.

Losing a child is never something we anticipate. As time goes by, I cannot help but visit in my mind's eye what my little one would have been doing, what she would have been like and the bond that I would have formed with her as a father and the joy we would have had having her within our midst. But alas, it was not meant to be.

All of us have heard at one time or another of the 5 stages of grief. I remember it myself while I was in my college years. I remember also that it



was portrayed as a goal to reach or a sequence of hurdles, and that by the end, all should be fine and moving on would be easy.

But what of the effects of losing your child, how could I ever come to terms of having her leave this world before me? It somehow seems unnatural. A parent shouldn't outlive his child. How was I ever going to be able to move on, when I would never ever forget my little one? I could accept that she is not with me, that is a fact. But to accept that I would need to move on as if she had no impact on my life, that I couldn't. So, what does that mean? Would I be doomed to remain hurdled at the stage of depression? In fact, there are a few that find themselves in the same situation that I faced.

It wasn't until my wife and I attended a weekend seminar on grieving during the holidays that presented a more realistic approach to grieving. We have all known or heard in some form or another of the circle of life. Here, I discovered the circle of grief. I learned that grief is not something you get over. Grief is something that is cyclical and revisited. I learned that every once in awhile, I will return to the place that I

once started. But I needn't stay at that place. Some days I will just skim over a stage, other days, it feels that I just want to camp there. I've learned that when I am depressed, that this is where I can use my talents and express them. Me, I find myself writing or painting and I am also discovering new things to do. Maybe for you would be singing,



cooking, whatever means or avenue you feel best creative, use it to express yourself. Use it to honour your little loved one. Because left unchecked, camping in the valley of depression is, to my belief, a door where guilt and pain could make one express themselves in a self punishing way. Excessive drinking, abuse of prescription or non prescription drugs and any other myriad of methods one could try to punish themselves.

If you have successfully read between the lines in thinking that I still grieve for my daughter, you are absolutely right. Although I find myself camping in the valley of acceptance more often and for longer periods, I still go through the cycle of grief. Sometimes I will go through the whole circle within a day, other times, it will take me months. All I am grateful for is that this circle of life... and grief is normal. And I chose to express my honour for my little one in this way. If I can help just one person, then at least it will not have been for nought.

by Rob – A father missing and honouring his daughter

Jessica's Story

We lost our tiny angel 'Jessica Violet Faith Pugh' at 25 + 4 weeks on August 31 last year. She caught an infection of the waters and even though



the hospital did all they could to stop her she was delivered - a sleeping baby two days after we found out I'd gone into premature labour.

During the whole few days at the hospital it was as if I had left my body and was watching somebody else. I knew when the sonographer consultant scanned my belly for the last time that my little girl had gone. I couldn't see her heart beating and I knew he couldn't either. It seemed to take a lifetime for him to turn round and tell us, the poor guy.

We got to cherish our baby girl for 25 hours after her birth. She was baptized with close family around my bed, she was dressed in pink and we got to keep a lock of her hair. Letting her go was the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

In the beginning I was determined that would be it, our first born and our last. But I changed my mind, and three months after I found out I was pregnant again (a long and nerve wracking nine months later)we had our rainbow baby Eddie, perfect in every way and a spitting image of his sister. He uses her blanket to keep him warm, a piece of his sister with him.

I want other parents to know that there is always a happy ending and fairy tales can come true. We miss our Jessica everyday and she will never be replaced but she lives on in her brother and one day he's going to know all about her.

Sending love and positive thoughts x

In Memory of our New Angels

Yankee David Weiss
January 7, 2013

Yaw Nyamekye Akowuah
January 12, 2012

Dakota Jamie Lee Culkin
February 2, 1995

Baby Glass
February 4, 2013

Letley David MacKay
February 13, 2013

Kara Shultz
February 13, 2013

Kaia Nicole Crossley
March 25, 2010 - April 25, 2010

Stella Gilkyson
April 23, 2012

Angel Flores
May 3, 2006 - May 5, 2006

Baby Reddick
July 17, 1995

Gabriel Sloan Franini
July 19, 2012

Brandin
July 29, 2005

Alanna Phoebe de Leon Mangune
August 19, 2012

Baby Bucher
September 2012

"Angel" Cosby
September 6, 2001

Jamiee Soar
September 16, 2010

Miloh Brenner Flowers
October 17, 2011

Baby Harburn
November 9, 2012

Kadin Jude Scott
November 17, 2010

Noah James Gonzalez
December 4, 2012

Aurora Bailey
December 25, 2012

*All angels can be found on our website at:
www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers*

Please call or email us if you would like to submit your baby's name to be remembered. If we have forgotten to remember your baby on this page, or have misspelled your angel's name, please let us know.

A Mother's Day Wish From Heaven

Dear Mr. Hallmark
By Jody Seilheimer

I'm writing you from heaven,
and though it must appear
A rather strange idea, I see everything from here
I just popped in to visit your stores to find a card
A card of love for my mother,
As this day for her is hard

There must be some mistake I thought,
Every card you could imagine
Except I could not find a card
From a child who lives in heaven.
She is still a mother too, no matter where I reside
I had to leave, she understands
But oh the tears she's cried.

I thought that if I wrote you
That you would come to know
That though I live in heaven now
I still love my mother so.
She talks with me, and dreams with me;

We still share laughter too
Memories, our way of speaking now
Would you see what you could do?
My mother carries me in her heart
Her tears she hides from sight.
She writes poems to honor me
Sometimes far into the night
She plants flowers in my garden
there my living memory dwells
She writes to other grieving parents
Trying to ease their pain as well.

So you see Mr. Hallmark,
Though I no longer live on earth
I must find a way to remind her of her wondrous worth
She needs to be honored and remembered too
Just as the children of earth will do

Thank you Mr. Hallmark, I know you'll do your best
I have done all I can do; to you I'll leave the rest.
Find a way to tell her how much she means to me
Until I can do it for myself
When she joins me in eternity.



Families First Society is a non profit organization established in 1996. We are directed by a volunteer board and work in partnership with many community agencies to offer a variety of programs and services. Our programs promote positive parenting and early childhood development.

Families First Society offers parent education, programs for young children to learn and play, and family support services, as well as information and referral to other programs and services in the community.

Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society (main office)

10302A – 99 Avenue T8L 1Y2
or Box 3285 T8L 2T3
Fort Saskatchewan, AB
Parent Link Centre

Phone: 780-998-5595

Fax: 780-998-5503

Angel Whispers was created by three moms in the Edmonton area who experienced the loss of their babies: one shortly after birth, one through miscarriage, and one through still birth.

It is a program of Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan, a non-profit charity funded primarily through individual donations.

Donations, in memory of your baby, are acknowledged in our newsletter at your request. Charitable donation receipts are issued upon request.

Angel Whispers provides:

- baby loss support group
- Healing Hands groups
- subsequent pregnancy support group
- resource lending library
- quarterly newsletter
- special care packages
- Memory Box program
- one-on-one and email support
- birthcertificate keepsakes
- website with memorial star page www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers

Angel Whispers Care Packages

Angel Whispers sends out care packages to grieving families. Each package includes a special memento and strategies for coping. Birth Certificate keepsakes are also available.

If you would like to receive or send a care package, please call us.

Pregnancy After Loss Support Group

For families who are joyfully and anxiously pregnant again after losing a baby. Meetings are on the 2nd Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park.

April 14, May 12, June 9

Baby Loss Group

For families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family andCommunity Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive.

April 7, May 5 and June 2

For meeting information, or to receive our newsletter or a special care package, please call 780.998.5595, ext. 225.

Angel Whispers is a non-denominational program. However we honor and respect the individual beliefs of our families.