

Angel Whispers

FALL, 2014

*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

Hello to all of our Angel Whispers Families,

As I began to collect my thoughts for our Fall Angel Whispers newsletter it occurred to me that September marked 12 years since our Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program was founded, and much like how quickly 2014 has flown by, in reflecting back on our Angel Whispers history, I can't believe how fast 12 years has gone.

We began as a program founded by myself and 2 other moms after the losses of our babies. Our philosophy for providing hope and healing to families was the same. In the early days of our support group meetings we may only have a few families attend, some months no families came. However we were committed to being there for families devastated by the loss of a baby, knowing that as time went on and more families heard about Angel Whispers our program would grow.

The program has experienced change and huge growth over the years, from changing locations of our meetings, to becoming a program under the umbrella of the Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society, to a change in volunteers and facilitators and by incorporating dads as co-facilitators to ensure our Angel Whispers dads are feeling supported, our program has supported thousands of families either through care packages, support group meetings or individual support. Our program is currently providing support to almost 50 local families in addition to the dozens of international packages that we send each week. An average baby loss support group meeting has upwards of 20 in attendance. One thing has remained consistent through the years, and that is our commitment and dedication to providing hope and healing to grieving families.

Through the past twelve years our biggest challenge has always been our lack of funding for the program. We have been overwhelmed by the tremendous number of requests we have received recently for

Angel Whispers Birth Certificate keepsakes. We are honoured that these cherished certificates bring so much comfort to grieving families.

Because we do not have long term sustainable funding, the future of our program is always uncertain. The incredible number of certificate and care package requests has put a financial strain on our program and so effective September 1st we are asking for a \$10 donation to the program to cover the postage costs of a birth certificate keepsake or care package, the cost of postage for a memory box is \$20. Thank you for your understanding!

To make a donation to the program or a donation for a birth certificate keepsake, memory box or care package go to CanadaHelps <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/fort-saskatchewan-families-first-society/>. Thank you so much for helping us to continue to provide hope and healing to grieving families.

The Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program receives no government funding. We sustain our services through grants, fundraisers and individual donations. The 5th Annual Madison Memorial Golf Tournament was held a few weeks ago raised almost \$17,000 for the Angel Whispers Program. The tournament is hosted by Melissa and Blair Kondro in memory of their precious baby girl Madison with all proceeds being donated to Angel Whispers. Melissa is a co-founder of the Angel Whispers program, and thanks to her and her

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A Child's Grief Journey

by Lori-Ann Huot

The loss of a baby has a dramatic impact on not only the parents but other family members as well. Often the forgotten mourners are the siblings to the baby that has died. Naturally most people are concerned about the well being of the parents after the loss, but sometimes the younger generation is not given the same opportunities to grieve.

The loss of a sibling is a devastating loss for a child who may likely have been anxiously anticipating the arrival of a little brother or sister. The age of the child will have an influence on the reaction that the child will display. Younger children may react more to the emotions of the parents than the death itself as they are too young to fully understand the loss. Children are very impressionable and are incredibly sensitive to how their parents behave and feel.

The older the child the more fully they will understand that loss and the implications to the family dynamics as a result. It's important to be open and honest about the loss, don't hide your feelings or tears. It's important that children see that it's okay to feel sad and to cry; give them the opportunity to talk about how they are feeling. Their reaction to the loss often correlates to how they were feeling about the new baby. Most children are excited about the arrival of a new baby and therefore will likely react with sadness. For a child that may not have been feeling excited about a new baby's arrival, for whatever reason, the child may be feeling guilty that his or her feelings of ambivalence may have caused the loss. Reassure the child that nothing they did caused this to happen.

Children may react by mimicking parents behavior, regressing, acting

out, sleep patterns may be affected or the child may become clingy and excessively needy; sometimes the opposite happens and the child becomes withdrawn. For some children you may not notice a change in their behaviour or for some it's a delayed reaction.

Children generally are egocentric and will often question what the loss means for them. Don't be concerned if the child's reaction seems indifferent. For some children, the loss of a baby is too scary or confusing to talk about. Respect their reaction and do not pressure them to talk if they do not want to. With time they may decide to ask more questions and want to talk more about the loss.

Often children will express their feelings through pictures they draw or stories they write. Encourage your child to express themselves in age appropriate activities. A younger child may want to draw a picture, and older child may draw, write a poem or a story. Give your child a journal or sketch book and encourage them to express their feelings as they want. They may or may not want to share with you what they have drawn or written, ask them if they would like to share and talk about what they have created. You will find information in this newsletter on an Expressive Arts Grief program for children.

When talking with children about the loss of a baby, these suggestions may help:

- Keep your explanation simple – there is no need to provide a detailed explanation.
- Be honest – Parent's naturally want to protect their children from the harsh realities in life, but by not being open and honest children may become confused.
- Encourage questions and discussion – let your child know that it is okay if they want to ask questions.
- Use your words carefully – children are very literal with their interpretation of what is said. Avoid saying things like the baby went to sleep and didn't wake up as the child may fear going to sleep

for fear they will not wake up or if you say we lost the baby, the child may worry you will lose them too.

- Openly share your grief – it's important for children to learn at an early age that it is okay to cry and be sad. Avoid telling the child to be strong and not to cry.
- Don't expect your child to grieve the same as you – children are naturally selfish when they are young, and as a result of their brain development do not have the cognitive ability to understand loss the same way as an adult who has more life experience. If their reaction is selfish, understand that this is natural and avoid criticizing them for how they react. You can help your child to understand empathy by being empathetic yourself.
- Provide a loving, safe environment – when parents are grieving and their emotions are vulnerable children need added reassurance that they are safe and loved. Children can easily misinterpret emotions and may worry that your sadness is as a result of you being upset with them and they may feel rejected.
- Understand that children thrive on routine and schedules - even though it may be difficult try to maintain a sense of normalcy for the child in terms of meals, school, activities and bedtime. Follow through on promises made. Ask for help from family and friends if you need help getting your child to activities.
- Ensure that everyone in the child's life is aware of the loss – therefore if the child makes statements or asks questions that others know how to react appropriately.
- Expect that your child may be open and honest with others about the loss – it's typical for children to be blunt and open with others they meet about the loss of their brother or sister. Don't be shocked if they say to someone they meet, "my parents had a baby that died" or "my brother or sister died". It's

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their reality and it's important to honour their need to share their life story with others.

- Be open to providing supports to your child if necessary – there are agencies and therapists who offer grief support for children. If your child's appears to be struggling with their grief, seek supports to help them.

The following are common questions expressed by children:

What happened?

Keep your answer simple and honest, for example – something happened and the baby died. Unless the child inquires further, don't feel the need to provide a full explanation. You may base your answer on your own religious beliefs.

What happened to the baby?

It's okay to say, we don't know what happened. Some babies were born healthy like you and sometimes it doesn't happen the way we had hoped.

Will this happen to me?

Reassure your child that the baby dying does not mean something bad will happen to them.

When will you stop being sad?

Let your child know that you can't answer that question now, but that you won't be sad forever. Reassure them that their love and hugs help to make you feel better and that even though you are sad you still love them as much as before.

Children are incredibly resilient individuals. In my own experience with my children their journey was more resilient than my own after the loss of our babies. My daughters were young at the time and seemed most concerned with mommy crying and trying to take care of me to make me feel better. As they have grown we have ensured that they know and honour their two sisters in heaven. We encourage our girls to

talk about their sisters who aren't here.

Our angels Loren and Brooklynn are part of many family conversations and celebrations. My girls have asked "Had Loren and Brooklynn survived how do you think our lives would be different now?" I always answer openly and honestly that I believe that they died so that mommy would go on to co-found the Angel Whispers Program and help other families after the loss of their babies. For me that explanation has provided me with peace and understanding as to why they

died. I feel that they did not die in vain because their legacy lives on through Angel Whispers.

Know that each child is different and as different as each child is their grief journey will be as unique as they are. There is no right or wrong way for them to grieve. What is important is that they are given the opportunity to react in a way that is natural for them and that through the journey they are surrounded by the love and understanding of their parent's and others that love them unconditionally.

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 the mommies who decorate our memory boxes and to all our volunteers!

and for the following donations:

- to Blair and Melissa Kondro for hosting the 5th annual Madison Memorial Golf Tournament and for donating the proceeds to the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!
- to all of the Angel Whisper's families who helped collect donations for the tournament and who volunteered their time at the Madison Memorial.
- to Kelly Monaghan for donating her share of the 50/50 winnings at the Madison Memorial Golf Tournament back to the program!
- to Jennifer King from King's Quilting Queen - Jennifer handcrafts beautiful baby quilts and donates them to

Angel Whispers to be given to Angel Whispers families after the birth of their Rainbow Babies - for more information on Jennifer's quilting, please visit her website - <http://www.kingsquiltingqueen.com/>

- to Jenn Moffat for the generous donation in memory of Sophie Monaghan!
- to Tina Brunelle for requesting donations for the Angel Whispers program at her birthday party!
- to DOW for the generous grant to cover the cost of supplies for our Healing Hands group!
- to Kelly Monaghan for the donation of books to enhance our Angel Whispers library in memory of: Sophie, Lachlan, Grace and Katelyn
- to Shannon McGowan for the donation of the Kindle for the Angel Whispers resource library!
- to Pamela & James Rowe for the generous donation in memory of Sarah.
- to all the families who donate to cover the costs of care packages and birth certificate keepsakes.

Helping Children Cope With Grief

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

When someone loved dies adults grieve. So do children.

As an adult or child, experiencing grief means to "feel," not just to "understand." Anyone old enough to love is old enough to grieve. Even before children are able to talk, they grieve when someone loved dies. And these feelings about the death become a part of their lives forever.

Caring adults, whether parents, relatives or friends, can help children during this time. If adults are open, honest and loving, experiencing the loss of someone loved can be a chance for children to learn about both the joy and the pain that comes from caring deeply for other people.

Talking About Death to Children

Adults sometimes have trouble facing death themselves. So open, honest discussions about death with children can be difficult. Yet adults who are able to confront, explore and learn from their own personal fears about death can help children when someone loved dies. As a result, children can form "a healthy attitude toward both life and death."

When a death occurs, children need to be surrounded by feelings of warmth, acceptance and understanding. Caring adults can provide this support.

A Caring Adult's Role

How adults respond when someone loved dies has a major effect on the way children react to the death. Sometimes, adults don't want to talk about the death, assuming that by doing so children will be spared some of the pain and sadness.

However, the reality is very simple: children will grieve, anyway.

Adults who are willing to talk openly about the death help children understand that grief is a natural feeling when someone loved had died. Children need adults to confirm that

it's all right to be sad and to cry, and that the hurt they feel now won't last forever.

When ignored, children may suffer more from feeling isolated than from the actual death itself. Worse yet, they feel all alone in their grief.

Encourage Questions About Death

When someone loved had died, adults need to be open, honest and loving. Patiently, they need to answer questions about the death in language children can understand.

How adults respond when someone loved dies has a major effect on the way children react to the death.

Adults shouldn't worry about having all the answers. The answers aren't as important as the fact that they're responding to the questions in a way that shows they care.

Children may repeat the same questions about the death again and again. It's natural. Repeating questions and getting answers helps them understand and adjust to the loss of someone loved.

Establish a Helping Relationship

Respond to children with sensitivity and warmth. Be aware of voice tone; maintain eye contact when talking about the death. What is communicated without words can be just as meaningful to children as what is actually said.

Let children know that their feelings will be accepted. Although some of their behavior may seem inappropriate, adults need to understand children during this stressful time, not judge

their behavior or criticize.

Children need to know that adults want to understand their point of view. This commitment tells a child, "You're worthwhile; your feelings will be respected."

Sharing Religious Beliefs with a Child

Adults often wonder if they should share with children their religious beliefs regarding death. This is a complex issue; no simple guidelines are available.

Keep in mind that adults can only share with children those concepts they truly believe. Any religious explanations about death must also be described in concrete terms; children have difficulty understanding abstractions. The theological correctness of the information is less important at this time than the fact that the adult is communicating in a loving way.

Allow Children to Participate

Create an atmosphere that tells children that their thoughts, fears and wishes will be recognized when someone loved dies. This recognition includes the right to be part of planning the arrangements for the funeral.

Although children may not completely understand the ceremony surrounding the death, being involved in the planning of the funeral helps establish a sense of comfort and the understanding that life goes on even though someone loved has died.

Since the funeral of someone loved is a significant event, children should have the same opportunity to attend as any other member of the family. That's "allowed" to attend, but not "forced." Explain the purpose of the funeral: as a time to honor the person who has died; as a time to help, comfort and support each other and as a time to affirm that life goes on.

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Viewing the body of someone loved who has died can also be a positive experience. It provides an opportunity to say "goodbye" and helps children accept the reality of the death. As with attending the funeral, however, seeing the body should not be forced.

Growing Through Grief

Grief is complex. It will vary from child to child. Caring adults need to communicate to children that this feeling is not one to be ashamed of or something to hide. Instead, grief is a natural expression of love for the person who died.

As a caring adult, the challenge is clear: children do not choose between grieving and not grieving; adults, on the other hand, do have a choice- to help or not to help children cope with grief.

With love and understanding, adults can guide children through this vulnerable time and help make the experience a valuable part of a child's personal growth and development.

Suggested Guidelines Concerning Children and Grief

- Be a good observer. See how each child is behaving. Don't rush in with explanations. Usually, it's more helpful to ask exploring questions than to give quick answers.
- When someone loved dies, don't expect children's reactions to be obvious and immediate. Be patient and be available.
- Children are part of the family, too. And reassurance comes from the presence of loving people. Children feel secure in the care of gentle arms and tenderness.
- When describing the death of someone loved to a child, use simple and direct language.
- Be honest. Express your own feelings regarding the death. By doing so, children have a model for expressing their own feelings. It's all right to cry, too.
- Allow children to express a full range of feelings. Anger, guilt,

despair and protest are natural reactions to the death of someone loved.

- Listen to children, don't just talk to them.
- No one procedure or formula will fit all children, either at the time of death or during the months that follow. Be patient, flexible and adjust to individual needs.

Adults must recognize their own personal feelings about death. Until they consciously explore their own concerns, doubts, and fears about death, it will be difficult to support children when someone loved dies.

About Dr. Alan Wolfelt: author, educator, and grief counselor



Dr. Alan Wolfelt is known across North America for his inspirational teaching gifts. His compassionate messages about healing in grief—based on his own personal losses as well as his experience supporting children, teens, adults, and families over the last three decades—speak not only to the intellect but to the hearts of all who hear him. Perhaps best known for his model of “companionship” versus “treating” mourners, Dr. Wolfelt is committed to helping people mourn well so they can live well and love well. Founder and Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, Dr. Wolfelt presents numerous educational workshops each year for hospices, hospitals, schools, universities, funeral homes, community groups, and a variety of other organizations. He also teaches the 4-day trainings described on this website in beautiful Fort Collins, Colorado.

Dr. Wolfelt is a popular media resource who regularly provides his expertise to many top-tier television shows, newspapers, and magazines. Recipient of the Association for Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, Dr. Wolfelt is also a faculty member

of the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine.

“Mourning in our culture isn't always easy. Normal thoughts and feelings connected to loss are typically seen as unnecessary and even shameful. Instead of encouraging mourners to express themselves, our culture's unstated rules would have them avoid their hurt and ‘be strong.’

“But grief is not a disease. Instead, it is the normal, healthy process of embracing the mystery of the death of someone loved. If mourners see themselves as active participants in their healing, they will experience a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life

To learn more about Dr. Wolfelt and his Centre for Loss & his extensive Resource Library, visit <http://www.centerforloss.com/>

‘Helping Children Cope With Grief’ and ‘Helping Bereaved Siblings Heal’ have been shared with permission from Dr. Wolfelt.

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>

Find our Angel Whispers Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/angelwhispers-babylosssupport>

***In Loving Memory
of Brielle LaVaughn
Bahrije Judy Martin-
Bright***

Brielle,

It's been 65 days since you were brought to the world, and 64 since you were taken from it. You are still the best thing that has ever happened to me, and you always will be. I miss you so much every single day, because darling you have my heart. I love you with every ounce of my being, and I will never stop. I promised you when you were still inside my tummy that I will do better and I will make you proud of me, and I will continue that. You make me want to be so much better, you've taught me so much, and I know that every single day I'm alive you are watching over me. I cannot wait to see you again my dearest one, and I know there are days that I will want to rush the meeting but I know you wouldn't want that. Our day to be together again will come. You're so beautiful and you are so smart. You're the most wonderful thing to me, and you've changed my entire world. For that I thank you so much. I love you so much baby girl, and I'm sorry I couldn't do more to help you.

Love forever,
Mommy

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.*

Congratulations!

Ewan Woodrow Wallace Rowe

*Born on July 3, 2014 weighing 7lbs 14oz to proud parents Pamela & James Rowe!
Big sister Sarah is celebrating Ewan's safe arrival with the angels!*

Helping Bereaved Siblings Heal

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Next to the death of a parent, the death of a sibling can be the most traumatic event in a child's life. Why? Because not only has a family member died, but a family member for whom the child probably had very strong and ambivalent feelings.

As those of us who have brothers and sisters know, sibling relationships are characterized by anger, jealousy and a fierce closeness and love—a highly complex melange of emotion. This complexity colors the surviving child's grief experience.

A Caring Adult's Role

How adults respond when someone loved dies has a major effect on the way children react to the death. Sometimes, adults don't want to talk about the death because they want to spare children from some of the pain and sadness.

And for the same well-intentioned but misguided reason, adults hide their own feelings of grief from children.

What bereaved siblings really need is for adults to be open and honest with them about the death. They need to see that grief is as natural a part of life as loving. Children need adults to confirm that it's all right to be sad and to cry, and that the hurt they feel now won't last forever.

When ignored, bereaved siblings may suffer more from feeling isolated than from the actual death itself. Worse yet, they may feel all alone in their grief.

What A Surviving Sibling Feels

Each person's grief is unique and changes from day to day. So, it is impossible to predict what a specific child will feel after her brother or sister dies. If you want to help, the most important thing you can do is to listen and to accept any and all feelings the surviving sibling expresses.

However, I have had the privilege to counsel hundreds of bereaved siblings. Among many other special lessons, they have taught me they often feel:

- **Guilt.** For a number of reasons, bereaved siblings often feel guilty. Their power of "magical thinking"—believing that thoughts cause actions—might make them think they literally caused the death. "John died because I sometimes wished he would go away forever" is a common response among children who haven't been given the concrete details of the sibling's death and who haven't been assured that they were not at fault.
- **Relief.** A child may also feel relief as well as pain when a sibling dies. Responses such as "Now no one will take my things" or "I'm glad I have a room to myself" are natural and do not mean the child didn't love his or her sibling. It is important that you provide an atmosphere in which the child feels safe to express whatever he or she may be feeling.

Create an atmosphere that tells bereaved children that their thoughts, fears and wishes will be recognized.

- **Fear.** When a child's brother or sister dies, another young person has died. So, for a child, confronting this reality can mean confronting the possibility of one's own death. Be prepared to honestly but reassuringly answer questions such as "Will I die, too?" The death of a sibling can also make a bereaved child fear that one or all of his other family members will die, too, leaving him alone.
- **Confusion.** One eight-year-old girl I counseled after the death of her brother asked me, "Am I still

a big sister?" This little girl was obviously struggling with the confusing task of redefining herself, both within the family unit and the world at large. The answer to her question, of course, is both yes and no, but ultimately it is a question the child must answer herself. Adults can help, however, by letting the child teach them what this confusion is like.

Siblings Can Be "Forgotten Mourners"

When a child dies, most of the grief support from family members and friends gets focused on the parents. Indeed, losing a child may be the most painful experience in life, and those of us who are parents readily empathize with and offer our support to the dead child's parents. And the parents themselves are often so overwhelmed by their loss that they can barely help themselves get through the day.

So what about the surviving siblings? Though we can't quantify grief, we can say that siblings are often as profoundly impacted by the death as their parents are. And in some ways they are even more deserving of our attention because they are children.

Let's not allow bereaved siblings to be forgotten mourners. If you are a bereaved parent, share your grief with your surviving children and make time to understand theirs. If you just can't make yourself emotionally available right now, gently explain this to the child and appoint another adult as grief helper for the time being.

Allow Siblings to Participate

Create an atmosphere that tells bereaved children that their thoughts, fears and wishes will be recognized. This recognition includes the right to help plan and participate in the funeral. Although children may not completely understand the ceremony surrounding the death, being involved in the funeral helps establish a sense of comfort and

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the understanding that life goes on even though someone has died.

Since the funeral is a significant event, siblings-no matter how young-should have the same opportunity to attend as any other member of the family. Encourage, but never force. Explain the purpose of the funeral: a time to honor the person who died, a time to support each other, a time to affirm that life goes on.

When they choose to, siblings can participate in the funeral by sharing a favorite memory, reading a poem or lighting a candle. You might also suggest they place a memento or photo in the casket.

For siblings, viewing the body of the brother or sister who died can also be a positive experience. It provides an opportunity to say goodbye and helps them accept the reality of the death. As with attending the funeral, however, seeing the body should not be forced.

Talking To Children About Death

Adults sometimes have trouble facing death themselves. So open, honest discussions with children about death can be difficult. Yet adults who are able to confront, explore and learn from their own personal fears about death can help surviving siblings.

Encouraging questions about the death is another way to help bereaved siblings. Children may repeat the same questions over and over again. This is natural. Repetition and consistent, patient answers on your part help the sibling understand and slowly accept the death.

One final word about children's questions: Don't feel you need to have all the answers. Your answers aren't as important as the fact that you're responding in a way that shows you care.

Let Children Be Children

Children need to be children-especially when they are hurting. Never tell a surviving sibling, "You need to take care of your mom and dad (or younger siblings) now." When you force a bereaved child to grow up too soon, you

don't allow him the time and space he needs to mourn in his own developmentally appropriate way.

Help Siblings Embrace Their Memories

When a sibling dies, the surviving children must go through the long, arduous process of realizing and acknowledging that their brother or sister is gone forever. The permanence of death is difficult for everyone, even adults, to accept.

Thank goodness for memories. Remembering the child who died is an appropriate way for the sibling to continue that precious relationship. Encourage her to talk about her memories, both good and bad. Show her ways to capture her memories, such as by creating a scrapbook or writing a poem. On special occasions like birthdays and holidays, help her remember what it was like to celebrate with her brother or sister. Remembering the past makes hoping for the future possible.

Guidelines for Helping Grieving Children

- Be a good observer. A bereaved child's behavior can be very telling about her emotions.
- Be patient. Children's grief isn't typically obvious and immediate.
- Be honest. Don't lie to children about death. They need to know that it's permanent and irreversible. Don't use euphemisms that cloud these facts. Use simple and direct language.
- Be available. Bereaved children need to know that they can count on the adults in their lives to listen to them, support them and love them.
- Listen. Let each child teach you what grief is like for him. And don't rush in with explanations. Usually it's more helpful to ask exploring questions than to supply cookie-cutter answers.

See page 5 for information about the author, Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt.

Upcoming Fundraising Opportunities:

- Christmas Mini Photo Shoots with proceeds being donated to Angel Whispers. Stay tuned to our website for upcoming information www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers. Thank you to our Angel Whisper mommies who are holding this fundraiser in support of the program!
- Angel Whispers Bottle Drive - Saturday January 4th, 2015 - this is your opportunity to donate all your Holiday and New Year's bottles with all money raised helping to sustain services to grieving families. Stay tuned for details on location and times!
- 2nd Annual Angel Whispers Pub Night - to be held in February 2015. Details will be announced in our Winter newsletter!

If you have an idea for a fundraiser or if you or your company are interested in hosting a fundraiser for the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program, contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225 or by email at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.

Thank you for your support in helping us to continue to provide hope and healing to grieving families!

The Importance of Sharing Sophie

by Kelly Monaghan

Many people criticise me for wanting to include my angel Sophie in Aiden's life.

Sophie would have been 8 years old this coming Christmas. I am in the process of adopting Aiden and he has been with me for a year and a half. People's response is to say that he never knew Sophie, that because Aiden is not related to me by blood she is not his real sister. I find that very offensive. To say that she is not his real sister is to say that he is not my real son.

Sophie is the only one who knows what my heart sounds like from the inside and Aiden didn't grow under my heart but in it. He is as much a part of me as she is.

Christmas has always been tough for me and last year was the first year I attempted to celebrate the holiday season, because of having Aiden. As the years go on and he gets older, we will find different ways to celebrate Christmas and incorporate Sophie into our celebrations...to find ways to celebrate her. My goal is that Christmas never be a sad time but a time of joy and happiness. It will be a time to celebrate all that she is and all that she brings to our lives. We had a few special ornaments on the tree last year for Sophie and I talked about her to him as we hung them. Now that he is a little older and more vocal, he will point to her picture and say "Baby Sophie"

Aiden will never grieve in the sense that he didn't know her; they didn't have a physical bond. It is important to me that he grow up knowing the connection he has with her, that he will always have with her. He is in my life because of her and I hope that is something he always holds dear. As

A Different Child

By Pandora Diane MacMillan

A different child,
People notice
There's a special glow around you.

You grow
Surrounded by love,
Never doubting you are wanted;
Only look at the pride and joy
In your mother and father's eyes.

And if sometimes
Between the smiles
There's a trace of tears,
One day
You'll understand.

You'll understand
There was once another child
A different child
Who was in their hopes and
dreams.

That child will never outgrow the
baby clothes
That child will never keep them up
at night
In fact, that child will never be any
trouble at all.

Except sometimes, in a silent
moment,
When mother and father miss so
much
That different child.

May hope and love wrap you
warmly
And may you learn the lesson
forever
How infinitely precious
How infinitely fragile
Is this life on earth.

One day, as a young man or woman
You may see another mother's tears
Another father's silent grief
Then you, and you alone
Will understand
And offer the greatest comfort.

When all hope seems lost
You will tell them
With great compassion,
"I know how you feel.
I'm only here
Because my mother tried again."

he becomes old enough to understand he may grieve the lack of the physical bond that he never got to experience with her but I hope that he always feels her with him, his very own guardian angel; his sister watching over him from Heaven.

People do not have a right to tell me that he can't and shouldn't have this and they certainly don't have the right to tell him he doesn't deserve that. She is his sister in every single way and he has the right to know her, to feel her, to love her and to miss her.

Angel Whispers receives some funding from the Ed Stelmach Foundation. We also rely on grants, fundraisers, and donations from generous individuals to sustain our services to grieving families. Thank you for your continued support!

husband Blair, almost \$85,000 has been donated to Angel Whispers in the past 5 years! Thank you to Blair and Melissa for your dedication to the Madison Memorial Golf Tournament and to Angel Whispers and for providing the financial means to help to ensure Angel Whispers is able to continue to support families!

Also a big thank you to the Ed Stelmach Community Foundation who have committed financial support to our program for 3 years! We continue our goal of finding long term sustainable funding for Angel Whispers so that we are able to continue to provide support to grieving families, until we can find sustainable funding we will continue to focus on fundraisers and other means of financial support for our program.

Our Fall 2014 newsletter is dedicated to the siblings of our angels, siblings that grieve the loss of a little brother or sister or to the Rainbow babies who will grieve the older brother or sister they never knew.

I am often asked by families how they can help their other children after the loss of a baby, this edition is filled with information on children's grief and how to provide comfort and support to a grieving child. You will also find information on how to share details with children as they grow about the brother or sister that they didn't have an opportunity to know or grow up with.

Children are incredibly resilient in their grief, I admire their ability to share their journey so openly and honestly with others. Respecting a child's grief journey while allowing them to grieve in a way that is natural to them along with being open with your emotions as you grieve will ensure that your child grows up with a healthy perspective on grief and the ability to openly share emotions. It is important not to instill gender difference beliefs about emotions based on the traditional boys vs. girls roles where boys are often raised to be strong and tough and not being allowed to cry. It is these gender biases that often make it more difficult for men to grieve as adults based on the messages received as a

child. Yes, there are inherent difference between men and women emotionally and when grieving, however if we raise our daughters and sons with the same ability to share emotions openly, they will be more likely to grieve well as adults when faced with loss.

Be gentle with yourself this fall... take time to enjoy the beauty around you. It can be easy to lose sight of the blessings in our life when we are so overwhelmed with the intensity of our grief. As we approach Thanksgiving, consider keeping a gratitude journal of the things in life you are thankful for. Initially it may be hard to find things to be grateful for when we are so focused on the emotions of grief, it may be that you are thankful for your morning coffee, for the smile from a stranger, for the beautiful fall leaves, for the love and support of family or friends.

Whatever it is that you are thankful for, the emotions associated with feelings of gratefulness gives us a break from the intensity of grief. With time as the intensity of the grief softens it will be easier to find hope and happiness. Until then it may help to look at some of the positives in our lives. In the midst of every storm there is often a rainbow.

With love and understanding,

Lori-Ann

Lori-Ann

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

Donations

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

Donations can be made through the CanadaHelps website - www.canadahelps.org

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

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 FCSS offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive. October 5, November 2 and December 7

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Contact Lori-Ann for meeting location. October 19, November 23 and December 14

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. October 25, November 22 and December 13 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park.

Parenting after Loss Group Meetings
Please Call Lori-Ann for upcoming dates

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

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels

*Marian Clare Hyland
1991*

*Shyla Eleanor Courtney Langham
January 4, 2014*

*Benjamin Barrera
January 5, 2011*

*Aliyah Grace Preston
January 7, 2014*

*Desiree Lynn Kopp
January 27, 2013*

*Sophie Marie Fitzgerald
January 27, 2013*

*Riley John Ray Taylor
January 28, 2009 - March 31, 2009*

*Zuko Iroh McNulty
February 4, 2013*

*Liam Thomas
February 5, 2009*

*Luke Rowley
February 6, 2013*

*Jessi Diane Pettigrew
February 7, 2007*

*Allison Louise Wright
February 10, 2014*

*Abigail Kay Wright
February 10, 2014*

*Angel Beasley
February 15, 2013*

*Travis Lee Lewis Jr.
February 17, 2010*

*Kaitlyn Marie Doiron
March 1, 2005*

*Stormy Marie Sohl
March 2, 2006*

*Angel Marie Chavez
March 3, 2004*

*Matthew Barrera
March 3, 2009*

*Raymond Santiago Chavez
March 6, 2004*

*Nichelle Renee Wells
March 8, 1998*

*Angel Rose Kendal
March 12, 2010*

*Charlotte Noel Fletcher
March 18, 2014*

*Willow Kenna Vandervies
March 19, 2014*

*Carolynn Faith Dewell
March 20, 2014*

*Kaelyn Joi Fellows
March 20, 2014*

*Christopher James Spikes
March 27, 2014*

*Loreal Muldrew
April 7, 2014*

*Kaleb Lee Johns
April 13, 2013*

*Zander James Bowe
April 16, 2013*

*Jordan Riley Parlatore
April 19, 2014*

*Kali Mae McDade
April 20, 2014*

*Jaydn Austin Warner
April 24, 2013*

*Cameron James
April 27, 2001*

*Titus Reed Kershaw
April 28 - April 30, 2013*

*Camryn R.L Deline
May 3, 2004*

*Brayzsen Isaiah Ira Hiatt
May 4, 2014*

*Aven Henry Wilkinson
May 6, 2014*

*Destiny Rose Moreland-Phillips
May 7, 2014*

*Grayson Henry Michalec
May 7, 2014*

*Colton Thomas Oursler
May 9, 2012*

*Max Potter
May 9, 2013 - January 26, 2014*

*Gabriel Allen Gosnell
May 12, 2010*

*Lillian June Swartz
May 14, 2014*

*Raiden Edward Luera
May 17, 2012*

*Lani Sharon Jackson
May 21, 2005*

*Aveleen Marie Gayford
May 21, 2013*

*Therrian Michael Gayford
May 29, 2013*

*Angel Elijah Bell
May 31, 2013*

*Mason James Croston
May 31, 2014*

*Lucas Jaden Dingus
June 1, 2013 - August 10, 2013*

*Cheyenne Elizabeth Chavez
June 3, 2006*

*Cooper Bradley Walls
June 3, 2011*

*Codi Levi Temple
June 10, 2013*

*Xavier Allen Swartz
June 12, 2013*

*Athena Louise Reed
June 18, 2013*

*Ashton Eric Nikolaishyn
June 19, 2014*

*Ensa Maria Fehr
June 20, 2014*

*Mackenzie Crystabelle Wren
June 22, 2013*

*Jacob Cannon Freeman
June 22, 2014*

*Eli Vaughn McHenry
June 24, 2014*

*Baby VanRaalte
June 26, 2014*

Newly Discovered Angels continued on
page 12

<i>Jake Fogarty</i> July 1, 2007	<i>Charley James Akrill</i> August 4, 2009	<i>Madison Mae McDade</i> September 10, 2013
<i>Heavenly Hope Flynn</i> July 2, 2014	<i>Atticus Ewasiuk</i> August 4, 2014	<i>Aleena Kay Patton</i> September 14, 2014
<i>Wyatt Gerald Brito</i> July 4, 2014	<i>Bradley George Austin</i> August 6, 2006	<i>Alan and Jamie Dunleavy</i> September 28, 1991
<i>Savannah James</i> July 5, 2009	<i>Marvin Lewis IV</i> August 9, 2008	<i>Ava Riley Slothour</i> October 7, 2011
<i>Rylan Nicole Brown</i> July 7, 2009	<i>Colton Samuel Parrott</i> August 12, 2014	<i>Damien Jay Haney</i> October 10, 1998
<i>Rakiya Lee Hernandez-Johnson</i> July 7, 2013	<i>Evan John Michael Barrett</i> August 15-23, 2011	<i>Luna Star Cardinal</i> October 10, 2013
<i>Sawyer Lee Shifflett</i> July 8, 2014	<i>Baby Boy Gilbert</i> August 17, 2014	<i>Kendal Faith Hawkins</i> October 15, 2013
<i>Wyatt Doyle</i> July 9, 2014	<i>Jayden Edward Kopp</i> August 20, 2013	<i>Peanut Rodriguez</i> October 18, 2013
<i>Mia Elexis Hallman</i> July 12-15, 2009	<i>Tristan Michael Grove</i> August 21, 2012	<i>Isobel Greaves Bardon</i> November 1, 2013
<i>Kayleigh Rigby</i> July 15, 1997	<i>Nevaeh Marlene Coslett</i> August 21, 2014	<i>Jeremiah Eugene Shepherd</i> November 5, 2012
<i>July Angel McMahan-Hiatt</i> July 16, 2013	<i>Pieper Adelaide Martinez</i> August 24, 2014	<i>Kayden Grace Bowers</i> November 14, 2013
<i>Brielle LaVaughn Bahrije Judy</i> Martin-Bright July 20, 2014	<i>William James Howitt</i> August 26, 2012	<i>Maddysen Erline Vincent</i> November 17, 2007
<i>Owen Davis</i> July 21, 2014	<i>Averie Ann Flynn</i> August 29, 2013	<i>Hayden Joseph Vincent</i> November 17, 2007
<i>Davey J. Haney</i> July 24, 1994	<i>Heaven Aubree Hurrell</i> August 30, 2014	<i>Alexis Jade Ryan</i> November 20, 2005
<i>Darwin Alexander Escobar Jr.</i> July 28, 2009	<i>Precious</i> September 1996	<i>Tre'Jahvon William Rice</i> November 24, 1999
<i>Aiden James Ubell</i> July 28, 2010	<i>Baby Angel</i> September 3, 2013	<i>Cristian Byron Bermudez De La Cruz</i> November 26, 1992
<i>Thaine Andrews Cissell</i> July 28, 2014	<i>Wyatt Casey Honeycutt-Cochran</i> September 6, 2013	<i>Finley Alderson</i> November 26, 2013
<i>Charlie Aldridge</i> August 2, 2002	<i>Xavier John Hayward</i> September 8, 2011	
	<i>Ethan Allen McDade</i> September 10, 2013	

Newly Discovered Angels continued on
page 13

*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.

Recommended Song List

As one of our Angel Whispers mommies beautifully expressed recently...music is her therapy as it is for many others. Music triggers memories and emotions, often allowing much needed tears to flow. Here is a list of songs recommended by myself and some of our Angel Whispers mommies. I hope they bring you comfort as you grieve.

- Small Bump - by: Ed Sheeren http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_af256mnTE
- My Name - by: George Canyon <http://georgecanyon.com/videos/page/2/#prettyPhoto/3/>
- Fiddler's Green – by: Tragically Hip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35mJvcY104M>
- A Mother's Prayer – by: Celine Dion <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bToocwVE0vM>
- I Will See You Again – by: Carrie Underwood <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTnWFT3DvVA>
- Audrey's Song – by: Selah <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLuaGiu73jc>
- Angel – by: Sarah McLachlan <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1GmxMTwUgs>
- Tears in Heaven – by: Eric Clapton <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxPj3GAYYZ0>
- Gone too soon - Daughtry - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvpoYxwI08M>

If you have song suggestions you would like to share with other Angel Whispers families, please email Lori-Ann at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca.

Newly Discovered Angels continued from
[page 12](#)

*Codie Gordon Cashmore
December 1, 2013*

*Gabriana Ivette Izabella Ortiz
December 21, 2013*

*Lachlan Ian Rennie
December 27, 2013*

My Brother

© Jessica Valencia

I never got the chance to meet you
You died before I was even born
I think about you as if I knew you
I know you see the way I mourn
I cry for you all the time
Just wishing to have you by my side
I want to see your lovely face
I want to feel your sweet embrace
It hurts this much and to think I never
met you
If I had, imagine what I'd be going
through
I have a father, a sister, and a mother
The only thing that's missing is you-
my Brother



Pilgrims BriarPatch Centre for Grieving Families

- Expressive Arts for Children ages 5 to 12 years old who have experienced the death of someone they love. We offer art, music, play, puppetry and drama for our youngest mourners to explore their unique grief journey in a safe and compassionate setting. Our parent/guardian group meets concurrently for other family members.
- Expressive Arts for Teens ages 13 to 18 years old who have experienced the death of someone they love. We offer art, music, writing and movement for our youth to explore their unique grief journey in a safe and supportive environment. A parent/guardian group meets concurrently for other family members.

For more information on these children's grief programs, contact Cheryl Salter-Roberts - cherylsr@pilgrimshospice.com or 780.413.9801 ext. #302

Thank You



Blair & Melissa Kondro would like to send out a huge Thank you to all the golfers and sponsors that helped to make the 5th Annual Madison Memorial Golf Tournament an overwhelming success once again!

Your continued support will help to ensure that Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program through Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society is able to continue to provide care to grieving families around the world.

We know Madison is looking down upon us and thanking you from the bottom of her heart for keeping her memory alive along with all her other friends in heaven!

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Healing Opportunities

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



The poster for the Baby Steps Baby Loss Memorial Walk features a purple header with the title "Baby Steps" in a large, white, serif font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is "A Walk to Remember our Precious Babies". The central graphic is a circular emblem with a green tree-like design and the text "Baby Steps Baby Loss Memorial Walk" inside. Below the emblem, the date and time "Saturday, October 4th, 2014 1:00 p.m." are written in a purple font. The location "Registration and events will be held at Festival Place and the Baby Steps walk will take place just outside around Broadmoor Lake Park" is listed in a black font, followed by the address "100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park, Alberta". The organizers "Baby Steps is an event created by H.E.A.R.T.S. (Helping Empty Arms Recover Through Sharing) Baby Loss Support Program & the BriarPatch Centre for Grieving Families" are mentioned in a black font. At the bottom, contact information "For more information: heartsbabyloss@shaw.ca www.babystepswalk.com" is provided in a green font. A small dragonfly illustration is in the bottom right corner.

Baby Steps
A Walk to Remember
our Precious Babies

Baby Steps
Baby Loss
Memorial
Walk

Saturday, October 4th, 2014 1:00 p.m.
Registration and events will be held at Festival Place
and the Baby Steps walk will take place just outside
around Broadmoor Lake Park
100 Festival Way, Sherwood Park, Alberta

Baby Steps is an event created by H.E.A.R.T.S.
(Helping Empty Arms Recover Through Sharing)
Baby Loss Support Program
&
the BriarPatch Centre for Grieving Families

For more information:
heartsbabyloss@shaw.ca
www.babystepswalk.com

To a Stillborn Sister

Music: Canzone.

By Andrea Gabrielli.

*Sequenced by Curtis Clark at
The Internet Renaissance Band.*

How do you love a person
Who never got to be,
Or try again to see a face
You never got to see?
How do you mourn the death of
one
Who never got to live,
When there's nothing to feel good
about
And nothing to forgive?
I love you, little sister.
You're a person of the wind,
Free to be the memory
Of all that might have been.
I love you, little sister,
My companion of the night,
Wandering through my lonely
hours,
Beautiful and bright.
What does it mean to die before
You ever can be born,
To live the lovely night of life
And never see the dawn?
Ah! My little sister,
You lived like anyone!
Life's a burst of joy and pain,
And then, like yours, it's done.
I love you, little sister,
Just as if you'd lived for years.
No more, no less, I think of you,
The angel of my tears.



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

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.

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

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 or email angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca,

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 and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive.

October 5, November 2 and December 7

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group

For families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Contact Lori-Ann for meeting location.

October 19, November 23 and December 14