

Angel Whispers

WINTER, 2013

*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

Holiday Wishes to all Our Angel Whispers Families!

It's hard to believe that the holiday season is almost upon us, and the end of another year is fast approaching. This is the time of year that many grieving families dread the most; it's hard to imagine celebrating Christmas without your baby.

The Holiday Season is meant to be celebrated with those you love, a time for family and friends. It's hard to feel like celebrating when the most cherished member of your family, your precious baby is not here to experience Christmas together with you. For those of you who will be facing the first Christmas since the loss of your baby, you may be feeling reluctant to celebrate at all.

We found out that our baby Brooklynn had died on December 23rd, 2002. I remember celebrating Christmas that year with a very heavy heart. I struggled with trying to make it a "normal" Christmas for our other children when I was overwhelmed with sadness.

I found ways to honor Brooklynn and our other angel Loren at Christmas and one special way I did that, which continues to this day, is their angel tree. I decorate a special Christmas tree with their ornaments and ornaments for my mom who passed away in 2003. I add a new ornament for them each year and it brings me comfort each Christmas knowing that they have a special place in our home and in our hearts. You will find information in this newsletter on our Christmas Healing Hands workshop which is an opportunity for you to make an ornament in memory of your baby.

You will find information in this edition on coping through the holidays. If you are looking for ways to honor your baby this Christmas, I hope you find an idea in

the next few pages that feels right to you. Remember that this is your journey, don't allow others to tell you what you "should" be doing to get through the holidays. Do what feels right to you. And if what feels right to you is continuing on with family traditions do that; if that doesn't feel right, find new traditions or know that it's ok to skip Christmas this year. Also in this newsletter, one of our Angel Whispers mummies shares her experience after losing her baby girl Sophie and how this will be the first Christmas she will be celebrating since Sophie passed away in 2006.

My Christmas wish for you and your loved ones is a season filled with love and peace in your hearts, and hope for the future. May you feel the love of your angel baby with you each and every day through the holidays. Allow yourself some moments of joy and laughter this holiday season. Your angels want you to experience happiness, that's an emotion that many of us feel guilty experiencing after a loss, however it's in those moments of happiness that we begin to feel hope for the future.

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*



Coping Through the Holidays After the Loss of Your Baby

by: *Lori-Ann Huot*

The holidays are a difficult time of the year when you are grieving. When you have lost a baby, the thought of celebrating Christmas, especially if your loss is recent, is too much to bear for many families. Holidays are meant to be shared with loved ones, and yet when a loved one as significant as your baby is missing, it can be too difficult to imagine a Christmas without them.

For some, skipping Christmas may feel like to best option, although there are many things to be considered when making a decision to not celebrate the holidays:

- Express how you are feeling to your family, explain that it's too difficult to face the usual traditions and that you're hoping that next year may be easier.
- Be gentle with yourself, remember that it's okay to experience moments of joy and happiness. Don't feel guilty if you find yourself smiling or laughing. You are not disrespecting your baby by allowing yourself to enjoy life.
- Decline invitations – no explanation is necessary, friends and family will understand.
- Make shopping easy – consider online shopping for those that you need to buy gifts for and avoid the holiday bustle of the stores.
- Find a balance between staying busy and having time to yourself – try to plan a few activities that you enjoy. Grief can be very lonely, try not to add to those feelings of loneliness by isolating yourself.
- Take a vacation – a trip away may be the best way to remove yourself from the traditions that are too difficult to face. You may want to travel away as a couple or perhaps consider inviting family to join you. Consider a travel destination

where Christmas isn't celebrated.

If a vacation isn't possible, consider taking on a project around your home to keep you busy.

- Do something special to remember your baby, continue reading for ideas on honoring your baby.

If you chose to attend holiday gatherings, the following suggestions may make the experience easier to tolerate:

- Know your limits – if you feel as though you will feel more stress than enjoyment, decline the invitation. Do consider however if attending events with friends and family may help to take your mind of things for a short time.
- Make a plan in advance – if you are attending a holiday gathering, find a quiet place to spend a few moments alone if you need to. Plan an excuse to use in case you feel overwhelmed and need to leave.
- Share your feelings with friends and family – your loved ones will know best how to support you if you can express to them what you need.
- Not everyone understands what you are going through, you may hear comments that are hurtful or insensitive. Know that most often these people make comments with the best of intentions, but without them understanding exactly what you are going through it's hard for them to know the right things to say. Often times they will say nothing as they are concerned that they may upset you, when in reality they are worried about being uncomfortable by you being upset. What you need to express to them is that you want desperately to talk about your baby and hear your baby's name.
- Reach out to others that under-

stand – it helps to talk to someone that can truly understand what you are going through. Connect with other baby loss families through support groups or in online chat groups. If your faith is important to you, attend extra services. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a counselor or mental health professional.

The other way to cope with the holidays, instead of skipping Christmas, may be to start some new holiday traditions. As you journey through your grief, your needs may change. You may try something one year and decide to change it and try something new the next year. With time you may even decide to renew old traditions. Most importantly do what feels right to you and allows you to honor your baby and incorporate your baby's memory into your new reality. Here are some ideas for honoring your baby's memory at Christmas:

- Ornaments – have an ornament engraved with your baby's name on it, add a new ornament each year in memory of your baby. I invite you to attend our annual Christmas healing hands workshop on Saturday December 15th from 1-3pm where you can make an ornament in memory of your baby.
- Dedicate a tree specifically to your baby – I did this several years ago in memory of my angels, Loren and Brooklynn. Every year I decorate my angel tree to honor my babies, and each year I add a new ornament that I make or buy for them. Consider having a theme to your tree: angels, butterflies, dragonflies or something meaningful to you. Tie ribbons on your tree, blue for boys, pink for girls or white if

[Continued on page 3](#)

you don't know the gender of your baby. Search the internet for baby loss awareness ornaments.

- Hang a stocking for you baby – write a letter to your baby and tuck it inside the stocking, invite loved ones to do the same. Add a new note each year and save them to read every year. Consider the Random Acts of Kindness stocking idea that is shared in the newsletter.
- Buy a gift in memory of your baby that you can donate to a local hospital or needy child – buy an age appropriate gift for the age your baby would be. This can become an annual tradition. Include a note that the gift is being given in memory of your baby.
- Make a donation in memory of your baby to a hospital, charity or program designed to help families after the loss of a baby.
- Give your baby a special signature – feel free to sign holiday cards with a designation for your baby like a stamp of an angel or baby

feet, it may help you to know that your baby is not being forgotten and being remembered by others.

- Update friends and family by sharing how you are feeling – if you typically send out a letter with holiday cards, let them know how you are coping. It's ok to be honest and to share what you are needing from them.
- If you are inviting family or friends over, display keepsakes for you baby (pictures, scrapbooks, ornaments, etc.)
- Light a candle in memory of your baby.

Whether you decide to skip Christmas, create new holiday traditions or attempt to celebrate Christmas like you have done in years past, I wish you peace, love and hope. May hope for the future and the love of family and friends bring comfort to you this Christmas. Please know that your angel is smiling down on you from above wishing you love and happiness.

REMEMBERING

by Elizabeth Dent

Go ahead and mention my child.
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me further.
The depth of my pain doesn't show.
Don't worry about making me cry.
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing
The tears that I try to hide.
I'm hurt when you just keep silent,
Pretending he didn't exist.
I'd rather you mention my child,
Knowing that he has been missed.
You asked me how I was doing.
I say "pretty good" or "fine".
But healing is something ongoing.
I feel it will take a lifetime.

One Christmas Wish

I guess if I could make just one Christmas wish,
I would wish I could see you.
To hold, to snuggle, to just kiss,
This is something
I'd really like to do.
My arms ache for my baby girl,
Who will always remain just that.
To never grow and experience joy,
I wish I knew where you were at.
Why is it God thought he needed you more than I,
And why is it wishes can't come true?
I am just an aching heart
who can only ask why,
And a mother who can't let go of you.
Please God grant me this one Christmas wish,
If just for a minute, an hour or a day.
She is someone I really need and miss,
What more must I say?

Donations

*Angel Whispers 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.*

Sophie's Story

By: Kelly

December 22, 2006 was the day that my life turned from a living nightmare to my own personal hell. It should have been the happiest day of my life, instead it became the start of the most devastating experience I would ever have, one that was to change my life in so many ways that would have been inconceivable to me before that.

The day started like any other. I was 5 days away from my due date. I had been in and out of the nursery all day that day, rearranging things, reorganising the clothes in the closet, touching the sweet little pink outfit that she would be coming home in. Making sure that everything was ready, that it was all perfect. I spent a lot of time in that room in the months prior to that, that room was my haven, my reminder that in the dismal world I was living, there was hope. That room was proof that good things can come from bad situations. My relationship was less than healthy. We had been together almost 14 years, to call those years a living nightmare would be an understatement.

The evening of December 22nd was a typical one. He came home from work in a foul mood, I said the wrong thing at the wrong time and within seconds he was beating me. By that point I had learned that it was easier not to fight him, it was over quicker and hurt less if I didn't fight. I remember trying to turn away from him, shielding my stomach. It all happened so quickly. He pushed me and I fell down the stairs, the last thing I remember thinking is 'Please God, let her be okay, let my baby be alright'.

I woke up in hospital the morning of December 23rd. I knew instantly that she was no longer inside me but I had no idea where she was or if she was okay. I tried to sit up and get out of bed and I almost passed out from

the pain. Two nurses were in my room almost immediately and told me that I had to wait for my doctor to come in and talk to me about my injuries. They didn't seem to understand that I didn't care. All I wanted to know was if my daughter was alright, nothing else was important to me. They told me that she had been delivered by C-section immediately upon me getting to the hospital, which was apparently a while after the fall; I am still not sure to this day how long he waited to get me there.

The last thing I remember thinking is 'Please God, let her be okay, let my baby be alright'.

I was told that she had suffered irreversible brain damage as a result of the beating, the subsequent fall, and the delay in getting to the hospital. The doctor told me that it was unlikely she would survive the next 24 hours. Her heart wasn't beating on its own and she was unable to breathe by herself. The nurse took me in a wheel chair to go see her. They tried to prepare me, but what can prepare you for that?

I remember wondering during my pregnancy what the first time I saw her would be like, the moment when they handed me to her, all pink and perfect, 10 fingers and 10 toes. I imagined what it would feel like to hold her, to feel her heart beating, to hold her close and know that she was finally here. Instead, I was looking at her through glass and instead of 10 fingers and toes I could see wires and tubes. She had a small indent and bruise above one of her eyes and they told me under her little hat, her head was very bruised. She had taken as much of the beating as I had. They told me to talk to her, to sing to

her, to touch her hand so she could feel me. They asked me if I wanted to hold her and I said no. I was terrified that I would hurt her. In my mind, as long as she was in the incubator she was safe, she was being kept alive. They tried to tell me kindly that it wouldn't make a difference, they told me she wasn't going to survive and that I could hold her but I didn't believe them, didn't want to believe them.

The details of the next few days are clear and raw some days and vague and foggy on others. I was alone with her. No one came. There were those who blamed me and told me that I had made my own bed and now it was time to lay in it and there were those who didn't know what to do or say so they did and said nothing. For 4 days it was just her and I.

We hadn't picked names for her, wanted to wait until she was born. I had a few in mind but wanted to wait. I named her Sophie Louise which means Wise Warrior. For 4 days I talked to her, I sang to her. Her nurse had given me the book *Guess How Much I Love you* and I must have read it to her a thousand times or more. To this day the words 'to the moon and back again' tug at my heart and bring tears to my eyes. During those few days the hospital was so busy, people coming and going, patients had friends and family visiting for Christmas. Other moms were having babies and their families were so excited and happy. I remember being angry and thinking how can they be so happy, don't they know what is happening? Of course they didn't know, it didn't affect their lives, they had no idea.

Christmas came and went. I prayed harder than I have ever prayed in my life. Promised God that I would do all

[Continued on page 5](#)

the good in the world that I could if he let her live. The morning of the 27th, my doctor had just left my room after changing my dressings when her doctor and 2 nurses came into my room and closed the door. I was already crying, I knew. In my heart I had known all along. They told me that there was nothing that could be done and it was time. Her nurse took me into a room and they brought Sophie to me. She placed her in my arms and told me that I had as much time as I needed. I remember thinking that no amount of time in the world would be enough. I realised while I was holding her that it was her due date. On the very day that she should have been entering the world, I was being told I had to say goodbye. Instead of that magical moment when she should have been placed in my arms for the first time and all the hope and anticipation of what was to come for both of us should have been filling my heart, the first time I held her would also be the last. On the day she should have been born my daughter died in my arms.

The days, weeks and months to come were filled with 'I told you so', 'something like this was bound to happen', 'you should have left him sooner', 'you deserved this, you made it happen', 'this is Gods way of telling you that you are not meant to be a mom', 'be thankful that you never brought her home, that you never really knew her, it will make it easier to get over'. I couldn't take it anymore. I had no support, no one to hold me up, and no one to help me.

I blamed myself completely, I knew it was my fault but I didn't need to hear it from other people. I didn't need the stares or the whispers, the accusations, the guilt. I was carrying enough guilt and blame without others burdening me with more. So I left. I packed up my life into 2 suitcases and less than a year after losing my daughter I was on the

other side of the world where nobody knew me. I didn't have to deal with it. I didn't have to think about it. Nobody knew so nobody asked questions. I got a job, found somewhere to live and to all intents and purposes I functioned. To others I appeared quiet and shy, but I looked normal. I didn't let people get close; it was easier to not let people in and run the risk of them finding out. For years that was enough. I went day to day and went through the motions of living. Except I wasn't living, I was dying on the inside. Not being able to grieve for my daughter and not being able to deal with the circumstances surrounding her death was destroying me.

I knew things had to change, getting by wasn't working. 'Enough' wasn't enough anymore, I wanted more from life. I started letting people in, just a little bit. Made some friends, came

'Enough' wasn't enough anymore, I wanted more from life.

out of my shell a little. Still not many people knew what had happened and those who did didn't really know what to say. They didn't know me when I lost her they never knew her so to them it was just something that happened to someone they didn't know at the time. Still, I felt like I was moving forward, baby steps, but I was still moving.

Six years after losing her, I still blamed myself. I was so consumed by guilt that it affected every aspect of my life but the one thing it didn't change was my desire to be a mom. All I had ever wanted to be was a mom. I wanted the dirty diapers, the bedtime stories, the temper tantrums, the snuggles, I wanted all of it. I was unable to carry any more children of my own and knew that adoption was my only hope of being a mom.

I made a few calls and everything happened so fast. I wasn't sure that I

would get through the home study. I thought for sure that once they heard my history and the fact that I was applying as a single applicant, they would give me a resounding no. Instead, I was told that what I had been through would make me an amazing mom and that I just had to make sure I had supports in place to help me deal with the emotions and feelings that would arise when a match was made and a child was placed with me. By this time I had convinced myself I was fine, that I could do this and it would be relatively easy.

Just over 6 months after starting the process I was tucking a 15 month old little boy into bed. I remember the first week he was with me, I couldn't believe he was here, that I could be that blessed. I couldn't believe how much I loved him. Then reality came crashing in and what should have been the happiest time in my life resulted in me feeling like my world was falling down around my ears. How could I love him as much as I did and still love my daughter? My heart couldn't be big enough for both of them, could it? I worried, would she be looking down on us thinking that I loved her less because I loved him to? I felt like I was betraying her, would she feel betrayed? Then I worried that I wasn't going to be a good enough mom to my new little man because I had all these feelings and emotions that I didn't expect to have. I was told to expect them but I naively thought I would be fine. Would I do him more harm than good?

I was so scared that I wasn't going to be what he needed. He is a happy little guy but had already known more loss in his little life than anyone should know and I didn't want to add to that hurt for him, he deserved better than me, surely?

Then I saw a link on a Facebook page to Lori Ann from Angel Whispers profile page. You know the Benjamin Mee quote "sometimes all it takes is 20

Continued on page 6

seconds of insane courage and bravery and great things will happen”? Somehow and somewhere I found that 20 seconds of bravery and sent a message.

At the beginning of writing this story I said that losing my daughter was the most devastating experience of my life and that it would change my life in so many more ways that would have ever been conceivable to me. Sending the message to the Angel Whispers page was the second thing that would serve to change my life in so many ways. For the first time EVER I found myself reaching out for help and not quite sure why. Then I realised, my little guy needed me to be happy, healthy and whole. He deserves the very best Momma he could ever have and I will do whatever it takes to be that for him. I started doing it for him but the further along this journey I go, I realise that I am doing it for us, for all 3 of us. Sophie deserves to be at peace and to know that her Momma is not living in pain and guilt. Aiden deserves the very best of me and I deserve to find some peace. So everything I am doing is for all of us. Lori Ann told me when I first met her that none of it would be easy. She, and a few very other special people who have come into my life in the last few months, have all said that it will likely be the most difficult thing I have ever done, to walk the healing journey, but that it will be the best thing I have ever done. They didn't lie to me. The last few months have been some of the hardest few months of my life. The highs have been very high and the lows have been very low. So many times I wanted to give up, to just stop and go back to pretending everything is okay. But once you start this journey, you can't stop, you have to keep going. None of us who have lost our angels asked to be on this journey, none of us asked God to test us to see how strong we are but we are as strong as we have to be just as we are as vulnerable as we need to be.

Since the year that my angel was sent to me, Christmas has been a non-event for me. I worked, kept busy but never celebrated. How could I celebrate a season and a holiday that brought so much pain to my heart? How could I be happy and make plans when the only person I wanted to be with was no longer here? How could I surround myself with people who didn't get it, who didn't want to even try to get it? How could I put on a happy face and pretend that I was full of the joys of Christmas when all I wanted to do was curl up in a ball and hide for the entire holiday season and pretend that my heart wasn't being ripped in half? So I just didn't do it. In many ways, although Sophie would be 7 this year

I owe my life to the small circle of people who have come into my world.

had she lived, this feels like the first year without her. Because I have just started dealing with her loss and have only recently embarked on my healing journey, it all feels very new and very raw. Many people have told me that this Christmas should be easy to do, now that I have my amazing little man in my life, some people have actually told me that he should take away the hurt caused by my previous loss, that he should make it all better. One went so far as to say 'well isn't that why you are adopting, to make it all go away. You are a mom now so it shouldn't hurt'. I never went into this with the intent of replacing Sophie. She is irreplaceable, nor did I think that having another child would make the loss of the first one hurt any less.

What does this Christmas look like for me? The thought of it still makes me want to cry, it's a tough time of year and I miss her, it makes my heart hurt but this year will be different. My little guy deserves a good Christmas. It will be a quiet one; we will hang out

at home. He will open his gifts, we will snuggle and play, read and watch Christmas movies. We will enjoy being with each other and we will enjoy our first Christmas together. I am not putting any pressure on myself this year to meet other people's expectations. Those who love and care for us will understand that I will do whatever it is I need to do in order to get through it. Those who don't understand, I don't have the time or energy to waste explaining it to them. I am going to find little ways to acknowledge her and to celebrate her. I want to celebrate her. She is, and always will be, a gift. A very precious gift that I am so thankful to have been given, It has taken me a long time to be able to say this but I fully believe that she was only ever intended to be with me for the 9 months that I carried her and the 5 short days that she was here on earth was all the time she needed to be able to teach me what she was supposed to teach me. Because of her I know what unconditional love is, because of her I know everything I need to know in order to be a good Momma to her new little brother. I believe that not only was she my gift but she was his gift also. Her life has given him the chance at a new life that will be as wonderful and as amazing as I can shape that to be for him. Without her, I wouldn't be here. After she died, it almost cost me my life and I thought I can either stay here and die or I can leave and fulfill my promise to her to make her life, and death, mean something. After I lost her, I had nothing left to lose. No one could hurt me more than losing her hurt and she gave me the courage to leave. If not for her, my little man would not be with me now.

I owe my life to the small circle of people who have come into my world in the last 6 months. People who have given me back the ability to believe not only in myself but in the goodness of other people, those who have been

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

prepared to step into the hell that was my world and hold my hand, give me an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on and who have held me up and pushed me forward when all I wanted to do was give up. Those who have given me the safe place that I never had, a place where I can grieve openly and honestly for all that could have been but will never be, who have shown me that I have every right to feel as I do and who have taught me that her death was not my fault.

I still have days where the guilt consumes every fibre of my being but that's all they are now - days. It's not permanent, it passes. Deep down in my heart I know that what happened was not my fault. My son, my daughter and I are so incredibly blessed to have such amazing people in our lives. I will always miss her, it will always hurt.

The difference between now and 7 years ago is that I have hope. Having people in my life who love me and who love and accept my little man has made all the difference in my life. I have hope for the future and what it holds. I have hope that life can be good again. It will always be different, my new normal will not be what I ever expected my life to be but that doesn't mean that it can't still be an amazing life. My daughter will be with me wherever I go. I don't have all the answers, I never will. What I do have is more than I ever thought I would have and more than I ever thought I deserved.

From my family to yours we send you lots of love for this holiday season and we hope that you find peace and comfort in those who surround you and from your angels watching over you. May you know as I do that they know how much you love and miss them and I hope you feel their presence with you, now and always.

To those of you reading this who have touched my life, and you know who you are. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have collectively

The Night Before Christmas

Shared by: Janet Gilmour

It's the night before Christmas, we're all filled with joy,
except when we think of you, little boy.

The stockings are hung by the chimney with care,
and in our hearts it's as if you were here.

My children are sleeping, in their bedrooms they lay,
but we're still filled with grief for our baby that died.

You see, this Christmas you would have been two,
But every Christmas I know we'll miss you.

As I wrap up the presents my thoughts are on you,
and what we'd have bought if you were here, too.

A car, a ball, a red fire truck
or maybe a rabbit's foot to bring you good luck

The tree is all trimmed with bright coloured balls,
and decorations hang on all of the walls.

It looks so pretty - - I wonder if you see
Your Christmas ball we've hung on the tree.

I made it for you before you were here,
Not knowing I'd hang it with eyes filled with tears.

Tomorrow is Christmas; I'll try not to be sad;
I'll count all my blessings and try to be glad,

You're not a part of our future - - you were a part of our past
and someday I know we'll be together at last.

helped give me back my daughter. I am now able to remember her with love and peace and not just guilt and pain and you will never know what that has done for me. There is no greater gift that you could have given me than the love, support, safety and friendship that you have so willingly offered and sustained.

With my daughter in my heart and my new son in my arms, we wish you safe and happy holidays.

By: Kelly

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> or like our new Angel Whispers Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/angelwhispersbabylosssupport.

Congratulations!

Kenzie Marie Love Harburn

*Born on October 11, 2013 weighing 6lbs 13oz to proud parents Christie and Terence Harburn
Kenzie's big brother is celebrating with the angels!*

Matteo James DeLeon

*Born on November 3, 2013 weighing 7lbs 4oz to proud parents Melissa and Alan DeLeon
Big brother Noah is celebrating his safe arrival from heaven!*

Isabella Erin Ferchau

*Born on November 26, 2013 - 5 weeks early weighing 6lbs 5oz to proud parents Cathy and Gary Ferchau!
Big sisters Annaliese and Katie are very excited to have a baby sister. Isabella has an angel in heaven watching over her that ensured her safe arrival!*

Angel Bears for Sale



We are once again selling our Angel Bears as a fundraiser for Angel Whispers. The bears sell for \$10 each with all money raised helping us to sustain our services to grieving families. They are a beautiful addition to your Christmas tree in memory of your baby or to give as gifts. If you are interested in purchasing a bear, please contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 or by email angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

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:

- DOW for their generous donation towards care packages and books for our Angel Whispers families.
- The Ed Stelmach Community Foundation who have made a 3 year financial commitment to Angel Whispers to help us to sustain services to grieving families.
- The generous soul who anonymously donated 56 pairs of feather angel wings. Thanks to you, Angel Whispers families will continue to receive these cherished keepsakes in their care packages.

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. December 1, January 5, February 2, March 2.

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Meetings are usually held from 7-9 p.m. at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park. December 8, January 19, February 9, March 9. However please check with Lori-Ann at 780.964.7464 before the meeting to confirm location - sometimes we just go for coffee!

Parenting after Loss Group Meetings - an opportunity for moms and their rainbow babies to meet and discuss the emotions and challenges parents experience in parenting a Rainbow Baby. Dad's are welcome to attend!. Sunday's from 1-3 p.m. at the FCSS offices January 19, February 9, March 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. December 14, January 18, February 22 and March 22 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park.

For all meetings and workshops please contact Lori-Ann to register 780.998.5595 ext. 225.

Helping a Loved One Cope Through the Holidays

by: Lori-Ann Huot

For a family that has lost a baby, the holidays can be a difficult time of the year. The holidays should be a time to spend with loved ones, and for them it is another reminder of their precious baby that they should be enjoying Christmas with. Listed below are a few suggestions on how to help your loved ones through the holidays:

- Validate the family's loss by acknowledging their baby. Send them a note letting them know that you understand that this is a difficult time of year for them after losing their baby and that you are thinking about them. Mention the baby's name, families want desperately for their baby's to be remembered.
- Give them a gift in memory of their baby: a personalized ornament, an angel, a teddy bear, engraved picture frame or jewelry.
- Make a donation to a charity in memory of their baby.
- Offer to attend a Holiday Memorial Service with them, you will find a few listed in this newsletter or on our website – www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers.
- Offer to attend holiday get togethers with them. Having an understanding friend to talk to can make them less stressful.

- Deliver a few meals or holiday treats to them personally.
- If your friend is more private about her loss, you may want to consider a different gift idea:
- A gift certificate to a spa – she likely hasn't taken much time for herself recently and it may be a nice relaxing opportunity for her.
- Offer to take her out for an afternoon, whether it is for lunch, a movie or shopping.
- If your loved one cannot bear the thought of facing Christmas and doesn't want to decorate or participate in traditional holiday activities, you can still be helpful.
- Support her decision not to celebrate or to change their holiday traditions.
- Invite her for a quiet Christmas at your home, sometimes doing something different can be enough to get through a stressful time. Spending time together is the true meaning of Christmas.

The most important thing you can do for your loved one is to be a friend and ask what they need from you and what you can do to help. They may not know exactly what they need, but knowing that you are there to support them will mean so much.

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.

"NORMAL"

– Author unknown

Normal is having tears waiting behind every smile when you realize someone important is missing from all the important events in your family's life.

Normal is feeling like you can't sit another minute without getting up and screaming, because you just don't like to sit through anything.

Normal is not sleeping very well because a thousand what if's & why didn't I's go through your head constantly.

Normal is reliving that day continuously through your eyes and mind, holding your head to make it go away.

Normal is having the TV on the minute I walk into the house to have noise, because the silence is deafening.

Normal is staring at every child who looks like she is my child's age. And then thinking of the age she would be now and not being able to imagine it. Then wondering why it is even important to imagine it, because it will never happen.

Normal is every happy event in my life always being backed up with sadness lurking close behind, because of the hole in my heart.

Normal is telling the story of your child's death as if it were an everyday, commonplace activity, and then seeing the horror in someone's eyes at how awful it sounds. And yet realizing it has become a part of my "normal".

Normal is each year coming up with the difficult task of how to honor your child's memory and her birthday and survive these days. And trying to find the balloon or flag that fit's the occasion. Happy Birthday? Not really.

Normal is my heart warming and yet sinking at the sight of something special my daughter loved. Thinking how she would love it, but how she is not here to enjoy it.

Normal is having some people afraid to mention my daughter.

Normal is making sure that others remember her.

Normal is after the funeral is over everyone else goes on with their lives, but I continue to grieve my loss forever.

Normal is weeks, months, and years after the initial shock, the grieving gets worse sometimes, not better.

Normal is not listening to people compare anything in their life to this loss, unless they too have lost a child. NOTHING. Even if your child is in the remotest part of the earth away from you - it doesn't compare. Losing a parent is horrible, but having to bury your own child is unnatural.

Normal is taking pills, and trying not to cry all day, because I know my mental health depends on it.

Normal is realizing I do cry everyday.

Normal is disliking jokes about death or funerals, bodies being referred to as cadavers, when you know they were once someone's loved one.

Normal is being impatient with everything and everyone, but someone stricken with grief over the loss of your child.

Normal is sitting at the computer crying, sharing how you feel with chat buddies who have also lost a child.

Normal is feeling a common bond with friends on the computer in England, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and all over the USA, but yet never having met any of them face to face.

Normal is a new friendship with another grieving mother, talking and crying together over our children and our new lives.

Normal is not listening to people make excuses for God. "God may have done this because..." I love God, I know that my daughter is in heaven, but hearing people trying to think up excuses as to why sick children were taken from this

Continued on page 11

earth is not appreciated and makes absolutely no sense to this grieving mother.

Normal is being too tired to care if you paid the bills, cleaned the house, did laundry or if there is any food.

Normal is wondering this time whether you are going to say you have two children or one, because you will never see this person again and it is not worth explaining that my child is in heaven. And yet when you say you have one child to avoid that problem, you feel horrible as if you have betrayed your child.

Normal is avoiding McDonald's and Burger King playgrounds because of small, happy children that break your heart when you see them.

Normal is asking God why he took your child's life instead of yours and asking if there even is a God.

Normal is knowing I will never get over this loss, in a day or a million years.

And last of all, Normal is hiding all the things that have become "normal" for you to feel, so that everyone around you will think that you are "normal".

My First Christmas in Heaven

Author Unknown

I see the countless Christmas trees
around the world below

With tiny lights like heaven's stars,
reflecting on the snow.

The sight is so spectacular, please
wipe away that tear,

For I am spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that
people hold so dear,

But the music can't compare with the
Christmas choir up here.

I have no words to tell you the joy
their voices bring,

For it is beyond description, the way
the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me. I see
the pain inside your heart.

But I am not so far away. We really
aren't apart.

So be happy for me, dear ones. You
know I hold you near.

Be glad I'm spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I send you each a special gift from
my heavenly home above.

I send you each a memory of my
undying love.

After all LOVE is the gift more pre-
cious than pure gold.

It was always most important in the
stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other, as
our Father said to do,

For I can't count the blessings or the
love He has for you.

Have a Merry Christmas and wipe
away that tear.

Remember...

I am spending Christmas with Jesus
Christ this year.

In Memory of Our New Angels

Riley Lee Johnston

Emma Marie Dilley

June 11, 2012

Lucas Ray Briggs

July 19, 2012 - October 20, 2012

John Peter Simpson

July 24, 2013 - September 16, 2013

Francis Wolfgang Wheeler

October 11-13, 2013

Daniel Levi Rowe

October 2013

Baby Lazar

October 2013

*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.*

Brooklynn's Story

After thinking our family was complete with three daughters, we were shocked to discover we were expecting again. I had complications very early on in my pregnancy, and had several ultrasounds because I was hemorrhaging. It was after one of my ultrasounds that my doctor called and asked if I was sitting down—then told me that we were expecting twins! At this point I was still hemorrhaging and through the next few weeks the bleeding became so heavy that I was convinced I was miscarrying our babies. Another doctor visit and ultrasound revealed one of our twins had died, but the other twin was still hanging on. We found out that Brooklynn had died on December 23, 2002—and the bleeding was caused by a subchorionic hemorrhage, meaning that where the surviving twin's placenta attached to my uterus, it had hit a major blood vessel. Brooklynn was unable to survive the hemorrhaging. It was a very sad Christmas that year, having just discovered we had lost one of our babies.

Our other twin, Sydney, thrived despite the further complications I had during my pregnancy—my hemorrhaging lasted for 20 weeks and just as I thought I might have a chance to start enjoying this pregnancy, my mom passed away suddenly when I was only 24 weeks pregnant. The stress, combined with the pregnancy complications of the last five months, caused my water to break when I was only 30 weeks pregnant. I was admitted to the hospital on bed rest while they tried to stop my labor so that Sydney would be more likely to survive. Sydney entered the world at 32 weeks gestation weighing just over 4 pounds. She spent a month in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Sydney proved what a fighter she was by surviving the complications that took little Brooklynn so early. She was

diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy when she was 2 ½ but has overcome more challenges—being told she may never walk or talk, she runs, dances and is the most talkative of our four daughters we have here with us. We believe she has something special to share with the world and that is why she has fought so hard to survive.

Sydney talks about her sister Brooklynn and her sister Loren, who we lost in 1998; she says they are angels who

stay with her and protect her. I do wonder if Brooklynn was taken from us to ensure Sydney would always be taken care of by her own personal guardian angel. Sydney gives us a daily glimpse of what Brooklynn may have been like, her gentleness, her smile and her angelic spirit.

*Written by Lori-Ann and Rene Huot
in memory of Brooklynn and Loren*

YOGA FOR GRIEF SUPPORT

Sometimes the most important thing in the whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths. – Etty Hillesum






Instructor: Sandy Ayre
YAA Certified Yoga Instructor
BSc Occupational Therapy
Certified: Death and Grief Studies
Phone: 780.474.4536
Web: www.yogaforgriefsupport.com
Email: sandy@yogaforgriefsupport.com



Healing Connections
10548 115 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
www.healing-connections.ca

Yoga for Grief is a pre-registered class designed to support anybody who is suffering after the death of a loved one. The focus of the class is nurturing the body and mind by providing a supportive and understanding space for relaxation and reflection. By combining theories of grief and bereavement support, along with yogic philosophy, this class cultivates tranquility and compassion.

Meditate

Learn calming meditation techniques to quiet the mind and connect with an abiding sense of wholeness

Unite

Use the physical practice of yoga asana to unite the mind and body, and cultivate relaxation

Breathe

Breathe deeply. Breathe fully. Breathe again. Use your breath to support yourself as you move through grief

Next Session

Wednesday January 8 -
March 19 2014, 7:30-9:00pm
(no class March 5)
or
Sunday January 12 - March
16 2014, 7:30-9:00pm

Healing Connections
10548-115 Street
Edmonton, AB
Cost: \$170.00

If you have questions about if this class is appropriate for you, or to register, contact Sandy at 780-474-4536

Page 12

Angel Whispers

Winter, 2013

Healing Opportunities

The Grieving Parents Society of Edmonton

Annual Christmas Candlelight Service

Date: Sunday December 1, 2013

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Knox Metropolitan United
Church 8307-109 St. Edmonton

Holiday Healing Hands Angel Whispers Workshop and Get Together

You are welcome to join us on Saturday December 14th from 1-3 p.m. for our Holiday Healing Hands workshop and an opportunity to meet with other Angel Whispers families to honour our cherished babies. We will be making Christmas ornaments in memory of our babies while enjoying some Christmas cheer and goodies. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP to Lori-Ann at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

Parent Care Candlelight Service

In keeping with what has become a ParentCare tradition, the December meeting will once again be a Candle Light Non-denominational Service on December 19th at 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel of the Misericordia Hospital. Before the busy Christmas season begins Parent Care offers each of you an opportunity to pause and remember the babies that live on in our hearts.

If you would like to attend the service please call 780 989 5040 before December 15th and leave the name(s) and colour of candle for your baby(ies) to be remembered or email this information to Patti at: Patti.Walker@albertahealthservices.ca

Angel Whispers Fundraiser:

We are hoping to plan an Angel Whispers fundraiser in late February or early March, if you are interested in helping us to plan the fundraiser please contact Lori-Ann at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca

Family Friendly Fundraiser for Angel Whispers:

Thank you to Samantha Karinna with Lumina Lash Studio and mobile spa for

KIDS for planning this fundraiser: ***Saturday May 3th 2014 - location and details to be announced***

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 and upcoming class dates, please visit - www.yogaforgriefsupport.com.

You might want to check out these web sites:

- www.tinyhandsofhope.ca
- www.facesoffloss.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.



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
- 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.

Dec. 8, Jan. 19, Feb. 9, March 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 and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive.

December 1, January 5, February 2, March 2