**Summer 2021** 

# Warm, sunny summer wishes to our Angel Whispers families,

Angel Whispers

June is here marking the start of summer and our next quarterly newsletter edition.

This edition is the first since the changes to the program began. If you missed the spring newsletter or our announcement on social media, the non-profit agency that Angel Whispers has been a program of for the last 13+ years announced in March that due to lack of sustainable funding they were cutting the bereavement program (including the Angel Whispers Program) and eliminating my position as bereavement coordinator. My last day as an employee with Families First Society was June 4th.

Because of that decision, Angel Whispers will be undergoing some changes to programming. Currently, the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program is operating under the umbrella of Hope & Healing Grief Support Services. Angel Whispers will continue to provide support to families grieving the loss of a baby to miscarriage, stillbirth, SIDS and neonatal death. That support will look a bit different as the program continues to operate with no funding.

One on one support and counselling will be available at a minimal cost. Our support groups (miscarriage, baby loss and subsequent pregnancy) will break for the summer with the plan to resume in the fall as parent-to-parent peer support groups led by bereaved parents. Our hope is to continue to offer a Christmas Healing Hands workshop. Angel Whispers care packages, with information on coping after the loss of a baby, information on grief and healing and information on the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program will continue to be available for grieving parents.

Unfortunately, some of the extra supports and keepsakes that we have offered in the past (Rainbow Baby Reunion, annual grief retreat, birth certificate keepsakes and memory boxes) will no longer be offered.

For families that face financial barriers to accessing one on one support, a subsidy can be accessed through the Bereavement Fund with the Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society as I have been invited to contract my services to them one day a week to ensure individuals grieving the loss of a loved one continue to be supported.

I am excited to share that in addition to my contract work with Families First and my commitment to continuing to offer support to Angel Whispers families, that I have accepted a position with the Hospice Society of Camrose and District as their new Grief and Bereavement Navigator. My new position allows me to continue to pursue my passion for providing much needed support to individuals and families grieving the loss of someone they love.

I recognize that between all of these roles that my availability with Angel Whispers and my contract position



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www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers

"To inspire hope & healing and offer compassion & understanding to families devastated by the loss of a baby."

Email: angelwhispersbabyloss@gmail.com Phone: 780-974-7054

with Families First will be less than what clients were previously accustomed to. If I feel I am unable to best meet the needs of those requiring support because of my limited availability I will provide individuals with appropriate referrals. This newsletter edition has information on other local/ online resources for families grieving the loss of their precious babies so

#### Continued from page 1

that families will continue to be well supported throughout the changes that Angel Whispers is facing.

Miscarriage/Baby Loss grief is considered a disenfranchised grief. Wikipedia defines Disenfranchised grief as a term describing grief that is not acknowledged as legitimate by society. For example, a loss may be seen as too small or the relationship too distant to justify grieving. Traditional forms of grief are more widely recognized and supported. As a result bereaved families often don't receive the much needed and long term support from well intentioned but misinformed family and friends who put unrealistic expectations and deadlines on their grief. Receiving support from others who have experienced similar losses allows bereaved families to feel better understood and supported throughout their grief journey.

Thank you to our families and individuals who have allowed Angel Whispers to provide the much needed and well-deserved support to them as they grieve the loss of their precious babies over the past 19 years since the program began. A heartfelt and genuine thank you to each of you for your patience and understanding as we navigate the changes Angel Whispers undergoes. We are looking for volunteer bereaved parents to help with our parent-to-parent peer support groups in the fall. If you have an interest in sharing your experience with newly bereaved parents, please contact Lori-Ann at 780 974 7054 or email *angelwhispersbabyloss@gmail.com*.

May you hold onto hope in the face of heartache and grief, and may you feel the love and support from our entire baby loss community that hold you up and honour your stories.

With Love and Understanding,

Lori-Ann

Lori-Ann Huot Program Coordinator Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program Cell - (780)974-7054 angelwhispersbabyloss@gmail.com www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers

"To inspire hope and healing and offer compassion and understanding to families devastated by the loss of a baby."



The "Grieving Parents" Club -It's an exclusive club. -No one asked us if we wanted to join. -The price you must pay is much too high. -We never imagined we would have to be members. -Once you're in, you're a lifetime member.

Facebook/MyChildDidExist

## The Hole in my Heart

by Grace Wutzke

When you were here my heart was so full. The loss of you left a heart-shaped hole.

The hole goes to heaven and you look through. I'm still sending love right up to you.

One day in heaven the hold will be full. We'll be together and my heart will be whole.

# **COCOON Study**

The COCOON study in Canada focuses exclusively on the experiences of postpartum women and their partners, who have experienced stillbirth and neonatal death, both prior to and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is that this research can help improve care for all families affected by/going through perinatal loss in Canada and around the world.

Bereaved parents are needed in one of the two study periods:

- 30 Jan 2018 31 Dec 2019 (pre-COVID-19 group)
- 30 Jan 202 going forward (COVID-19 group)

If you are interested in participating in this research survey, the screening survey is located at *https://bit.ly/cocoonscreen* After completing that survey all parents who meet the study criteria will receive the invitation to complete the survey for their situation (study group, stillbirth vs. neonatal, woman vs. partner).

For more information on the study, visit *https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/* SV 8AJmsHB4sk037XU

# The Club

### By Karen Grover

*My* baby is beautiful,

so perfect yet so small.

I only have one picture,

I wish that wasn't all.

*My* baby is so perfect,

while still in my womb.

but she passed away

so silently one day.

full of hope to hear

coming to my ear.

I went to the midwife,

the sound of baby's heartbeat,

She couldn't find a heartbeat.

"You should go for ultrasound."

At the ultrasound appointment,

"We couldn't find a heartbeat."

I'd had a "missed miscarriage"

Still no heartbeat was found.

"I'm sorry for your loss."

"Your baby is too small."

that baby had passed away.

I left so I could bawl.

My body didn't know

At first I chose to wait

as they sadly say.

We are all members of a very exclusive club. We had been only vaguely aware of its existence, and we thought that surely a chapter in a city the size of ours wouldn't have many members. We had seen a few people who belonged to the club, but we didn't seem to have anything in common with them, so we didn't really get to know them. Occasionally, we read stories in the newspaper about new members being initiated into the club, but it didn't seem likely that we would ever be eligible to join, so we paid no attention.

The price of membership is so dear that we couldn't imagine being a part of the club. We must have realized in the backs of our minds that people didn't choose to join and pay the dues--it was done for them somehow. In fact, no one really has any idea of how members are selected. There are a lot of theories; but much of the time, the theories come from non-members who don't understand much about the situation.

The "club" we are now in (although it is not an organized group), is known as "bereaved parents." *C* The cost of our membership was the life of our children; and we, like all other members, have no idea why we were selected for membership.

No one wants to be in this club. Even now, months afterward, inside our hearts and minds we continue to fight membership, but there is no resigning from it. It is an automatic lifetime membership. There was no way to avoid it – we did the best we could to keep our children safe only to have them die.

Have you ever experienced the feeling of having one terrible incident go through your mind, day after day, week after week, month after month, wondering why it happened and how you could have prevented it? Though we lay awake night after night, and think of it day after day, there is no answer as to why we have been thrust into this select group. We hate

it and we cry out in protest, but there is no way to change it. We have learned a lot since our membership began. We now understand much about the other members. In fact, we seek to be with them, to have regular get-togethers, to discuss our membership, and try to understand its value.

Sometimes, those outside the club are afraid of us, fearing that if they

# Janelle

by Grace Wutzke

till things started on their own, but as they days went by my anxiety had grown. My children needed mommy, I couldn't wait for weeks. This needed to be over, so I could mourn and grieve. My little bird had flown, so I had to let her go. She's with Jesus, safe and sound, and doesn't need me now. Good-bye my little baby in heaven up above. You brought me so much joy and I'm sending you my love.



come near us or talk with us, they will be selected to become members too! Acquaintances often try to ignore the membership, pretending that it doesn't exist. They seem to think that will make things easier, and then the members won't feel "different," but it really only makes things much worse. So many times, we have wanted someone to say hello or to tell us they have been thinking of us or to mention something about the absent child who still lives inside us and overshadows all our thoughts.

We have heard people say, "I don't want to upset her, or remind her of her baby, or say something that will make her cry." We want to tell them: The only way you can make me feel worse than I already do is to pretend that it doesn't exist or that it isn't as deep and painful as you surely know it is.

Have you ever experienced the feeling of having one terrible incident go

Sometimes we need someone

to simply be there... Not to fix anything or do

anything in particular, but

just to let us feel we are

supported and cared about

through your mind, day after day, week after week, month after month, wondering why it happened and how you could have prevented it? Well, don't worry about reminding us of our children. We are thinking about them nearly twenty-four hours a day. Sure, sometimes our minds are temporarily dis-

tracted--it would have to be to function at all. But if you think there is even one day that goes by without our children's death tearing up our hearts, then you have no idea what this club is all about.

We appreciate your talking about our children, or at least letting us talk about them. They are a very large part of our lives, and ignoring them now will really hurt us. It makes us think that you feel they are no longer important because they are gone. It hurts to think that people don't want to think about them or remember good things about them, just because they have died.

We understand that you don't want to say anything that will make us cry. That sounds kind, and we used to feel that way too, but now we know better. We'd rather the tears didn't come when you talk to us because we know they may scare you away, or at least make you very uncomfortable. But we've learned how useful and necessary they are.

If we go too long without tears, our body builds up a terrible pressure from the pain of the grief. If you will allow us to cry in your presence, perhaps we won't have to cry alone, wondering if anyone else remembers, or even cares, about our loss. You can't know what will make us cry--sometimes we don't know ourselves. Some days we stay dry-eyed through nearly everything.

> Other days, the slightest thing will start the tears--things you could not possibly imagine or anticipate. Not all the tears are tears of sorrow. Even in the midst of our anguish, we sometimes cry tears of joy and relief because you have reached out; because you have confirmed that our children were special:

perhaps because you have shared with us some precious memory about them which we had not known before.

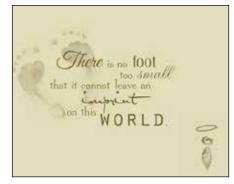
Please don't run away from us. Don't pretend their death never occurred, or even worse, that they never lived!

We still love them, think of them, and need to remember. Please share with us and we will all feel better.

We are learning that God is not punishing us. He did not cause the death of our children. But, He can help us to grow through this experience--to become stronger and wiser and more caring, if we have some help. Initially, when we were told that we would change and grow stronger through this experience, we wanted to scream that if it meant giving up our children, we didn't want to change or get stronger. But we know we have no choice about that now -- they are gone. Now our choices are to either let God, and friends, help us to become better; or we can choose to allow this grief to destroy us.

We have to experience the grief. We can't pretend it doesn't hurt, or hurry it along. That's what membership in this club is teaching us. We are choosing to allow God to take an unspeakable experience and use it to start life again... in a new and better way.

In Memory of our Newly Discovered Angels



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

Alexandra Erin Bleakney May 9, 2004

Erin Alexander Bleakney February 13, 2006

> Zion Ropp February 8, 2021

Atone Izere March 23, 2021

Janelle Joy Wutzke May 28, 2021

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.

# Rainbow Baby and Pot of Gold Birth Announcements

Georgia Bailey Marie Phillips

Born on April 19, 2020 weighing 8lbs 13oz to loving parents Chantelle and Jay. Georgia's angel siblings are watching over her from above and celebrating her safe arrival.

### Parker Gray Godfrey

Born on April 25, 2021 weighing 7lbs 4oz to proud parents Sarah and Sean. Parker has an angel sibling sending her love from above.

### Rachil Mileah Patzer Guse

Born on May 6, 2021 weighing 8lbs 5oz to excited parents Lisa and Trevor. Rachil is watched over and protected by her siblings in heaven.

#### Kenzie Jean Lemoine

Born on May 14, 2021 weighing 6lbs 12oz to loving parents Lacey and James and excited big sister Bria. Kenzie's big sister Hailey is celebrating with the angels.

#### Kymber Ann Scott

Born on June 8, 2021 weighing 7lbs 6oz to proud parents Amanda and Nate and excited big brother Kolt. Kymber's big brother Remy is celebrating Kymber's safe arrival with his Grandpa in heaven.

#### Ella Hope Grenier

Born on June 26, 2021 weighing 7lbs 2oz to overjoyed parents Lisa and Brandon. Ella's angel sibling Squirt is watching over Ella from above and celebrating her safe arrival

# Supports and Resources 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, an Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor.

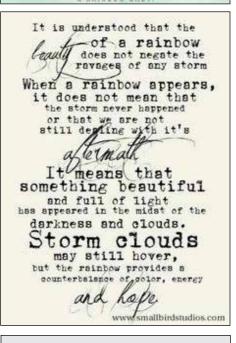
For more information and upcoming class dates and online courses, please visit www.yogaforgriefsupport.com A 'SUNSHINE BABY' 15 A BABY BORN BEFORE A MISCARRIAGE, STILLBIRTH SIDS OR ANY OTHER CHILOHOOD REATH

AN 'ANGEL BABY' IS A BABY LOSS TO MISCARRIAGE STILLBIRTH, SIDS OR ANY YDUNG CHILDHOOD LOSS. IF YOU LOSE TWINS THEY ARE GALLED 'SHOOTINE STAKS'.

IF YOU HAVE A TWINLESS TWIN, THE LOST TWIN IS CALLED A 'SUNSET BABY' THE SURVIVING TWIN IS CALLED A 'SUNRISE BABY'

> A 'RAINBOW BABY' IS A HEALTHY BABY BORN Following a LDSS.

A 'POT OF GOLD BABY' DR 'GOLDEN BABY IS A BABY BORN FRILOWING A RAINEEW BABY.



Support means I will walk with you. I will not try to change you or how you feel. I will simply be here beside you.

### "Giving is not just about making a donation, it's about making a difference."

### - Kathy Calvin



A *HUGE Thank You* to the following individuals for their generous support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program! Your support allows Angel Whispers to continue to provide hope and healing to families devastated by the loss of a baby.

- Betty Dean for her ongoing support and creativity in designing our Angel Whispers newsletters!
- To all our Angel Whispers volunteers!
- To Cara Richards for her ongoing commitment and dedication to Angel Whispers! Cara co-facilitates our monthly baby loss support group meetings and is our creative influence with Angel Whispers organizing our annual Christmas Healing Hands Workshops!
- To our Angel Whispers families who donate to the program with the gift of time, financial contributions or gifts purchased in memory of their sweet babies to be donated to families in need, your generosity and giving spirit is so greatly appreciated!
- To our Angel Whispers families that request donations from family and friends to Angel Whispers in memory of their babies.
- To Angela Loucks and Charmaine Martin for organizing the Two Mothers Fundraiser Bike, Run or Walk for a Cause in support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!
- To Paige Smith for organizing the Stained Glass Hearts Fundraiser in support of the Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program!
- To Shelly Kubbernus for creating and donating Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Ribbons for our Angel Whispers care packages in memory of her daughter Zoe!
- To Alberta Blue Cross Hearts of Blue for the donation of Angel Wings for our Care Packages!



# Can you Help?

Our monthly Angel Whispers Support Group Meetings (Baby Loss Support Group, Miscarriage Support Group and Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group) will be changing format to become a parent to parent model starting in September, meaning I will be taking a step back from facilitating the meetings after 19 years and will have parent volunteers run the meetings.

The intent behind the meetings has always been for parents to connect with other parents who have experienced a similar loss to help them feel better understood and supported.

When Angel Whispers was founded in September 2002, support group meetings were facilitated by myself and the two other co-founders. Through the years, life led the other two co-founders in different directions and away from Angel Whispers.

As much as I have loved facilitating the meetings and sharing my own personal journey through the loss of our two angels, Loren and Brooklynn, I feel as though it is time to allow others the opportunity and honour of sharing their stories and having their journey's inspire other's healing as they grieve the loss of their sweet babies. It is important that those interested in volunteering feel as though they are in Continued from page 6

a good place in their own grief journey as hearing other's stories of loss and heartache can be difficult to hear especially when one is in a vulnerable place in their own grief.

If you feel as though you would like to become a parent-to-parent connector for our support group meetings, please feel free to reach out to me @ 780-974-7054 or *angelwhisperbabyloss@ gmail.com*.

# **Healing Opportunities**



### HEARTS (Helping Empty Arms Recover Through Sharing) Baby Loss Support Program

www.briarpatchfamilycentre.com/ grief-programming

The BriarPatch Family Centre offers the H.E.A.R.T.S. Baby Loss Support Program. for anyone touched by the loss of a precious baby during pregnancy or anytime after birth. Support group meetings are held on the 4th Thursday night of each month, currently by Zoom Link. To access this Zoom Link, or to seek more info or grief counselling, please contact us via our Contact Us page or by phone: 780.690.6135.



# **Healing Opportunities**

### Dr. Alan Wolfelt - Community Grief Seminar

- April 20, 2022 (Rescheduled due to COVID-19 pandemic previously scheduled for April 20, 2020)
- Location: Westin Hotel, 10135 100 Street, Edmonton



Park Memorial is proud to bring back this dynamic grief counselor and speaker to help families in their journey through grief.

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 "companioning" 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 Healing Opportunities 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, his Centre for Loss, and his extensive Resource Library, visit *http:// www. centerforloss.com/*.

## ParentCare



### www.parent-care.ca

**Parent Care Support Society** We are a support group of parents helping parents who have suffered the loss of a baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, or early infant death up to 28 days. Support Group meetings are held the 3rd Thursday evening of each month.

## The Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support Centre

#### <u>Website</u>: https://pilsc.org/ <u>Call</u>: 1-825-205-7918 <u>email</u>: info@pilsc.org Helpline Available: 9am-11pm MST -7 days a week

The Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support Centre offers the following supports:

- Acute Crisis Line
- Text (1-888-910-1551) or Web Chat Online Support
- Professional 1:1 Help
- Loss Mentors
- Peer Support Groups (Grieving with Living Children, Grieving without Living Children, Partners in Loss, Art Therapy Group, Difficult Decisions Peer Support Group & Pregnancy After Loss Peer Group)

The Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support Centre is a non-profit registered charity that helps families obtain grief support on their path to healing after pregnancy or infant loss. Families just like yours can work with us remotely or in-office (currently not available due to COVID) and get support from our team with a variety of services that address each stage of the bereaved journey.

We offer FREE specialized peer support groups to meet you exactly where you are. Our group facilitators are either mental health professionals or peers who have also experienced loss.

PLEASE NOTE THAT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WE ARE OFFERING ALL GROUPS RE-MOTELY. YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US FROM ANYWHERE, YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE LOCAL TO CALGARY. EMAIL US TO LEARN MORE at *info@pilsc.org* 

## Next Steps after Loss OPEN Group

# Ideal for families considering or trying for a child following loss.

This group is for families considering or trying for a child following a loss. Parents may be considering fertility treatment, pregnancy, adoption or surrogacy. Parents may be, actively trying to conceive (naturally or through assisted fertility treatment), in the process of adoption or surrogacy. The group will cover topics such as acknowledging our stories, grief & loss, fears & anxiety, and creating healthy boundaries. This group is for both partners, couples and individuals are encouraged to attend. This group is affirming and trauma-informed.

## Difficult Decisions Peer Support Group

### Ideal for: Parents facing (or have already made) the decision to terminate a pregnancy for medical reasons.

Having to make the decision to end a wanted pregnancy is extremely difficult and comes with complex emotions. This group provides a space for you to freely share your journey with others who have also been there.

## Pregnant after Loss Meet Up

### Ideal for: Individuals who are pregnant again after experiencing a previous pregnancy or infant loss.

We are a peer support group providing a safe, non-judgemental space for individuals who are pregnant again after previous pregnancy or infant loss.

### Grieving without Living Children Peer Support Group Ideal for: Parents who do not have living children currently This group is about connecting with

other people who can relate to the complexities of not having children that others can see. The group addresses the unique challenges that parents of angel babies face.

### *Grieving with Living Children Peer Support Group* Ideal for: Parents who are parenting living children after loss

This group is about finding ways to grieve our children who are not with us, while also managing the responsibilities of parenting living children.

## Partners in Loss Peer Support Group

Ideal for: Partners who have also experienced loss

This group is about the acknowledgement of the unique and often disenfranchised grief that partners experience in their journey of pregnancy and infant loss. The group is an affirming place for those who are navigating loss as a partner.

## Fertility 6-week Closed Peer Support Group

### Ideal for: Those that are entering into or currently navigating the fertility journey

We are a peer group that allows people who are going through the fertility journey to connect in a non-judgmental setting. This group is about a space to acknowledge, support, and walk with each other through our fertility experiences, to discuss the many emotions we are faced with, to learn ways to cope with the cloud of confusion, anxiety and to gain self-awareness and self-direction. Both partners and individuals are encouraged to register and attend. We are an affirming and trauma-informed space.

## **Supports and Resources**





\*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.

Family and individual grief counselling available.

For more information on these grief programs, contact Chy Salter-Roberts at chysr@pilgrimshospice.com or 780.413.9801 ext. #302.

www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers

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Fundraiser

How does it work? Set a goal. Share it with your family friends, Share your journey as you go spreading awareness and stopping the silence on pregnancy and infant loss. Do it as a team, on your own or with your family! All donations have to be in Aug 22nd 2021.

July 1st

- Aug 22, 2021

Bringing awareness to pregnancy and infant loss with ALL donations going towards the Angel Whispers Baby Loss and Support Program. Angel Whispers is a free, confidential service for parents needing support through the loss of a child.

Reach on on Instagram at ale a rest and the Diffe ail in in Mathems Fundadalan er in angebehisperstatet remail com of some excamples