

November, 2012

Sharing Parents is a Sacramento based non-profit organization devoted to supporting parents who have experienced the loss of a baby from the time of conception through early infancy.

Our Purpose is to provide a safe environment where grieving parents with similar experiences can come together and share their feelings about the loss and the love of their babies. Our meetings are also a place where parents express the love they have for their baby in their compassion for others, where they can give and receive emotional support by sharing common experiences and learn about the natural grief process while working through and resolving their loss.

We Offer a variety of meetings and support services that are designed to help parents throughout the different stages of their grief. There is never a fee to attend our meetings.

Our Meeting Place

Mercy Women's Center
 650 Howe Avenue, Ste #530
 Sacramento, CA 95825

**Our Mailing Address
 & Phone Number**

Sharing Parents
 P.O. Box 19538
 Sacramento, CA 95819-0538
 (916) 424-5150

Upcoming General Meetings

November 11 : Making Memories – Art Project
 December 9 : Handling the Holidays

Subsequent Pregnancy Meetings

November 25 : Subsequent Pregnancy
 December – no meeting

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**"Breathe.
 Listen for my footfall in your heart.
 I am not gone but merely walk within you."
 ~Nicholas Evans**

Message from the Sharing Parents President

2012 Sharing Parents Volunteers

President

Rebecca Erickson

Vice President

Deanna Lockhart

Secretary

Noël Lehman

Treasurer

Ken Hisey

Past President

Kristie Avila

Short Term Grief Coordinator

Stacey Hisey

**Pregnancy Interruption
Coordinator**

Erin Greenough

Listening Line Coordinator

Lynne Genzel

Listening Line Volunteers

Molly Lawrence

Noël Lehman

Oct. Memorial Coordinator

Jennifer Stiltz

Community Outreach

Kristin Lunardi

Event/Fundraiser Coordinator

OPEN

Librarian

Rebecca Erickson

Newsletter Editor

Brion Maciel

Newsletter Assistant

Allison Clavel

Webmaster

Ken Hisey

General Volunteers:

Shannon Anderson,

Sarah & Nelson Canales,

Neil Genzel,

Molly Lawrence, Laura McHugh,

Ryan Stiltz, Tzeli Triantafillou

Letter from the Sharing Parents President, Rebecca Erickson

The months of October, November, and December can be difficult for many grieving parents. Some recently bereaved parents may have anticipated the upcoming holidays with a healthy baby or babies in their arms. Some may have imagined dressing their child(ren) in their first Halloween costume(s). Those of us who have already experienced holidays without our baby or babies know that, while time can make the pain less intense, time does not take away our pain or our losses. Holiday time can be difficult regardless of how long ago the loss(es) occurred.

Thanksgiving, a holiday usually spent with family, can be difficult when our babies are not in our arms. Maybe we imagined the attention our child(ren) would receive from relatives. We may find or worry that some family members may not be as supportive or understanding as we want or need them to be. Will we be bombarded with those well intentioned clichés or have to endure a conversation with someone who pretends nothing happened? And then what if there are other family members who may be pregnant or have living newborns?

In addition to the family aspect, December holidays can have a unique sort of pain. I speak of Christmas not to exclude other holidays at this time of year, but only because it is the holiday with which I am most familiar. We may have memories of our own childhood at holiday time. We may have had dreams of replicating traditions with our own child(ren). Stockings, Santa—many aspects of Christmas seem geared primarily for living children. And sometimes sadness can happen at times you least expect it. I spent one particular agonizing Christmas Eve at a mass in which the priest who had baptized my stillborn daughter in the hospital two years before discussed Christ's birth and how magical, miraculous, and wonderful motherhood is. His idea of motherhood was focused on mothers of living babies.

With all this said, there can be very positive and healing parts of these fall and winter holiday months. By remembering our babies and grieving for them we are doing important grief work. Grief can be difficult but it can help us process our losses. Of course, we need to take breaks from grief, as can't process the enormity of a pregnancy and child losses all at one time. We must have some enjoyable moments. We can find comfort in traditions, adapt traditions to meet our needs, and even make our own traditions. We might have vacation time that we could devote to renew and refocus ourselves.

However you are feeling as the holidays approach, Sharing Parents is here to support you. On November 11th from 7-9pm at our November General Meeting, we will be decorating ceramic ornaments in memory of our babies in addition to sharing our stories and love for our babies with one another. Our December General Meeting will be focusing on ways to handle the holidays. As always, our Listening Line volunteers are also available to speak with you during these difficult months.

Wishing you strength and love in these last months of the year,
Rebecca Erickson, 2012 Sharing Parents President

Rebecca Erickson
Sharing Parent's 2012 President

Remembering Our Babies With Love

Anniversaries, birthdays and holidays are difficult times for us. We remember with love....

NOVEMBER

Grace Kukas
Baby Krebs
Faith Marie Jones
Isaac Alcaraz
Tara Marie Schmidt
Kori Peters
Elle Pop
Grace Marie Nickles
Victoria Rose Domino
Carmen Rose Acuna
Kate Walker
Sally Adame
Baby Wyzanowski
Keegan Turner Gilwee
Zachary Zielinski-Kristianous
Travis Adrian Maheras
Baby Davis
Baby Denny
Justin Daniel Fleming
Abigail Furtado-Rinker
Malachi Ezekiel Harvey
Gabriel Moore March
Emily Steele
Saphire Robertson-Horner
Jody Lee Shunk
Samantha Rae Troutman
Zoey Louise Van Eenennaam
Isadora Vargas

DECEMBER

Justin Pardi
Angel Ramirez Aguilar
Olivia Lane Hirschberg
Jeremiah Harrison Murray
Julia Faith Murray
Sofia Senna
Sarah Lampe
Molly Ann Cottman
Cherish Amyx
Swasti Gupta
Alexandros Nichols
Christopher Eells
Alura Marrow
Baby Cruz
Justice
Olivia Grace Cowan
Elijah James Barker
Baby berger
Jack Ryan Hildebrand
Rebecca Grace Hadsell
Gino Mills
Nico Mills
Michael McNeese
Babies Patterson
Lynn Blackmen III
Owen Staley
Owen Staley
Colin Devey
Baby Heckley
Blaine Kevin Heckley, Jr.
James Terrence Waldron
Nicholas John Waldron
Baby Fraser
Gwenyth Marjorie Page
Emerson Avila-DeRosa
Samuel Isacc Dressen
Graham Lynn Graham
Ryle Lynn Graham
Santrika Shayann Holloway
Zackary Herkins
Baby Ocel
Christopher Thomas Webster
Baby Sheen
Baby Silva
Baby Ramos
Baby Rasmussen
Baby Riemer
Baby Ringenberg

JANUARY

Nathan Russell Scott
Tanner Kelley
Logan Henry Berry
Michael James Cromeenes
Gracie Ann Laackmann
Baby Schreck
Samuel Alan Demmin
Baby Beck
Brandis Behnken
Darian Brooks
Christian Lewis
Brayden Rose-Siefker
Raleigh Rose-Siefker
Liberty Amyx
Hector Campbell-Lockwood
Evelyn Lang-Cannon
Corbin David Crouch
Andrew Bond dos Reis
Kamore Kahealani
Naomi Brown
Timothy John Kilkelly
Baby Errichetti
Samantha Dahl
Selma Livadic
Hananiah James Oates
Lannette Jasmine Adams Step-
toe
Faith Ann Blakely
Baby Dressen
Elsabella Brophy Jett
Cashew Martinez-Gardner
Elias Matthew Ponce Zepeda
Angelica Robertson-Horner
Oliver Robertson-Horner
Baby Mallory Van der Veer
Baby Matthew Van der Veer
Baby Wildermuth
Baby Adams
Baby Ahdan
Josiah Ridgeway Anderson
Baby Bailey
Baby Bansal

Names are entered through
the sign-in sheet at all Sharing
Parents meetings.

Sharing Parents Update

Dear Sharing Parents Families,

Election time is upon us! 2012 has been an important year in raising awareness of Sharing Parents services in the community. Sharing Parents' meeting numbers are increasing. (TEN people attended the August General Meeting!) 2013 will need to focus on recruiting new volunteers so we can continue providing support to parents in years to come. Right now Sharing Parents needs volunteers to step forward and help out in 2013.

Please consider what Sharing Parents means to you and what you can offer Sharing Parents. We want everyone to be able to find a way to give back to Sharing Parents in whatever way they can. If you are interested in volunteering, please email sharingparents@yahoo.com.

Thank you always for sharing your precious babies with us,
Sharing Parents Volunteers



Sharing Parents Volunteers

Community Resources

It is our goal to begin a new section in the Sharing Parents newsletter which highlights one community resource each newsletter. If you would like to recommend or write up a description of a community resource that has been helpful in your grief journey, please email sharingparents@yahoo.com and put "Community Resource" in the subject line. Thank you!

Sharing Parents Community Outreach Update

Submitted by Kristin Lunardi

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, Sharing Parents volunteers have been extremely busy trying to educate professionals in the community about grief in general, perinatal grief, and Sharing Parents' free services. On August 20th, Sharing Parents spoke to 40+ Kaiser Roseville NICU, labor and delivery nurses, nurses from the mother/baby unit, nurses from the newborn unit, social workers and other staff. This presentation was very powerful for both the presenters as well as the participants. Many hugs were exchanged and there were lots of tears. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) were offered to the professionals for attending. Each participant is asked to complete a survey giving Sharing Parents constructive feedback so that we can better serve the needs of the community in future services/presentations it provides. One participant told Sharing Parents volunteers that their nurses do remember the losses but seldom remember the live births. They wanted for us at Sharing Parents to relay this back to our families to let them know that our losses do stay with them and they wish that they could follow up to find out how many of the families were doing. Another participant requested that we offer more classes like ours to the community. One told us that it made her realize that no loss is small and she feels more educated now to help and educate her patients.



Stacey Hisey and Shannon Anderson at the Sutter NICU Remembrance Event on October 15, 2012.

On Monday October 15th, in honor of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day, Sharing Parents will be participating in the Sutter NICU Remembrance Event. This is an annual event offered by Sutter hospital to families which includes a dinner, a butterfly release, sharing of resources, among other support services. Sharing Parents will have a table display and will be speaking to parents about Sharing Parents services and support group. Thank you, Stacey Hisey and Shannon Anderson, Sharing Parents volunteers, for participating in such a beautiful event.

We will also be presenting to Kaiser South on October 16, 2012. This presentation will be offered to Kaiser doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, and other staff. Thank you in advance to Darlene Viggiano Ph.D. (MFT) author of "Carrying On: A workbook for women who've lost a pregnancy" (2010) for arranging for Sharing Parents to speak to their staff.

This quarter was also spent contacting numerous local funeral homes to inform them about Sharing Parents and our support group. Many brochures and resources were shared. In this next quarter, more funeral homes will be contacted as well as other professionals in the community who may be directly working with the bereaved.

Community Resources

October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month

by Rebecca Erickson

This is an excerpt of an article published in the Bereaved Parents USA Sacramento-South Placer County Chapter October Newsletter

In October 1988, President Ronald Regan proclaimed the month of October to be “Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month.” In his speech, he noted that our society has terms for the loss of a spouse (widow or widower) and a child who has lost a parent (orphan), but no term to describe a parent who has lost a child. Such a loss is unimaginable and indescribable. Child loss goes against the natural order. The lack of a term to describe a parent who has lost a child could be viewed as symptomatic of society’s tendency to ignore the reality of child loss.

Our society tends to have difficulty acknowledging and discussing death in general—let alone the death of a child. The loss of a child during pregnancy or early infancy is further minimized in our society. When it comes to child loss, people tend to think that how long you’ve known a child dictates how much you love it. In Sharing Parents’ experience, how much one loves a child does not depend on how long the child lives. As long time Sharing Parents volunteer, Deanna Lockhart, describes it, “Parental love is instinctual and complete. Many new parents are instantly in love before the baby is born. This intense love doesn’t increase as our children get older; we just get more experienced in loving our children. Parents have more memories as the child gets older, but we don’t love our children any less if they die very young.” Parents grieving their babies are also grieving the loss of potential. As Doug Manning states in his 2003 *Special Care Series* of bereavement books, “the child has not lived long enough to establish their significance in the world so we must establish it for them. It is almost as if we must walk through the world for the child.” At Sharing Parents, we find that bereaved parents are also grieving what they imagined parenthood would be like. Parents who have no other living children may even question whether they are parents.

Some might be shocked at the frequency of pregnancy and infant loss in the United States. Miscarriage rates are usually reported as 1 in 4 pregnancies although some estimates are as high as 1 in 3. The CDC reports one in every 115 American pregnancies ends in stillbirth—defined as naturally occurring fetal death after 20 weeks gestation. This translates to more than 3,000 babies being stillborn in California each year; 25,000 babies in the United States each year. Due to the “Back to Sleep” campaign, SIDS is much more recognized but happens much less often. The American SIDS Institute reports 1 in 2,500 US children die of SIDS. According to Michael Bergman’s 2001 book *Parenthood Lost*, birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality in the US, and “of all infants born each year approximately 1 in 115 has heart and/or circulatory defects” (203). While these statistics can be helpful, once our loss has occurred statistics become less meaningful to those who are dealing with the loss. For them, it’s 100% loss. The more open parents are about their loss, the more they might find that they are not alone in their experience.



2012 October Memorial program created by Jennifer Stiltz.

Many parents who have experienced a pregnancy or early infancy loss find themselves in a secret club of which no one wants to be a part. All too often, pregnancy and early infancy loss is revealed and discussed only when we learn someone else has undergone a similar loss. Fortunately Sharing Parents Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support Group exists to help support grieving parents over the age of 18 whose babies have died from conception to early infancy (up to 6 months of age). Formed in 1981, the purpose of Sharing Parents is to provide an atmosphere where grieving parents can come together and share their feelings about their loss and the love for their babies. Based in Sacramento, it is a place where parents can both give and receive emotional support by sharing common experiences and learn about the natural grief process while working through their loss-- hence the name, *Sharing Parents*.

Since the time when President Regan’s speech brought heightened awareness to pregnancy and infant loss, October 15 has become internationally recognized as “Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day.” On October 15th *everyone* in all time zones all across the world is encouraged to light a candle at 7pm and keep the candle lit for one hour. With this simple act, we are creating a continuous wave of light all across the world. In place of our October General Meeting, Sharing Parents holds a non-denominational memorial service which recognizes and honors our dead babies. This year’s October Memorial will be October, 14, 2012 from 3-5pm. Anyone who has had a pregnancy or infant loss is invited to attend. The ceremony takes place in the State Capitol Park World Peace Rose Garden whose theme is Peace for Women, Children and Families. The Sharing Parents October Memorial is a time of sharing and remembering that includes a candle ceremony, special music, and a dove release.

Parent Submissions

Thoughts by Andrea Kay Bloom, mother of Robert Tenzin Bloom

Navigating the holiday:-

I used to not want for anything. I didn't have a lot, but I was happy. Now I want. I want you here, to dress in cute little Halloween hats, to sing Christmas carols to, to snuggle and welcome in the new year.

Celebrations can be difficult:-

It's still hard, 4+ months after your birth/death. Especially on special days, like your Daddy's Birthday. But I'm still realizing the gifts you brought us.

The gifts you give:

When you were just a seed in our mind's eye, you brought us focus and inspiration. When you were a growing, responsive baby, you brought us joy and anticipation. When you were gone, you brought us an awareness of our strength. Despite feeling quite weak, we are surviving. I have seen your Daddy in a whole new light. He is so brave while embracing his grief and sorrow. He doesn't lock your memory away; he brings it out into the light to share with me and others. I will continue to look for the gifts you gave.

Healing:

Today I went to the Healing Arts Gathering. It was like a small, open bazaar, where different healing modalities were offered.

I participated in a little tai chi. I talked to a few people that I know & love about my healing process.

There was a massage therapist there (Jim Gaetano). He encouraged me to have a massage. I was hesitant because I haven't had a massage since I was pregnant. I haven't had acupuncture either. I was hesitant to be touched in a healing way. I have managed to get back to the chiropractor, but a massage or acupuncture feels more indulgent.

So I did it. I laid down on the table. He asked me if there was a chance I was pregnant, so he could avoid certain pressure points. Ouch! "No," I said, "definitely not." After I was face down, I told him that I was sensitive to this whole experience because we had lost our son a few months ago. Then I tried to let go. Not of my son. Not of the pain. Actually, I tried to embrace the pain and allow whatever feelings I had wash over me. Wash me and clear me for healing. I cried. Not the sobbing, heaving crying that I know so well. Just gentle tears that covered the pillow. I relaxed and cried and got a good massage.

After 20 minutes, he finished. I was relaxed. I felt so good. I was proud of myself for doing it. I felt relieved to have overcome another obstacle in this path of grief & recovery. I felt clear. Like after a good storm, how the air is clean. I felt my soul was clean. Those good cries always seem to clear me and allow me to feel a little better.

This massage was so good for me. I'm really glad I did it. Thank you to Jim Gaetano for the wonderful massage, gentle with my heart & firm with my muscles, just the way I needed it.



Andrea and Bobby Bloom, parents of Robert Tenzin Bloom speak at the October Memorial .

Written by Laura McHugh, this speech was given at last year's October Memorial (2011) in honor of Isabella Sophia. Isabella would now be six years old.

“Isabella Sophia McHugh”

As I sit down to write my thoughts our house is full of noise, the noise of children's laughter as they play with their new puppy. Looking from the outside in it would seem like the perfect home.....5 years ago I thought the same thing. I was pregnant with our second...this time a girl. Our son at the time was 3 and a half and so excited to become a big brother. Every night we had a routine and he would kiss my belly and say, “goodnight sissy, I love you!” The arrival of our baby girl was greatly anticipated by everyone we knew.

I had just been given a lavish shower and was spoiled with all the things fit for a princess. My pregnancy at this point text book. No problems. After my 37 week appointment the doctor said everything was going great. Then 4 days later I stopped feeling her move. Reluctant to go to the hospital and even more sure that my princess was just sleeping a lot, my family convinced me to go and check to make sure everything was ok. So off my husband, Jeff and I went with nothing prepared. In our minds we would go, hear the heartbeat and be sent on our way. The night went nothing as I imagined.

The nurse checked me in and began to search for the heartbeat with the Doppler. I sat quietly waiting to hear the heart beat that was usually music to my ears. This time, nothing. The nurse politely said she wanted the on call Doctor to perform an ultrasound and excused herself. Jeff and I sat looking at each other still confused as to what was happening, but still not imagining what we were about to hear. As I laid there holding Jeff's hand tight I kept telling myself that everything was going to be fine. When the Doctor came in and performed the ultrasound I could not look at the screen or his face but could tell from the look on Jeff's face that what I was about to hear was going to change our lives forever.

Then the words came from the doctor....”I'm sorry”..... As tears filled my eyes the crying became uncontrollable. I am sure I had an out of body experience because most of what happened next was a blur. One of the first things I do remember was thinking how were we going to tell our son... our 3 and a half year old son..... that was so excited to meet his baby sister. How were we going to explain any of this to him when we ourselves didn't understand? How were we going to tell him that his baby sister was not coming home. The next thing I remember was thinking how in the world I was going to deliver my baby and hoping the doctors had some magical way of doing this so that the memories didn't haunt me forever.

The hours that followed were filled with phone calls that my husband and family had to make. Calls that should have been filled with joy were calls of unimaginable conversations followed by questions of how and why. My family was now panning a memorial service instead of a homecoming. On September 5, 2006 Isabella Sophia was born silent in the arms of God. No cries of a baby filled the delivery room, only tears of sorrow from a mother and father still in shock . I will never forget holding her tight and kissing her sweet, perfect face..... the day I to said hello and good bye all at once or the feeling of being to blame, the felling of disappointment and anger to be leaving labor and delivery without my baby girl and still not understanding how this could even happen.

The pain of losing Isabella is something that I am reminded of almost daily. I am still overcome with emotions when I see pregnant women who innocently go about their pregnancy not knowing or even thinking, as I once did, the devastation that could come with a Stillborn..... The pain of knowing I was never given the chance to see what color eyes she had, to know what her first word would be, to know her personality or the young lady she would become. Then there are all the other milestones that parents celebrate.....such as the first day of Kindergarten, which for Isabella would have been this year. I will never knowonly wonderand dream..... and hold on to the precious time I had with her for 9 months.

I see her so clearly when I look at my children. When I see them smile, laugh and play. I find myself staring at her picture and often wonder how our family would be different if she were with us today. How much she looks like her brother and sister that followed her. Or how hard it is when I meet people for the first time and get the inevitable question “So how many kids do you have”. Do I tell them.... 3.....2 beautiful children on earth with me and one precious angel in heaven. Each and every time this question is asked I am reminded of Isabella and how much I miss her.

Although 5 years has past, I am sometimes taken back and feel as though it was yesterday. The feelings of guilt and questions of why come rushing back; the deafening silence that filled the room after delivery, when all I wanted was to hear the beautiful cry of a newborn. How perfect she looked in every way and that all I kept thinking was..... she just looked asleep..... Holding her and praying that she would just breathe. It is hard for me to imagine how I made it through. It is because of Sharing Parents that I was able to begin my healing process. Through the meetings and the support of the families we met that allowed us the opportunity to realize we were not alone. I am thankful for those of you who have listened, shared and helped Jeff and I through one of the darkest times of our lives. I have come to realize the pain of losing Isabella will never go away..... it will only become more bearable with time. I also realize that it is through the love and support of my family that I am at this place of peace.....a family that has stood by me and is here today.....the ones that gave me the time to grieve.....that helps me recognize Isabella every year on September 5th the ones that say her name....the ones that love her as much as I do.....

I am so thankful for this memorial – Thankful that we are ALL able to honor our babies we have lost. Today my wish for those of you who have experienced a loss is that your pain has become more bearable.....that you are able to recognize your baby. That you know that it's ok to say your babies name out loud and acknowledge that they are and always will be a part of your family. Whether your story is similar or completely different, I want to say how sorry I am. Sorry that you hurt, that your lives will never be the same and sorry that you have had to experience a loss no one should ever have to endure.

Lastly..... to my sweet angel Isabella- it is for you that I stand her today and share your story Thank you for all you have taught me over the past 5 years. You have given me courage when I thought I could face no more..... you have given me strength when I thought I could bare no more..... and you have shown me love in a way I never thought I could know. I am proud to be your mommy and I honor you today and every day. When I look to the stars I think of you and know that you are with me..... I can feel your hugs from heaven..... You took a piece of my heart the day you were born and I love you more than you will ever know. You will forever be in our hearts.

Rainbow Baby

~anonymous ~

Submitted by Pamela Barker

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.



A Love Like No Other

By Tzeli Triantafyllou

I have experienced much in this level of existence.

I have immersed my being in different cultures, tasted the fruits of different lands, conquered peaks and reached new heights, embraced defeat, took hits and rose from the ashes like the phoenix...

My soul has been enriched with love that has given my life such a unique texture.

The fiber of my brain has been developed with kind elements, delicately placed in the epicenter of my being.

Yet my biggest blessing came to me from the most unorthodox source.

My most amazing gift arrived in a package that the average conditioned human mind cannot conceive or comprehend.

I have lived a life in search of teachers and learnings with which to define my place in this world and make my humble contribution of a shield to human suffering.

The most amazing teacher arrived with the August full moon a little over four years ago...

He was the smallest, yet the most powerful human being I have ever come across.

He challenged the status quo and asked me to embrace circumstances that I have not encountered before in my day-to-day experience of life.

He needed me to shuffle my perceptions, adjust my body and mind to a new reality.

He did not have a voice and yet he spoke to me so clearly.

He told me secrets about how conditioned our mind is and how what we focus on, has no power to bring us true contentment.

He reinforced what the true precious things in this level of life are.

He reminded me who my true friends were and exemplified to beauty of giving without expecting anything in return.

He taught me the importance of being present and how crucial a quiet mind is in our never-ending quest for untainted happiness.

He made my voice stronger....

He was the mirror to my soul and showed me how unconditional love can be.

He exemplified how powerful and how fragile we are and how important is to embrace how little control we have of anything outside our own control....

He was my son, the one I held so close for a blissful 5 months, the one I stroked tenderly, the one I sang to at night.

He was the son I never helped take his first step, the one I never got to take to kindergarten, or applauded at his performance at his first soccer game.

He was the most pure and untainted love I have experienced that shaped me to be the mother, the woman and the human being that I am today.

He is the love like no other, for me in my life, the one I kissed good bye on a cold December evening....

How could I ever explain the magnitude of his presence to the average person that seems to care for me?

How could I relate to another who understands the immense depths of sorrow and joy my son, had in store for me in our short time together in the realm of this level of existence?

I wanted to talk about him, let my tears flow, share my heart and his teachings with the world, yet no-one could understand....I quietly wrote my thoughts on a piece of paper, in an effort not to make others feel uncomfortable....

And then I found my self in a room, surrounded by people I had never met before....

...yet we could look at each others eyes and support each other tears, hold each other hand...feel each others pain, listen, understand...

...They provided me with the acceptance and a warm embrace to just be, feel and express my self, talk about my love for my son and keep his memory alive.

When I look back in my life, there are a few experiences that stand above the rest in making me who I am today....

My son Alexandros, and the "family" that allowed me to keep him close after I had to let him go physically, stand high above the rest....

They are my sharing parents, the "family" I chose to be part of...the fellow human beings that know this depth of unconventional love...a love like no other.

Holidays After Emma Graced My Life

By Rebecca Erickson

When I was a child, I would stockpile presents for my parents and siblings under my bed beginning around the month of July. As the youngest of four, I was known in my family as being an overly generous gift giver. When you start so early, you keep finding more and more things for someone! I remember one year giving my teenage sister a hairdryer and a mirror. This in the 1970's when electronics were much more expensive than they are now. I was disappointed when my mother would not allow me to buy anything else for my sister. I earned all the money myself and wanted to use it to buy things that I thought would make others happy.

When I became an adult, my husband and I would travel together to be with our families. This often meant we would fly on Christmas Day to spend part of the day with both families in different states. When I compare those years to the years after Emma graced our lives, many things remain the same. My family continues to be extremely meaningful to me. It might shock you, however, that I no longer exchange gifts with my extended family. After Emma was stillborn in July, I do not stockpile gifts, and I refuse to travel for the Christmas holiday season. I need to be at home with Emma's remains. I need to put up her tiny stocking, light a candle for her, and know that Santa will remember her with a candy cane. I need to have the freedom to make my own traditions and express my emotions—cry, smile, laugh, yell—whatever emotions need to be expressed at each moment—even if they are entirely different from one moment to the next. I do not need anyone to pass judgment on how I celebrate the holiday with both my living and dead children.

Emma has been in our lives for the past eight holiday seasons—the one precious holiday I carried her in my womb—the others when I carry her in my heart and in my soul. She will be with me for every holiday season of my life. She has given me strength to say no to commercialism and superficial things that don't seem as important to me now. I encourage my living children to make gifts for those they love—putting love into each bit of what they make. Emma is a constant reminder of how precious life is and how the time we have with each other can be much too short. I like the idea of surprising someone when they least expect it, love gifts out of the blue to remind someone how special they are.

I am hesitant to write about how I have come to spend holidays after Emma was stillborn. I certainly don't want to come across as offering advice. I just want to share how my holiday celebrations have evolved. Whatever you find yourself doing this upcoming holiday season, please trust in yourself that it is the right thing for you at the moment. If you must adapt traditions to meet your own needs or if you need to hold on to the traditions to guide you, I wish you a sense of peace and calm this holiday season.

Librarian's Corner

Book Reviews by Rebecca Erickson

Lending Library Book Review

by Rebecca Erickson

An Exact Replica of a Figment of my Imagination (2008), a memoir by Elizabeth McCracken, was recently donated to our Sharing Parents Lending Library. McCracken is a prize winning novelist who writes about her first son, Pudding, who was stillborn at in rural France in 2006. About her loss, McCracken says, "This is the happiest story in the world with the saddest ending" (16). She details how she "thought he was a sure thing" (12). A year and five days after delivering Pudding, McCracken delivered her second son who she holds on her lap as she wrote portions of this memoir. McCracken contends, "I am not ready for my first child to fade into history" (15).

Before McCracken's loss of Pudding, a fan had suggested at a book reading that McCracken "write a book about the lighter side of losing a child." McCracken was perplexed by this suggestion made by a woman who had lost a teenage son. While McCracken clarifies "This is not that book" (3), she says she's "coming around to understanding what the woman . . . wanted" (6). McCracken says she, too, wants "the impossible lighter-side book" (13). McCracken explains:

I will always be a woman whose first child died, and I won't give up either that grievance or the bad jokes of everyday life. I will hold on to both forever. I want a book that acknowledges that life goes on but that death goes on, too, that a person who is dead is a long, long story. You move on from it, but the death will never disappear from view" (13).

Elizabeth McCracken's An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination: A Memoir is now available for check out in the Sharing Parents Lending Library. The Lending Library also has many other personal experience stories of loss available. Please feel free to ask meeting facilitators for book suggestions.

New Additions to the Sharing Parents' Lending Library

Molly's Rosebush (1994) by Janice Cohn, D.S.W. and illustrated by Gail Owens

Grieving Dad's: To the Brink and Back (2012) by Kelly Farley with David Dicola

Someone Came Before You (2007) by Pat Schwiebert, illustrated by Taylor Bills

An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination: A Memoir (2008) by Elizabeth McCracken

Love Gifts

To honor your child's memory, send a "Love Gift" to Sharing Parents. A Love Gift is a monetary donation given in honor of someone or as a memorial to a baby, relative or friend. Not only will you be memorializing your baby but you will be helping Sharing Parents, which survives on donations and fundraisers. If you would like to donate a Love Gift to us, please fill out the form below. The deadline for inclusion in the next newsletter is January 15, 2013.



We welcome your Love Gifts in support of Sharing Parents. A Love Gift is a monetary donation made to honor your child's memory. Please make checks payable to **Sharing Parents of Sacramento**.

(Donations to Sharing Parents are tax deductible.)

Enclose your check, attach any special message to this form and mail to:

Sharing Parents
P.O. Box 19538
Sacramento, CA 95819-0538

In Loving Memory of:

Date of Birth:

Date of Death/Loss:

Donor Name:

Address: