My son, Jonathan, was stillborn in 1995—a time when the Internet was just getting off the ground. In fact, while I was on bed rest when pregnant with Jonathan, I remember watching a commercial that showed a man at his desk ordering flowers for his wife, making dinner reservations and booking an airline flight with seemingly just a few clicks of his mouse, all while looking at his computer screen. At the time, I did not even know what a “mouse” was, and I honestly thought the commercial was a bit far-reaching—impossible, really.

A couple of months after Jonathan’s stillbirth, I decided we needed a computer at home for some reason. I remember the first time I turned it on. I had no idea what in the world to do next. It was an impulsive purchase. We were so grief-stricken that we weren’t thinking clearly when we bought it. Why on earth would we need such a huge gadget in the corner of our bedroom? I remember calling my husband, Byron, at his office that day and telling him to just take it back. It was a stupid thing we had done and a waste of about $2,000. We kept it anyway and decided to join the World Wide Web (WWW). Oh, what a new world that opened for me! Back then, chat rooms were very popular, yet we were all warned of the many dangers of “talking” to complete strangers. I stayed away from that particular means of communication, but I was somehow introduced to the Listserv, Infanlos. There I met numerous women from all over the world who had suffered the death of a baby. It was through my computer that I was finally able to pour out my heart to women who truly knew and understood what I was going through. I’d stay up until all hours of the night communicating with my new virtual friends, telling them things about my grief that I had not told a soul. They got it and oftentimes told me they felt the same way. It was extremely healing and therapeutic.

Months later, I felt compelled to bring what I experienced in cyberspace into the real world. I figured if typing to a computer screen was helpful, surely meeting fellow grieving moms face-to-face would be much better. So, that’s kind of what happened—much of how M.E.N.D. was birthed, nearly 17 years ago.

M.E.N.D. was in existence for several months before we had a presence on the World Wide Web. Our good friends, Max and Jody Friz, who had suffered some miscarriages before we lost Jonathan, offered to create and maintain a website for M.E.N.D. Once the website launched, M.E.N.D. escalated to a whole new level. We then had women from all over the world learning about our ministry. The website eventually offered a guest book, which enabled families to post their stories and their email addresses if they wanted readers to contact them. It’s funny how what was at one time so incredibly helpful and healing is now completely obsolete.

About four years ago, one of our board members, Amber Zuckerman, who we affectionately refer to as our “computer geek,” began a M.E.N.D. Facebook page. I was not on Facebook at the time, nor did I have any intention of drowning myself in something of the sort. However, for about two years I kept hearing comments such as, “did you see what so-and-so posted on Facebook…?!” I eventually realized I was very much out of the loop within the ministry that I founded and directed. One night while Amber was sitting at my kitchen table with her laptop at a M.E.N.D. board meeting, she began pounding away on her keyboard then announced, “Okay, Rebekah. You have a Facebook account now.” What?? I didn’t even ask her or tell her it was okay. Once I learned how to navigate my way through Facebook, though, I was hooked! But more importantly, I saw how vital our M.E.N.D. page was for grieving families. Multiple times a day I read through the many posts on our M.E.N.D. page. Not only did I
The Heart of the Leader

My name is Amber Zuckerman. In December 2003, I was diagnosed with PCOS and told that I may never have children. I was devastated at this thought, but I trusted that this could not be God's plan. After some medical heroics, we were pregnant just six weeks after being told this news. Under the watchful eye of my doctor, we delivered our first son, Eli, in October 2004. We were told when we were ready to try again to call our doctor to repeat the magic formula.

Much to our surprise, without medical heroics, we found out we were expecting again in August 2006. Both surprised and excited, we moved through this pregnancy without incident, healthy and on track. On March 29, 2007, I went into labor and we headed to the hospital to bring our baby boy home. In the still of that night, monitor after monitor, nurse after nurse, tear upon tear, we were told that our AJ's heart had stopped beating. At 5:28 a.m. on March 30, Adrian Joseph "AJ" was born still in silence due to a nuchal cord x2 and a true knot in his umbilical cord.

Two weeks after AJ died, we were sitting in our first M.E.N.D. meeting and for the first time we felt validated for the emotions, thoughts and desperation we had been experiencing. We attended religiously each month and quickly knew that M.E.N.D. would forever be a part of our journey and our lives. As soon as Rebekah would let me, I began serving on the Walk and Christmas committees, fundraising, organizing raffles and administering M.E.N.D.'s social media presence. Today, I proudly serve on the board of directors and as the event fundraising coordinator.

Through M.E.N.D., we were able to regain our strength, define our new normal, and have over time been able to appreciate God's perfect plan. In April 2009, we welcomed AJ's hand-picked little brother, Alexander, to our family. When asked how many children we have, we say we have three boys: two on earth and one in heaven. I'm thankful God trusts me enough to share our little slice of heaven on earth through M.E.N.D.

♥ Amber Zuckerman,
Mommy to Adrian Joseph “AJ”
M.E.N.D.—Board of Directors

Return to Zero

M.E.N.D. is proud to sponsor the new movie, Return to Zero. This movie captures the lives of a successful couple preparing for the arrival of their new baby, only to find out weeks before the due date that the baby has died in the womb and will be stillborn. The film focuses the heartache and many issues that follow after the loss of a child.

This film will be released in March 2014. M.E.N.D. is encouraging our members, family and friends to support this movie when it comes to theaters, and to draw as many as possible to a showing of this film.

To learn more about this film, please visit www.returntozeromovie.com. Many states have also created Facebook pages in anticipation of the release of this film, and links can be found at the Return to Zero website.
Losing Rylan happened too fast for me to even process the whole situation. One morning I woke up and went to work like any other day, and by that night I was in the ER with a ruptured tube, internal bleeding, medicated on whatever they would give me to make the pain go away. And by that next morning I wasn’t pregnant anymore.

Post-surgery left me curled up in my bed with the laptop. There isn’t a whole lot to do on bed rest, and not much else that you are thinking about when you have a loss. I spent endless hours on every website I could get to. I looked up the answers to every question I could think of—would it happen again? what are the risk factors when I get pregnant again? is there anything out there to help? is this or that normal?

Of course, the “why” can never be answered. No matter how many times I searched couldn’t find anything that gave me comfort. That was the question that I wanted answered more than anything, but I know now that it won’t ever be answered in a way that I want.

So instead, I started blogging. It’s easier to deal with the pain when someone isn’t looking at me, isn’t expecting me to say something, isn’t watching every tear, doesn’t try to interject their thoughts when I just need a moment to think. It is easier to collect what I want to say and deal with unsuspecting surprises that come up. I can process my own thoughts and come back to it later. I don’t feel out in the open, I feel like I can share with everyone at the same time something that hurt instead of reliving it every time a friend calls.

But most of all, I feel like I can just survive. Because even if no one else wants to talk about Rylan, I know I have a place to go where I can say anything I want whenever I want. I can unleash my sadness without fear of judging eyes. I can hash out my emotions and figure out how I’m doing without the pressure of coming up with an answer in a moment’s notice. It’s my way to grieve, to remember, to feel. If I share it and it helps someone else, that’s really the second most important reason why I started it.

Kristian Doucette, Mommy to Rylan
M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

Continued on page 15
Birthday Tributes

Happy 5th Birthday, Daniel!
It has been five years since we heard the words that shattered our hearts and forever changed our lives: “He didn’t make it.” My precious angel, you are loved and missed more than words could ever say. You were on this earth for such a very short time but will live forever in our hearts. Happy fifth birthday, Daniel Nicholas. Until we hold you again, we are sending tons of love, hugs and kisses to heaven. xoxoxoxoxo

Daniel Nicholas Woodard
August 31, 2008
Complications due to premature birth
Parents: Joe and Danette Woodard
Siblings: Kristina Vice, David, Douglas and Nicole

Happy 2nd Birthday, Harmony!
Mommy and Daddy miss you!

Harmony Lopez
August 20, 2011
Fraser Syndrome
Parents: Victor and Jenny Lopez
Siblings: Romeo, Jasmine, Alexandra and Savannah

Happy 5th Birthday, Isabella!
Happy fifth angelversary.
We love and miss you so very much.
Until we meet again,
Mommy and Daddy

Isabella Alorah Baca-Lopez
July 11, 2008
Intrauterine Distress
Parents: Delores Baca and Jose E. Lopez, Jr.

Happy 1st Birthday, Brooklyn!
Brooklyn, you were taken away from us so suddenly, cruelly, unfairly and unjustly by the hands of a stranger. But, princess, you’re too beautiful and perfect for him to let you be tainted, and so to heaven you went. Mommy, Daddy and your sisters miss and love you more than words could say. We will all be together, in heaven, again one day! We love you, Brooklyn!

Brooklyn Antonetty
Murdered August 24, 2012
Parents: Jamaal and Marena Antonetty
Siblings: Brianna and Alyssa

Happy 1st Birthday, Leilani!
Sweet Leilani, I miss you every day! You gave me hope when I thought hope was lost. I am grateful for the weeks I carried you and look forward to the day when I will finally see your face. Your story has touched many lives, and I know God is using your short little life for a greater good than I could have ever imagined! Kiss your brothers for me.

Love,
Mommy

Leilani Rose Palmer
August 25, 2012
Ectopic pregnancy
Also remembering
Ezra Grey Palmer
October 5, 2009
Ectopic pregnancy
Nathaniel Ellis Palmer
Miscarried October 20, 2012
Jude Michael Palmer
Miscarried December 20, 2012
Parents: David and Kristi Palmer
Sister: Penelope

Happy 8th Birthday, Ryland!
Happy eighth birthday in heaven, Ryland!
We miss you every day.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Sissy and Buddy
xoxo

Ryland Dixon
August 12, 2005
Infection
Parents: Bryan and Kelly Dixon
Siblings: Leighanne and Conor

Happy 2nd Birthday, Wyatt!
Happy second heavenly birthday, Wyatt! Oh, what we would give to be with you celebrating. Your daddy and I live each day for you, beautiful boy. You are our miracle, and we are so very thankful for you.

Love always,
Mommy and Daddy

Wyatt Lane Vowell
July 25, 2011
Staph infection
Parents: Lavane and Lancer Vowell
Happy 1st Birthday, Harper!
We can’t believe it’s been a whole year since you went to heaven. We miss you and love you so much! Your big brother and sister ask about you often. You are not forgotten! Love always and always.

Harper Kathleen McBee
June 5, 2012
Cystic Hygroma, cord entanglement
Parents: Ryan and Heather McBee
Siblings: Jackson and Olivia

Happy 6th Birthday, Justice!
To my Dreambaby, my first true love, it’s hard to believe it’s been six years, but I still miss you like it just happened. I love you so much and wish we could’ve gotten to know each other, but everything happens for a reason!

Always and forever,
Your Mommy!

Justice Patrice Richardson
July 13, 2007
Early labor caused by infection
Mommy: Brandis Richardson

Happy 6th Birthday, Gabby!
We think of you every day and speak of you often. We want you to know how loved and missed you are today and always.

“Our time has ended; I feel it’s only just begun and I’m frustrated. Will I fall to pieces or am I alright? My heart is bursting through my chest, now I’m crying, the tears falling off my face. Heaven, where is my angel? I need her now.”

-BFMV

Gabriella Grace Garcia
Miscarried July 3, 2007
Also remembering
Abigail Sophia Garcia
Miscarried June 17, 2011
Parents: Adam and Alex Garcia
Siblings: Kylie, Adayna and AJ

Happy 1st Birthday, Angel!
Happy first birthday to our baby, Angel from above. We love you and miss you each and every day. Your brothers hope you’re having lots of fun in heaven! You will be remembered by all of us, including Grandma and Grandpa, until the day we meet again in heaven.

Angel Ray Garcia
July 12-13, 2012
Anencephaly/heart defect
Parents: Marco and Cynthia Garcia
Siblings: Marco Jr. and Jason

Happy 2nd Birthday, Jordan!
Happy second angelversary, sweet Jordan. Mommy and Daddy think about you every day. We miss you but know one day we will all be together. Love you, sweet baby.

Jordan Taylor Fugitt
Miscarried July 2011
Also remembering
Rylie Peyton
Miscarried November 2011
Parents: Justin and Barbara Fugitt
Sibling: Carter Alexander (due July 26)

Happy 4th Birthday, Jackson!
We can’t believe it has been four years. So much has happened, but one thing has never changed, and that is how much we love and miss you! We stand firm knowing one day we will all celebrate your birthday together. Until then, we can close our eyes and feel you close. We love you and miss you. We all love you and look forward to the day we all meet again!

Here for a moment, in our hearts for a lifetime!

Love,
Mommy and Daddy, Isaiah and Thomas
Nana and Pawpaw Voyles
Aunt Heather and Uncle Terry and Eden and Haden
Grandpa and Grandma Wood
Aunt Amy and Uncle Damon and Grayson and Gavin

Jackson Connor Wood
Stillborn June 6, 2009
Blood clot in cord
Parents: Darin and April Wood
Brothers: Isaiah and Thomas

Happy 3rd Birthday, Stephen!
Happy birthday, baby boy! We love you so much and miss you everyday!

Stephen Grosnick
June 12, 2010
Amniotic band syndrome
Parents: Michael and Shannon Grosnick
Sibling: Emmalin

Happy 3rd Birthday, Benjamin!
We love you very much and think about you every day. You are our little angel. We wish you could be here with us, but we know that you are in heaven watching over us. Love you, Little Man.

Benjamin Joseph Curtis
Miscarried July 17, 2010
Parents: Joseph and Jennifer Curtis
Sister: Rebecca
Happy 2nd Birthday, Aeriana!
In the hospital I was given a rag doll to leave a scent to comfort you. Now you leave the rag doll here with your scent to comfort me. You are gone but never forgotten, for you are my baby who now lives in heaven.

Aeriana Tamia Horn
August 22—September 29, 2011
Premature birth
Parents: Sylvian Walker and Jawann Horn
Sibling: Khadence Walker

Happy 3rd Birthday, Westin!
There is not a day that goes by that we don’t think of you or miss you. Your little sister and brother already know all about you and will continue to learn about you. I hope you are having a heavenly third birthday. We love you, Westin

Westin Dobbins
August 8, 2010
Incompetent cervix
Parents: Randy and Cortney Dobbins
Siblings: Cynlee and Colt

Happy 1st Birthday, Catherine!
My sweet Catherine, living without you here is heartbreakingly awful, but I sit in constant amazement at all the beautiful people and blessings your short life has brought to me. You’ve shown me how to love without expectation, to grow in Christ and to see the unfailing beauty of life. You were so beautiful, so courageously strong and you will always have a piece of my heart. I never knew what true love was until I held you in my arms, and the piece of my heart you took with you will always be yours to keep. I’m so very lucky to have a piece of my heart in heaven. I made you a promise in those tiny moments we had together to always remember your life, to always celebrate your time on earth more than I grieve because of your death. I intend to keep that promise all of my days. Happy first birthday, my tiny fighter. Mommy misses you more than words can say.

Catherine Grace Chapman
August 10-12, 2012
Extreme prematurity due to HELLP
Mommy: Kara Chapman

Happy 3rd Birthday, Princess!
We love and miss you so much!
Mommy, Nana, TT-Kay and TT-Eb ♡

Princess-Jahzara Emani
July 26, 2010
PTL/incompetent cervix/premature
Mommy: Jasmine Swain

Happy 3rd Birthday, Tristan!
To our sweet son that we barely knew but loved so dearly, you were the light of our lives and continue to inspire us to live everyday to the fullest. We love you so much.

Tristan Matthew Davis
August 25, 2010
Preterm Labor
Also remembering
Baby Davis I
March 2009 at 8 weeks
Unknown cause
Bryan Thomas Davis
December 11, 2009
Two vessel cord
Baby Davis II
March 2011 at 6 weeks
Ectopic pregnancy
Baby Davis III
January 2012 at 4 weeks
Chemical pregnancy
Baby Davis IV
May 2012 at 4 weeks
Chemical pregnancy
Baby Davis V
September 2012 at 4 weeks
Chemical pregnancy
Baby Davis VI
March 2013 at 4 weeks
IVF Chemical pregnancy
Parents: Brent and Melissa Davis

Happy 1st Birthday, Elizabeth!
Mommy, Daddy, your grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins love you more than words can say. We think about you every single day and will love and miss you forever and ever. You will always be our firstborn and precious baby Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Luke Matthes
July 25, 2012
Umbilical cord accident
Parents: Lance and Marianne Matthes

Happy 12th Birthday, Griffin!
Happy birthday wishes ascending your way, to wish you the happiest 12th birthday today!
With all our love,
Dad, Mom, Mya and Aidan

Griffin Caleb McIntosh
Stillborn June 6, 2001
Parents: Matthew and Naomi McIntosh
Siblings: Mya and Aidan
Happy 3rd Birthday, Emmaline!
Happy third birthday, Little Miss!
Little miss, pretty miss,
Blessings light upon you!
If I had half a crown a day,
I’d spend it all upon you.

That poem I read to your sister always makes me think of you, because Daddy lets me buy you whatever I want for your keepsake shelf! I cannot believe what a big girl you are now. Your little brother smiles and giggles at your picture so much I am convinced he knew you before he was born! We all miss you so much!

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Mckinley, Maddie and Maxton

Emmaline Ila Legg
July 29, 2010
Full-term placental abruption
Also remembering
Baby Legg I
Miscarried 1999
Baby Legg II
Miscarried 2009
Baby Legg III
Miscarried 2011
Parents: Jimmy and Ami Legg
Siblings: Mckinley, Madeline and Maxton

Happy 1st Birthday, Isaac!
Our sweet little 1 year old lamb. We miss you so much and pray you have an amazing 1st birthday in heaven. Mommy, Daddy, Noah, Grace, Elijah and #5 love you so much and look forward to seeing you again one sweet day! The kids say “Happy Birthday” and hope you are having fun and love heaven!

Isaac Eugene Vrba
August 26, 2012
Unknown cause
Parents: Jerry and Kristen Vrba
Siblings: Noah, Grace, Elijah and #5 (due December 22)

Happy 2nd Birthday, Eli and Mei Li!
Our precious babies, I can’t believe it’s been two years since our lives forever changed. We miss you guys and think about you all the time. You now have a little sister named Jade. I can’t wait to tell her about you guys when she is able to understand. Your big brother, Maximus, is as busy as ever and takes good care of his little sister just as he would have of you guys. I look forward to the day we meet again.

Love you guys always and forever,
Daddy, Mommy, Maximus and Jade

Eli Payton
July 25, 2011
Mei Li Payton
July 28, 2011
Unknown cause
Parents: Ryan and Ashley Payton
Siblings: Maximus and Jade

Happy 5th Birthday, Noah!
Noah, we miss you more than ever as your fifth angelversary approaches. Mommy and Daddy know you live on through your sisters. We feel like we’re getting glimpses of what you would be like if you were on earth with us today. We are wishing you a very happy fifth birthday in heaven. We all love you so very much, and we’ll meet again one day “on the other side.”

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Twin Sister Julia and Little Sister Sydney

Noah Powell
Stillborn July 22, 2008
Cord accident
Parents: Nate and Barb Powell
Sisters: Julia (twin sister) and Sydney

Happy 9th Birthday, August!
Sweet baby August, time continues to march on, and it doesn’t seem possible that it’s been nine years since you were wanted, surprisingly discovered and so quickly gone. Your birthday this year is already looming in front of me because the very next day your little sister, Madison will start kindergarten. It’s going to be a hard week for Mommy and Daddy! We love you and miss you! Give your brother a hug for us!

Mommy, Daddy and Maddie

August Fann
August 13, 2004
Miscarried 8 weeks
Also remembering
Caleb Scott Fann
December 1, 2003
PROM
Parents: Jonathan and Heather Fann
Sister: Madison Grace
Happy 1st Birthday, Aylin!
Baby Aylin, though you were never born here on earth, we know you are alive in heaven. We all wish you were here, and we love you very much!

Aylin Christian Cooley
July 1, 2012
Unknown cause
Also remembering
Baby Lappin 1
Miscarried 2004
Baby Lappin 2
Miscarried 2006
Baby Cooley 3
Miscarried 2008
Baby Cooley 4
Miscarried 2009
Parents: Chris and Jessica Cooley
Siblings: Ryan, Riley and Christopher

Happy 2nd Birthday, Aubree!
I can’t believe it’s been two years since I’ve held you in my arms, my love. I miss you more and more each day. I wonder about all the things our Father has taught you. I know you are in a beautiful place with our Father, and for that I am grateful. Please remember how much we all love you! Until we meet again...

Aubree Faith Carmichall
August 18, 2011
Uterine rupture
Parents: Jeremy and Kelly Carmichall
Siblings: Ryan and Breean

Happy 1st Birthday, Baby Oden!
To my little angel in heaven, my heart aches because you aren’t in my arms. I’m sorry that Mommy’s still mad at the world, but it seems so wrong and so unfair. I want to hold you, kiss you and keep you safe with me, but instead you are in the arms of the Lord. Please be patient with me as I learn to live without a piece of my heart; it’s a daily struggle and often a minute-by-minute battle of emotions. I love you.

Baby Oden
August 15, 2012
Missed miscarriage
Mommy: Tina Wharton

Happy 9th Birthday Jordyn!
We love you and miss you every day. Sending you balloons in heaven.
Happy birthday, Sissy!
Love,
Your twin, Jada, and baby brother, JR
Mommy and Daddy

Jordyn Lynae Johnson
July 13-16, 2004
Umbilical blood clot
Parents: Bruce and Debra Johnson
Siblings: Jada and Bruce Jr.

Happy 3rd Birthday, Jason!
Happy third birthday, son! As we watch your little brother grow up, we miss you more and more each day. We will hold you close in our hearts until the day we see you in heaven. We love you so much!

Love,
Mommy and Daddy

Jason Michael Murphy
July 29, 2010
Unknown cause
Parents: Michael and Diana Murphy
Little brother: Trevor

Happy 7th Birthday, Livi!
Happy birthday to our Livi! Wow—to imagine you are seven years old and our world was turned upside down then is just unimaginable to us, but it is so true. Mommy imagines that you are a little caramel, fat-cheeked little girl with two ponytails and in lavender, trimmed in sorbet green dress, running and laughing on the streets of gold in heaven. God’s plans are hard to understand and accept, but in seven years we have been able to live with your loss, because we know we will see you in heaven one day and God has given us so much strength. We look at your brother, Jaxson and now your little sister, Lauryn, and wonder which one would favor you the most and if without your loss would they both be here. While we do not know the answers to these questions, we do know we love you more and more each day and will continue to make sure you have a legacy in this world. Your loss and our suffering were not in vain. We love you and want you to have a happy heavenly seventh birthday and celebrate it with Papa, Grandma Eloise and all the others family and friends we know.

Love,
Daddy, Mommy, Jaxson and Lauryn

Alivia Elizabeth-Grace Walker
Stillborn July 24, 2006
Incompetent cervix
Parents: Robert and Liz Walker
Siblings: Jaxson and Lauryn
Happy 2\textsuperscript{nd} Birthday, Zacc!
No words I write could ever say
How sad and empty I feel today.
The angels came for you
Much sooner than I planned.
I’ll brave the bitter grief that comes
And I’ll try my best understand.
Zacc, why did you have to go away?
Why wasn’t it right for you to stay?
In my heart, Zacc, will always be.
I love him dearly,
And I know he’ll watch over me.
What I’m suffering seems so unfair,
But one thing is for certain,
My love for him will always be there.
Zacc, my son, you always will be.
Oh, how I miss you, my Lil Monkee!!
Love, Mama

Zacchaeus Monjoi Roberts
Prematurity and severe respiratory distress
Also remembering
Angel Baby Roberts
Miscarried 1998
Mommy: Ronesha Roberts

Happy 3\textsuperscript{rd} Birthday, Christian!
Precious boy, it has been three years since you went Home. Some days it feels like we lost you in the past few hours. Other days it feels like a lifetime since we held you and kissed you. Our hope is in Jesus, and we know we will spend eternity with you. We miss you and love you!
Mommy, Daddy, Michael and your new sister, Mya

Christian Graham Wells
Stillborn July 11, 2010, at 34 weeks
Unknown cause
Parents: Glen and Mitzi Wells
Siblings Michael and Mya

Happy 2\textsuperscript{nd} Birthday, Elena!
“What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”
-Helen Keller
Our precious Elena, we love and miss you every day. We hold you in our hearts until we are able to again hold you in our arms.
All of our love,
Mommy, Daddy, Liam and Asher

Elena Marie Rusert
May 23, 2011
Prematurity
Parents: Michael and Tina Rusert
Siblings: Liam and Asher

Happy 2\textsuperscript{nd} Birthday, Brand and Colt!
Dear Brand and Colt, my precious boys, I can’t believe another year has come and gone—so much has happened this past year. You two are big brothers to a sweet sister who resembles you both very much. It’s bittersweet watching her grow while at the same time imagining how it would have been watching you two. I think of you boys often, miss you terribly and love you both with every fiber of my being. I am still waiting for the day I can hold my sons in my arms again; I am one year closer.
Love,
Mommy, Daddy and baby sister Clara

Brand and Colt Whigham
August 4, 2011
Umbilical cord entanglement
Parents: Chris and Beverlyann Whigham
Little sister: Clara Grace

Happy 5\textsuperscript{th} Birthday, CJ!
Happy 4\textsuperscript{th} Birthday, Marina!
CJ and Marina, even though we miss you still, we have seen good come from your short lives. Your big sister, Emily, was recently baptized. You influenced her decision to ask Jesus into her heart as I answered questions about where you were and how to get to heaven. Thank you for being a part of that important decision in her life. We love you always.

Love,
Daddy, Mommy and Emily

CJ Gold
Miscarried August 12, 2008
Marina Gold
Miscarried July 14, 2009
Parents: Greg and Kathryn Gold
Big sister: Emily

Happy 7\textsuperscript{th} Birthday, Ian!
Ian—our sweet boy! I can’t believe that it’s been seven years since you made your surprise entrance into our lives. I’ll always be grateful for the “bonus month” we had with you! I can only imagine how enriched our lives would be if you were still with us, but for now, I am grateful for the growth and healing that has come in your absence. Happy birthday! We love you!

Ian Wesley Giger
August 3—November 5, 2006
SIDS
Also remembering
Baby Giger
Miscarried February 2007
Parents: William and Noel Giger
Siblings: Calvin, Jordan, Gavin and Aaron
Happy 9th Birthday, Noah!

Happy ninth birthday, baby boy! It never gets easier. I miss you so much. I think of you being a big boy playing baseball with your bubba, Damien, wishing I can see you run and play! I know God had a different plan for you, so for now I can imagine you playing on Jesus’s baseball team of angels. Until I see you again, I will be cheering for you from down below, waiting for God to choose me to be with you. I love you so much. Happy birthday, Noah!

Noah Adam Barron
July 5-19, 2004
Hypoplastic lung syndrome
Parents: Lupe and Clem Barron
Siblings: Anthony, Damien, Naomi and Nicholas

Happy 9th Birthday, Caelan!

Our dearest Caelan, we miss you more than words could express. We think about you every day. You have a new baby sister, Finlea Rose. You will love her sweet smile, and she will love you so much. We will find a way to share with her about you and the meaning you brought to our lives through yours. You will always be so special. We hold you in our hearts until we can hold you in heaven.

Love,
Mom and Dad

Caelan Matthew Wallace
July 30—August 3, 2010
Preterm labor
Parents: Andy and Dana Wallace
Little sister: Finlea Rose

Happy 2nd Birthday, Bailey!

Little Princess, not a day goes by that we don’t think of you. We often talk about how crazy it would be in this house with you here, too. We miss you so much. We hope you get all those nightly kisses from big brother, Anthony. He insists on kissing you goodnight.

Happy second birthday in heaven! We can only imagine the amazing party that is thrown up there.

Love and miss you daily!
All the love in the world,
Momma, Papa, Anthony and Crystian

Bailey Diane Gosiak
July 13—August 2, 2011
ACD (Alveolar Capillary Dysplasia)
Also remembering
Baby Gosiak
Early miscarriage April 22, 2008
Parents: Adam and Megan Gosiak
Siblings: Anthony and Crystian

Happy 3rd Birthday, Luke!

Happy third heavenly birthday, my sweet boy! I miss you very much, and I think of you every day. I am so proud of being your mom, and I love when I get a chance to share your tiny but powerful life with others. It has not been easy to live this life without you, but I promise to you I am being strong because of you. I love you, special boy! I know in my heart you are rejoicing in the presence of our Lord, and you are with your other siblings that I miss dearly, too. From here to heaven, mommy sends you tons of kisses, my precious Luke.

Always and forever love,
Mom

Luke Noe Johnson
July 26, 2010
Preterm labor due to MTHFR
Also remembering
Jude Hope Johnson
Miscarried October 30, 2009
MTHFR
Faith Johnson
Miscarried September 2, 2011
MTHFR
April Johnson
Miscarried April 10, 2012
MTHFR
Parents: James and Merle Johnson
Sister: Emma Grace

Happy 4th Birthday, Baby Boy!

As time has gone by, so many have forgotten you, but you will always hold a special place in our hearts. Lord, please continue to hold our precious son close to your side until we can join him someday. We love you so much!

Daddy, Mommy, and brother Soren

Baby Boy Stratton
Miscarried August 22, 2009
Parents: Jason and Miriam Stratton
Little brother: Soren

Happy 1st Birthday, Princess Penelope!

A year has come and gone, and we miss you, Princess! I want you to know that my love will find you wherever you are; there is no place that it can't find you. Until we are reunited, I will think of you, my little ladybug, every moment of every day! Feliz Cumpleanos, Princesa!

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, Angelica, Cristiano and Vivian

Penelope Rosero
August 17-20, 2012
Villamentous insertion of umbilical cord
Parents: Zabdi and Maria Rosero
Siblings: Angelica, Cristiano and Vivian
Happy 5th Birthday, Theo!
“My big brother Theo is in heaven, with Jesus.”
While this truth still causes my heart to hurt, you will
forever be my precious boy who is loved and missed.
Happy heavenly seventh birthday!
Love from Mommy, Daddy, Ysabel and the Family

Theo Fleurima Shannon
August 10, 2008
Neonatal death
Parents: Ted and Geri Shannon
Siblings: Ysabel

Happy 3rd Birthday, Henry and Sam!
Happy birthday to our sweet angel babies. We can’t
believe it has already been three years since you came into
our lives. We miss you very much and always say big
prayers thanking God for our time with you and for
knowing that our time apart is temporary compared with
the forever that we will one day have! We learned so much
from you during your short time on earth. We know that
you watch over your little brother, Jack, and your baby
brother, Luke, who will be here soon. We carry you in our
hearts always and love you so very much.
Big Hugs!
Mommy, Daddy, Jack and Luke

Henry Forrest
July 24-25, 2010
Samuel Forrest
July 24-August 8, 2010
Preterm labor-unknown cause
Parents: Peter and Julie Forrest
Little Brothers: Jack and Luke

“Social Network Grieving” continued from page 1
realize how great it was to have a place for bereaved families to pour out their hearts, but it was also a wonderful
vehicle for families to minister to and encourage fellow grieving moms. It didn’t take long before I made an executive
decision that all chapters of M.E.N.D. must have their own Facebook pages. Admittedly, we’ve had some issues that
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It has been 18 years since I was in the deep, dark throes of grief—at a time when expressing our sorrow publicly
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not taken advantage of what is “out there” for you, I encourage you to check it out and try it. Join one of the ten
M.E.N.D. Facebook pages today (see “Connecting Through Facebook” on page 19 on how to join), and let us help
you as you journey down this lonely road of grief.

♥ Rebekah Mitchell,
Mommy to Jonathan Daniel and Baby Mitchell
We all have memories that we hold precious and dear to our hearts, no matter how brief our time was with our little ones. These moments are sacred, cherished beyond measure and are guarded safely for a choice few. Our stories are personal tragedies, painted pictures of worlds falling apart. We don’t look for pity, but rather recognition that our baby(ies) existed. We are faced with questions that cause an inner debate on whether we tell about our nightmares or just give a simple lie as an answer.

We live in the technological age, where information is a click away and phone calls are almost a thing of the past. In a world ruled by social media, how can our grief fit? Child loss, though it is gaining positive support, is still a very taboo subject. After keeping my Facebook “friends” updated throughout my entire pregnancy, I panicked after we lost Gabriel. I didn’t know if I should ever log in to my account again, because what could I say? I didn’t want to go into details, and I didn’t want to hear the apologies or condolences, but I knew no matter how sugar-coated the story was, questions would come.

I won’t lie—it hasn’t been easy navigating the murky waters of social media. When you sit behind an emotionless computer screen, it can be hard to determine who is friend or foe. I scrutinized every comment, every question. I lost people who I thought were friends and even received negative feedback when I shared Gabriel’s pictures. Though it wasn’t an easy path, especially during the early storm of grief, my choices have led to my own safe haven.

I have always loved writing. It is a way for me to get my feelings out where, in other situations, words have failed me. I questioned why my story shouldn’t be heard. Why should I be made to feel as even less of a mother because other people were uncomfortable with reality? A drive was born within me—I needed to get these emotions out! It started with my own private group on Facebook; this way I could add who I wanted with safety. At first it was mostly family, and I poured my heart out about the grief roller coaster I had somehow ended up on. It wasn’t always pretty, but it was true, it was raw and sometimes even dark. I half expected to be under lock and key because of some of the things I posted, but as we all know, the first year is the hardest. To my surprise I was encouraged to share my story, I was a “hero” for not hiding behind a silly mask. Eventually I even began to write on my own Facebook page, share pictures every once in a while, and after a few minor setbacks, I finally felt I could be true to myself.

Social media wasn’t always nice to me. When hiding behind a computer screen people often show their true feelings and say things they wouldn’t dare say to your face. But I have gained so much support. Not only can I be myself, but I can even go back to the posts about my pregnancy and just remember those beautiful moments. I consider my Facebook a living timeline. Social media has also led to my own public blog about my grief journey, and it continues to amaze me that every month there are more and more people coming across Gabriel’s story.

Somewhere people are listening. They aren’t turning a blind eye to the truth and to me, and that makes every trial I have endured to get to this point worth it. I won’t be made to believe that because Gabriel isn’t “here” he never existed. I won’t be pushed back into the corner, because my son did matter; your children matter, and the silence needs to be broken. Even if it is in a small way, my story is making a difference. I don’t think I could have made even this much of an impact without the technology we have today.

♥ Andrea Gimlin, Mommy to Gabriel David

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri

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Raising funds for M.E.N.D.

A special thank you to Smiling Moose Deli at College Park District in Arlington for hosting a profit sharing event to benefit M.E.N.D. in March. In addition to Smiling Moose Deli donating 10% of daily sales back to M.E.N.D. that day, they also donated a Daryl “Moose” Johnston autographed football for the Walk to Remember raffle. It’s a gift that will keep on giving!
In keeping up with the changes in technology, M.E.N.D. is excited to reveal our new website. Many changes were made to enhance our website for easier use and navigation. We still have the same address, www.mend.org, but visitors will find these changes.

Top five noticeable changes:

1. The new M.E.N.D. website has been designed in consideration of many readers who are now transitioning to touch-screen tablets (e.g. Apple iPad, Kindle Fire HD, Samsung Galaxy, HP Slate 7) from desktop computers or laptops. Navigation is now easier on both touch-screens and desktops, where previously it was a bit awkward and unreliable on touch screens.

2. Any web page on the website can now easily be shared on Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest.

3. Individual local chapters of M.E.N.D. will now have a “micro site” format so they can add additional web pages or topics relevant to their chapter (instead of a single web page).

4. Google Maps have been embedded in each of our local chapter location pages for easier directional information.

5. Resource links are now listed in a format that is much easier to read (also improved for touch screen devices), and will also print better should readers decide to print their web pages.

Important changes that will not be noticeable to the reader, but are worth mentioning:

1. Our web hosting provider will change. The new host will provide a technology infrastructure that will allow us to enhance our site capabilities a bit more than we are able to using our previous provider.

2. We will be working to integrate a custom search capability that will allow readers to search only the content on our site (coming soon).

3. In upcoming years, we hope to have a mobile web site specifically designed for smart phones (e.g. iPhone, Android, Blackberry) that will be easier to navigate on a smaller screen. Note: We are not planning on developing “apps” for these devices, only a mobile web site.

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington: We had a successful balloon release in May in honor of all our babies who couldn’t be here on Mother’s Day to celebrate with us.

M.E.N.D.—Dallas: What a great time we had at our first ZUMBA Fundraiser! We raised more than $800 for M.E.N.D. while burning lots of calories and having a great time! Thank you to DaLana Barsanti for organizing such a fun night, that will hopefully become an annual event.
In Loving Memory

Maya Denise Ates
Stillborn January 6, 1998
Clot in umbilical cord
Given by mommy Tammie Ates and siblings Erin and Brandon

Lauren Autry
June 17—July 2, 2011
Parents: Melissa and Brandon Autry
Sister: Hailey
Given by Zach and Rori Callaway

Emma Bailey
April 23, 2008
Incompetent cervix

Brooklyn Taylor Bailey
January 1, 2010
Incompetent cervix

Jillian Marie Bailey
January 2, 2010
Incompetent cervix

Sydney Grace Bailey
January 2, 2010
Incompetent cervix
Given by parents Chad and Melissa Bailey

Apple and Blueberry Barrientos
Miscarried July 7, 2010
Parents: David and Priscilla Barrientos
Given by Zach and Rori Callaway

Liam and Sebastian Callaway
Stillborn August 5, 2011
Unknown cause
Given by parents Zach and Rori Callaway and little brother Miles

Abigail Grace Crump
July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Given by parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump and little sisters Cami and Karli

Lyle Donald Daggett
Stillborn September 18, 2002
Unknown cause
Given by parents Brad and Lisa Daggett and little siblings Alexander, Benjamin and Madeline

Brooke Sophia Daily
Stillborn March 11, 2010
Vasa Previa
Gifts given by
Parents Jeremy and Lisa Daily and sisters Sarah and Savannah
Andrea Pinkerton

Riley and Parker Davis
November 14, 2006
Prematurity
Given by parents Rob and Cheryl Davis and little sister Annalise

Kyler Paul English
Stillborn January 20, 2006
Cord accident
Parents: Laurie McPike and Bob English
Given by Jon and Laurie McPike and brothers Kinser, Kelson and Kayden

John Michael Garabedian, Jr
Stillborn February 2, 1998
Cord accident/Villamentous cord insertion

Adam Michael Garabedian
Stillborn July 25, 2001
Cord accident
Given by parents
Mike and Cindy Garabedian and sisters Victoria, Elizabeth and Catherine

Serenity Harrison
Miscarried December 3, 2009
Gifts given by
Parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell and big brother Byron, Jr.
Grandparents Dennis and Sue Brewer Dentistry of Las Colinas/Byron L. Mitchell, D.D.S.

Carson Lewis Humphries
March 23, 2009
Trisomy 9
Gifts given by
Parents J.J. and Amy Humphries and big sister Sarah Jessica
Grandparents Joe and Donna Yancey
Uncle Jeff and Aunt Kris Newcomb
Uncle Travis and Aunt Sarah Biggs
Uncle Brian and Aunt Jessica McDonald
Cousin Avery Jo
Kellie Glissen

Marcus Alan Johnson
July 5, 2003
Trisomy 9
Gifts given by
Parents Jena and Marc Johnson and little brothers Jack
Given by Zach and Rori Callaway

Ross D. Kennedy, III
Stillborn October 29, 2000
Cord accident
Given by parents Ross and Nicole Kennedy

Sarah Ann King
Stillborn June 22, 1995
Unknown cause
Parents: David and Lori King
Siblings: Brooks, Kaylee and Brady
Given by David H. King Insurance Agency

Katherine Elizabeth Kjolhede
Stillborn May 10, 1999
Unknown cause
Given by parents
James and Kristine Kjolhede and siblings Jared and Savannah

JJ Kojich
February 19-March 9, 1996
Omphalocele complications
Given by mommy Linda Kojich and brothers Adam and Alex

Baby McCliment 1
Miscarried February 3, 2012

Baby McCliment 2
Miscarried September 3, 2012
Given by parents
Matt and Jennifer McCliment and little siblings

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell
Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord accident

Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December 2001
Gifts given by
Parents Byron and Rebekah Mitchell and big brother Byron, Jr.
Grandparents Dennis and Sue Brewer Dentistry of Las Colinas/Byron L. Mitchell, D.D.S.

Bay William Miltenberger, Jr.
Stillborn December 9, 1998
Preterm Labor
Parents: Bay and Paula Miltenberger
Little brothers: Bryce, Bo and Brady
Given by R.B. Miltenberger

Avery Napaluch
Mommy Adrianna Napaluch
Given by Zach and Rori Callaway

Joseph Parker Nelson
Stillborn January 30, 2012
Gastrochisis
Given by parents
Michael and Danielle Nelson and siblings Chase, Riley, Hunter, Abigail, Chloe, Phoebe, Rachel and Mary-Ester
On the 30th of March of this year, we were blessed with our little Lauryn, and I had forgotten about the questions you get from people when you have a new baby. I went to an appointment, and a lady asked the normal questions about her and then the one that affects every mother who has lost a baby: How many children do you have? At times I feel fine to share with people about our loss and other times I do not feel the need to share it, and this day I was on the fence. I told her three: Livi, who is six (at the time), Jaxson who is five and the baby. She said very quickly, “I bet Jaxson is a good helper,” but then went on and on about Livi! How she is probably a great helper, a little mama to Lauryn and how her children were spaced out and such good helpers. Sitting there I was trying to determine if I should just burst her bubble with “my Livi died six years ago but I bet she would be” or instead leave it alone and just go with it. I chose to leave it alone and just let her do all the talking. She continued talking, and I felt like I was going to scream, “My life is just not that simple!” Finally, my name was called.

As I left my appointment, I was a bit upset because she was so nosey! I reached out to my fellow M.E.N.D. mommies on Facebook and got responses to my frustrations for several days. This community on Facebook helped me to remember that although I do this and that with M.E.N.D. and that I am seven years out from my loss, it is okay if I am hurting or upset about something we face as mothers of heavenly babies, and it is good to reach out for comfort. No matter how long ago your loss was, we, the family of M.E.N.D. are here to support you, and it is a blessing that we can connect through Facebook.

♥ Liz Walker,
Mommy to Alivia Elizabeth-Grace
M.E.N.D.—Dallas/Fort Worth
Chapter Updates

Houston

I am so excited and blessed to be joining the M.E.N.D. family as the new M.E.N.D.—Houston Chapter Director. I would like to introduce myself. My name is Stormy Mitchell. On May 17, 2011, at 33 weeks and 4 days gestation, our son, Gideon, was born into the arms of Jesus. He was such a miracle to us because he came after years of infertility and after we had already lost his older sibling, Avery, to miscarriage in 2008. After he passed away, our hearts were totally shattered. We had to cling to God to survive every moment. At the hospital, they gave me a M.E.N.D. brochure, and I knew I needed to attend a meeting. From the moment I walked through the doors, I received love, grace, compassion and understanding. God has used M.E.N.D. to draw me closer to Him and to bring healing to my broken heart. When I was pregnant with Gideon, God made a promise to me that our child would bring many people to Himself. I believe that as the facilitator of M.E.N.D.—Houston, that is one of the ways the Lord will keep that promise. God continues to use the short life of our son to bring glory to Himself! God has given me a heart to come alongside other grieving parents and walk with them on their grief journey. As the director of the Houston chapter, I will always do what I can to give support and love to the hurting families in the Houston area. I am very excited about our Walk To Remember coming up on October 5 at the Bammel Road Church of Christ. If you live in the Houston area, please consider attending the Walk this year. It is a beautiful ceremony where we remember our babies and turn our eyes toward Jesus. I am honored to be a part of this wonderful ministry.

Stormy Mitchell

Tulsa

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to one of my assistants, Sara Hintz, for all her hard work, dedication and commitment to M.E.N.D. God is calling her family to another location. We will definitely miss her and wish her the best of luck with her new endeavors. Additionally, I want to thank Marcie Nienhuis and Erika Huff for all of their hard work, dedication and commitment to M.E.N.D.

Lisa Daily

Amarillo

M.E.N.D.—Amarillo is gearing up for our Bunco for Babies! It will be held September 6. For more information, contact Becky Anderson through email at becky@mend.org or 806.570.4344.

Becky Anderson

Texarkana

M.E.N.D.—Texarkana continues to grow and minister to families throughout the Texarkana area through email, phone calls, Facebook, monthly meetings and hospital visits to grieving families.

Monica Davis

Bryan/College Station

M.E.N.D.—Bryan/College Station is continuing to bless the hurting families of Brazos County. Stay tuned for more information about our annual balloon release at Veterans Park in October! If you would like more information about our chapter, please email me at jennie@mend.org.

Jennie Drude

Hot Springs

M.E.N.D.—Hot Springs is praying for a smooth transition as both of our hospitals merge and hoping more doors open to be able to minister to our families when they suffer the loss of a baby.

Amy Humphries
NWO Washington

I had the opportunity to speak at a local MOPS group on May 24, and it was a great time of sharing. I was glad for the opportunity to share with local women on what to do to help a friend/family member who suffers the loss of a baby.

We are busy planning to walk in the Whaling Days Parade on July 27, to spread the word about MEND in our community.

We have welcomed seven new families to our group this year, and we are glad they found MEND to aid them in their journey of grief.

Stacy McGhee

SW Missouri

MEND—SW Missouri continues to see new families nearly every month. In the past three months I’ve been blessed to share about our ministry with Mercy Healthcare (Lebanon and Springfield), Cox South Hospital (Springfield) and Citizens Memorial Hospital (Bolivar). Our families have also enjoyed time outside of our support group meetings with Food and Fellowship each month, and most recently with Memorial Hospital (Bolivar). Our families have also enjoyed time outside of our support group meetings with Food and Fellowship each month, and most recently with Memorial Hospital (Bolivar). Thanks to Kathleen Moore for coordinating both!

Heather Fann

Wichita Falls

MEND—Wichita Falls continues to welcome new families each month. We are also hard at work with our letter fundraising campaign.

Looking Ahead

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>Walk to Remember</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>Walk to Remember</td>
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<td>October 12</td>
<td>SW Missouri</td>
<td>Balloon Release</td>
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<td>December 9</td>
<td>SW Missouri</td>
<td>Christmas Ceremony</td>
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<td>December 10</td>
<td>Headquarters-Irving, TX</td>
<td>Christmas Ceremony</td>
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MEND—Support Group Meetings in the Dallas Metroplex

Join us for a time of sharing experiences.

MEND—main chapter meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of every month from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Daddies group meets the 2nd Thursday of March, June, Sept. and Dec., from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

A time for dads to meet together and discuss topics relevant to them as fathers. Our moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups for discussion.

Food and Fellowship are held the 4th Thursday of every month at 8:00 p.m. at the Corner Bakery in Southlake Town Center

A time to relax and meet with other MEND parents in a social setting.

Contact Brittney Fish: brittney@mend.org

Subsequent pregnancy group meets the 4th Tuesday from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Led by Liz Walker: liz@mend.org

For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss.

MENDING Mommies Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. Contact Marilyn Brown: Marilyn@mend.org

MENDING Mommies is a group of MEND moms (and grandmothers) who create and sew tiny gowns, caps, and blankets that are donated to area hospitals for new heavenly babies.

Parenting After Loss Playgroup Meets monthly at various locations in the Dallas / Fort Worth metroplex. Contact Magen Kaye: Magen@mend.org or call (214) 435-3870

Infertility group meets the 3rd Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Contact Cheryl Davis for meeting location and information at Cheryl@mend.org

For families experiencing infertility after a loss.

Mommies AND daddies are both welcome at all MEND meetings. Unless otherwise noted, all support group meetings are held at:

Wells Fargo Bank
800 W. Airport Freeway
Irving, TX 75062

(Located in the Crystals Pizza parking lot, between MacArthur and O’Connor) Meetings will be in the bank board room, located on the first floor.

For more information, call (972) 506-9000.


My son, Jonathan, was stillborn in 1995—a time when the Internet was just getting off the ground. In fact, I remember while on bed rest when pregnant with Jonathan, seeing television commercials of a man at his desk ordering flowers for his wife, making dinner reservations, and booking an airline flight with seemingly just a few clicks of his mouse while looking at his computer screen. At the time, I did not even know what a “mouse” was and I honestly thought the commercial was a bit far-reaching—impossible, really.

A couple of months after Jonathan’s stillbirth, I decided we needed a computer at home for some reason. I remember the first time I turned it on. I had no idea what in the world to do next. It was an impulsive purchase. We were so grief-stricken that we weren’t thinking clearly when we bought it. Why on earth would we need such a huge gadget in the corner of our bedroom? I remember calling my husband, Byron, at his office that day and telling him to just take it back. It was a stupid thing we had done and a waste of about $2,000. We kept it anyway and decided to join the World Wide Web. Oh, what a new world that opened for me! Back then, chat rooms were very popular, yet we were all warned of the many dangers of “talking” to complete strangers. I stayed away from that particular means of communication, but I was somehow introduced to the Listserv, Infanlos. There, I met numerous women from all over the world who had suffered the death of a baby. It was through my computer that I was finally able to pour out my heart to women who truly knew and understood what I was going through. I’d stay up until all hours of the night communicating with my new virtual friends, telling them things about my grief that I had not told a soul. They got it and oftentimes told me they felt the same way. It was extremely healing and therapeutic.

Months later, I felt compelled to bring what I was involved with in cyberspace into the real world. I figured if typing to a computer screen was helpful, surely meeting fellow grieving moms face-to-face would be much better. So, that’s kind of what happened—much of how M.E.N.D. was birthed, nearly 17 years ago.

M.E.N.D. was in existence for several months before we had a presence on the WWW. Byron’s and my good friends, Max and Jody Friz, who had suffered a few miscarriages before we lost Jonathan, offered to create and maintain a website for M.E.N.D. Once the website launched, M.E.N.D. escalated to a whole new level. We then had women from all over the world learning about our ministry. The website eventually offered a Guest Book, which enabled families to post their stories and their email addresses if they wanted readers to contact them. It’s funny how what was at one time so incredibly helpful and healing is now completely obsolete.

About four years ago, one of our Board Members, Amber Zuckerman, who we affectionately refer to as our “computer geek”, began a M.E.N.D. Facebook page. I was not on Facebook at the time, nor did I have any intention of drowning myself in something of the sort. However, for about two years I kept hearing comments such as, “did you see what so-and-so posted on Facebook…?” I eventually realized I was very much out of the loop within the ministry that I founded and directed. One night while Amber was sitting at my kitchen table with her laptop at a M.E.N.D. Board
meeting, she began pounding away on her keyboard then announced, “okay, Rebekah. You have a Facebook account now”. What?? I didn’t even ask her or tell her it was okay. Once I learned how to navigate my way through Facebook, though, I was hooked! But more importantly, I saw how vital our M.E.N.D. page was for grieving families. Multiple times a day I read through the many posts on our M.E.N.D. page. Not only did I realize how great it was to have a place for bereaved families to pour out their hearts, but it was also a wonderful vehicle for families to minister to and encourage fellow grieving moms. It didn’t take long before I made an executive decision that all chapters of M.E.N.D. must have their own Facebook page. Admittedly, we’ve had some issues that we’ve had to learn how to troubleshoot and at times we have to delete some inappropriate posts and even block a few people, but the ministry and the good far outweigh the bad. Our Facebook pages are a safe place where families from all over the world can express themselves and share their little ones with a group of people who understand and will not respond with hurtful reactions. Additionally, it is an ideal place to share photos and special mementos without fearing uncomfortable comments might follow.

It has been 18 years since I was in the deep, dark throes of grief – at a time when expressing our sorrow publicly was just becoming acceptable. Today, those freshly grieving have an immense advantage of utilizing Social Networking to make their emotions known. I so wish what is available now had been more available then. If you have not taken advantage of what is “out there” for you, I encourage you to check it out and try it. Join one of the ten M.E.N.D. Facebook pages today (see page ……on how to join) and let us help you as you journey down this lonely road of grief.

♥ Rebekah Mitchell, Presidente y Fundadora Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y Mitchell bebé Mitchell

How Social Grieving Helps

- The more you share, the more you heal
- Can communicate thoughts and feelings easily
- Able to reach out without feeling like intruding
- Develop support system for the griever
- Provide instant support/advice
- Feeling of isolation is not as prevalent


“Pinterest isn’t just a space for sharing other people’s photos. It’s also a place to heal.... This shared experience makes up the backbone of grief and illness pinning. It’s not self promotion, it’s self revelation.”

“How Social Grieving Hinders

- May attempt to speed up or dumb down grief process
- Words and encounters are etched in time
- It’s not for everyone
- Can become overly committed
- Receive bad advice or manipulation
- Others may not realize how much you are hurting

“People Turn to Pinterest to Help them Heal” by Lauren Rae Orsini, March 15, 2012 on The Daily Dot. www.dailydot.com, retrieved June 10, 2013
“... that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:4)

M.E.N.D. Fundraisers

As a non-profit organization, M.E.N.D. is funded solely by private donations and fundraisers. Any assistance you can give us by participating in any or all of these fundraisers is greatly appreciated.

- **Kroger grocery stores** donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers in Texas and Louisiana who have their Kroger Plus Card linked to M.E.N.D. To link your card, contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Kroger Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D.

- **Tom Thumb** also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please contact Rebekah (rebekah@mend.org) to obtain the Customer Letter. You must only present this letter one time to link your card to M.E.N.D. Reward cards can also be used at Randalls and Simon David stores.

- **Glenn Martin** is looking for M.E.N.D. families willing to grant space for small gumball machines in order to raise funds for M.E.N.D. If you have a retail business or connections to a high traffic location in the Grapevine, Southlake, or metroplex area, Glenn will place, stock, and service the equipment and give M.E.N.D. 35 percent of the proceeds. Glenn can be contacted at (817) 874-5366 or glmartin@attg.net.

- **M.E.N.D.** can now earn funds through i.think inc., an online marketing research firm. You can help by signing up as a survey panel member and designating us as the recipient of your fee. Just go to the Web site at http://www.ithink_inc.com and choose “Sign up to become an i.think inc. panel member.” Fill out the sign-up survey. Under the “Funds for Charity” section, select M.E.N.D. from the list of names.

- **IBM** employees may now make charitable donations to M.E.N.D. through automatic payroll deductions. Choose Charity Code 0M562 from the IBM Employee/Retiree Approved Charity List.

- **GoodSearch.com** is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Powered by Yahoo!, it is used like any other search engine. To earn money for M.E.N.D. using Goodsearch.com, go to www.goodsearch.com and designate M.E.N.D. as your charity of choice.

- **Ebay** has a charitable giving program that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you sell items on Ebay and would like to designate a percentage of your revenue to M.E.N.D., visit www.missionfish.org to find out how.

- **Igive.com** will donate a penny a search and a portion of each purchase made through their website to M.E.N.D. Sign up today! M.E.N.D.’s cause number is 52025.