

SINCE

Alexandra's
HOUSE

1997

From The Founder

Beloved Friends,

While my eyes must often be upon the future to make sure we achieve the goals of our mission, they are equally on the past, always praying to be faithful to our original calling. Our foundational years were very difficult in terms of my frail humanity, so lots of prayer, trust, joy, suffering, questioning, abandonment and awe are woven into every moment of those early years. One thing that greatly helped was something I heard on Christian radio. I decided to take a drive - one of my favorite things to do when I need to think. The minister was talking about being patient while waiting on the Lord. He used a very simple example and said that the safety and stability of a building was dependent upon the security of its foundation. It needed to be deep enough and wide enough to support the building it would hold, and made of only the best materials to stay standing for a very long time. He spoke of the differences between the construction requirements for a one-story building versus a skyscraper. The taller the building, he said, the deeper the foundation needed to be and the more time it takes to build. And so, he said, if God is going to build a skyscraper, he needs the time and the materials to build the foundation and you need to be patient as he does his work. I embraced this message and mentally reviewed it each time I grew impatient.

As I count our many blessings, our dear friends top the list. To see your big hearts poured out for our little babies is incredible to witness. I wish to thank some dear friends who were pivotal in our very early days. They are as intimately connected to this work as the stones and mortar are to our house. This list begins with George and Helen Panebianco and Fran Cobb who regularly prayed with me when this calling was new and needed a strong spiritual base. Dear Chuck DeAngelo advised us to form a non-profit corporation and obtain 501©3 status, which we did in 1997, so the calling had a legal structure. Chuck also gave me a missionary rosary for Alexandra that we later placed in her casket. Father Peter Jaramillo steadfastly prayed with me for many years for God's will to be done. Mrs. Cindy Archer and Monsignor William Blacet both spent countless hours advising me in practical and spiritual matters. Father Bill McCarthy, from Moodus, Connecticut, directed me to the late John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, and through him, to the precious Sisters of Life. I later met Mr. John Erickson, past president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, who became a great friend and advocate, and strengthened me through many, many meetings. He was pivotal in introducing our mission to many other prayerful and generous people. These include the former Commander of the Salvation Army, Clarence Harvey, who introduced our seedling mission to two wonderful Kansas City families, who beg anonymity, but who helped us with a financial foundation. Marie Hauser, who serves on our Founder's Board, still intercedes for us these many years later. Included here, too, I must mention a father and daughter Marty Regan and Joni Nachbar. Sweet Bob St. Denis, Bill High with the Servant Christian Community Foundation, beloved Tom Redmond, God rest his soul, and Dick and Bernadette Miller with Christmas in October, MC Sullivan of Wellesley, MA and her family,

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Where There Is Doubt, Faith

In these uncertain times, moved in prayer, motivated by love, and confident in faith, Joan Brisimitzakis and Martha Hubbard organized and hosted the first ever large scale fund raising event to benefit the work of Alexandra's House. As many of you know, their efforts were rewarded immensely by raising an astonishing \$24,500.00.

The leadership and families of Alexandra's House wish to take this opportunity to applaud these very humble ladies for their selfless labor and amazing generosity and also, all of you, for your gracious response. It was a magical evening where truly, a spirit of oneness was palpable.

The party was so successful; a Second Annual Bow Ties for Babies' Gala has been scheduled for the evening of September 11, 2010. Please mark your calendars now, if you would like to attend. More information will be circulated about this at a later date.

From all of us, thank you, Joan and Martha, and thank all of you, for your abiding friendship. Your goodness humbles us. We pray to be equally faithful to you by being good stewards of all you give to us in so many ways.



Samuel Family

Champ Samuel Pulliam's Gift

By Darrel and Jill, His Parents

Our birthday gift to Jesus is to dedicate our lives to repaying Christ back for all the love that He has shown our family. Jesus was with our entire family during Champ Samuel's life in my belly. He taught each and every one of us so many different lessons in love, grace, and dependence on His timing. Champ was such a blessing to our family. He has also helped our family to grow even bigger with all the wonderful people that has evolved through our relationship with Alexandra's House.

In order to dedicate my (Champs Mom) life to Him, I have teamed up with Alexandra's House, families, and great friends to deliver Champs Wee Care Packages to the hospitals in the Kansas City area. Since May of 2008, over 250 boxes have gone to families with unexpected perinatal deaths. These boxes are filled with little things to give the families comfort in a very uncomfortable time in their lives. My husband and I give our time to other families at Alexandra's House. We know how very hard it is to live in a world with people who don't understand how hard it is to carry a child with a fatal birth defect. If my husband and I can reach out to other couples and give them a little glimmer of hope, then maybe it's a way for us to give back to Jesus.

Our hearts got so worn down during our son's life. So many ups and downs, twists and turns emotionally and mentally. We feel our hearts healing as we give a little at a time back to the One who kept us alive.

along with Dr. Pearce, all shared their gifts to advance our cause. These are just some of the very special people who believed in and supported this calling before it was active and for whom I will always be deeply grateful.

At this moment, we are perched between our initial calling and the broader vision of our future. Perinatal hospice is not the only service Alexandra's House was created to offer, but it is what has come first. The vision for Alexandra's House includes services to the vulnerable dying at both ends of life, and also to babies with other kinds of needs, but we wait for the Lord's timing. From our earliest days, I believed our services to the frail elderly would spring from the deaths of my parents. I also believe that God will call someone else to join me, who will be the one to begin and direct that portion of the apostolate.

As I write, I am at my dying father's bedside. His journey to this end began on August 25 with a tragic accident where both his legs were broken, and it is now the last days of October, so we have had ample time for meaningful conversations and to say good-bye. As much as he is able, he has worked to tie up any loose ends regarding the business of his life. He instructed each of his children, in ways unique to each one, and we all are at peace.

While anticipating his dying isn't easy, it is a more natural event than the deaths of our newborn babies. My father was adopted as an infant and soon sent away to boarding schools, so he never had any sense of belonging to a family. He provided us with great security and always encouraged us to learn and grow and especially to be entrepreneurial. All his life, even in recent days, he lamented not knowing his birth parents. He always believed he had other family somewhere in this world, though he was never able to prove it. Even surrounded by a wife and children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, he felt alone. This inability on his part to bond with people made him appear aloof and stoic, often, even to his family. He deftly guarded his feelings and never complained of pain. He was a fact seeker and stated he needed a miracle to prove that God existed.

As his weakening condition peeled away the layers of his unnaturally thickened skin, he was transformed into a fellow with almost childlike innocence and glee. He was every nurse's favorite patient and even on his or her days off they checked on him. As each shift ended, no one left the unit until they hugged Dad and each of us. He spoke to me in a very hushed voice that he had never felt such love and knew with no doubt that he was lovable. I asked him if he knew the origin of that love and he said, "yes" as he pointed his pale finger skyward.

One day as I walked out of his room, I thought to myself; what a wonderful time it is to be with my father, with his easy charm and sincere appreciation of others around him. This was a new man, someone foreign but delightful to us. It was then inside me that I heard these words: "This is who I created him to be." And then I began to imagine some of the emotional suffering of his life, especially as a child, that must have raised those walls. We each start out as a new and fresh creation and can it be, that those to whom we are entrusted can inflict so much pain upon us that it actually alters the person we were supposed to be? I don't know. I am not a theologian or psychologist. But, this insight leaves me so grateful for his lingering end of life journey, upon which I met my *real* father.

Our passion as servants to our dying babies has not dimmed, and our baby hospice will continue, God willing, far beyond my life's end, yet there is more to be done. So it is time again to wait, first for God to move a few hearts, for their fiat, and then for them to start laying the foundation of other phases of our work, which at Our Lord's movement, will include Alexandra's Grandma's and Grandpa's House. Especially in these times, this calling is more important than ever.

Seasons change, and my Daddy's autumn is past. Ahead, we celebrate Jesus' Birth. This is one of our two favorite times of the year; Holy Week being the other. Alexandra was born and survived in this season of Noel and it was she, in her humble and fragile state, who taught me so much. Each and every time one of our babies is born and I am able to hold them, I feel as if it is baby Jesus himself. What an honor.

Alexandra, thank you. We love you. You, in your mighty smallness, linked us to each of these beloved people who bear one heart for your mission. May each of you be blessed for your love and may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts forever. Thank you! We love you.

Your Patti



We'll Miss You, Tommy

Alexandra may not have had a home were it not for Tom Redmond.

After reading an article in the Catholic Key in 2001 about the work of Alexandra's House, Tom, along with Dick Miller, both key leaders of Christmas in October, decided to help find a suitable home for Alexandra's House. At that time, Alexandra's House was operated from Patti's two-bedroom Plaza townhouse. After lots of searching, the residence Alexandra's House currently occupies was chosen as the perfect place for "phase two". Tom helped with any and all remodeling needs and installed dual central air systems. The House was dedicated on Alexandra's ninth birthday, December 12, 2002.

Tom's death could not go unnoticed by us. The following is a tribute to this humble, generous and loving man, taken from the Kansas City Star.

Tom Redmond wasn't one to go home after work and sit on the couch. He was, as friends and family say, a man of many passions.

He built homes. He and his wife raised seven children, six of whom were adopted. And maybe most of all, he was longtime leader of Christmas in October — the nonprofit program that rehabs and winterizes urban homes.

So his oldest son, John, had his hands full coming up with the one thing Tom would most be remembered for when he delivered the eulogy at his father's funeral.

He talked for a while about the homes his dad built, mostly in south Kansas City in subdivisions such as Red Bridge, Verona Hills and Hallbrook. "Is this my father's legacy?" John asked at the funeral.

But then he added that his father never talked much about his homebuilding accomplishments. "That wouldn't have been his style," he said.

"Then don't do it." Maybe his father's legacy was the values he instilled in his seven children, John said. Tom and his wife of 52 years, Margaret, taught each child the value of education, work, faith and doing what's right.

John, who built homes for his father, told about a time when he was asked by a subcontractor to do something morally questionable.

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And A Child Shall Lead Them: Caden's Legacy

By Brandon and Lindsey Carlson

In early December of 2007, we found out we were expecting our third child. We were a little apprehensive about how life would be with three young ones in our home, but were thrilled to hear the news.

In March of 2008, our world changed forever.

We were told at our routine 20-week sonogram that there was no fluid around our baby, which meant that our youngest child would not be able to breathe when he or she was born. We decided to continue our pregnancy, despite knowing that we would never get to bring our baby home.

Through many difficult appointments, explanations, and weeks, family, friends, and strangers alike supported us. We were humbled by the outpouring of love we experienced during the most difficult time in our lives.

Months later, our son, Caden, was stillborn. One of the hardest parts of that experience for us was that our

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other children, ages six and four at the time, struggled to understand why they didn't get to bring their baby brother home. As we sought to comfort them in the midst of our own sorrow, some of our friends generously gave us the gift of a trip to Build-A-Bear, so that both of our living children could create a special "friend" to help them remember their baby brother. We were very touched, and our kids loved picking out a fuzzy new friend to love and hold when they were sad. Though the bears belonged to the kids, the gift was truly ours.

We wanted to honor Caden and his memory, so we established Caden's Cubs. Through this ministry, we pass on the gift of a Build-A-Bear experience to siblings who are experiencing the pain of losing their own little brother or sister in situations similar to ours. We hope that this ministry will one day grow into a national foundation, but we are now working through Alexandra's House to begin reaching others. We hope it brings some smiles and a measure of comfort to families who are struggling with their own loss.

As so many have prayed for us, we are praying for you, and all your children.



Carlson Family

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He told his father about the request.

"John, is that something you want to do?" Tom asked.

"No, it wouldn't be honest," John answered.

"Then don't do it," Tom told him.

Christmas in October: John stopped short of saying that Christmas in October would be his father's legacy, but it did seem to be perhaps his greatest passion. For a decade or so, Tom led the organization that each year rehabs and winterizes more than 500 homes, mostly for the poor in the central city.

As a builder for 40 years, he had the contacts to make the nonprofit program successful.

"I think it was his Catholic faith that drove him to do that work," said another son, Mark Redmond. "He wanted to help minorities because he always felt they got the short end of the stick."

Longtime friend John Massman, who met Tom Redmond when the two were at Rockhurst University in 1951, said he saw signs of a charitable heart back then.

"I think it was just his nature," Massman said. "If somebody had a problem, Tom was there to help. He carried that on through his life."

As this year's Christmas in October weekend neared, Tom grew concerned when it appeared money for materials would run short. A last-minute contribution saved the day.

"He had the biggest smile on his face when he heard that news," said Steve Redmond, a nephew.

Tom was quite sick by that time. He died on the Monday after the weekend event.

"I think he was definitely waiting," Mark said. "And when it was over, he decided it was OK for him to go."

Survivors include: At the time of his death, Tom was survived by his wife, all seven children, 18 grandchildren and a brother. His oldest daughter, Mary, died in a traffic accident three days after his funeral.

Final thought: At the end of John's eulogy, he got around to what he thought would be his dad's legacy: "I told him the night before he died, when I found myself alone with him, 'Thank you for being my dad.'"

"I'm John Redmond and I'm one of my father's seven kids."

Do you see why he couldn't be overlooked?

Tom, you will always be a part of Alexandra's House. We love you. We thank you. To his wife Maggie and his family, God bless you. Our prayers are with you.



*Faith's Lodge
Webster, Wisconsin*



Another Path to Healing

Faith's Lodge, located in Wisconsin, provides a place where parents and families facing the serious illness or death of a child can retreat to reflect on the past, renew strength for the present, and build hope for the future. Several of our couples from Alexandra's House have traveled there, since their opening two years ago, and have found the experience to be healing.

Brian and Becky Feller recently returned from a visit there. Eli's Mommy, Becky Feller, writes:

At Faith's Lodge we met eight other couples who knew exactly what we were going through. I will never forget our first night there as we shared our babies' stories in the cozy great room by the warmth of the fire. Over the next four days, we had many opportunities to sit and talk. Some of these times were during scheduled activities and others started with meals in the dining room where we'd end up talking for hours. One night we had a bonfire and roasted marshmallows as we chatted. Another night we played games after dinner. Once we gathered separately as moms and dads, giving us a chance to share on a different level. It was so nice to be able to openly share our feelings, without the fear of making someone uncomfortable, because everyone there understood the multitude of emotions that accompany the loss of a baby. The staff spoiled us. The lodge and its surrounding woods were beautiful and peaceful. Above all, we had the gift of time to think about and grieve for our little boy without the distractions and duties of everyday life. Faith's Lodge is truly "A Place Where Hope Grows."

*For information about Faith's Lodge, call 715-866-8200.
A referral is required.*

Our Firstborn, Baby Eli

By Brian and Becky Feller

This Christmas was to be Eli's first. We knew he wouldn't be old enough to remember it, but we were looking forward to giving him gifts and sharing him with our families. Instead, we are receiving gifts, because of Eli's life.

On March 27 of this year, during a routine ultrasound, Eli was found to have multiple lethal anomalies. The doctors told us that he would not live long, once he came into the world, so we made the decision to enjoy him for however long God would have him be with us.

He was born on June 15, at 31 weeks, and was with us for nearly an hour before God took him home. It has been hard to say goodbye to the hopes and dreams we had for our little boy, but we find great comfort in knowing that he is perfect in Heaven, and we look forward to the day we are reunited with him.

Although we would never choose to lose a baby, doing so has provided us with a greater understanding of God and a new perspective on life. We certainly trust God a lot more and have learned that there are so many things that appear to be in our control, but God is really behind them all.

The things that we used to worry about, now seem trivial, and we are more conscious of the "little things" in life that we once took for granted. God has given us just enough strength to get through the tough days and the compassion to help others who find themselves in similar situations.

He has blessed us with family and friends who have supported us throughout our journey with Eli. He has richly provided us with everything we need. Every day is truly a gift and we can't wait to welcome Eli's siblings into the world, so we can tell them all about their big brother in Heaven.



Feller Family

Saturdays at Alexandra's House

Years ago Father Peter said that the services of our apostolate would, in some measure, grow and change with the needs presented to us by those seeking our care. That was proven true in 2009.

At the final family gathering of our bereaved parents in 2008, it was very clear that the Lord wanted us to open Alexandra's House more frequently for those seeking meaning, consolation, and group support following an anticipated loss of a baby, i.e. those with an adverse prenatal diagnosis. Obedient to this urging, we opened the House every second Saturday afternoon of each month for this purpose. Each session is led by a parent or couple who was pregnant with a terminally ill baby or whose baby had died.

Soon, mothers began phoning Alexandra's House, seeking answers and assistance following an unanticipated loss – stillbirth, miscarriage, and fetal demise. Many of these couples had completely uneventful pregnancies, their babies' nurseries were ready, and then, unexpectedly, their unborn baby dies. In many of these situations, a reason for the babies' deaths could not be found. This truly was not our area of expertise but invited them to join our Second Saturday Support group, where we perceived the parents to be experts.

Sitting in on these sessions, though, it became clear the two groups had little in common except they all went home without a baby. The anticipated loss group spoke of their pain but also, as they had some time to prepare for their babies' deaths, also spoke of the immense meaning they found in their

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Another's Perspective

Helen Panebianco

LET GO OF YOUR PLANS. THE FIRST HOUR OF YOUR MORNING BELONGS TO GOD. TACKLE THE DAY'S WORK THAT HE CHARGES YOU WITH, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU THE POWER TO ACCOMPLISH IT. Edith Stein, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

Hi. My name is Helen Panebianco and I would like to share with you the before and after of Alexandra's House, from my perspective.

Patti Lewis (our House Mother-Founder), Fran Cobb, my husband George, and I have been friends for over 15 years. We have gone to church, breakfasts, movies, sharing at each other's homes and brought a lot of laughter and joy into our respective families' lives over the years.

We prayed many years for Our Lord's will in our lives. I remember one time we asked the Redemptorist Fathers if we could use their special chapel for our prayers. They responded in the affirmative and we went in to pray with enthusiasm and love for Our Lord. We sat in different places in the chapel and, at one point, someone started singing and we all joined in together. After we left the chapel, we remarked about the beautiful singing that went on. However, since we didn't have the greatest voices, we somehow knew we had a heavenly presence, like a choir of angels, with us. We praised and gave thanks to the Lord!!

Another time, Patti, Fran and I decided to go on retreat to Mother Cabrini's Shrine in Colorado. This is where Our Lord first began to unfold His plan for Alexandra's House. To tell you the truth, we felt that we would all be taking this journey together. In fact, when we were praying, we felt that God would speak to each of us the same about this journey or apostolate. We were extremely surprised when Our Lord specifically spoke to Patti's heart about this ministry. His plan is always PERFECT.

George and I were part of the extended family while Alexandra was here on earth, visiting her in the hospital and praying, praying and praying for God's precious little soul. Our Lord spoke to Patti's heart through the painful and beautiful experience with Alexandra and the family. The ministry of Alexandra's House was becoming fruitful,

Fran and I stayed involved in the beginnings of the ministry of Alexandra's House, being on the Board of Directors and giving our spiritual, physical and monetary support. Then, over a period of time and circumstances, Our Lord directed our lives in different directions. Now, we were only able to give our spiritual and monetary support. Patti, with her humble heart, was now dependent on Our Lord to lead her alone with the ministry of Alexandra's House. His plan is always PERFECT.

Over the years, Patti and I have wondered if we would ever be involved together again with the ministry. George and I were still spiritually and monetarily involved but not physically. Once I retired, one of the first things Patti and I did together was to travel to Mother Angelica's shrine in Birmingham,

Alabama and then on to Atlanta, Georgia to secure some religious artifacts.

I knew that Alexandra's House was running very efficiently with Patti, Kathy Tarbe, Patti's administrative assistant, and Judith Gorsky who worked part time. One day Patti called me to let me know that Judith was going in for surgery and could I possibly come in part time while Judith was recovering. George and I prayed and the answer was "YES". I have been at Alexandra's House for almost four months now and have met some wonderful staff, parents, volunteers, fund raisers and others associated with and connected to Alexandra's House. Patti and I attended a precious baby's funeral where I observed the parents being loved and cherished by a multitude of people. It is so difficult to keep dry eyes on occasions such as these.

This morning we had a visit from a family whose baby lived a few hours after birth and who were experiencing the grief and sorrow and joy and blessing of such an event. The grandfather couldn't thank Alexandra's House enough for all the outreach of caring and loving they were shown.

Even though we may not always know his plan,
HIS PLAN IS ALWAYS PERFECT!!!!

So, with one voice and one heart we say:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!



Thank you for granting us the awesome gift of experiencing again and again the wonder of Your Nativity each time one of our special babies is born. What a privilege it is to see them and hold them and to know that, through them, it is the closest we can come, on Earth, to behold Your lovely face and to offer You our sweet embrace. Could we be like the angels and sing an everlasting hymn of adoration, it would not seem sufficient, for such a glorious gift as You.

And to all our friends,
again...

**THANK YOU and MAY OUR BABIES INSPIRE YOU TO HAVE
A CHRISTMAS MORE BLESSED THAN ANY ONE BEFORE.**

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experiences. The other group, with unexpected losses, was not consoled. They were angry, justifiably so, and wanted answers. For three months, some of the unexpected loss parents continued to attend these sessions; a few other couples paired off and found support on their own, developing very deep friendships.

In May, a precious couple came to Alexandra's House, telling their story of this year's Mother's Day. Their little boy, just eleven weeks and one day old, died of SIDS that day. They will tell their own story later but the mother and sometimes the father, when able, began attending Second Saturdays. Nicole was so profound in articulating her sorrow and also an incredible, compassionate listener. She, too, quickly observed the differences in the grieving processes of both groups. Out of her agony, she founded Fourth Saturdays at Alexandra's House, a peer support group for unexpected infant loss of all causes.

Much of what we do has been formed by what we have learned from our Alexandra's House families. While we are so sorry for their losses, we are so grateful that their babies brought us all together.



Baby Frankie

*Baby Frankie
who died of SIDS.*

For more information on any of the support programs at Alexandra's House, feel free to call 816-931-2539.



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