



LOVE BEYOND MEASURE

Dear Friends,

We often speak that our broader mission, in the spiritual sense, is to help transform our culture, one heart at a time, into a culture of authentic love for aching mankind. We see this happening daily through our mission to the suffering, for suffering is a vessel to unleash such immense love from the heart that it begs to be poured out into service, and that service has as its aim others. These are not mere words but actual lived experiences. It takes some time to see that once one gets beyond the agonizing sorrow, that the heart is different and it sees the world differently. Little things that were irritating or important before dim in the light of learning what is really of value in this experience on earth.

You are a part of our mission to parents who are pregnant with babies who will die at birth and then to our addition of services to parents whose pregnancies were normal, yet their babies died from a variety of causes unexpectedly around the time of birth or into infancy. This work with our parents with unexpected losses was generated by an unmet need in the community in which we all live.

Earlier this year we met an exquisitely special woman. In our first article she tells the story of her and her husband's quest to have children.

While we know how hidden the loss of a child can be, for rarely do people ask one who has lived the journey how it feels, but the type of loss that she describes is truly most hidden. We are talking about the painful loss of miscarriage, be it one baby or multiple, as in her case. While we have heard the story of miscarriage often, somehow the way in which she presented her need to us was breathtaking. She actively searched for five years for someone who could understand, offer her answers, or help her find some resolution, yet she over and over found herself alone and feeling hopeless. It was finally when she did come to Alexandra's House and met with other couples who had also lost babies, though perhaps in a different manner, that she finally found validation. As she somewhat hesitantly told her story, one of our attendees said, "I can't imagine what this is like. At least we had our babies to hold and to bury, but you never got that chance."

So she found a purpose in her suffering, to open our hearts and minds to the needs of others in our community who have not had an opportunity to discuss and resolve their own grief in the loss of their babies through miscarriage. She now knows that the

deaths of her five children through early miscarriage have propelled us to open our doors, *with her*, to welcome those who have had miscarriages, are infertile, and those too, who are childless because they are single, but still longed to be mothers and fathers.

I want to thank this courageous woman for her role in opening this new area of service and we welcome any and all who experienced any type of loss or inability to have children, whether it was yesterday or 70 years ago, to come here, to join us, and to find hope and healing, and to come, just as you are.

As this year comes to a close, we want to personally thank each of you for your prayers, service and love for Alexandra's House. We could not do it without your generous support. We look forward joyfully to the future. Thank you all!

Your Patti

A FAITH FILLED JOURNEY

The day I contacted Alexandra's House was one of my lowest days. I was searching for peace, for healing--really, for God. I felt He had left my life. I felt alone, confused, frustrated, and most of all, devastated having lost my babies to miscarriage. While I knew God was not punishing me, I felt a disconnection. I was angry and was having difficulty trusting God and doubting any plans for me whatsoever, but especially as it related to my journey to motherhood. After all, it had been five years of tremendous suffering. My heart was shattered.

The answering machine picked up and I immediately hung up. "This is not a place for me," I told myself after hearing the sweet voices of children in the greeting mentioning the home being for "very special babies." No one would use those words to describe my children--my unborn children. They were my babies, but the coldness of the medical world and the confusion of my Church never gave them personhood--just status. They were nothing more than miscarriages, in their eyes--in the world's eyes, I felt. I returned to my work that day when later I received a call from Patti. This wise angel (whom, in time, I would come to consider as more proof of God's love for me), knew that my call was

not necessarily a wrong number and so she reached out with her gentle voice and a heart that seemed to absorb my grief. This was the beginning of my journey toward healing.

God led me to Patti and Alexandra's House. It was through Patti and the other brave mothers I met that I heard God speak to me directly. I had been in a very dark place. Alexandra's House was repeatedly my light. I was reminded over and over again how important it was not to succumb to the anger, fear, and pain I was feeling. Patti and the sweet women she enlisted to help me, reached out to me persistently with such heart. I could not help but feel moved. Some days, their timing was incredible.

I recall one very difficult day calling Patti, full of doubt and tears. In her loving way, Patti suggested I consider a devotion to the Blessed Mother. Admittedly, I had been angry with Mary as well, as I had entrusted my babies to Her. Patti convinced me to trust again--what did I have to lose? I had to try to let go of these negative feelings, even if I did not think I could.

I did what Patti suggested and my life began to change and my heart continued to heal. Patti introduced my husband and me to a local priest

who was aligned with the mission of Alexandra's House. His compassion was real and he acknowledged the grave nature of our situation. I then felt my faith was on my side. My husband and I even met a healing minister who exclaimed God's plan for us. My heart was further mended, as was my relationship with God. I was finally able to feel gratitude and joy again--two traits that had always come so easily to me but seemed long gone for years.

This gratitude and joy has begotten further joy and opportunities for gratitude. It is almost as though I am back in alignment with God. He could not help me directly in my anger and pain. So he led me to Patti to help me find that pathway to Him again. She and Alexandra's House have been a catalyst for this incredible healing that I did not believe was possible. I am forever grateful and hope that my story will help others realize the tremendous resource our community has in Alexandra's House. They helped me find new life--the one I needed to rediscover before I could accept any new blessings in my life. Regardless of what the future holds, I feel peace and find glory everyday. It feels good to be alive again.

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2013 BOW TIES FOR BABIES
SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF ALEXANDRA'S HOUSE

On a beautiful Fall night, October 5th, our 5th annual Bow Ties for Babies was held at the Carriage Club off the Country Club Plaza. This year's silent auction held over 35 items for guests to bid on, with all proceeds going to Alexandra's House.

Emceed by Johnny and Susan Hart, this year's event speakers included Brett and Jenny Horn, founders of Charlie's House. After an accident took the life of their two-year-old son Charlie, Brett and Jenny launched this wonderful not-for-profit organization to educate others on prevention of household injuries.

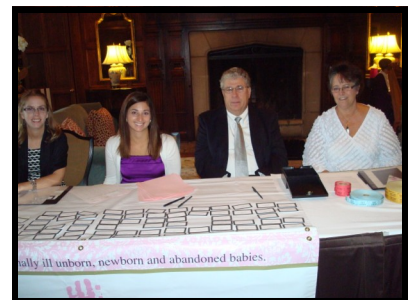
Next, Dr. Wickstrom of Obstetrix Medical Group; Dr. Wickstrom has helped thousands of families with high risk pregnancies. Her contributions to this field were clear as she talked about her experiences with Alexandra's House and the many families she has had the privilege to work with.

Following Dr. Wickstrom, the Morris family returned to the annual Gala to talk about the healing their family received from Alexandra's House and the birth of their daughter, Dalilah. The final presenter, Patti Lewis, founder and house mother for Alexandra's House, spoke on her vision and gratitude to every life that has been touched by this amazing evening.

The silent auction and other donations helped raise over \$36,000 for Alexandra's House and its yearly operations. Thank you to all who donated these items for such a worthy cause.

Thank you to all who attended, planned, participated and made this wonderful event possible!

From top: The Morris Family: Jennifer, Dalilah, Dylan, Tim and Dawson; the beautiful table setting; our loyal volunteers Marley Schuster,



SIMPLY HONORED

God most often works in such mysterious ways.

In February of this year our son Isaac Paul was stillborn. We anticipated his death but thought we would first get to meet him. God had other plans for our son and while we are thankful he did not suffer, our hearts still ache with not getting to meet him alive.

After his death, Patti was instrumental in giving us words of wisdom and reminding us how God plays a larger role than we ever imagine. One day Patti asked what my life was prior to being a stay at home mom. I told her I worked 18 years in marketing and advertising and had recently be-

come a freelance writer. That very night I received an email stating the Alexandra's House staff was looking for a new newsletter writer. Patti asked if I would be interested in taking this on. Normally I am a processor, but this was an offer I knew would honor our son and so many other children so I immediately said yes. This is my second edition and I hope to be able to write for as long as they will have me!

After experiencing the support of Alexandra's House first hand, I feel compelled to let others know how it can help them, how it helped us, and how it will continue to honor these children for many, many years to come. Even though I do not have an organization or a program to honor Isaac, I feel this is a way I

connected to Alexandra's House — the families, and especially to spread the word of this organization and all it offers families across the United States.

Going through a pregnancy when you know your child has a very small, if any, chance of survival is an extremely hard journey. Alexandra's House helps you realize you are not alone in this journey. I hope that I can honor this organization, and our son, through writing this bi-annual newsletter.

Please feel free to email me at alexandrashousenews@gmail.com as I love to hear your feedback or suggestions for what you would benefit from in future editions.

May God bless you this holiday season and always,
Jessica Pflumm

LOVE IS GRAND

Of the many people who have been touched by the love of Alexandra's House, one often overlooked group rarely discussed is grandparents.

Grandparents are often impacted in a double sense when their grandchild is diagnosed with a fatal illness. They grieve for the grandchild and they also grieve for their child—often feeling helpless in how to help or fix the situation for their entire family. The following tribute is in a grandmother's voice and tells how she (they) found strength .

We were waiting to find out if the baby was a boy or a girl when we first found out there were health concerns. We were told he was a little boy and his name would be Jack Andrew. It was a special name to us because he is named after Papa whose middle name is also Andrew.

Learning that your child is having a child with health concerns is devastating.

It took time to work it all out in our heads. How do you help? How do you respond?

In our case, it was very simple, we followed the lead that Patrick and Rachel (our daughter and her husband) established. From day one they treasured each day of the pregnancy, marking each day as a victory, a celebration. Why would we spend these few precious months grieving for tomorrow?

And so we did. We celebrated each day, each heartbeat, each kick.

And then it was time. We were so thankful he made it full term. He fought and fought and he was still with us. We celebrated and thanked God for this.

And then he was born. None of us knew what to expect. We hoped and we prayed.

And then, he cried.

The world could not have been more beautiful than it was at that moment. Our hearts almost came out of our chests. Fear was mixed with hope and it was a strange and yet wonderful mix.

And then we saw him. There were no machines to keep his heart going, no machines to help him breathe. There was just this little boy.



The Courtney family (from left): Rachel, Jack, Keith, Layla and Patrick.

We rejoiced in his strength, we rejoiced in the gift we had been given. He was our little miracle. No one spoke of what was to come. We lived in that moment, each minute storing the treasures that were Jack. His beautiful face with the half moon chin he got from his Mom and his Zpa before her. The softness of his skin, the feel of his heart beating, and the sound of his breath.

We lived in a bubble for those 77 hours, each of us taking turns holding and singing and watching. Always watching. Memorizing his every feature

while it was still within our sight.

And then the joy was mixed with such unbelievable sorrow. How can we be sad when we know he is in such a better place than us? The sorrow is for us, that we will have to wait to be with him again.

While we will continue to grieve this loss we will not let it overshadow the joy that was Jack. What a miracle we had him to hold, what a blessing it was to see his fighting spirit. With God's help he gave us that time to store and remember until we see him again.

It may have appeared to the outside world that we comforted him but the truth is he spent his life comforting us.

We will think of Jack Andrew and smile. It may be through tears but the smile is there.

Through all of this my favorite verse comes to mind. There are three things that will endure – Faith, Hope, and Love – and the greatest of these is Love. Papa and Bata will always love and remember their baby boy, Jack Andrew.



Jack Andrew's maternal and paternal grandparents. So much love!

