



*A refuge for unborn-newborn babies and little children who will die and those who love them*

**NEWSLETTER**

**FALL 2016**

## **EDITORIAL**

In Jewish folklore, it is said that the unborn baby is all-knowing, and only at the moment of birth does an angel touch its face above the lip and wipe its mind clean. It may be only folklore, but there's something really lovely about that idea, something that reflects our intuition that our infants can feel love and relationship from the very start. And that is what we are all about at Alexandra's House.

In this fall edition of the newsletter, we are able to gather together some stories about how people have been touched by the work of Alexandra's House, by babies that, in some cases, they might never have met. Particularly heartening is to hear from young people in the locality. Jenny McGinnis writes that her young daughters wanted to set up a lemonade stand to make a contribution to the House, and Helen Rhodes, a high-school senior, together with her school group, were much moved by doing voluntary work there this summer. Tess Hackney, one of our moms, writes about the valuable time she spent on retreat there, while Kay Kremer tells us about the first annual Remembering Ceremony that took place in October. And, of course, there is the report on our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Event, Bowties for Babies: the biggest yet. A full season, as you see, since our last issue!

We hope, meanwhile, that all our families and readers have a wonderful Thanksgiving, Christmas and holiday season. Thank you.

--H.M. Stroh

## ***The First Annual Remembering Ceremony: Report***

*This time last year, we covered the story of Kay Kremer, mother of baby Sullivan. You may recall her plan to co-ordinate Alexandra's House First Annual Remembering Our Babies Ceremony. This very meaningful event took place on 8 October 2016. Kay writes:*

The loss of a baby is devastating. The grief it brings is often misunderstood. It is often unspoken and can leave families feeling alone, grieving in silence. There are few opportunities where we, as bereaved parents, can safely share our babies' stories. This ceremony is a chance for families to share and honor their babies who've died. It is an opportunity for us to speak their names and to hear them spoken by others. It is a platform for paying tribute, for remembering and for recognizing that each of our babies are unique human beings. It is an acknowledgement that they were here, they are real and they continue to have an impact on our lives. Finally, this ceremony is an opportunity to raise awareness for Alexandra's House and for Pregnancy and Infant Loss (1 in 4 pregnancies end in loss). No family should be left to grieve alone.

I am happy to report that it was a beautiful ceremony on 8 October! We held it at Loose Park in Kansas City. The weather was perfect and we had many families attend. The ceremony was open to the public and free of charge. Each family received a beautiful glass votive candle with their baby's name written on it. The candles were a special gift from us, for each family, as a keepsake for their baby. We provided a "Remembrance Table," on which parents could share a special picture or memento of their baby. Special prayers were said and poems read. The babies' names were read aloud while their candles were lit. A special song was played at the conclusion of the ceremony and cookies and refreshments were served afterwards. It was moving to see the families connect with one another. It sounds so simple, but a lot went into it. It meant so much to these families.

It was such an honor to have organized this event alongside other Alexandra's House Mothers. It was an amazing experience – one which I hope and pray to continue to offer as a healing service to Kansas City families each year. I hope and pray for future donations and financial support to continue this mission to help families remember and honor their babies. Keeping their memories alive and sharing them with others is a parent's life long mission. I hope you will continue to support us and join us next year!

Thank you and God Bless!



## *On Retreat at Alexandra's House*

*Sometimes, after the loss of a child, it's truly hard to be back in the same environment, doing the same things, 'toughing' it out when life goes back to normality, and trying to pretend you feel okay again. Alexandra's House has served as a safe space – a retreat house – for those navigating the journey of infant loss. For Tess Hackney, mother of baby Val, a retreat there for a few days was just what was needed. She writes:*

Val is our first child. My husband, Justin, and I found out we were pregnant in August of 2015. We were parents! Life would never be the same. We had 5 months with our precious Val before she passed away unexpectedly inside my womb due to a rare blood-clotting disorder that the doctors had no way of knowing that I had. Three days before Christmas I gave birth to Val, and her funeral was four days after Christmas.

It's been over nine months since we lost our Val. Alexandra's House has been there for us, right from the start. I called Patti from my hospital bed, crying, hopeless, less than a day after Val was born. I wondered if anyone was going to show us how we were supposed to live after this inexplicable heartbreak – losing a child through stillbirth. Alexandra's House has helped us shoulder this immeasurably sorrowful journey.

The start of another school year this August was especially difficult. I felt like I was stumbling through life. I was trying to unpack our new home, get caught up at work, stay in touch with people (although I felt awkward because I still wanted to talk about Val and some of them seemed to be running out of things to say... or who knows what), and all the while, I was trying to reconnect more genuinely with God. I didn't know what to do. Every day I was moving further away from the day I held my daughter...every day I was hearing her name less and less...This was (and still is) so tough for me.

With the help of my husband and therapist, I finally decided to ask Patti if I could retreat at Alexandra's House. I was desperate to go somewhere that was *all* about Val, a place where I could speak her name over and over, and where it would never be out of place. A place where someone always wanted to talk about her, if that is what I wanted. And also a place where I could be reminded that joy still exists, and that I could still experience it, even though it's hard sometimes to believe such a thing.

I cannot explain in just one article the great fruits that came from my retreat at Alexandra's House. Every need I had at that moment was taken care of. I needed to be reassured that I was loved by God, that our suffering wasn't meaningless, and that Love had not abandoned us. Patti kept telling me how glad she was to have me there, and after I left, she would check in to see how I was doing. How great it was *not* to feel like an awkward, sad shadow of myself. How wonderful it was, and is, to feel like a valued and cherished mommy, what I've always wanted.

Through my retreat at Alexandra's House, I have been able to find some peace in continuing each day as a bereaved mommy, remembering our beautiful Val, and at the same time, knowing the Lord has not overlooked anything in our lives, and we are always in His precious sight!



## *From Time-Filler to Heart-Changer*

*Helen Rhodes and her friends, all high-school seniors at St James' Academy, were much moved by doing voluntary work there this summer. Although not part of their original plan, their time at Alexandra's House became the core of their experience, and changed their way of thinking. Helen writes:*

What does it mean to be a woman? Many would avidly argue that it means nothing different from being a man. As Catholics, as women, and as high-schoolers, we feel that, with utmost respect, this is one of the most incorrect assumptions one could make. The complementarity of male and female create within us different needs. Women's inclination to receptivity and creativity, inspired our women's faith sharing group, G.R.A.C.E., nestled within the St. James Academy Community. G.R.A.C.E is an acronym for "Girls Respond Actively to Christ's Example" and our little student-led, witness-sharing fellowship has grown into quite the family. But we had still to grow its mission. We had followed in Christ's example through food, faith, and fellowship but we had not followed Jesus in His acts of service.

This past summer my twin sister, best friend, and I worked under the guidance of our wonderful teacher to create a G.R.A.C.E. Mission Trip, where we volunteered at multiple organizations in our lovely backyard, Kansas City. Coordinating thirty girls, multiple chaperones, retreat activities and more was a whirlwind, and as we got closer and closer to June, we grew more and more desperate for the flexibility of organizations. I recall sitting with my two other coordinators and saying, "That's it, I'm emailing Miss Patti because this is a place other girls need to see, even if they don't need us for much." It started as the perfect patch for one of our three group's time gaps, but grew into being four of the most impactful hours of service.

Alexandra's House is unlike any place we had served. It was kind of like getting hit with an emotional train. We are all juniors and seniors in high school; most of us have dreams of growing up, becoming successful, and best of all, starting a family. We learn over and over in religion class that to be God's means to accept suffering and in fact, to title it as the most beautiful mercy. Yet, the suffering of infants to which Alexandra's House ministers, seems so raw and so indiscriminate. Reality had hit us. In this place, it was like getting a glimpse into Christ's wounds.

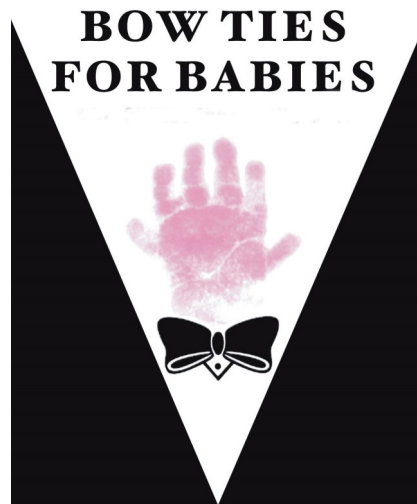
This house values womanhood, manhood, and the true dignity of life. Our whole mission trip had focused on seeing the human behind each need. Here we put faces to the cause. These were our lost brothers and sisters, and unlike in the secular world, here they were missed, they were cherished, and they were loved. What a fresh breath of the world we felt that day. What a peace was in us, as we were able to experience the firsthand love of a family, bound together under one roof.

Looking back, it is a bit of a shame that only six girls and two chaperones got to dive into a culture of love with the great people at Alexandra's House; but at the same time, what a blessing that each one of us lucky eight got that chance and now we are newly able share what authentic love looks like.

On behalf of all the G.R.A.C.E. girls and our entire St. James Academy community, I would like to thank the community of Alexandra's House for your willingness to accommodate and inspire us.



***2016 BOW TIES FOR BABIES GALA from the Friends of Alexandra's House***



We feel very blessed to have had so many of you attend and support our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala held on Friday, October 14, 2016 at the Grand Street Café Plaza, KCMO. There were new faces combined with our faithful supporters, many smiles, and some tears. These were all shared as the large, extended 'family' that we are at Alexandra's House. Together, we bring with us our stories, both sad and happy. This year, Alyson Voigt shared her heartfelt story of her time with her precious daughter, Addy. Dr. Errick Arroyo shared his perspective as a physician working with some of our families. Patti, as its foundress, has brought each story to life under the watchful eye of our heavenly Father. These are His children, we are their caretakers, and Patti is their guardian.

Thanks to all of you for your love, prayers, attendance, and monetary support. We were delighted to have had so many new contributors donating items for our auctions, many for the first time from the Westport area. Through your kindness, we were able to raise **\$ 45,000** for Alexandra's House.

The funds will be used towards:

- 1) Purchase 100 early loss burial vessels so the littlest babies' remains can be buried versus being "disposed of as medical waste"
- 2) Perpetual light by Alexandra's Monument in front of the house
- 3) Continued support of families, fund funeral account to help with burial expenses
- 4) Contingency account for major repairs and /or equipment purchases
  - a. Brick & stone tuckpointing
  - b. Kitchen floor (tile replacement )
  - c. Walls repairs and repainting in bedrooms & hallway and stairway to 2nd floor

Our goal continues to be to provide Alexandra's House with the monetary support to serve past, present, and future families needing the services of this unique ministry

May Our Lord bless all of you.

## *Lemonade Stand with a Difference*

*Jenny McGinnis came across the work of Alexandra's House at a Curé of Ars parish Mom's Group meeting, when Patti came to talk last year. Her daughters, Molly (age 6) and Kate (age 3), decided to make it their special cause. Jenny writes in:*

When we considered doing a lemonade stand this summer we began thinking of where the proceeds would go - we always have a rule about the money they earn. One third goes to church or charity, one third goes to their college savings and the other third can go to their piggy bank or toy store. Last year, they gave a third of their Lemonade Stand proceeds to Curé of Ars in the tithing basket the following Sunday morning. But this year they wanted me to give them more ideas - so I did. When I mentioned the mission of Alexandra's House and what they do, they enthusiastically wanted to give there. My older daughter, Molly made friendship bracelets to sell, Kate helped me baked the cookies and they both helped with the lemonade! We had almost 60 family-members and friends stop by and they were very pleased to be able give the money to Alexandra's House. The secondary benefit was all the people we were able to tell about its mission. So many had never heard about it so we told them all about it so they too can help in the future with your mission!



*Alexandra's House*

[www.alexandrashouse.com](http://www.alexandrashouse.com)

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