



NEWSLETTER

FALL 2015

EDITORIAL

The name of Maria Montessori will no doubt be familiar to all of you. This gifted early-twentieth century Italian woman's legacy is visible up and down the country, never more so than at present, with over 4000 pre-schools and schools to the forefront of bringing her ethos and methods to our children. Rather fewer will be familiar with Maria Montessori's deep religious faith which informed her thinking about the dignity and wonder of the infant, and our responsibility to nurture them in the most loving way possible. It was when reading her book *The Secret of Childhood* (1936) recently, that I came across a passage so breath-taking in its implications and so reminiscent of the work of Alexandra's House that I shall take the liberty of quoting it in full. The attitude we should have towards the new born baby, she writes, is one of 'reverence before the mystery of creation, the secret of an infinite taking bounded form'. And she continues with a religious analogy (although one doesn't have to be Catholic to appreciate the deep power of the image):

'The manner of handling a new-born babe and the delicacy of feeling that should inspire such handling make one think of the Catholic priest as he handles the Host at the altar. With purified hands, which have practiced every detail of their movement,

with what delicacy and deliberation does he move the Host now vertically, now horizontally, setting It down from time to time, as if It were weary, as if even such movements were so vigorous as to need interruption. And while he raises up the Host, he prostrates himself in worship. Here is silence; the light that enters is subdued by colored glass; a feeling of hope, of elevation fills the whole environment; such is the environment worthy of the child.'

Now this careful, sacred touch of the infant, however tiny, however ailing, is what Alexandra's House does so often and so devotedly through the unwearying ministry of Patti and the community. And as parents, family, friends and supporters, we are invited to share in that same reverence for these little ones, awed, above all, at the mystery of their creation, and giving them, to the last, an environment worthy of their great dignity. We want to thank them for this gift of their mission, and, meanwhile, on Patti's behalf, I send this with greetings to all our readers for a peaceful holiday season and new year.

--H.M. Stroh



CELEBRATING CHANCE

Jerred and TJ, together with eldest son Cal, welcomed Baby Chance Edward on June 12, 2012. Chance had been diagnosed with Trisomy 18 and arrived at 26 weeks gestation. Those 26 weeks of love and care were crucial in helping his brave parents reach out to other families suffering similar heartaches. They write:

The inexpressible pain and heartache of losing our second son will never go away and nor do we expect total healing. Yet, in all we have suffered personally, we know that we are not alone as countless mothers and fathers just like us have said goodbye to their babies all too early. We were robbed of the joy, the opportunity to nurture, love and rear our baby boy but realized that we were put in this situation by God for a reason and that we could do something to help those that have gone or will go through the pain that we had to endure.

This is when we came up with the idea of having a 5k Run/Walk to honor our precious Chance Edward and all other Angel Babies. The race would be a positive way of building solidarity and helping other families cope with losing a little one too soon.

We started this race one year after Chance's death, with the idea that it would be held on the last Saturday of June every year. Our first 5k was held on June 27, 2013 and was a great success as other families that had similar losses came from near and far to honor their little ones. We took their names and created signs with angel wings and the babies' names, displaying them throughout the course so that the runners could see.

Our second year was even bigger and this year, June 2015, was our biggest yet. This time, we hosted a breakfast of biscuits and gravy for all the participants



which was, naturally enough, a big hit with the attendees! This year was special also because representatives from Alexandra's House were able to be there to cheer on our runners. Patti Lewis and Kathy Tarbe made the trek from Kansas City and it really meant a lot to Jerred and me that they could be there to talk to everyone and even participate! We were also able to give Alexandra's House much-needed money to help the families that they serve.

We would encourage our readers to become involved especially those who live in Highland KS and Wathena KS. There is a Facebook page (see link below) that we have created to invite people we know and to get the word out to other families to come and run (or walk!) and remember our loved ones. Several months before the race, we put out a registration form on Facebook. Each participant will get a t-shirt with their entry fee and all the proceeds are given to Alexandra's House to help other families with hospital and other expenses. Here is our Facebook link.

https://www.facebook.com/Celebrating-Chance-Edward-And-All-Angel-Babies-5k-RunWalk-1473724159512337/timeline/?ref=br_tf



CELEBRATING CHANCE (CONT'D.)

Our little event has become a huge success in our small town of 1000 people of Highland, KS. Without the support of all of our friends and family, this event would not be possible and we are extremely grateful to all of you out there! And we hope to see y'all next June.



FROM KAY KREMER -

Kay Kremer is one of our AH moms who is hoping to start up an annual Remembrance Ceremony involving our families, communities and parishes. Anyone interested should contact Kay directly at Kay_Kremer@yahoo.com.

She writes:



Dear Alexandra's House Supporters,

The death of an infant or unborn child is often an overlooked and misunderstood event in our society. The mainstream does not appear to recognize these deaths as the loss of real human life – particularly in instances of the unborn. The loss is often marginalized leaving the heartbro-

ken parents to grieve quietly. The life and death of these children, however, is real.

The loss of a baby is devastating no matter whether the baby is unborn or born. These babies are our hopes and dreams. When we lose them, we lose those hopes and dreams, and the present and future with them. We are left wondering who they would have been. The grieving is a life-long journey without our child. As parents who can't parent those babies, we long for ways in which we can be close to or honor them. We also want to bring sensitive awareness to a topic of which many people aren't aware. We long to share our babies with others and support those who experience the same kind of loss.

October is *Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness* month as first proclaimed by Ronald Reagan in 1988. October 15th has become, since 2002, the National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day (PAILRD). By now, this commemorative day is being

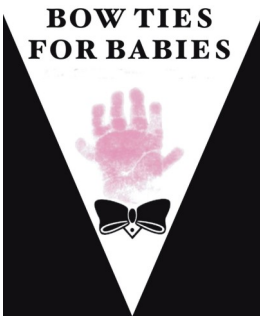
observed not only in the US, but in Canada, the UK, Australia and Italy too. Every year at 7 pm in each time zone, there is an international "Wave of Light," to honor all the babies gone too soon. Candles are kept lit for an hour, balloons are released, t-shirts are made with the infants' names on them and their names are read off. There are only a few organizations that offer these ceremonies; most of them are nonprofit and looking to raise funds.

My husband and I believe that there is an opportunity here for Alexandra's House to create their own Remembrance Ceremony involving the Dioceses of Kansas City in Kansas and Kansas City-St Joseph, the parish communities from various faith traditions, and all the families who love and cherish Alexandra's House. This opportunity would help comfort and support the families who have lost as well as bring much needed awareness of and funding to the generous work of Alexandra's House. We certainly need help and backing to do this. Whether this is a big event or small one, it could make such an impact each year on so many families.

I have never planned an event like this before. It is strange how grief can motivate you to do things that you never imagined doing. This year I will be attending a ceremony at the JC Nichols Fountain hosted by another organization. My intention is to observe what they do, what they offer and how many families will be there. It was very meaningful to purchase a lumineer as well as a t-shirt with my baby, Sullivan's, name on it. All of the babies who have died will have their names read out loud during the ceremony. They will exist to others!

My hope then for this ceremony is to raise funds to benefit Alexandra's House and bring a greater awareness of infant and pregnancy loss. I pray that you all will join me this time next year in October for our own Wave of Light. If this is something that you, as a parish-member in the above dioceses or indeed a parish member of another faith tradition or community, are interested in, please contact me through Alexandra's House. Together, we can bring this Remembrance Ceremony about.

BOW TIES FOR BABIES



This year our annual Gala Event, Bow Ties for Babies was held on 25 September 2015 at the Grand Street Café on Grand Avenue, KCMO. The Emcee and Auctioneer was Yve Rojas. Joan Brisimitzakis writes on the occasion.



Seen at 2015 Gala: Alexandra's House Moms

Dear Friends and Supporters of Alexandra's House,

I would personally like to thank all of you for your time, talents, and treasures. I feel very blessed to have a wonderful group of people who have worked throughout the year to make Bow Ties for Babies 2015 a success. Your generosity has enabled us to present Patti with a check for \$42,000.

I was quite touched to see many old faces and some new ones too. The personal stories told by three families who were blessed to have Patti and Alexandra's House on their challenging journey of parenthood truly touched upon the sorrow they had experienced and the peace they had attained by joining Patti's special family.

We are already beginning to prepare for next year's event and are in need of your help. Firstly, we will be losing a committee member, and we would therefore like to take this opportunity to invite people to come forward if they would be interested in organizing this special annual event. If you feel that this is something you'd be good at and would enjoy doing, we would like to hear from you.

Secondly, we also need to bring more awareness to Patti's work by inviting new people to fill the seats at our fundraiser. I am calling upon you all to invite new people, sponsor a table, and share your knowledge of Alexandra's House with all you meet. This year we filled

101 seats, our goal next year is 150 seats with the hope of presenting Patti with a much larger check. Together we can make this happen.

As a family, we must work together to use and share the blessings we have, and bring the resources needed to help Patti continue to serve every family who comes through her doors.

Thank you once again. I hope you will join us in our work and I am very much looking forward to seeing all of you at *Bow Ties for Babies* 2016.

With a grateful heart,
Joan Brisimitzakis



Martha, Yve (auctioneer), Susan

Alexandra's House

A home for terminally ill unborn, newborn and abandoned babies

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