



## BEREAVED PARENTS of Madison

### Fall 2017 Newsletter & Annual Report

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

**CLAIRE MATEJKA**  
President

**SAM KUBLY**  
Secretary

**EMILY GRORUD**  
Treasurer

**REBECCA MARKERT**



## BEREAVED PARENTS of Madison

*Supporting parents who have  
experienced a miscarriage,  
stillbirth, or infant death.*  
est. 1974

*Grief is a  
difficult  
journey, but  
you do not  
have to  
travel  
alone.*

#### Dear Parents and Friends,

*The past year has proved to be a challenging, humbling, and inspiring one in so many ways within our organization. Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc has continued to broaden our reach and I could not be more proud of the work our team has accomplished in the community. We are excited to share some highlights with you on the following pages!*

*Even with all the amazing progress since our last newsletter with awareness, education and support, it seems we continue to learn of endless opportunities. Our goals for 2018 are not flashy or glamorous. We are keeping our priorities in line with our mission to support families and educate professionals. We could not continue this pursuit without an army of dedicated volunteers. THANK YOU to each parent volunteer for helping us achieve our support goals in the Madison community! You are amazing!*

*Finally, it is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to one of our founding board members, Jen Pepoy. She is dedicated, detail-oriented, and driven by the love for her family. She will be missed on our board, but the legacy she has established in her children's memory is immeasurable. Thank you, Jen, for all your dedication and support.*

### Upcoming Events

12/12/17	Pregnancy After Loss Support - Rainbow Pregnancies of Madison
12/15/17	Book Club: A Broken Heart Still Beats: After Your Child Dies, by McCracken & Semel
12/21/17	Bereaved Parents of Madison Monthly Support Group
12/26/17	Mom's Angel Party

Complete event details are available on our Facebook page or by contacting  
bereavedparentsofmadison@gmail.com 920-643-0217

**Forever in Our  
Hearts: Honoring a  
Precious Life  
by Elaine R.  
Mother of Newton Rose**

It is never a question of how to keep our baby's memory alive and fresh. I never stop thinking about her – ever. On a biological level, my body remembers her constantly, her cells mixed with my own, forever living inside me. She is always with me, her memory vivid, visceral, eternal. And yet, as time passes and the seasons change, the world moves on, and our baby's short time on earth gets further and further away. For others, her memory becomes but a trace of existence, something fleeting, something not quite real, something others rarely offer to talk about. But our baby, Newton Rose, was real, and she was very much her own person, even though, for reasons I will never understand and struggle to accept, she was given a body incapable of nurturing her sweet soul. Our baby's existence has permanently changed my life and I feel compelled, on a daily basis, to honor the great impact she has had on my partner, Bobby, and me.

A dear friend gave us a small, stuffed baby lioness the night we said farewell to our baby. Since our due date, we find ourselves cuddling the stuffed lion, connecting to our baby through its soft, inanimate body. We have gemstones mindfully placed throughout our house that constantly remind us of Newton Rose. My partner and I wear matching crystal necklaces, which serve to connect us as parents, and I wear another necklace that holds precious keepsakes of our baby.

Our small coffee table has been converted into a memorial for our baby. The photo we took on our babymoon in Hawaii when I was 18 weeks pregnant is the centerpiece surrounded by various stones, art, and candles dedicated to Newton Rose. Up until our due date, I kept cut flowers on the memorial, switching them every week. This ritual held great meaning for me as it was a way to shroud my baby's memory in beauty and life. Since the due date, I have placed small orchids on the coffee table, giving the shrine a more sustainable, long-lasting beauty.

Anyone who comes into our home sees this memorial, presenting others with an opportunity to experience Newton Rose, to talk about her, to feel her presence — to honor her as a part of our family.

We are fortunate enough to live across from Lake Wingra. The lake cradles the memory of our baby. The night before we had to say goodbye to Newton Rose's physical body, we released her soul into the lake with a fire ceremony. We often go to that place at the lake shore to take a few moments to connect with our baby — although recently, we visit that space less, perhaps because we have so integrated our baby into our daily lives. We talk about her, we sing songs to her — we miss her, we love her.

On a warm Sunday in June, Bobby and I went to a quiet shore of Lake Mendota. After we each expressed the regrets that we carried with us around the tragedy of losing our child, we fully submerged into the lake, three times. I remember feeling a certain degree of panic, despite being a strong swimmer, as I held my breath for as long as I could under the icy lake water. Bobby could tell I was struggling, and in between submersions, he held me and encouraged me to connect with our baby. When I submerged again, I focused on the sweetness of our baby, and with my partner's loving hand on my back, I was able to calm my panic and linger under water longer. This powerful ritual left both of us feeling lighter, more connected to each other, and closer to our baby.

Continued on Page 10...



August 2017 Paper Lantern Craft at Support Group  
Donated by Ryan and Sierra  
in memory of Gabriel and their three babies.

## How Can You Help?

Year-End Gifts Help Support Our Mission

Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc. continues to support newly grieving parents in many ways with both presence and resources. We are grateful to everyone who has helped us continue our mission serving parents after the loss of their babies. Whether a monetary donation or a donation of volunteer time, we appreciate everything our members do to help our organization fulfill this important mission. Your monetary donations are critical in helping us continue to give resources to our families as well as to serve them with our monthly support group and yearly events.

Please consider a year-end, tax-deductible donation that will help guide us in serving new families. Please consider asking your friends and family to consider a donation as well. You may be surprised at how many cherish the opportunity to remember a loved one with you with a memorial gift.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

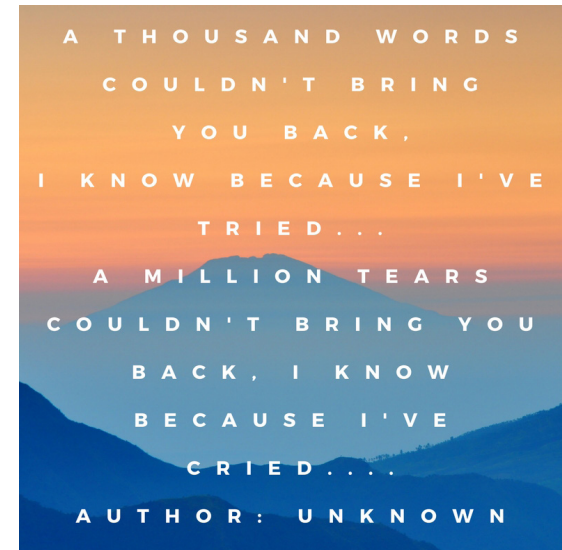
Mail: Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc.  
PO Box 46511  
Madison, WI 53744-6511

bereavedparentsofmadison@gmail.com  
Call: 920-643-0217  
Web: www.bereavedparentsofmadison.com

Please contact us via email or phone if you wish to unsubscribe from future newsletter mailings.

**For the Dads**  
by Mike M.  
Father of Lily

I consider the first ultrasound to be my daughter's birthday. Normally, we think of a birthday as the day in the delivery room when you see your precious baby for the first time and documented on the birth certificate. That day would be much different for us, and her life so short, that I think of the first grainy image on the monitor as the moment that I met her, and to me at least, she was born. At the first ultrasound, I sat there on the edge of my chair, holding my wife's hand and smiling, just staring at my beautiful little baby, watching her (even though her gender was still unknown to us) wiggle and flop around on the screen. Even her little spine was cute! I was immediately in love. I didn't realize it at the time, but later it would seem as if an entire childhood was crammed into these few 20 minute or so appointments. Imagine most parents' memories of first steps, first words, school projects, Little League games, school plays, graduations and driver's education tests all compressed into these images on the ultrasound screen. Her loss and the grieving process was a very bitter pill to swallow for many years. You are supposed to lose your parents, and half of married people are going to lose a spouse, but losing a child upsets the natural order of things. There seems to be fewer resources for grieving dads compared to grieving moms, and often the gender-neutral resources seem tilted towards helping the women. One thing that has helped me is bringing purpose to Lily's life by helping others who are grieving. I know a lot of the men reading this are in the earlier stages of grief and lost in that fog dread and hopelessness. Please reach out to me or someone if you are. There's many people able to help you, it's just sometimes hard to see that at the time.



Continued from page 2...

Recently, I went to the cemetery to visit the site where dear friends scattered our baby's ashes. After we lost her, I was too overwhelmed to scatter the ashes myself, so this was the first time I visited the site. Sitting on the earth where our baby's ashes were laid to rest, my palms spread on the grass, I wept as I felt our baby's presence radiating around me. I was surprised at how moved I was by that space, but it makes sense — that area is the only place, aside from my own body, that holds any physical piece of our baby. I sprinkled rose water over the ground, mixing it with my tears. We use rose water in our rituals for Newton Rose, and I frequently wear rose oil on my skin, keeping her close to me, emanating from my being — my heart.

I imagine my life will always be oriented, on some level, toward the baby who graced us so briefly with her presence. I cannot fathom ever "forgetting" her — ever. Yet, these physical reminders, the daily offerings and the rituals in which we engage, create sacred space to connect with our little one, and they serve to remind the world that yes, Newton Rose was real, she existed, and she is, and always will be, our firstborn. She will always occupy my mind, and she will forever be a sweetness in my heart.

**Programs and Events**

BPoM has continued to find ways to support parents and families through their grief. The Bereaved Mother's Retreat and the Light Between Oceans film screening and discussion were highlights for our moms. Dads participated in a March Madness viewing and enjoyed a bonfire.

We held our second family-friendly picnic at the park. We had 28 family members enjoy the water, sand, sun, bubbles, and community. This fall, over 30 family members gathered to pick pumpkins!

Our events are open to all of our members and full details are posted on the closed BPoM Facebook page. Thank you to the many volunteers who help pull these events together. If you have an idea for an event, we would love to talk to you! Contact Claire at [bereavedparentsofmadison@gmail.com](mailto:bereavedparentsofmadison@gmail.com)



July 2017 Family Friendly Picnic

*"To see a friend who has suffered the loss of all things begin again with trust and love, gives us strength to continue on."*

Mother Angelica



2017 Bereaved Mother's Day Retreat  
12 Mothers gathered for support, yoga, and Kintsugi.



**General Communications and Events:**  
PUBLIC Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc.

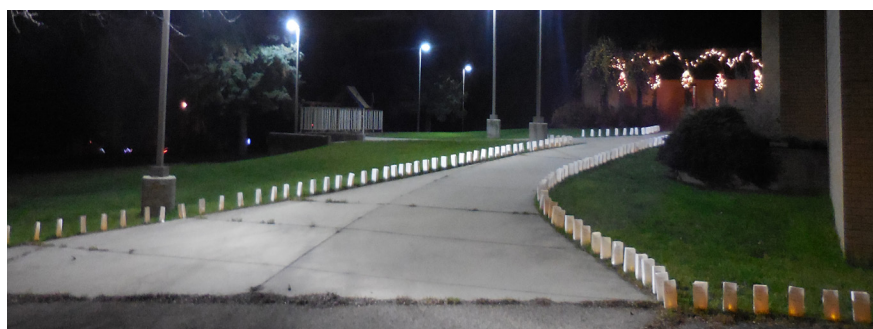
**Private Online Support Group:**  
Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc.

**Pregnancy After Loss Support Group:**  
Rainbow Pregnancies of Madison



October 2017  
Families in the pumpkin patch.

## Holiday Remembrance Service December 3, 2016



2016, we added luminaries with each baby's name to the path to light the way for families coming to remember and honor their little ones gone too soon.



A candle is lit for each baby. Stand made by Sally and Terry In memory of Kyle and Jennifer

Each December, our families gather to remember their babies. Many families tell us they look forward to attending, and for many it will be the only opportunity they have throughout the year to celebrate their baby(ies).

This non-religious service features music and readings by parents from our group. We read aloud the names of the babies as a candle is lit for each of them. Each family receives a gift for the child we have come together to remember and honor.

**Gone, but not forgotten...**

## Support Groups

Our quarterly Early Loss Support Group has had a slow start this year with attendance. This group is meant for families who have experienced early pregnancy loss and are seeking support and comfort from others who are walking a similar path. We encourage families struggling in this capacity to come and meet others as no one needs to walk alone.

Our Monthly Support Group continues to have steady attendance. After introductions and sharing time, we start an activity which offers families a chance to continue the discussion while keeping their hands busy. Families have greatly appreciated the activities as they are also a keepsake to take home in memory of their little one(s). We are grateful to everyone who has sponsored the snack and activity at our monthly support group. If you are interested in sponsoring in memory of your child, please contact Emily Grorud.



October 2017 Volunteers  
Forever In Our Hearts Walk  
Ivy Anderson & Leah McNeely

We have been very busy sharing the mission of Bereaved Parents of Madison and the support we offer local families. Our advocates answer questions and share their stories directly with the medical teams and related professionals that care for our families.

In addition to speaking to Edgewood College nursing students for over 10 years, we are now reaching Madison College and Blackhawk Technical College students.

Our parents have served on panel discussions, provided resources at community events, shared our mission on WKOW 27 Wake Up Wisconsin, Channel 3 & 47 evening news, Cap Times, and published in Madison Mom's Blog, BPoM, along with other organizations, have been advocating for a one-time state tax credit for parents after the stillbirth of a baby. Two of our board members are current contributors to online support magazines PALS (Rebecca Markert), and Still Standing (Emily Grorud.)

*"Each person's life is a story that is telling itself in the living."*

William Throsby Bridges



June 2017 Speakers at Edgewood Center for Nursing  
Sue Tjgum & Tina Keller  
With Bridget LaGro, RN Unity Point Health Meriter



# HUGS

Hope, Understanding, & Grief Support

## Education & Outreach



**October 2017 Hearing for Bill 138**  
**Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions, and Rural Issues.**  
 Mark Pepoy, Claire Matejka, Lindsay Marty, Laura Becker (Embraced), Rebecca Markert, Sen Alberta Darling, Mike Markert, Tina Keller, Emily Grorud, Amanda Smyth (Star Legacy), Hellen Werner.



**May 2017 March For Babies**  
 BPoM Volunteers offered families support and assisted families adding their baby's name to the memory garden.



Gifts presented to HUGS families.

**HUGS Volunteer Recruitment Informational Call**  
 for Madison and Janesville areas.  
 January 8, 2017 7:30pm

**Requirements for Volunteers:**  
 2 Years since most recent loss.  
 Attended a support group.  
 Commit to a family for one year.  
 Can not be pregnant.

**Questions or RSVP**  
 bereavedparentsofmadison@gmail.com

HUGS is a group of trained community and bedside volunteers who are connected to families after a loss. The referrals come from hospitals, clinics, and online self-referrals. Our volunteers support families by encouraging them to make choices that are best for their families before, during, and after their loss. We also support families for a year afterwards by texting, calling, and meeting in person.

Since launching the HUGS program in February of 2016, our volunteers have supported 84 families both at bedside and after discharge. This year, we successfully expanded to the Monroe Clinic where the program has been embraced by both the clinic and hospital teams. We have learned so much over the past year from our families and volunteers, and even though things have not always gone as we expected, the HUGS coordinators and volunteers remain flexible as the program continues to evolve.

Feedback from families who have completed their year of followup have been very positive, encouraging, and affirming that we are on to something with this innovative program.

Thank you to all the volunteers for your many hours of family support, and a very sincere thank you to the families who have shared your journeys with us.



**September 2017**  
**WI WIC Association Professional Development Day**  
 Claire Matejka shared her personal story and gave a presentation on perinatal loss to over 100 Directors.



**October 2017 Still Loved Film Screening and Panel Discussion**  
 Rebecca Markert (moderator), Jenah Ulrich, Leah McNeely, and Sue Tjgum.

## Finding Comfort by Lindsay M. Mother of Mason Michael



I miss the girl I was during my first pregnancy. The girl who was naïve enough to think that pregnancy loss only happened in the first trimester. The girl who didn't really know what stillbirth meant and thought it certainly wouldn't happen to her. Looking back at that first, blissful pregnancy, I wish I would have enjoyed it more. I wish I would have thought less about it being over and found more joy in the anxiety-free, miracle that I was creating. I quickly got pregnant again when my daughter was 16 months old. Again, the thought of losing the baby never crossed my mind. I already had a healthy baby, so this time would be no different. At 22 weeks I stopped feeling the baby move. Mason Michael was born sleeping on July 16th, 2014. My world was shattered. I was in a very dark place and the only way I felt I could crawl out was by trying to get pregnant.

Five months later, I was completely terrified to find out that my first rainbow was on its way. This started my pregnancy after loss journey. I immediately requested to join the Rainbow Pregnancies of Madison Facebook group. I found lots of comfort in this group. I posted about appointments and everything that was stressing me out. The support and encouragement I received from the other women, who needed support themselves, was truly amazing. I don't think I would have made it through those months without a safe place to release my worries. The affirmations offered from the group were such a blessing. I wrote a couple of these quotes on my bathroom mirror. I made myself say them out loud each morning. The group was the only place I could turn to that I didn't feel judged. These women could truly relate to what I was going through. I have since had a second rainbow baby in August of this year.

If you find yourself going through pregnancy after the loss of your baby, please know that there is a network of people here to support you. Don't be afraid to reach out for help.

## Rainbow Pregnancies of Madison

Bereaved Parents of Madison, Inc has a pregnancy after loss support group. The group has a private Facebook page to support moms expecting after a loss. It requires approval to join and family/friends can not see you are a member so your privacy is respected. They also meet in person and provide books to help with your journey. We have welcomed 25 new rainbows since our newsletter last year!

If you are interested in joining this group for support, please contact Rebecca Markert at [rebecca.markert@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.markert@gmail.com).



Dr. Kristen Sharp  
Clinic Launch June 7, 2017

## Hope After Loss Clinic

Our community was very thankful to have a new OB clinic open on June 7, 2017 that supports our families. Dr. Kristen Sharp is an ObGyn with UW, and she saw the need for more specialized care after her own loss. The clinic includes care from Dr. Julianne Zweifel. Families can make an appointment without referral (depending on their health plan) to attend the clinic to review their loss, plan for future pregnancies, and receive care for subsequent pregnancies.

UW Arboretum Clinic  
1102 S. Park St. Madison, WI 53715.

Call (608) 287-5898 for appointments or more information.

*A "Rainbow Baby" is the understanding that the beauty of a rainbow does not negate the ravages of the storm. When a rainbow appears, it doesn't mean the storm never happened or that the family is not still dealing with its aftermath. What it means is that something beautiful and full of light has appeared in the midst of the darkness and clouds. Storm clouds may still hover, but the rainbow provides a counterbalance of color, energy and hope.*