AUGUST 2024 | Vol. 24 Issue 3 WESTERN NEW YORK PERINATAL BEREAVEMENT NETWORK, INC. FORGET-ME-NOT NEWSLETTER

Emily's Entry

BY EMILY DORING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The past few months have been incredibly busy for us. From hosting our "Elegant Evening to Remember Gala" and Parent's Day Brunch, to supporting various events from other organizations that benefited WNYPBN, we've been active and engaged.

We've also had some changes to our Board. The Network extends its gratitude to Dr. William Zorn and Michael Anderson for their dedication and support of WNYPBN, as well as their time on the Board of Directors. We wish them well as they move on to other endeavors. Amber Hultgren is our new Board President, Joanna Weld is the Vice President and Secretary, and Terry O. Michalek is our Treasurer.

As summer draws to a close, we say farewell to our intern, Brooke, and begin preparations for our "Walk to Remember" on October 13th. We greatly appreciate Brooke's contributions since she began her internship in January and wish her all the best in her future career as a social worker. I asked Brooke to share her reflections on her internship, and here are her thoughts. Unfortunately, my time as this year's intern at WNYPBN is coming to a close. In these last few weeks, I have been reflecting on all the things I've learned and all the wonderful people I have met through this community. Although it is a community that we would not have chosen for ourselves, life has chosen it for us. If not for the strong and palpable solidarity, compassion, and vulnerability I've experienced here, I'm not sure I would have made it this far in my grief journey as a bereaved mother and as a young professional hoping to help parents much like myself... much like all of you.

Thank you, Emily, for being an exemplary model of success through tribulation as you manage the network and life as a bereaved mom, dedicating the passion you have for supporting bereaved parents in all that you do. As I go forth into my career, I will remember your transformational leadership style, the moments of candor and vulnerability where you imparted great tidbits of wisdom upon me, and the hectic fun of navigating a small nonprofit, that helps hundreds of people in WNY, through its toughest days.

Kristen, thank you for allowing me to shadow you and witness how you encourage bereaved parents to see the resilience and strength within themselves, and within our community. Your humor, obvious expertise, and honesty are felt at every support group, no matter how heavy my heart was when I entered that space.

Amber, thank you for being a guiding host throughout my 8 months with the network, challenging me to consider every nuance, to embrace uncertainty and experiences without expectations, and to use everything as a teachable moment. Thank you for helping me understand the difference between process and content (though I still struggle with it).

To the volunteers and community partners who generously dedicate their time and talents without expectation of reward, you make our mission achievable, and that is truly the most beautiful thing. Please feel the true conviction I have in every word: we could not do it without you.

Lastly, I thank all of you, the bereaved individuals we serve, who make me feel both seen and heard. Never have I felt so validated as when I am sharing my experience with one of you. For those of you I've been blessed to meet personally, you will never know the positive impact you've had on my healing. I hope the kindness and acceptance you've bestowed upon me is deposited right back into your lives tenfold. This will surely not be the last you see of me.

Sincerely, Brooke Shields

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FORGET-YOU-NOTS

April 5, 2005 Baby D **Michael Anthony Anderson** Always, always in our Hearts! Love, Nana and Papa xxxooo. We love you always! Love, Mommy, Daddy, & Mia Parents: Michael and Kelly Anderson

September 26, 2009 Lilya Raine Arena Hugs to the sky, baby! Mama, Daddy, and little sister, Willow love and miss you. Parents: Kelly and Michael Arena

Jivae Andrea Báez

December 28, 2012

Our beautiful baby girl... we love and miss you every second of every day. Thank you for your sweet baby brother Jamari. All our love all our life. Love, Mommy and Daddy. Parents: Evelyn and Jarred Báez

Benjamin Matthew Brightman

We see you everywhere we go - thank you for giving us those hopeful signs. Until we see you again, Benjamin. You are so loved! Love, Mommy, Daddy, Emma and Millie Parents: Kurtis and Carrie Brightman

Cecelia Rose Callea

You are our shining moon and shooting star. Thank you for inspiring us and always watching over our family. You are so loved and so missed. Love, Mama, Papa, Thomas, and Matteo Parents: Tom and Mary Callea

Rily James Croce	March 8, 2010
Gabrielle Irene Croce	August 3, 2010
Baby Croce Parents: Lena Kingsbury	December 9, 2013
Joy Aubrey Damberger	May 11, 2023

Parents: Jenna and Andy Damberger

Kayonna Marie Darrell **Kingston Antonio Darrell**

We Love You Always! Not a day goes by that we don't think of you Parents: Peter and Lisa Jerebko both! You both will forever be in our hearts!! We are sad that you both are not here with us, but it helps knowing that you have each other!! Love, Mommy, Daddy, Big Sisters Elana, Avianna and Savannah. Big Brother Brandon Parents: Ashley Hunt and Wendell Darrell Jr

March 11, 2013 October 30, 2013 Selah Grace Doring We carry you in our hearts - Forever & Always, Mommy, Daddy, Preston & Kendra Parents: Emily and Todd Doring

Tyler Farris

June 25, 2020 Here on earth for a short time my darling baby boy. Never far from our thought and prayers. Parents: Kayla Marvin and Carl Farris

Eli Robert Godios Parent: Eric and Amanda Godios June 25-Sept. 13, 2022

Baby Casey

Our sweet Casey, we love and miss you so very much. We should be March 25, 2021 celebrating your first birthday, but we know you are safe in Heaven. You are always in our hearts and on our minds. Love always, Big Brother Elias, Little Brother Owen, Mommy, and Daddy. Parents: Ashley and Steven Gruhalla

Reid Hamilton

December 16, 2018 We miss you more and more each day. We think about you every minute of every day. We know you are watching over us. We love you so very much. Love, Daddy, Mommy, Pierce, Rory, Burke, Reagan, Riley, Seamus, and Padraig Parents: Molly and Andrew Hamilton

0 Baby Girl H

0 Baby H

December 28, 2022 3 We know you're both in heaven with our other loved ones who have passed on. We know you both watch over your sister as her angels now. We miss you everyday and think of you often. We love you both!

Parents: Erin and Todd Hoeltke

October 16, 2018 John Paul Jerebko

November 18, 1999

June 8. 2018

April 27, 2021 Our little angel! Love, Mom, Dad, Jakob & Jackson

Baby Boy Jonathan

Miss you more and more everyday!! Forever missed, never forgotten, loved forever and ever!! Mom, Dad, Big Sisters Krysten, Kaytee, Kamden, Big Brother Klyde, Nephews Kortlnd, Kreese, Delltoh, and Nieces Kenzley and Emileigh Blue Parents: LaRue and Leilan Jonathan

April 18, 2021

October 15, 2019

May 18, 2022

FORGET-YOU-NOTS

Marina Kim Ella Grace Kim We love you and think of you often. Please watch over us... now and alwavs. Parents: Dawn and Mark Kim

Baby Joy Love Baby Hope Love Baby Bliss Love Livenzo Sol Love February 15, 2020

My sweet boy, my perfect son, my miraculous full term child, Livenzo Sol. I carried you in my womb, held you in my arms and love you dearly forever. I miss you so much. To each of my precious Steven James Serrano babies, you are a blessing to me, gone too soon and always in my heart. With all our love ~ Mama, Grandma and Ambrosia Parent: Christina Love

Angelo Thomas Marchetti

January 31, 2022 Mommy, Daddy, and your brothers love you and miss you beyond words. We feel you here with us everyday. I will see you again one day my sweet baby boy.

Parents: Katelin and Mark Marchetti

Baby Angel Matam I	October 12, 2021
Baby Angel Matam II	January 23, 2022
Chiara Sneham Matam	Nov. 21, 2022 - Dec. 16, 2022
– , , , , , , , , , ,	

To our two beloved babies that we never met and held - we can't wait to meet you and hold you in Heaven. To our beloved Chiara you are the strongest and most beautiful person we have ever known, and we are so honored to be your mommy and daddy. We think of all three of you every day and miss you every moment. We love you beyond words. Until we can hold you again, we know Jesus is holding you.

Parents: Joshua and Lexi Matam

Bud Charles Mott Theresa Marie Mott "Blueberry" Mott **Baby Mott**

September 12, 2005 September 12, 2005 January 21, 2014 December 23, 2014

Miss you with all of our hearts, Theresa, Bud, "Blueberry" and Baby Mott. God knows our pain and sadness. We know that someday, we will see you again. All our love ~ Daddy, Mommy & Allison Parents: Timothy and Beth Mott

Noah Navarrette

Feb. 12- Sept. 12 2021

Te amare para el resto de mi vida mi amor. Siempre. Parent: Alexa Mancilla

October 24, 1992 **Michael James Quigley** Miss you more and more! 'Til we meet again! Love, Mom Parent: Debi Zmuda

August 3-4, 2005 Caleb Jonathan Schmeelke

March 18, 2022

June 8, 2007 My sweet boy, You made this world a brighter place and brought our big family together. Daddy and I love you more than we could ever say. We think about you every day. We are so proud to be your parents, little Cub.

Parents: Krystal Rivers and Cameron Schmeelke

March 26, 2021 Jacob Wesley Scott

November 8, 2021 We love you and think of you everyday! Butterfly kisses, buddy! March 16, 2023 Love, Mom, Dad, Thomas, & Mandy Parents: Phillip and Christine Scott

Parent: Lisa Graziano

March 16, 2006

May 27, 2000

Aubrey Marie Stuber

May 7, 2023 Aubrey Marie "lil' bean" - God needed you for reasons we may never understand but we are thankful to have you watching over us. We love you forever, our beautiful guardian angel. Parents: Larry & Sarah Stuber

Nicholas Mark Weld

You are my darling, my angel, my star, and my love will find you, wherever you are. Love, Mom, Dad, Benjamin, Amelia, & Johnny Parents: Nate and Joanna Weld

Margie Faye Willis Parents: Katie and Brandon Willis

Grace Lee Zimmer

April 12, 2012 Until we meet again, fly sweet butterfly, fly! A moment in our arms, A lifetime in our hearts. Love, Mom, Dad, Hunter and Luke Parents: Donna and Russell Zimmer



Kaya Faith Darrell was born Aug 26, 2023! Overjoyed and Blessed! We know her siblings, Kayonna and Kingston, are watching over her and keeping her safe! Parents: Ashley Hunt and Wendell Darrell Jr

Vera Sneham Matam was born on April 22, 2024. We know that Baby Angel Matam I, Baby Angel Matam II, and Chiara Sneham Matam are watching over her. Parents: Joshua and Lexi Matam

April 25, 2019

May 22, 2019

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY JOANNA WELD

I've seen a post circulating on Facebook about a specific scene from the new movie *Inside Out 2*. It has been shared by several people and organizations, so I am not sure who the original author is, but part of the post reads as follows: "In one scene, Sadness shyly asks Joy if she can go down into the memory pool with her. In response, Joy takes Sadness's hand into hers and says, "Of course! Remember Sadness, wherever I go, you go too."

I don't think there is any joy or bright side to losing a child. Instead, this sentiment reminds me of the sadness that creeps in and often stops me from being entirely happy. As you read this, it might also remind you of a time when you felt guilty for feeling joy in light of your child or children not being here.

As a twin loss mom, this deeply resonates with me. In all of Johnny's milestones, I share in his joy and also feel the extreme sadness of missing Nicholas. As September creeps closer and I try to prepare myself for Johnny starting kindergarten, I am expecting that both Joy and Sadness will walk beside me as I watch him step onto the bus with his older siblings. If you're feeling this way as we approach a new season, my heart is with you.

I am grateful to the special moms who have chosen to share their stories with us in this newsletter. Thank you for your honesty, bravery, and willingness to share your precious babies with us.

A letter to my angel babies:

Dear Hope and Sesame Seed,

I'm writing to you because I have a hard time saying the words out loud, and I don't know if you'd even hear me if I tried. I want you to know that I loved you both from the very beginning. From the moment I knew of your existence with those two lines I had hopes and dreams for you. I was so afraid, but so excited about all the possibilities. I knew the statistics and the myriad things that could go wrong. I knew that there was a chance that I'd never meet you, or that your life may not be picture perfect, but I truly never imagined that things would end up this way. Even today, it seems impossible that I never got to bring either of you into this world. I can't seem to wrap my head around the fact that I was never able to hold you, see you up close, or celebrate your existence. There were so many things that I wanted to show you and teach you and experience with you.

Hope: you lived with me for nearly 15 weeks, but I carried you for 17. I will forever live with the guilt of not knowing that you weren't okay. I'm so sorry that I couldn't do more for you, but I promise that I tried my very best to do everything right. I did everything the doctors recommended, and we did all the testing we could. No one saw it coming, but nothing would have prepared us for the day we were told you no longer had a heartbeat anyway. We had already told everyone about you, and they were all so excited to welcome you into our lives. Once we knew that you were a little girl, I pictured big bows in your curly hair and your dad wrapped around your finger. I knew that we would team up to drive him crazy and get whatever we wanted. Losing you made me question everything. I lost faith in myself and my body, in modern medicine, and in God. I didn't think I would ever be able to live in this world when you weren't here with me.

Sesame: we waited more than a year for you. Finding out that you were with me gave us hope for the future. We had been through so much, and it was such a relief to know that there was a chance of better days ahead. Even though we only knew about you for a week before you were gone again, I felt you with me. Thank you for giving me the chance to feel optimistic. I'm sorry that more people don't know about you, and I really wish you could have stayed with us longer. You will always be an important part of my life.

I have felt so many emotions through loving you and losing you both. I've questioned everything, but there are two things that I now believe are absolutely true. First of all, everything does not happen for a reason, despite what everyone will tell you. There is no reason why some people are forced to feel the pain and the grief of losing children that they loved and wanted but never even got the chance to know. Second, sometimes there isn't a good answer to the biggest questions you have. Despite asking "why" every day, there is no answer. Was there something I could have done differently? Maybe, but probably not. Life isn't always fair to us, but I'm trying to learn how to stop asking impossible questions, to stop trying to find a reason, and to stop feeling angry.

This is where our journey has brought us. Even if there is no good reason why, and no good answers to the questions I've been asking myself, I hope that you can both feel my love and be proud of the progress I've made. I want you both to know that even though I'm moving forward I will always love you both and will carry you with me for whatever lies ahead. Maybe one day you'll get to watch me be a momma to your sibling here on earth. Until then, please know that I will always love you unconditionally, even though you both had to leave. I hope that you hear me tell you good morning as I start my day, and that you know I keep your memories with me everyday. Even though I may not be parenting you, I am still your mom and I'm grateful that I get to have that title. You were both very real to me, even if you couldn't be seen or felt by anyone else. You may not be here with me in person, but I hope your little spirits always stay by my side.

Until we meet again, love always, Mom

> -Rachel Pollutro, bereaved mother of Hope-March 2022 and Sesame Seed- October 2023

KRISTEN'S PAGE

BY KRISTEN SMITH, FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATOR

Last February, I asked some of our Tiniest Angels Support Group moms to write what they valued about Support Group. Reading what they wrote about their babies and their stories of loss inspired me to want to give more families the opportunity to share. I have the privilege to hear their stories at our Support Group meetings, but they deserve to be told multiple times, to multiple people. I hope that the two stories we're sharing in this newsletter will leave you with another recognition that you're not alone, and perhaps offer you some hope. And as always, I encourage you to come join us at Support Group.

-Kristen Smith, bereaved mother of four and WNYPBN Family Support Coordinator



If you are interested in either benefiting from this program as someone in need of a Peer Mentor to walk through your grief with you, or are at least one year postloss and interested in becoming a Peer Mentor, please reach out to Kristen for more information at kristen@wnypbn.org or 716-222-2150.

Western New York Perinatal Bereavement Network, Inc. Parent-to-Parent **Peer Support**

What is my story?

In short terms my story is Endometriosis, Infertility, Hyperemesis Gravidarum, Sunshine Baby Girl, NICU, PPD/ PPA, Late Miscarriage, Chemical Pregnancy, Secondary Infertility...Still waiting for our Rainbow Baby.

You never think it is going to happen to you until it does. At the time of writing this it has been 8 months since we lost our baby. Time is so peculiar. Some weeks fly by, but then there are days that I sit and stare with tears flowing down my face to no end, just wishing and I don't want her story to focus on what praying that I could bring her back. Losing a child puts you in this club that you never wish to be apart of. It is a heartbreak that you feel in your bones. The pain never goes away, you just learn how to live with it.

If you would've asked me 8 months ago if Since losing Maya, I had to choose to go I was going to get through this. I would've said "No, how do I even get though an hour without crying and taking medication?" My story was "Why me? Haven't I been through enough?" It was also focused on the traumatic birth experience, the pain, both physical and emotional, and the anger. Present day, I don't have it all together; I still have triggers and lack some hope. However, I have changed the tune to how I want the story told and realized how strong I am.

Monday, November 27th at 16 weeks 2 days pregnant at about 5 pm, my water broke. In retrospect, I knew what was happening but didn't want to believe it. I didn't tell anyone and left to go to the Jonas Brother's concert with my best friend. Tuesday evening I texted my aunt, who is an OBGYN resident, and told her what happened. I needed her to give it to me straight, best and worse case scenario. Worst case scenario. "Madi, she's too young to survive".

November 29th, the day my world came crashing down. I'll never forget the look on the ultrasound technician's face. The silence. Both from her and from the machine. No Heartbeat. Blank screen. No Fluid.

Backtrack a few days to Saturday, November 25th. We had a gender reveal party and found out we were having a girl. She didn't have a name yet. That night my husband looked up "M" girl names because our family is Matt, Madi, & Mila. His top one was her name. The next day my cousin texted me a name she had thought of.

It was serendipitous. Maya.

On 11/29/2023, I gave birth to our daughter, Maya Rose Zelazny.

happened to me because she is bigger and brighter than that. I want her story to be one of real, raw emotion: to narrow in on the fact that she matters and her existence has, and will continue to leave an impact.

on for my living daughter, my husband, and myself. We decided to take her memory and create "Maya's Mission". We made a book cart and collected over 100 books which we donated to Sister's Hospital. We hope that these books can bring the smallest amount of solace to parents going through the worst thing imaginable. We are in the works of consolidating with Star Legacy Foundation WNY Division to spread more book carts, books, and resources. I will continue to say her name and talk about my loss. I want to open up the conversation about miscarriages and stillbirths. Every single one of those babies matter and should not be forgotten. I have a drive, that starts with myself, to help get the advocacy and support to parents going through loss.

I have learned that it is okay to not be okay. Be gracious with yourself, there in no determined timeline or path for your healing journey. Most importantly, your baby matters \heartsuit

> -Madison Zelazny bereaved mother of Maya 11/29/23

FUNDRAISERS & EVENTS

Elegant Evening to Remember Gala

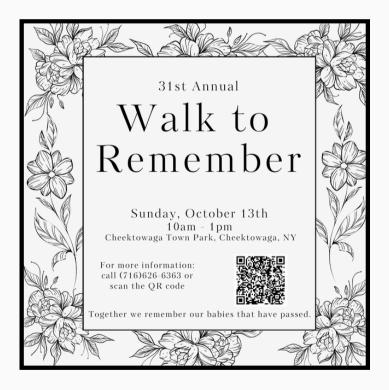
On May 18, 2024, we celebrated our 10th Annual Elegant Evening to Remember Gala. The gala honored several unique individuals who stood out in their professions for going beyond the scope of their practice and made tremendous efforts to provide trauma-informed and empathetic care in working with the bereaved families in our network. The bereaved families who nominated these honorees thank the honorees for empowering them in their grief journeys. Through our honorees' phenomenal work ethic and collaboration with our network's mission, we are establishing a continuum of care in WNY for bereaved families facing perinatal loss. Thank you to our donors and sponsors this year who've helped to make the gala as significant and memorable as we hoped, specifically to our presenting (remembrance) sponsor for the evening, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. The financial support from our donors and sponsors allows us to keep our momentum up, as more families each year require our help.



Pictured from left to right - Kristen Smith - WNYPBN Family Support Coordinator, Dr. Heather Florescue, Joanna Weld, Melissa Montgomery RN, Cyndi Beck RN, Sondra Dawes, Dr. Millicent Trevett, Tara Petty LMSW, and Emily Doring - Executive Director



National Rainbow Baby Day, observed on August 22nd, celebrates the joy and hope that rainbow babies bring to families who have experienced the loss of a child. Having a baby after a loss can be a very difficult and challenging time, characterized by anxiety, guilt, loneliness, fear, and doubt. The rainbow on the other side of these trials represents the beauty of new beginnings. National Rainbow Baby Day also honors the resilience of parents who navigate the dual experience of grieving their beloved losses while embracing new opportunities in parenthood. Happy Rainbow Baby Day to all those celebrating! May this be a reminder of the strength and love that unite us during both our darkest moments and our brightest joys. We ask, if you would like to share a photo of your rainbow baby, we would be honored to include it in a collage that we will be posting on our Facebook page on August 22nd. Please submit pictures to Brooke@wnypbn.org by August 20th.



The 2024 Parents Day Breakfast was a lovely event that commemorated the perseverance of our bereaved families and the lives of their dearly departed babies. This event included a gourmet breakfast, readings from bereaved parents, the reading of baby names and candle lighting, family pictures, and a potted plant craft meant to signify and usher in growth, joy and hope. Thank you to Angel Gowns of WNY, Inc. for sponsoring the Parents Day Breakfast.



FUNDRAISERS & EVENTS

Towns

We were honored to partner with Angel Gowns of WNY, Inc. for their wedding dress donation day on Saturday, June 22nd. There, we were able to accept and process 111 dresses in 3 hours! Angel Gowns of WNY, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity, is dedicated to creating beautiful final-photo and burial gowns, handcrafted by volunteers, from generously donated wedding gowns, to offer comfort to grieving families during their time of loss. Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo supplied a beautiful location on campus for donors to drop off, witness the processing and photographic capture of their gown, and take in various examples of stunning Angel Gown creations. The Angel gowns created from these donations will be distributed to hospitals, funeral homes, bereavement organizations, and families across the United States, completely free of charge. If you are interested in donating your gown to support this important initiative, send a photo of your gown to angelgownsofwny@gmail.com.





On May 19th, Hospice held its annual memorial walk at Canalside. Representatives from WNYPBN set up a memorial garden where walkers had the opportunity to share the names of honored loved ones on a flower.



to Nate and Joanna Weld Who organized the "Smitty" Golf Tournament. We appreciate the \$2,301 donation to support the programs of WNYPBN!



Thank you to those that have held a Facebook fundraiser for WNYPBN in honor of their loved one.

Hillary Breen Klansee Reynolds Bulmer Amanda Godios Shannon Martinez Heather Ratka

Thank you from WNYPBN! We raised \$2.424.49!!



The WNYPBN is looking for new Board Members who are interested in using their time and talents to make a difference in the bereaved community. To learn more, please contact Emily at <u>Emily@wnypbn.org</u>

Upcoming Events

Disc Golf Tournament Sunday, August 18th 9am-4pm Glory Be to Kids Volunteers needed

Dice Run & Chowder Cook-off Saturday, September 14th Glory Be to Kids Volunteers needed

Walk to Remember Sunday, October 13th Cheektowaga Town Park

Candlelight Memorial Service Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day Tuesday, October 15th, 7pm, St. Matthews Cemetery Chapel, Cheektowaga (Adults Only) contact WNYPBN office for more details

"Gavin's Light" Tuesday, October 15th Olean, 7pm for more information, contact Amy at Gavinslight09@yahoo.com

Hot Cocoa with Santa Sibling Event Saturday, December 7th 10am - 12pm location TBD

We need your help! Please scan the QR code for more information about upcoming volunteer opportunities.



150 Bennett Rd WNYPBN, Inc.

Forget-Me-Vot Newsletter

Cheektowaga, NY 14227 Wilson Support Building

Volume 24, Issue 3

AUGUST 2024

Christine Scott Founder of the Wings of Love Memorial Fund Christine@wnypbn.org

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WNYPBN, Inc.

Wilson Support Center

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Kristen Smith

Family Support Coordinator

Our Mission

educational support, community programs and referral services to bereaved parents. The WNYPBN supports an established standard of care following a

The mission of the Western New York Perinatal Bereavement Network, Inc. is to assist the community in meeting the needs of people facing the pain of perinatal

death. We promote standards of bereavement care intervention through

Feeding and Maternity Boutique (Lancaster), Brooks Memorial Hospital, Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network, Inc., Catholic Health System (Mercy Hospital, Sister's Hospital, Mount St. Mary's Hospital), Mount St. Mary's Hospital of Lewiston, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, Inc-Essential Care for Children, Kaleida Health (Oishei Children's Hospital, Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital),

Jones Memorial Hospital, Wilson Support System, Niagara Falls Memorial

Hospital, Olean General Hospital, United Memorial Medical Center, UPMC

perinatal loss, regardless of location of where the loss took place. **Member Organizations** Angels Gowns of Western New York, Inc., Baby's Sweet Beginning's Breast