

Emily's Entry

BY EMILY DORING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This beautiful piece of writing by Dr. Cacciatore was recently shared with me during one of our in-person support groups, and it truly spoke to my heart. As I read it, I was transported back to that first year after my losses—a time when finding the words to describe how I was feeling seemed impossible. My emotions could shift in an instant, and nothing ever felt steady.

I do have living children—almost adults now. Preston will turn 21 at the end of May, and Kendra is 19. But I will always be a mother to all four of my children, including my two babies: Baby D and Selah Grace. Their presence is with me every day, just in a different way.

For Grieving Mothers by Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me.

Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears.

I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me. Say nothing. Do not offer a cure. Or a pill, or a word, or a potion. Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me. Please be gentle with me. And I will try to be gentle with me too.

I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path. Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am even able to smile again, the pain is just beneath the surface. There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more- hungry children, the

homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child- or an elderly person struggling with the door. There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers- and fathers- and grandparents- and siblings won't wake up one day with everything 'okay' and life back to normal.

I have a new normal now.

As time passes, I may gain gifts, and treasures, and insights but anything gained was too high a cost when compared to what was lost. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder, don't forget that I have another one, another child, whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything as C.S. Lewis said.

My child may have died; but my love - and my motherhood - never will.



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FORGET-YOU-NOTS

Charlotte Caucci Anderson

12/19/23-12/25/23 Rily James Croce

Gabrielle Irene Croce **Baby Croce**

August 3, 2010

March 8, 2010

miss you everyday. We wish you could be here to meet your little brother and grow up with him but we will think of you everyday and

Our sweet forever baby, Mommy and Daddy love you so much and

tell him all about you. You are always with us. Love Mommy, Daddy, Owen and your fur siblings Blossom, Willow and Fin

Parents: Lena Kingsbury

December 9, 2013

Parents: Christina and Karl Anderson

Joy Aubrey Damberger

May 11, 2023

Parents: Jenna and Andy Damberger

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

Lilya Raine Arena September 26, 2009

Hugs to the sky, baby! Mama, Daddy, and little sister, Willow love and

Parents: Kelly and Michael Arena

Jivae Andrea Báez December 28, 2012 Selah Grace Doring

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 Preston & Kendra

life. Love, Mommy and Daddy. Parents: Evelyn and Jarred Báez

Wednesday Rose-Lynn Bradley Adalae Grace Bradley

You are Wanted, You are Loved.

Parents: Tiffany and Josh Bradley

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 Parents: Ashley and Steven Gruhalla and always watching over our family. You are so loved and so missed.

Love, Mama, Papa, Thomas, and Matteo

Parents: Tom and Mary Callea

Baby Cerasani

Our little surprise baby! You caught us off guard but immediately we were excited to have another little bundle of joy in our lives. We thought about you, your arrival and how things would be with your big sister so close in age. We made plans for a wonderful Christmas season with a new little baby in the house. But God had other plans and we will have to wait to meet you in Heaven one day. Thank you for We know you're both in heaven with our other loved ones who have the joy you brought to us in that short time. We will always remember you. Love, Mommy, Daddy and Luisa

Parents: Evan and Rachel Cerasani

April 5, 2005 Kayonna Marie Darrell

October 16, 2018

Kingston Antonio Darrell

April 27, 2021

We Love You Always! Not a day goes by that we don't think of you 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

Baby D

March 11, 2013

October 30, 2013

We carry you in our hearts - Forever & Always, Mommy, Daddy,

Parents: Emily and Todd Doring

Tyler Farris

June 25, 2020

June 8, 2024 Here on earth for a short time my darling baby boy. Never far from our

June 8, 2024 thought and prayers.

Parents: Kayla Marvin and Carl Farris

Eli Robert Godios

June 25-Sept. 13, 2022

March 25, 2021 Parent: Eric and Amanda Godios

Baby Casey

May 18, 2022

Our sweet Casey, we love and miss you so very much. We should be 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 December 16, 2018 Elias, Little Brother Owen, Mommy, and Daddy.

Reid Hamilton

April 18, 2021

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 April 19, 2024 so very much. Love, Daddy, Mommy, Pierce, Rory, Burke, Reagan, Riley, Seamus, and Padraig

Parents: Molly and Andrew Hamilton

Baby Girl H

October 15, 2019

Baby H

December 28, 2022

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

FORGET-YOU-NOTS

Nora Ann Holmes

My sweet girl, we miss you more than words can say. I know you're with great gramma and grandpa watching over us all. Your brother gave my life purpose, but you saved it. I love you so much. Love mama and George

Parent: Rebecca Martin

John Paul Jerebko

Our little angel! Love, Mom, Dad, Jakob & Jackson

Parents: Peter and Lisa Jerebko

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

Marina Kim Ella Grace Kim August 3-4, 2005 June 8, 2007

We love you and think of you often. Please watch over us... now and

Parents: Dawn and Mark Kim

Baby Joy Love Baby Hope Love Baby Bliss Love Livenzo Sol Love February 15, 2020 Jacob Wesley Scott

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 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 **Baby Angel Matam II Chiara Sneham Matam** October 12, 2021 January 23, 2022

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

SAFE ARRIVALS

Owen Caucci Anderson, brother of Charlotte Caucci Anderson, was born February 27, 2025 at 11:08 am. He was 9lbs 15oz and absolutely perfect!

We are happy to announce the safe arrival of Harrison R. Bradley, brother of Wednesday & Adalae Bradley, born on May 1, 2025.

November 27, 2023 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

November 18, 1999 Parents: Timothy and Beth Mott

Noah Navarrette

Feb. 12-Sept. 12 2021

Te amare para el resto de mi vida mi amor. Siempre.

June 8, 2018 Parent: Alexa Mancilla

Michael James Quigley

October 24, 1992

Miss you more and more! 'Til we meet again! Love, Mom

Parent: Debi Zmuda

Caleb Jonathan Schmeelke

March 18, 2022

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.

Parents: Krystal Rivers and Cameron Schmeelke

May 27, 2000

March 26, 2021 We love you and think of you everyday! Butterfly kisses, buddy!

November 8, 2021 Love, Mom, Dad, Thomas, & Mandy

March 16, 2023 Parents: Phillip and Christine Scott

Steven James Serrano

March 16, 2006

Parent: Lisa Graziano

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

April 25, 2019

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

Hannah Faith Wise

November 18, 2024

We love you sweet girl. We know that you are walking with Jesus and dancing in heaven. You are your siblings' guardian angel now. We can't wait to hug and kiss you when we meet you in heaven.

We will always love you, Mom, Dad, Nora, & Jacob

Parents: Dan and Ali Wise

Margie Faye Willis

May 22, 2019

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

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY JOANNA WELD





Image from thegoodgrieftrust.org

We just celebrated the sixth anniversary of Nicholas's birth and passing. It seems impossible that it has been six years since I held him. This time of year always feels especially heavy, with the birthday, Mother's Day, and the winding down of another school year. As I attended the Kindergarten Mother's Day Tea with Johnny, feeling the quiet ache of Nicholas's absence was unavoidable.

As I shared in the last newsletter, I have been thinking a lot about what long-term grief looks like. When I first came across the image I am sharing along with this letter, I couldn't imagine a time in which my grief wouldn't feel so all-encompassing. The image does a good job representing the way grief feels shortly after a loss; it's everywhere, at the center of our lives, preventing us from moving forward. Eventually, we build a life around our grief, but it never goes away.

As my jar continues to grow, I have new concerns about how I will keep Nicholas as a consistent presence in my life. This next phase also comes with feelings of guilt as I find myself looking forward to new opportunities and adventures. For the past six years, my pain has been a dependable lifeline to Nicholas and now I am learning to navigate what comes next. I remain grateful for the continued opportunity to volunteer with the WNYPBN as it allows me to devote meaningful and intentional time to support bereaved families in Nicholas's honor.

THANK YOU

to the sponsors of the 11th annual **ELEGANT EVENING TO REMEMBER GALA**

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FUNDRAISERS & EVENTS

On May 4th, the WNYPBN partnered with the Hospice and Palliative Care Buffalo for the annual "Hospice Memorial Walk." The Network assisted the Wilson Support Center with the Remembrance Garden which offered families the opportunity to personalize pinwheels with the names of their loved ones. Many children also drew heartfelt pictures in their memory. During the walk, the pinwheel flowers were either carried along or "planted" in our Remembrance Garden as a beautiful tribute.

















On Saturday, April 26th, the WNYPBN held the 11th annual Elegant Evening to Remember Gala at Fox Valley Country Club. At this event, we honored physicians, nurses, advocates, and volunteers who have made a difference in the lives of bereaved families in Western New York.

In addition to honoring individuals, the gala is a fundraiser that supports the programs of the WNYPBN. We extend our gratitude to the sponsors of this event, who are acknowledged on page 4.

Below, we recognize this year's honorees and share their own words in response to receiving the award.

Physicians of the Year Dr. Heather Link

Nominated by Kellyn LaLiberty and Essential Care for Children

"I am truly honored and humbled to receive this award. It is a privilege to be recognized by the WNY Perinatal Bereavement Network whose work is so important in our community and to be included in this group of dedicated and talented colleagues. I am grateful to the patients who allow me to care for them and share with them in their joys and sorrows. Maternal Fetal Medicine is a field that constantly challenges and teaches us, and I'm grateful every day for the opportunity to make a difference and to try to be the best part of someone else's worst experience. Thank you for this meaningful recognition—it strengthens my commitment to compassionate, patientcentered care and continued growth in this profession."

Dr. Sarah Wiese

Nominated by Tiffany & Josh, bereaved parents of Adalae & Wednesday

"I am humbled and thankful to receive this award. It is always gratifying to know you make such an impact in the lives of your patients. It speaks to a woman's resilience that in her time of grief and recovery she should think of others, and nominate me for this award. One of the many reasons I

became an OB/GYN in the first place. Not only do I get to form lifelong relationships with the women I care for, I also have the opportunity to help women navigate some of the most emotionally difficult times in their life. Being a physician has more than just caring for the physical body, but the mind as well, and it is times like this that make me feel I make a difference, and have chosen right path for my own life. The perinatology be bereavement network is such an amazing and needed organization. I am thankful we have their presence in Buffalo, and grateful I am able to be here tonight to help support their continued mission."

Dr. Catherine Falkner

Nominated by Devon & Sean, bereaved parents of Ava Grace

"When you enter the field of OB-GYN, you never dream about being a care provider for families of loss. We are trained to handle a number of difficult situations, but no one teaches you how to care for grieving families. I believe this to be a gift bestowed upon me, and for that, I am thankful. I feel blessed to have been granted the ability to handle "normal birth" as well as the spectrum of loss, with compassion. Words cannot express my gratitude, not only for this award, but also for keeping me humble. My families impacted by loss have been some of my closest patients in my career. I feel honored not only that they have allowed me into their lives at such a vulnerable time, but have chosen to keep me in their lives for years to come. Thank you to all the angels above and on Earth for such a distinguished award."

Nurses of the Year Joanna Bower, RN

Nominated by Tiffany & Josh, bereaved parents of Adalae & Wednesday and Rachel & Eric, bereaved parents of Eliza

"I am deeply honored to be recognized as the recipient of the Perinatal Bereavement Nurse of the Year Award. This award holds profound meaning for me, both professionally and personally, as it represents the heart of my work—supporting families through some of their most difficult moments with compassion, dignity, and care.

Perinatal loss is an experience that reshapes lives, my mission has always been to provide comfort, guidance, and a safe space for families navigating unimaginable grief. This recognition affirms the importance of that mission and highlights the crucial role that perinatal bereavement care plays in healthcare.

Receiving this award is not just a reflection of my dedication but also a tribute to the families I have had the privilege of walking alongside. Their strength, love, and resilience continue to inspire me every day. It is also a testament to the incredible colleagues, mentors, and support systems that have shaped my journey in this field.

I accept this award with gratitude and renewed commitment to advocating for compassionate perinatal bereavement care, ensuring that no family has to walk this path alone. Thank you for this incredible honor—it is a reminder of why I do what I do and a motivation to continue making a difference in the lives of the families I serve."

Erin Hafer, RN

Nominated by Devon & Sean, bereaved parents of Ava Grace and Carrie & Kurtis, bereaved parents of Benjamin

"Receiving this bereavement award is both humbling and deeply meaningful to me. As a labor and delivery nurse for the past 25 years, I've had the profound privilege of standing beside women and families during some of their most joyous, and sometimes most heartbreaking moments. It is an honor to be able to support families who have experienced the unimaginable loss of a child. While nothing can take away their

ELEGANT EVENING TO REMEMBER GALA

pain, I am grateful to simply be present, to hold space for their grief, and to offer comfort during such a vulnerable time.

This recognition is a tribute to the strength and courage of the families who face unimaginable loss with grace and resilience. Their ability to hold love and grief in the same breath is nothing short of inspiring. Being present during such vulnerable moments is a solemn privilege, and it's an honor to witness the deep love that exists even in the midst of sorrow. These families leave a lasting impact, reminding us all of the power of compassion, presence, and human connection."

Perinatal and Pediatric Advocacy Award Kellyn LaLiberty

Nominated by Courtney, Social Worker with the Essential Care program and the WNYPBN

"It is an honor to receive the Perinatal and Pediatric Advocacy Award and even more so to be a part of these children and families lives. It was 9 years ago that I cared for my first pediatric hospice patient, a 5-month-old little boy, after focusing mostly on adult care, and it was life changing. A few years and other pediatric experiences later, I decided to make the leap into the realm of perinatal, pediatric palliative and hospice care. I was fortunate to have a mentor, a previous Nurse of the Year and honoree tonight, that shared not only their knowledge, but their passion for this population. It was then I learned that it wasn't only the children and the families that needed us, but the community, to continue to share our knowledge, expertise, and passion and to build relationships to better serve these families.

Everyday I get to join a team of equally impassioned staff on the Essential Care for Children team and grow this mission of caring for children, expectant mothers, and their families and to educate and empower

the community to do the same. It is also in building these very important community relationships that we can enhance our care and support these families to the fullest. We will never forget your babies and they will always continue to be the inspiration we need to do more."

Community Service and Awareness Award Glory Be To Kids

Nominated by the Board of Directors of the WNYPBN

"While we are truly grateful to be recognized tonight by the Western New York Perinatal Bereavement Network, the real honor has been getting to know all of you and your incredible mission—supporting families through the unimaginable loss of a child.

Glory Be To Kids was born from our own heartbreak, following the sudden loss of a dear friend and the devastating impact it had on her 5-year-old son, Christopher. In the midst of our grief, we felt a deep need to do something—anything—to support him. Since we had all played softball together, it felt only natural to combine our love of the game with our love for our children. That first tournament helped us create a trust fund for Chris.

What began as a single event has grown into something much bigger. Through various sporting events over the years, we've been able to raise more than \$900,000 for 45 different children's charities. This journey has given us the opportunity to support incredible organizations like yours—those who work tirelessly every day to bring comfort and hope to others.

As one of our co-founders so simply and powerfully put it: "There is no greater need than that of a child."

Volunteers of the Year Award Kevin and Terri Ryan

Nominated by the Board of Directors of the WNYPBN

"It has been our pleasure to support this organization for the past nine years to assist the families during a difficult loss of a baby. Little did we know at the time, that we to would suffer the loss of our 5 1/2 month old Grandson Connor and the outpouring of support after from the staff and board of WNY Perinatal Bereavement Network. Kevin and I enjoyed the Walk to Remember each year the most. Meeting all the families and walking together in support of the loved ones we lost will always remain near and dear to our hearts. Although we are retiring now, we will always continue to support this organization and the caring staff that assist these families everyday. God Bless each and everyone of you."

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to Ryan's Reason for their donation of \$10,000 to the



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We need your help!

Please scan the QR code below for more information about upcoming volunteer opportunities.



Our Mission

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 educational support, community programs and referral services to bereaved parents. The WNYPBN supports an established standard of care following a perinatal loss, regardless of location of where the loss took place.

Member Organizations

Angels Gowns of Western New York, Inc., Brooks Memorial Hospital, Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network, Inc., Catholic Health System (Mercy Hospital, Sister's Hospital, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, Inc- Essential Care for Children, Kaleida Health (Oishei Children's Hospital, Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital), Jones Memorial Hospital, Wilson Support Center, Niagara Falls Memorial Hospital, Olean General Hospital, United Memorial Medical Center, UPMC Chatauqua, Wyoming County Community Health Center

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Forget-Me-Not Newsletter