

After loss of a child, a Web site is born

STEFANIE KNOWLTON Statesman Journal

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Local mom Susan Horn started the Web site BabyLossandHealing.com after suffering a miscarriage in 2006. She said reaching out to other parents helped her grieve. She is the mother of three girls, ages 6 months to 5 years, and baby Max, who died at 8 weeks gestation. This fall, Horn plans to organize a remembrance walk in Salem for all grieving parents and their loved ones.

Question: What does the term "baby loss" mean?

Answer: Baby loss refers to the death of a baby. On BabyLossandHealing.com, the focus is miscarriage, ectopic and molar pregnancies, stillbirth and infant death (including SIDS). However, I have always told my daughters that no matter how old they are, they will always be my babies. So any family that is in need of support while coping with the loss of a child is welcome.

Q: Can you tell me about your personal experience with loss?

A: In August 2006, my husband and I lost a baby. Early in the pregnancy (about six weeks) I had some bleeding. I went in for an ultrasound and saw our sweet baby with a heartbeat of 120 beats per minute. My bleeding stopped that day but six weeks later started again.

My midwife saw me immediately, and an ultrasound showed that our baby had died. My preference was to allow my body to naturally miscarry the baby, and within about 24 hours I was in the throes of the most emotional experience of my life. Unfortunately, I was bleeding excessively and fainted. My husband called 911, and I was rushed to Santiam Memorial (in Stayton). After getting stabilized the doctors and we decided a D&C (dilation and curettage) was the best option at this point.

I was on the borderline for needing a blood transfusion, and it was important to stop the bleeding. We chose not to have any testing done to find out a specific cause. We felt there was nothing we could do to bring our child back. So we needed to focus on healing.

Q: How did your experience lead to the Web site?

A: During the week or so after the miscarriage I scoured the Internet searching for information. I couldn't seem to find a Web site that really covered all the avenues I was looking for.



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Susan Horn, shown with her children at her Lyons home, founded BabyLossandHealing.com after she suffered a miscarriage two years ago.

Susan Horn

Age: 34

Residence: Lyons

Family: Husband John, 35, and daughters Sarah, 5, Ellen, 3 and Anna, 6 months

More information

<http://babylossandhealing.com/memorywalk.html>

If you go

The first Baby Loss and Healing Memory Walk is set for 10 a.m. Oct. 11 in Bush's Pasture Park in Salem. An event also is planned for Fredericktown, Ohio.

I have some experience in Web design and decided to create my own site. I felt it could be a positive way for me to go through my grief process and possibly help someone else. I was desperate to find something good out of this horrible experience.

Q: Describe the site for me. What does it offer people suffering a loss?

A: BabyLossandHealing.com has a forum community, live chat room, information pages and many links to related sites including some current blogs of women who have gone through a loss of a baby or babies. There is also a page of suggested books that help deal with baby loss and coping with grief.

One of the newer additions to the site is a memorial page. Visitors are welcome to post a letter, poem, pictures or other mementos honoring the baby or babies they have lost.

Q: Why is it important to remember these losses?

A: Personally, I think it's much healthier to acknowledge a loss than to hide it, thinking your grief will go away. It seems society has considered baby loss a taboo subject. All life is precious, no matter how short. I strongly feel that these lives should be honored.

Q: What has the response been online to the site?

A: I have always been astonished at the traffic levels on the site. There have been over 2 million hits since I launched the site.

Q: How can loved ones help those who have lost a pregnancy or infant? For example, what are the right things and the wrong things to say?

A: This is such a tough question, but it seems to be one of the most common questions I hear. Grief is such an individual process. I think it's important to offer your help or support in any way possible.

Listening when they talk about it is extremely helpful. However, saying things like, "It's all for the best," or "you'll get pregnant again soon" do absolutely nothing to ease their pain. In fact, I personally think it just rubs salt in their wound.

Q: How are you coping with your loss now? Do you think about Max? Does your family talk about the pregnancy?

A: I feel that I have gotten through the hardest part of my grief, and although Max is in my thoughts often, especially since I'm driven to keep the site updated, I don't feel depressed when I think of him. I feel at peace and have accepted it.

I would do anything to hold my sweet baby in my arms, even if just for a moment. I find tremendous fulfillment knowing that the Web site inspired by this sweet soul has helped so many people. My family is very open and understanding of my loss, especially my mom. She understands firsthand the heartache that losing a baby brings.

My parents lost a baby between my brother's birth and my own. She was by my side immediately when she heard the news that Max was gone. Part of my drive to create the Web site and inform people with accurate information stems from some of what my mom told me her experience was. It is appalling to me that people cast such horrible blame on mothers at a time when they are hurting the most.