
HANDPRINTS



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Helping After Neonatal Death
Post Office Box 341
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0341
(408) 995-6102

Our Christmas Angel

By Lori Miller

It was the night of December 17, 2001, and we were signing our Christmas cards – getting ready to mail them out the following day. On the front was a picture of my husband, our son, and myself – with a bulging belly. The inside of the card was signed from all of us, including “Baby sister to-be.” Then I felt it. Something I had felt three and a half years earlier, when I went into labor ten weeks early with my son. It was a contraction. I knew it. But this was not a moment of joyful anticipation. It was a moment of terrible fear. I was not quite 25 weeks along. My daughter was not due until the week of Easter.

Hours later I was in the hospital being told that she would not wait – she was coming and there was no stopping her. We were scared, but hopeful. Our son was early, and he was just fine. Sure, she was much earlier, but that just meant she'd have a longer hospital stay.

Kaylee Sandra was born the morning of December 18, weighing 1 lb, 10 oz. She was beautiful. We were back in the surreal, yet familiar setting of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Doctors and nurses told us of her various complications and her odds did not sound good. Despite all that, we were optimistic. Good things happen in our family.

Then came the day we learned she would not survive. It was December 23 – exactly two days before Christmas. I held her in my arms, and her Daddy felt the embrace of her tiny hand around his finger. This was a moment so bittersweet, so conflicted. The first time I could hold my baby girl. The last time I would hold my baby girl. Waves of love and adoration crashing upon jagged boulders of sorrow and disbelief. I told myself this was our moment. I had to squeeze a lifetime of love into the time we had left. We had about three hours together.

After she died, we had to deal with some of the pragmatics of death. The next day was Christmas Eve, and we spent it making funeral arrangements. We had to tell our son his baby sister would not be coming home. I also needed to find a way to dry up the milk supply I no longer needed. So many businesses and support people were closed, on vacation, enjoying their holiday. We had to find a way to make Christmas happen for our son. We refused to have him forever associate Christmas with the death of his sister. We went to the grocery store to buy cookies for Santa, carrots for the reindeer, and a cabbage. I had been told that putting cabbage leaves in my bra would

Our Christmas Angel continued on page 2

HAND

Helping After Neonatal Death is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that helps parents, their families, and their healthcare providers cope with the loss of a baby before, during, or after birth.

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Visit our Website:

<http://www.handonline.org>

HANDPRINTS

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Editor: Darla Harmon
handprints@handonline.org

Our Christmas Angel continued from page 1

help alleviate the soreness from my aching breasts.

Before I went into labor we had planned to spend the week of Christmas with the grandparents in Southern California, so we had no tree up, no decorations. While I was in the hospital the grandparents had rallied together and bought and trimmed a small tree, and put up stockings. We had wrapped all the presents before our nightmare began, so all we had to do was set them beneath the tree. We realized as we were going to bed that we had not filled the stockings, so we somehow managed to find a few things to place inside Evan's.

Christmas Day was a fog. Thank God for Evan and his sweet, excited face waking up on Christmas morning to open presents! I don't think I would have gotten out of bed without him. I watched him with renewed appreciation for the miracle of his life. What a blessing we had. There were still many tears, and I did spend a good deal of the day in bed. I had a profound sense that things would never be right again. No matter how wonderful our lives together might be in the future, we could never look at each other and say, "This moment is perfect!" No. There would always be someone missing.

The new year came and we lived our lives. Before I knew it, it was December 17, 2002. I asked Evan what he wanted to do the next day to celebrate his sister's first birthday. He wanted to know if there was any birthday cake in Heaven. I told him that if Heaven is at all the way I picture it, there certainly would be! We released a balloon as a present to her, and bought cupcakes for the occasion and put one candle in each. He also thought we should celebrate at Chuck E. Cheese that night. So we did.

As time has passed, we have found that elusive "new normal" that we always heard would someday come. Christmas will never be the same as it was. Nothing will. We will hang stockings, trim the tree, visit Santa – and one week before Christmas, we will celebrate Kaylee's birthday. ❖

Strong Enough

*I am not strong enough to face the pain...
Her love is strong enough to offer me comfort.*

*I am not strong enough to understand why this happened...
Her memory is strong enough to bring me peace.*

*I am not strong enough to look towards the future...
Her spirit is strong enough to bring me hope.*

By Darla Harmon © 2003

The Baby Who Never Was

To:

The baby who never was – acknowledged

The baby who never was – held

The baby who never was – named

The baby who never was – issued a birth or death certificate

The baby who never was, existed and was loved by the one who carried it.

Although this baby was never acknowledged

And it's existence even denied by some,

Dreams were dreamed of what was to be.

But those dreams suddenly came to an end,

*When the baby that was growing inside of me
suddenly became...*

The baby who never was – meant to be.

By Connie L. Pacheco

WHAT'S NEW @ HAND

Service of Remembrance

Sunday, October 5th, was a glorious day for the Service of Remembrance. Our families enjoyed the surroundings and each other, sharing together in the remembrance of our children already passed – it was easy to feel their presence with us throughout the day.

This year's Service of Remembrance was held at the Nestldown Resort, located in the Santa Cruz Mountains just South of San Jose. This exceptional retreat boasts gorgeous views, lush gardens, two large ponds, and waterfalls. This year's theme was "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and precious angels were our mementoes to take home.

The Service itself was held in the naturally-occurring outdoors amphitheater, at the edge of a large pond and fountain. Many of our families filled the seats on the stoned floor, while others chose the "built-in" seating nooks spotted on the hillside around the amphitheater's incline. After the readings, we returned to the lodge for the Dove Ceremony on the lawn. As always, it was a bittersweet moment: the doves circling higher and higher in the blue sky as they fly back home.

The Service was followed by a potluck on the lawns in the warm afternoon sunshine, next to the flower and tree-lined stream. We'd like to thank our event coordinator, Melissa Washington, and the committee members including Pam Galvan, Mary Ludwick, Nicole Matty, Heidi Olson, Craig Pampeyan and Andrea Russell for making this event possible. We appreciate all of the volunteers and readers who gave their time to make this day special. Thanks to LLC and Ala Blanca Doves for their involvement and also to Nestldown for providing us with an exceptional site for our Service of Remembrance. ❖

For Brian

Wisp of starlight,

All your life

You were wrapped

In your mother's love.

Peaceful, protected,

Never to know

Harm or fear,

Disappointment

Shining spirit,

So beautiful the goddess

Has lifted you

To her arms.

Precious to her

Beyond comprehension,

Your tiny life blessed

Each one you've touched.

And so we send

Our mother's prayers,

And honor the spring ground

With our living tears.

By Sunny Jobansson

*Each new life,
no matter how fragile
or brief,
forever changes
the world.*

HAND will be conducting its annual meeting in November to discuss future plans and elect the Board for next year. Please call (408) 995-6102 for more information.

A Letter to Katie

Katie,

You were our hopes and dreams.

With you, we'd have the perfect family.

You were perfect, up until the moment of your birth.

And then came the event that forever changed your life and ours.

We felt that your spirit left you then, leaving behind the vestige of a biomechanically functioning body.

The doctors told us of miracle babies that survive this type of insult.

We had our hope that you would be one of those miracle babies.

We picked you up and held you, along with your FV's, your breathing tube,

and your monitor probes, and we told you that we loved you.

Then you got better, and we were overjoyed.

But the next day, you took a turn for the worse.

We rode the ups and down of the roller coaster of your health, and we got numb and scared.

We didn't know how to feel, whether to love you, or to distance ourselves from you.

We visited you every day; we visited you every week.

We heard you moan when you weren't feeling too good.

We admired your fair face and beautiful eyelashes when you were comfortable.

You showed us the value of life and the dignity of death.

That every moment of shared happiness is precious.

Your death brings us peace, and your spirit brings us newfound fervor for life.

Now that you are free from your body, you can frolic with the angels.

God will nourish your soul and bring you joy.



*Rest in peace, my sweet child.
You'll be with us in our hearts forever.*

*Your Father.
By Ken Turkowski*





Nina's Angel

*I've never seen anything as precious as you, so beautiful and small...
My Angel*

*It was love at first sight, I looked at you and knew you were the missing piece to my heart...
My Angel*

*Just to see you lying there filled me with so much joy you took my breath away...
My Angel*

*Your shiny black hair, your lovely heart-shaped lips, I just wanted to hold you in my arms and kiss you...
My Angel*

*I had so many beautiful dreams for you and me, a whole lifetime, I thought...
My Angel*

*But those dreams were not to be, for my Godchild was taken from me...
My Angel*

*My heart is breaking, and all I have now are just a few sweet memories...
My Angel*

*I'll hold those so deep in my heart, I'll never forget you...
My Angel*

*You were just too precious and lovely for this world and now
you truly are an angel...
My Angel*

*I love you, Ronnie Jo
My Angel*

By Shawna Villa

*The joy of our hearts has ceased;
Our dancing has turned to mourning.
Lamentations 5:15*

*No words...Spoken
No words...Written
Can express...My love
For her*

By Darla Harmon

A Baby's Love

*I don't understand how this can be
When it's been your brief life
That has shined upon me such light
and given me a new sight
to see the magnificence of just one day.*

*Your rose petal lips
May never utter spoken words
But in my dreams
Those heart-shaped lips
Will sing to me bringing me peace.*

*Your eyes saw light momentarily
But never were they sad
For the hours I have spent staring at you
Memorizing every inch of you
I saw all the love that brought you into being.*

*The lock of your hair
Your little pink hat and tiny white shirt
Hold your powdery baby scent
I'll forever cherish as my keepsake
and it will serve as my path back to you.*

*I never would have thought
As the hourglass emptied the final grain of sand
That my baby girl could teach me
The art of surrendering in love
and the significance of one hour.*



*Now in the reflection of your face
I feel our souls intertwine
I see the new horizons in your eyes
I feel eternity in your small hand
Spirits are not contained by time
Though I may not understand this circumstance
Destiny has laid at my feet
Still I rise each day in appreciation
That God had privileged me with
The grace of your beauty and love.
I stand in awe and amazement
O how your small light shined so bright
It brought even unbelievers to their knees
In Christ, your life was no less lived.*

*Now I can rest assured knowing
Today is not our last embrace
I will sing to you lullabies again
For you are more than just a precious memory
Tiana, you are my daughter eternally!*

*Written by Kristina Nava
for Rhonda & Jason Velez
in Memory of Tiana Rose Velez*

A Letter to Alexander

Dear Alexander,

Your arrival was a surprise to us. Our hearts were filled with love and hope the first time we saw you.

We remember how you responded to our touches and our voices that day. However, we knew it would not last. We were about the experience the life cycle in reverse. Instead of you preparing for our death, we had to prepare for yours.

So you will remember us, we have given you a few items to take with you; pictures of us with Rembrandt and the house you would have grown up in, a teddy bear to amuse you and a blanket Grandma knitted to keep you warm.

Alexander, you are gone but not forgotten. You will be in our hearts and thoughts for the rest of our lives. Until we meet again, you are our guardian angel.

*We love you,
Mom and Dad*

By Harrison Paist

A Christmas Poem

*I believe in heaven, where Santa does not go.
But instead the tiny little angels find their homes below.*

*They mend our broken hearts, they wipe away our tears.
They impart their loving tenderness.
They blow away our fears.*

*As vivid as the magic of Christmas,
with all the sights and sounds.*

*With the twinkle lights and bolly,
their love is all around.*

*So have hope no matter what you do.
Your little piece of heaven
with help to get you through.*

Peace.

By Anne Stenebjem

Emily's Bear

This is Emily's Bear. We got it for Christmas after she died, because we couldn't endure the emptiness that she left. The absolute glare of the space she left vacant around the Christmas tree.

Some people suggest that it would be better to never have been pregnant than to go through that kind of grief. It took a long time, but I came to the realization that it is, as the saying goes, better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. I truly believe that and understand it now. Emily was inside me for forty weeks. She and I shared the most beautiful and intimate time. Her daddy and I were so excited to feel her move and to make plans for her. We have been devastated by her death, but enriched by her existence. At first it was hard for us to see little babies. Now we smile at each other when we see a four year old girl (not without some longing), sharing the knowledge that this is what she'd might be like today. Yet, Emily is and always will be our baby. I'm glad we had her.

This is Emily's Bear.

By Linda Thompson



The Bond of Our Babies

*Be thankful they said, it might have been worse.
Had he lived for a month, or a year, or more.
Be hopeful they told us, you are healthy and young.
There's time to have another baby, or more.*

*They tried to be helpful, to look on the bright side,
They gave us consolation, compassion and care.
A baby lost early, he might have been sickly,
For only a few months, was he really here?*

*Be strong they told us, there's always tomorrow,
To wake to a new day, with a hole in our hearts.
You know what I mean; I know that you've been there,
I've seen that pain that has set us apart.*

*Our pain in complete, no limit confines us,
Our cup of sorrow overflows with our tears.
The bond that connects us, they can't comprehend.
Our loss will not lessen, despite days or years.*

*It's odd to consider, I really am thankful,
for the gift of my baby, so brief in my life.
God gave those moments to hold him, to love him,
A few precious memories for me and my wife.*

*After all I am peaceful, my child's trial is done,
he's peaceful and healthy, he waits patiently.
I look on the bright side, I wait for reunion,
I've told you of my child, can you share yours with me?*

By John Mote

Rocking the Baby Who Isn't There

*Petal of hope
whispering
through winding passageways
Even in utter darkness
you are sunlit serenity
as you nestle
in
and
in
trusting in stormless horizons*

*Yes suddenly you have lost your moorings
born
away
on the relentless scarlet tide
we cry out for each other but you
my golden one have vanished
in another womantale
wild and common.*

*I am sitting quietly
hands resting like drained teacups
listening to the wind howl
through empty chambers
An there is a seed withing the sitting
a movement in the stillness
rocking
back
and forth
back
and forth
rocking
the baby who isn't there
rocking
the pieces of myself
lying among the ruins
in skyward hands.*

By Anne Pollack

A Letter to Jobanna

To my precious daughter, Jobanna,

I am writing this letter to you six years too late. I want to apologize to you for not holding you and not saying good-bye when I delivered you. I didn't know how to cope with your death and I thought I must have done something so bad for your little life to be taken before I could show you what a good Mom I would be.

I was counting down the weeks till your due date when a sonogram showed that your tiny little heart had stopped. So did mine. My doctor encouraged me during the three days I was in the hospital awaiting your birth, to hold you and say good-bye, but I was not strong enough.

I know you are my guardian angel and I feel so loved to know my daughter is guiding me, your Daddy and your little sister, Colie, through life each and every day.

I know that in heaven you and I will be together again, and I promise to hold you and never let you go, but I will never say good-bye, just "I love you."

I love you and miss you each and every day.

Love, Mommy

By Missi Sutter

Light a candle for all children who have died, so that their light may always shine.

Sunday, December 14, 2003, 7 pm Around the Globe

The Compassionate Friends invite you to participate in their
2003 Worldwide Candlelighting in memory of all children.

Bereaved parents are encouraged to light a candle in memory of their child at 7 pm.

As candles burn down in one time zone, they are lighted in the next,
creating a 24-hour wave of light that encircles the globe!

From My Heart

Editor's Column

Facing the Holidays

The pretense of joy and happiness that surround the holidays are in stark contrast with the way a grieving couple feels during this time of year. The pressure to have a cozy and traditional holiday reminds us of the hopes and dreams we once had before losing a child. Those fantasies have long faded, and now only the cold and empty reality of life grips our hearts. Facing the holidays is an ominous task so limit yourself to a few main priorities. Be realistic about what you can accomplish with your current emotions and energy level. Express your limitations to friends and family so they won't expect you to magically become the happy person you used to be during the holidays, and able to cope with the usual traditions. You can create your own new holiday traditions by doing something that honors the child you lost. Your health should be a priority with the cold and flu season coming on and shopping in crowded stores is a great way to catch a cold. Your immune system is low while grieving so maybe you should consider shopping at odd hours, by catalog, on the Internet or giving gift certificates. If you aren't up to sending out cards this year, don't do it. It's ok, really. If you do wish to send cards, you can enclose a memorial card or brief acknowledgment of your loss to those people who are unaware. What is most important is that you do what feels right and is best for you this holiday season. Slow down and maybe you'll find some simple joys that are often lost amid all the rush. And if a simple joy for you would be that the holidays are over, then so be it! *By Darla Harmon ❖*

HAND SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Pregnancy and Infant Loss

Central Valley:

The first, third and fifth Sunday of the month. 7-9 pm.

Fremont:

The first and third Wednesday of the month. 7-9 pm

Pleasanton:

Call for information.

Santa Clara:

The first and third Thursday of the month. 7:30-9 pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy

Fremont:

The second Saturday of each month. 1:30-3:30 pm.

Santa Clara:

The second Thursday of each month. 7:30-9:30pm.

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Groups are available on an "as needed" basis. Please contact HAND for specific information on a group in your area.

For more information on any of the support groups, please call (408) 995-6102 or if you are calling outside the 408 area code, call toll-free (888) 908-HAND (4263)

*Love is stronger
than death.*

Parent to Parent

What special way do you memorialize your child during the holiday?

Since we lost our Natalee on Christmas day it is very important to me to acknowledge her on that day. I have a beautiful angel candle that I light on special days when Natalee is especially thought of. I do it on Christmas, and on other special family days. It comforts me when I look at it I know she is with us.
– Anne

We really don't do anything special. I know a lot of people have ornaments or stockings made with their child's name on it. But since Jennifer is always in our thoughts and hearts we don't feel the need to make a special effort to remember her!
– Betsy

Besides a Christmas ornament dedicated to beautiful Angelica on the tree, we also take a trip to where she rests. We bring her two electric candles to light her way, and a small teddy bear that is just her size. It's a sad event, yet comforting in keeping with the Christmas spirit. On her birthday, we show the same love, knowing that she still lives in our hearts. We release balloons to send our deepest thoughts to her.
– Martin

We decorate the Christmas tree in his memory, all in gold angels and done up very pretty. We also donate toys or money to children that would be his age.
– Carmen

Our loss happened just before Christmas, and last year was our holiday season since then. We remember our daughter quite a bit during that season, since it also marks the anniversary of her birth and death. The one holiday-related tradition I can think of is getting a new angel ornament for the tree each year. I have always loved angels, but Christmas angels have had new meaning for me the last couple years.
– Lori

It has been several years since we lost our son but every year we buy gifts for a needy child that is the same age that our son would be. I have some special ornaments that I put on the tree and we also light a candle in his honor during our Christmas dinner. It makes me feel like he is close during the holidays.
– Sharon

During Christmas, we take a 4 inch Christmas tree to her grave, I let my 5 year old decorate the tree. We also have a special stocking for her that is hung up every year.
– Rhonda

Would you like to answer questions for the "Parent to Parent" Column?
Please contact Darla at handprints@handonline.org or (888) 908-HAND❖

KARA's Eighth Annual Candlelight Service
Thursday, December 4, 2003, 7pm
held at the Unity Church, 3391 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto.
This beautiful interfaith service honors the lives of deceased family and friends. For more information:
www.kara-grief.org

Donations Made By...

Glen & Jennifer Alden Lucas Aron Alden
 Art & Stephanie Allisany Cedar Jean Allisany
 David & Elaine Alper Natalie Kathryn & Baby Alper
 David & Dora Arnett Baby Daughter Arnett
 Michelle Barry Joseph and Nicholas Barry
 Georgine Boucher Lisa Anne Rodich
 Tony & Marianne Bullock Ryan Joseph Bullock & Justina Maxime Rose Carroll
 Bryan & Elizabeth Calhoun Madeline Lucille Calhoun
 Michael Carmacho & Jen Houlihan Marissa Abigail Carmacho
 Norman Cevallos & Beverly Tai Alicia Tai Cevallos
 Devin & Brandi Chapin London Faith Chapin
 Steven & Christy Choate Alicia Tai Cevallos
 Rob & Jaymi Cleland Bailey Marin & Emma Leah Cleland
 Dan & Dana DiVerde Baby Girl DiVerde
 Bryn & Susan Dole Katherine Elizabeth Baldry Dole
 Paul & Elisa Donovan Anthony, Isaiah, Isabella & Alexandra Donovan
 Robert & Diane Farrell Kimberly Brynn Farrell
 Robert & Maria Federle Ana Julie Federle
 Chris & Pamela Galvan Noah Christopher Galvan
 Paul & Betsy Gee Eryn Elizabeth & Rayna Belinda Gee
 Martin & Kathy Ann Green Tyler Malik Green
 Gregory & Stephanie Harrison Rachel Ann Harrison
 Wayne & Dana Heusinkveld Josiah James Heusinkveld
 Cheryl Holmes Savannah Holmes Starks
 Hsuan Wei & Wendy Hu Shannon Hu
 Ramil & Jenny Ignacio Alesha Maria Ignacio
 Charles & Dani Joyce Ariel Amanda Joyce
 Jim & Katherine Keaney Dane Lyle Keaney
 Lee & Michelle Khumalo Aaliyah Khumalo
 Robert & Kathleen Kraker Susan Elizabeth Kraker
 Stewart & Nellie Lai Megan Jennifer Lai
 Jose & Jocelyn Leano Joseph Jonathan Leano
 Robert & Alana Lee Robert Kyle Lee
 Ed & Mary Ludwick Tyler Jones Ludwick
 Allen & Sharon Martin Claire Elizabeth, Isabelle Ruth & Colette Marion Martin
 Steve & Margaret Martin Alexis Claire Martin
 Joseph & Maria Montecino Joseph Angel Montecino
 John & Esther Mote Timothy James Mote
 Dan & Paula Nehrling The Nehrling Babies
 Grace O'Bryan Lauren Marie Spallas
 Heidi Olson in honor of Monica Katreeb & Annika Denyer
 Ian & Leah Ortiz Aaron & Ryan Ortiz
 Craig & Julie Pampeyan Emily Ann Pampeyan
 Pablo & Rosa Reguerin-Plaza Maya Quiyani Reguerin-Plaza
 Antonino & Jackie Repetti Niccolo John Repetti
 Robert & Susan Salutric JR, Adam, Adrian & Hope Salutric
 Walter & Eileen Sasaki in honor of HAND
 George & Sarah Schriener Vanessa Brooke Carranza
 Scott & Mary Smith Elijah Scott Smith
 Paul & Belinda Spallas Lauren Marie Spallas
 Maureen Stickler for Service of Remembrance
 Thomas & Nina Suydam Danielle Nicole Suydam
 James Stichnoth & Dafna Talmor Claudia Talmor
 Erik Soule & Rebecca Turner Sydney & Sienna Vasquez
 Steven & Katheryn Wahl Karyn Jean Wahl
 Bob & Astrid Warner Jessica Marie Souza
 John & Janell White Jacklyn Mae White
 Raymond & Rosario Woo Isabelle Chinn Woo
 Michael & Cassandra Wood Jeffrey Daniel Wood

In Memory of...

RESOURCES

HAND of the Peninsula
 Post Office Box 3693
 Redwood City, CA 94064
 (650) 692-6655 crisis line
 (650) 367-6993 business office
Provides services to the San Mateo and Santa Cruz County areas.

Community Hospice, Inc.
 601 McHenry Avenue
 Modesto, CA 95350-5443
 (209) 577-0615
Provides support groups including "HUG" Hanging Up Grief - Childrens Support Group for ages 5-12.

Be sure to visit the Resource pages @ handonline.org for other grief-related support groups in Northern California.

Subsequent Babies

Owen Zachary Miller
 July 15, 2003
 Josh and Lori Miller

Monica Gerard Katreeb
 October 9, 2003
 David and Lia Katreeb

Annika Maj Denyer
 October 17, 2003
 Carl and Melana Denyer

Please note that the above parents have experienced a loss prior to the birth of these new babies.

Please accept our warmest thanks to those who have made donations to HAND.



Handprints Newsletter

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Handprints

Fall 2003

Handprints is a quarterly newsletter for bereaved parents. Contributions or donations made in memory of a special baby are always welcome and support HAND's mission to help grieving families.



Newsletter Subscription Form

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In Loving Memory of: _____

Donations made in memory of a baby will be acknowledged in the newsletter.

- Check if this is a renewal.
- Check if your address has changed.
- Check to discontinue receiving this newsletter.

HAND provides newly bereaved parents with this newsletter *free* for two years.

If you would like to subscribe, your donation is tax deductible. Please mail this form and your subscription/donation of \$20 or more to the address above.