



Reaching Out

September 2009

MESSAGE TO FRIENDS and SUPPORTERS

Hello and welcome to the Father's Day 2009 edition of *Reaching Out*. With Father's Day approaching, it is a time to reflect on the meaning of Father's Day, not only in its origin but what it means to be a father. In the NT we have a diverse range of communities that transverse significant distance, cultural and histories. Whilst the meaning of Father's Day differs depending on our beliefs and backgrounds, dads play an important part in our communities.

The origins of Fathers Day dates back to early 1909 in Washington. A woman called Sonora Smart Dodd while listening to a Mother's Day sermon was inspired to have an honor day for her own father.

She wanted to let him know how much she appreciated him for all that he had done for her and her siblings after their mother had died. Sonora held the first Father's Day on June 19, 1910 and the day was officially recognized in 1972. Seventy six other countries around the world now celebrate Father's Day.

The meaning of Father's Day is somewhat more difficult to define, yet many fathers will have their own meaning that is associated with the day and what is important to them.

A famous man and father, Sigmund Freud wrote this to a mate after the death of his daughter:

Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute, no matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. An actually this is how it should be...it is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish.

The opportunity for men to be supported through the loss of a child remains an important part of our grief and loss services. We hope that you find comfort in our newsletter this fathers day. Please remember, our counsellor, Margaret Lambert provides support and counselling to all families in the Northern Territory and our staff are always available if you just want to chat.

Margaret is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year to assist anyone affected by the death of a child up to 18 years of age. She is available for face to face and telephone counselling. Our organisation is keen to work in collaboration with other agencies to offer specialized grief counselling in child loss, including male grief, couple counselling and assisting communities deal with the loss of a child suddenly or unexpectedly, regardless of age or cause of death. Please give our office a call on 8948 5311 to discuss or call our 24 hour counselling line on 0448 849 234.

With your support we are able to reach out to so many more families around the NT.

Wishing all our dads peace, love and comfort, especially on Fathers Day.

Team at SIDS and Kids NT

...dedicated to saving babies lives and assisting anyone affected by the death of a child from conception onwards...



Introducing our new CEO.....

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to everyone, my name is Sarah McNee and I am delighted to have joined the SIDS and Kids NT team. I thank the Committee and Rachel for such a warm welcome and look forward to meeting many of you in the near future.

When taking this position I knew I wanted to make a difference, I believe that events in our lives are driving us to our eventual fate, our purpose in life. Its not until you get there you realise that your pain has not been in vain, your lessons have not been wasted but are all preparing you for what lies ahead. My life's journey has brought me here, to help those who too have suffered the sudden and unexpected death of a child. I have grown from my loss, developed qualities in me that I never new I was capable of. I bring to SIDS and Kids NT, a wealth of knowledge in the areas of Marketing, promotions / events and Business Development, but most of all I bring an understanding. I will be lobbying for ongoing Government Support, knocking on doors for corporate sponsors and doing what ever I can to build awareness and offer support to those who have been struck by tragedy.

I hope that you all join me in my quest to make a difference, to save babies lives and to support bereaved families.

I feel great things are upon us here at SIDS and Kids NT, I have so many ideas that I would like to put forward for the future direction of the organisation, in regards to raising awareness, support groups, fundraising etc, I would love to get feedback from you all.....

SIDS and Kids NT will be holding a planning day in the near future for any one interested in joining us, bring your skills, talents or just bring your enthusiasm for making a difference to a wonderful cause. Please email me your interest in attending darwin@sidsandkids.org or call our office on 08 8948 5311. With all these great minds, the future looks bright.

I can successfully say that I have survived our major fundraising campaign Red Nose Day for the first of many to come. We will be putting out a newsletter dedicated to those who volunteered their time and gave so much to make 2009s campaign one of great memories, fun and most of all to raise much needed funds for the Territory. Keep a look out for this in October when figures will be confirmed with our National Office.

But most of all my thoughts go out to the fathers this Fathers Day who have lost their child, YOU ARE A FATHER FOREVER.....Find peace in knowing that you are not alone, and that your little angel is now with you every step of your life. September the 6th is your day; spend it honoring both yourself and your precious angel.

We can honor our baby's short existence by the way we live our lives after loss.

Sarah McNee.

You can't prevent the birds of sorrow from circling over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair. (Chinese proverb)

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Education News

Our Educator this year attended the Perinatal Society of Australian and New Zealand - A Top End Experience, Better Birthing, Better Babies. Below is an overview of some of the issues we participated in.

Poster abstract, *Crazy with Grief?* This poster illustrated a study of parents whose babies had died in a Neonatal Care unit in Newcastle. The hospital evidenced an increasing number of parents at bereavement follow up appointment were expressing the need for therapeutic bereavement services that allowed the sharing of their experiences with other parents. An 8 week bereavement group was run to allow parents to do this and simultaneously offer a link to those parents with perinatal-psychology services.

Indigenous women and birthing: The Risk/Choice Paradox challenged participants to step out of their comfort zones and help to provide better birthing choices for women. In Australia today, the belief that birth in tertiary settings is the safest option, has led to relocation for women for birth across the country. Presenter, Sue Kildea has worked closely with a number of Aboriginal women and highlighted that these women are rarely allowed choices that provide what they consider culturally secure environments.

A number of sessions were focused on stillbirth, in particular looking at different methods of detecting fetal movement. Fetal movement is used as an indicator for fetal well being. SIDS and Kids supports many families who have lost a baby through stillbirth. Over 2 000 babies are stillborn in Australia and New Zealand every year, that's approximately 6 babies per day. Stillbirth rates for indigenous women are twice that of non-indigenous women.

Our educator, Rachel Dunne is available to speak with on Tuesdays and Thursdays. **For Safe Sleeping queries or to book a safe sleeping information session please contact Rachel on 0400 580 014.**

Please note that under the NT website is currently under development however you can access safe sleeping information by visiting www.sidsandkids.org.



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NORTHERN TERRITORY



Poems for Dad.....

Hey dad, I love you

Oh dad promise me, you'll live
If it should be that I die first

Don't ever starve yourself of life or be a man of constant thirst
Don't walk a shadow of yourself destroyed by my demise. I know how much I mean to you, I've seen it in
your eyes.

I've heard it in your voice those times that I have known success
And all those time when I fell down, you cherished fixing up my mess.

I've seen it in your smiling face I know I've brought you joy. Perhaps if fate says, he goes first it's so I'll
always be your boy

Don't let me going cost my mum, the man she's loved so long or cause my siblings wondering that I alone
gave you your song.

Oh dad, promise me, you'll live if it should be that I die first don't ever starve yourself of life, or be a man
of constant thirst.

Stewart Bush, reprinted from SIDS and Kids NSW Connections-Spring 2008



Time

Time cannot steal the treasures...

That we carry in our hearts.

Nor dim the shining thoughts

Our cherished past imparts.

For the memories of the ones we loved Still

Cast a gentle glow,

To grace our days and light our paths

Wherever we may go.

Author Unknown



Reaching Out



The below tribute is from a father to his twin sons Andrew and Matthew who passed away ten years ago, it is dedicated to all the grieving fathers who have lost a baby.

Ten years ago marked one of the most painful events in our lives.

There is nothing like the loss of children... particularly first children. The grief is unique... and deeply painful. It steals hope and destroys dreams. It challenges faith. It raises the simple question, "why us?"

But it also renews faith, as a reminder that there are some things only God knows... leaving us with only acceptance... letting go... but remembering. Trusting God.

I can only surmise God's plan for taking Joseph and Andrew. It is not within my power to know it.

Perhaps it was to leave a loving mother behind... to always remember... and to be of service to others in similar pain. Perhaps remembering renews love and commitment for the two beautiful blessings God has now provided for us... Andrew and Matthew.

Perhaps God brings us emotional pain as an opportunity for true humility. To help us to see what is really important. To see where he wants us to serve others. It is through seeing the truth of these things... if we allow ourselves to see... that He leads us to true joy in our lives... to gratitude in each moment.

But this is all supposition for now. Maybe the real answers will be revealed when we meet Joseph and Andrew, again, in God's eternal kingdom. Until then, I thank Joseph and Andrew's Mom for remembering... and taking me here from time to time... for a refresher in pain, humility... joy and gratitude.

Blog at wordpress.com

**Remembering Father's Day for that friend or relative can
make a huge difference in their lives for the rest of their
lives.**

Most of all, don't give up on making the effort.

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