



Pathways

Support for child, infant and pregnancy loss

Volume 6, Issue 2

From Regina's Desk

As you might have noticed, our newsletter has been subjected to a makeover. I finally quit wrestling with the complicated programs I am not familiar with in Microsoft Word and started working with Publisher. This will save me hours of frustration and spare my husband and family the short-tempered outbursts during newsletter deadlines. And in the long run, I know it will serve everyone else more efficiently as well.

Here we are in the throes of summer. School is out or close to it, family vacations are starting and we're supposed to be excited and happy, right? But what if we don't feel like a summer vacation this year without our child? What if the sweet breezes of June and the garden in bloom are the very triggers that confront us with our grief once again?

This time of year always finds me in a quandary. While I love the summer celebrations, picnics and vacations, I have another constant presence, an intense resurfacing of memories and emotions.

June 15, 2007 is the day I went into labor with Sadie. She was born June 20 at

6:20 a.m. and died 17 hours later. This time of year always brings about bittersweet memories. For some reason, this time last year was particularly hard. I tried to come to terms with that grief by writing a letter to the month of June, which you can find on page 2.

One thing I have found helpful is the Sadie Rose Annual Memorial Picnic and Balloon Release that usually falls on or around Sadie's birthday. You can read more about that, too. I am also excited about adding the Sadie Rose 5K and Walk into the business of June. We look forward to seeing many of you at both events.

In the meantime, we are here with you and for you. We are never more than a phone call, email, or text message away. So if you, like me, need an extra friend to help you through the next few months and beyond, that's what we're here for... because the path of grief after losing a child should never be walked alone.

Regina Harlow
Executive Director

My niece's gesture becomes annual SRF ceremony

By Regina Cyzick Harlow

The day after Sadie died, Lee and I were home trying to sort through our emotions. We were numb with shock and disbelief. We were surrounded by family and friends, but I was locked in my own world of pain and grief. It was like I was in a bubble and every activity, every visitor and everything around me was blurry, unfocused, distant.

But that afternoon my niece, Savannah

(then 12), showed up with a red heart helium balloon. She invited us to take a Sharpie and write messages to Sadie on the balloon.

For one of the first times since Sadie's passing, I seemed to come out of my bubble and be present with my grief. Lee and I both poured out our love to Sadie as we wrote on that balloon. We covered it with words of grief, pain, despair, love, desperation, and questions of how

See Balloon, Page 2

Quote Corner

"The reality is that we don't forget, move on, and have closure, but rather we honor, we remember, and incorporate our deceased children and siblings into our lives in a new way. In fact, keeping memories of your loved one alive in your mind and heart is an important part of your healing journey." ~ Harriet Schiff, *The Bereaved Parent*

Inside

- Make sure to register for the Sadie Rose 5K.
- Make plans to attend the 4th Annual Memorial Picnic and Balloon release
- Let us know if you plan to attend the informal coffee June 14. We might just put you to work on 5K preparations.
- We'd love to have you join us for our weekly online support chat.

Sending heavenly messages to our children becomes healing ritual

Balloons, from Page One

you go on as a parent when your child dies. But most importantly, we wrote directly to Sadie.

We reassured her that even though we didn't know how we could survive, we would. It was important for us to release her, for our own sake more than hers. We reminded ourselves and her that she was simply too special to remain in this pain-ravaged world. In that one gesture from Savannah, we emptied our hearts of so much pain.

The idea was to gather the nieces and nephews in our backyard and release the balloon to heaven together. But as with many times throughout our journey, there had to be some humor involved, some crazy twist that left us shaking our heads and laughing until our sides hurt.

Most of my 12 nieces and nephews at that time were quite young and not really aware of what was going on, but they knew it was a solemn occasion. We gathered them together and said a few prayers and words of love to Sadie and with all the sincerity within us, released that red heart balloon.

We waved good-bye as it started to ascend. The tears flowed freely as we imagined the balloon reaching celestial heights. But within seconds, the spell was broken. The breeze carried the balloon directly into the path of a large pin oak tree in our back yard and alas, it was stuck. All the solemnness of the occasion



Balloon Release 2011

was interrupted by peals of laughter.

That was quite possibly the first outburst of laughter Lee and I had shared in many days.

The situation became even more hilarious as my brother-in-law, Michael, risked life and limb to retrieve the balloon from the tree. By climbing its branches and using the pool skimmer stretched out as far as he and it could go, he somehow managed to bring it back down to earth, so we could start the process over again.

This time, though, there were no formalities. We simply said, "Let's try this again" and released the balloon—this time from a different location within our yard to avoid another appointment with the tree.

That innocent gesture of a child who invited us to pour out our hearts and release them to heaven was one of the most

healing rituals we experienced. The following June, we invited family and to friends to our home for a balloon release in Sadie's memory. By 2009, we knew that a memorial picnic and balloon release had to be a part of the Sadie Rose Foundation's annual remembrance ceremonies. June seemed like a fitting month since Sadie's birthday and date of death is June 20th. So in place of our regular monthly support meeting this month, we invite other families to participate in a ritual that brought so much healing and held so much

meaning for us. We often hear from families who have participated, saying that the picnic and balloon release is a meaningful spiritual and healing event for them as well.

After a covered dish meal, families huddle together as they share. Siblings, parents and grandparents wipe tears from their eyes as they take time to write a message directly to the child they are remembering. Smiles, tears and sobs are seen and heard as we all pour our hearts out to the ones who have left our arms so empty. And then, we release the balloons together. The moment seems surreal. There is a bond between us, the families left behind, that we can share with no other except those who have also experienced the death of a child.

Dear June

By Regina Cyzick Harlow

I never gave you much thought. As a child, you were the month that started my care-free summers. By the time I was a teenager, you were just another month. But now you haunt me. I am never prepared for the wave of conflicting emotions that wash over me every time you come around. It feels like June

2007 every year you visit now.

Your sweet fragrance of summer brings with it the smell of hospitals and funeral homes. The delightful sound of children enjoying your sunshine also rings with the sounds of hospital carts squeaking down the hall, doctors and nurses talking in hushed tones and hearts breaking. Your beautiful green mountains and bountiful gardens re-

mind me of the greenness of the cemetery grass, the tiniest white baby casket surrounded by flowers, family gathered to remember. Your fresh corn on the cob leaves a bittersweet taste in my mouth as I remember feed-sacks-full being shucked to feed our family that had gathered in shock and disbelief after the death of our baby girl.

See Letter, Page Three

A fresh hope, sweet June

From Letter, Page Three

So much I want to remember, so much I long to forget.

June, my dear June, I don't hate you, I just don't know what to do with you. One minute I welcome your presence and the next I am overcome with another wave of sadness and memories. You seem like a dream. Are you real or just a ghost to remind me of what we had and lost? What do you want from me? Do I have to give up Sadie again every time you come around? Will you hurt me forever? This carousel, this annual visitation, reopens the wounds of my already aching heart.

I want to be friends, but I don't know how. If you find me distant, if you're sweet summer breezes cannot penetrate the barriers of my heart, please know that I am just now learning how to accept you. I am trying to understand how our relationship has changed, how I have changed. Walk with me sweet June, and we will eventually come to a new understanding, a fresh hope. And in the meantime, just continue being that steadfast presence that I can always count on once a year.

Sweet Sadie, sweet memories, sweet month of June.

Calendar of Events

June 14: Informal Coffee, at the Sadie Rose office, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Come-and-go-as-you-please. Coffee and light refreshments provided. This is for those looking for support as well as for those interested in learning more about the Sadie Rose Foundation. (This one might involve preparing for the 5K.)

June 22: Annual Memorial Picnic and Balloon Release, Purcell Park, shelter #2, 6 p.m. For those who have lost a child of any age and their families. Table service, drinks and some biodegradable latex balloons will be provided. (You are welcome to bring balloons of your choice if you want.) Please bring a covered dish to share if you can. Please R.S.V.P. by calling or emailing us at the information below.

Weekly Online Support Chat, Sundays, 9 – 11 p.m. To participate, visit our website and click on the large "Support Group" button on the right sidebar. This is a great way to fill in the gaps between our monthly meetings or a great way to "meet" people from our group before attending a monthly support meeting.

June 16: Sadie Rose 5K and Walk, See details at below.

Ongoing: Lee Harlow's Walk365. Lee is counting down the days as he has committed to walk 365 consecutive days to raise funds and awareness for The Sadie Rose Foundation. Sponsorship is available for \$1 a day, \$7 a week, \$30 a month, \$90 per quarter, \$180 per half-year or \$365 for the full year. He can have multiple sponsors per day/week. As of May 1, Lee has walked 129 consecutive days.

For more information about any of our events or to volunteer,

please write, email or call us.

P.O. Box 382 Dayton, VA 22821, 540-810-0307 or

info-assistance@sadierosefoundation.org.

Join us June 16 for the Sadie Rose 5K and Walk in Dayton

Join friends and family at the First Annual Sadie Rose 5K and Walk June 16. Race headquarters will be at Wilbur Pence Middle School on Bowman Road in Dayton.

The 5K course will take runners past scenic Silver Lake on gravel roads through rolling farmland. Runners will be eligible for overall and age group awards. A 1.5-mile walk in town on paved roads will be suitable for families with small children and strollers.

Post-race refreshments available, as

well as raffle prizes. Pre-register by June 4 to guarantee your t-shirt. Cost is \$20 or \$25 after June 4 or race day.

Families and teams of four or more, take \$3 off your individual entry fee—no matter when you register.

We'd love to have civic groups, entire families, multiple generations, youth groups, Sunday school classes and entire congregations join us! Goofy costumes and team-themes are welcome.

Forms are available on our website or at the Sadie Rose office. Payment can

be made by clicking on the "Donate" button on the left sidebar of our website or by sending a check to Sadie Rose Foundation P.O. Box 382 Dayton, VA 22821.

Registration is from 7-8:30 a.m., and the race begins at 9.

We also need a large number of volunteers for this event. If you would be willing to help with the preparations and/or the day of, please contact us.

The Sadie Rose Foundation

P.O. Box 382
Dayton, VA 22821

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Learn more at
www.sadierosefoundation.org

**Because the path of grief after losing
a child should never be walked alone.**

The Sadie Rose Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers support to families that have lost a child. We were founded in 2008 in memory of Sadie Rose Harlow, infant daughter of Lee and Regina Harlow. Along with monthly support meetings, informal coffees and weekly online support chats, we offer one-on-one support at our office and a number of annual remembrance ceremonies. We are available to help with funeral planning or funeral meals when called upon to do so. Bereaved families are also invited to share their story on our website and connect with us on Facebook. For a complete list of our services, visit our website or call our office.