

Local mums launch new Chesterfield Sands support group for bereaved parents

With 17 babies stillborn or dying shortly after birth every day in the UK, bereaved mum Nicky Whelan of Hasland Chesterfield is on a mission to provide support to fellow bereaved parents.

Working with Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, Nicky and fellow bereaved mums, Nicky, Sharon, Stacey and Emma are launching the Chesterfield group on Tuesday 5 April and are calling upon fellow bereaved parents who live locally to come along. The meetings, which will be held on the first Tuesday of every month, are being hosted at the Chesterfield Community Fire Station, Spire Walk Business Park, Braidwood Way, Chesterfield S40 2WH between 7pm and 9pm.

Nicky says of her resolve to set up a support group in Chesterfield: "Due to severe medical complications identified after several scans and tests we had to make the devastating decision to end my pregnancy at 23 weeks. This was in February 2010 and the loss of Lily was compounded by extremely limited bereavement counselling available at my local hospital.

"The whole experience made me determined to do my best to ensure that other parents whose baby has died shouldn't be left to feel as alone and isolated as we did. I found support and comfort on the Sands forum, and met Stacey through the forum. We attended the nearest Sands group in Derby together, where we met Louisa Evans. It was the support we had received from Louisa that spurred me on to join forces with Sharon, Stacey and Emma to launch our own group. We just hope the new group will help other parents locally at such a devastating time,

especially as many parents feel that although people can sympathise with their loss, it's others who have experienced the death of a baby that can offer real understanding and empathy for what they're are going through.'

In addition to the formation of the new group, Nicky, Sharon, Stacey and Emma have been busy organising events to raise much needed funds for their new group.

On Saturday 26 March, Dronfield cyclist, Charlie Last, will be undertaking a four hour static cycle ride at Vicar Lane, Chesterfield (opposite HMV) from 11am – 3pm and two day's later (28 March), Andrew Crossley of AH Crossley Landscapes in Dronfield (and friend of Sharon) will be putting his pain threshold to the test when he takes part in a sponsored leg wax.

Nicky isn't leaving all the fundraising to others, as she will be embarking on a 12 week sponsored slim, in memory of Lily, and will be launching her endeavours at the first Sands Chesterfield support meeting on 5 April, with subsequent official weigh-ins taking place ahead of the monthly meeting.

Although Nicky experienced fertility issues when conceiving Lily, she is now proud mum of baby Lewis, aged three months and who she calls her miracle baby.

She concludes, 'Although Lily can't be here with us, she's spurred me on to do things I would never have done before. We've got all got such high hopes for the group and the support it will be able to provide local bereaved parents, and would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who is fundraising for us.'

If you would like to find out more about Sands and the new Chesterfield group please contact 07974086382 or 07980102162. Alternatively you can contact by e-mail at chesterfieldsands@gmail.com

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, was established by bereaved parents in 1978 and obtained charity status in 1981. The charity's core aims are to:

- Support anyone affected by the death of a baby;
- To work in partnership with health professionals to improve the quality of care and services offered to bereaved families; and
- To promote research and changes in practice that could help to reduce the loss of babies' lives

To find out more about Haven House Children's Hospice, please visit

www.havenhouse.org.uk

ENDS

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Sands Why 17? campaign:

Sands Why17? campaign asks a simple question. Why in spite of medical advances, do 17 babies die every day in the UK? For some of these deaths we simply do not yet know enough to be able to say why. Further research is needed.

The Facts today:

- 17 babies die every day in the UK (10 are stillbirths, 7 are neonatal deaths) totalling almost 6,500 baby deaths a year - the equivalent of 16 jumbo jets crashing every year with no survivors.

- This is four times the number of people who die every year of MRSA (1,593 MRSA deaths in 2007, UK Statistics Authority).
- This is double the number of adults who lose their lives on Britain's roads every year (2007 – 2,940 people were killed on the roads, Department of Transport).
- Ten times more babies are stillborn than die of cot death every year in the UK.
- The stillbirth rate has remained almost unchanged in the UK for the past 10 years. (CEMACH)
- Stillbirth is when a baby is born dead after 24 completed weeks of a pregnancy
- Neonatal death is when a baby is born alive but dies within the first 28 days of life

But increasingly, Sands believes that many of these deaths are potentially avoidable. The devastating impact of the death of a baby on the parents and their families and friends could be prevented.

What is needed is better antenatal care, increased funding for maternity services, more midwives and increased funding for research.

Sands Why17? campaign is seeking to raise £3million over the next 5 years to;

1. Focus public awareness on why, tragically, 17 babies a day in the UK are stillborn or die within the first twenty eight days of life;
2. Promote changes in antenatal practice that could prevent babies from dying;
3. Identify and support key research which could provide further information on why so many babies are dying