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OUR MISSION

TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE PREGNANCY AND/OR INFANT LOSS BY PROVIDING A COMMUNITY OF CONNECTIONS, COMFORT, AND COMPASSION.

OUR BELIEF

GUIDED BY OUR VALUES OF COMPASSION, EMPATHY, ACCEPTANCE, AND RESPECT, WE REACH OUR HANDS OUT TO ALL THOSE WHO GRIEVE THE LOSS OF A PREGNANCY AND/OR INFANT AND WALK OUT OF THE DARKNESS TOGETHER.





LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



On behalf of the Hope After Loss Board of Directors, it is my privilege to welcome you to the 2025 Hope Gala! We are looking forward to an evening of honoring some very special people in our community.

The 2025 Compassionate Care Award Recipients are all caregivers who went above and beyond in their compassion while caring for their patients and families. As caregiving professionals, while they cannot take away the pain of losing a child, they have each helped to make someone's tragic experience a little less terrible, and for that, we are forever grateful. We are honored that you are here to help us celebrate these incredible people and we hope that their work, and dedication, will help to educate and inspire others.

Hope After Loss helps those who experience pregnancy or infant loss to find strength and encouragement by providing them with connections, comfort, and care. Our organization offers burial and cremation support, outreach and education, and peer-to-peer support groups. Our support group facilitators have all experienced their own loss and have their own unique stories and experiences which gives them the tools to support other loss parents in our community. Because of our amazing donors, such as yourselves, paired with our skilled facilitators, bereaved parents are able to connect with one another, and be with others who just "get it."



LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONTINUED

The model of support offered by Hope After Loss works. I can say this with certainty because Hope After Loss helped me when my son, Samuel, was born still.

I know I would not be where I am today without Hope After Loss, which is what fuels me to continue helping others who walk this path today, even when it can get overwhelming. Bereaved parents do not have to grieve alone, those of us at Hope After Loss are here to sit with them, see them, validate them, and hold space for them when the grief feels too much to bear. We share this grief with them.

A very special thank you to our Circle of Hope members, sponsors, and donors for making the work of Hope After Loss possible, including our long time Annual Sponsors - Diamond Sponsor, Bartlett Legal Group and Gold Sponsor, Whitney Donuts and Silver Sponsors Andrew Esposito, Houlihan Lawrence Wareck D'Ostilio and Cool-ology . It is because of your strong support that we can continue to spread Hope throughout our community. Because with your help, there is no limit to the amount of Hope that can be spread to those who need it.

Thank you for joining us in hope,

Katie Christenson
Chair, Board of Directors



ORDER OF EVENTS

INTRODUCTION OF THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

STEPHANIE BYRD, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WELCOME ADDRESSES

KATIE CHRISTENSON, CHAIR OF THE BOARD
OF DIRECTORS
FRANK BARTLETT, DIAMOND SPONSOR

PERINATAL BEREAVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

OLIVIA ROONEY, PROGRAM MANAGER

COMPASSIONATE CARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

CLAUDIA ESPOSITO & RACHEL STEIGLEDER,
BOARD OF DIRECTORS & GALA COMMITTEE

RAFFLE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SILENT AUCTION INFORMATION

STEPHANIE BYRD, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CLOSING REMARKS

CHRISTINA MAILHOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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HOPE AFTER LOSS STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHRISTINA MAILHOS

PROGRAM MANAGER
OLIVIA ROONEY



2025 BEREAVEMENT TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Hope After Loss was able to award one full scholarship to an applicant who wished to take the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) Perinatal Bereavement Certificate Program:

Kaitlin Pirro, *Danbury Hospital*

Hope After Loss was also able to fund four scholarships for the Resolve Through Sharing (RTS) Perinatal Bereavement Course.

These recipients are:

Gissell Mota, *Doula*

Rachel Scully, *Growing Well Counseling*

Mischa Hadaway, *Gentle Mama Counseling*

Kayla Perkins, *UConn Health*



2025 COMPASSIONATE CARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Diana Polanco, RN Greenwich Hospital

Abbie Lopuch nominated Diana Polanco, who is a nurse at Greenwich Hospital. Abbie suffered a third trimester TFMR loss and stillbirth in December 2024. "Diana made memorializing our daughter Julie's arrival meaningful. She laughed with me when I needed it and held my hand when I cried. She lifted my husband and me up when we were at our lowest, but still acknowledged our grief," says Abbie. Abbie urges all caregivers to embody the kind of empathy that Diana showed her. **"Connecting to grieving patients emotionally is just as important as seeing to their medical needs,"** says Abbie. "Diana advocated for us to feel our feelings and acknowledge the pain we were experiencing. Even something as simple as speaking to us at eye level helped create a genuine sense of empathy."

Dr. Tania Aziz County OBGYN

Mark and Andrea Brundrett nominated Dr. Tania Aziz who is an OBGYN at County OBGYN. Andrea and Mark experienced the loss of their son Patrick in June of 2024. He was born unresponsive as Dr. Aziz delivered him via emergency c-section. He passed away after 4 days due to the effects of HIE. Mark and Andrea nominated Dr. Tania Aziz because, "Dr. Aziz has made it a point to check in with us and has become a member of our family. She has not only given us top quality care professionally, but has also provided us with personal connection and friendship that we sorely needed." Mark and Andrea remarked that "Then after the loss, was the most important part, **she listened to what we needed and what we are experiencing. It made all the difference in the world.**"



2025 COMPASSIONATE CARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dr. Kay Kourounis OBGYN PHYSICIANS

Shelley Heery nominated Kay Kourounis, who is an OBGYN doctor at OBGYN PHYSICIANS. Shelley tragically lost her son Brayden to a dog attack on February 16th 2024. Shelley was compelled to nominate Dr. Kay because, "Dr Kay was there for me when my world came crashing down on me and allowed me to come into the office and stopped her work to talk with me, held me while I cried, comforted and supported me and continued to do so from that day forward. Also showed up to Brayden's services as she was the one who delivered him. Not only was she there for me but was there for my entire family and continues to support us. We appreciate her and her entire team." Shelley shared that **she wishes all caregivers knew to check in with their patients continuously after something tragic happens**, as Dr. Kay did.

Danielle Beebe, RN The Hospital of Central CT

Marzena Mlyniec nominated Danielle Beebe, who is a nurse at The Hospital of Central CT. Marzena lost her son at 32 weeks due to placental abruption in 2024. She nominated Danielle because, "Danielle demonstrated exceptional kindness, compassion, and honesty. She went above and beyond in providing physical care, emotional support, and helping manage family boundaries. She ensured that my stillborn son was treated with the same importance as if he had been born alive. Danielle baptized our son and allowed us time to bond with him. She even offered to arrange food for us outside of the hospital. She truly embodies the definition of a kind person and a wonderful nurse." Danielle's compassion reminded Marzena of a quote from Saint Francis of Assisi, "**For it is giving that we receive**"



2025 COMPASSIONATE CARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Elisabeth Schneider, LMFT

Bridgeport Hospital and The Perinatal Wellness Institute

Molly Paguaga nominated Elisabeth Schneider, who is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Molly's son Noah was stillborn at 23 weeks in November 2024. Molly shared, "I am honored to nominate Elisabeth Schneider for the Hope After Loss Compassionate Care Award. Elisabeth is the very definition of a compassionate caregiver. She embodies kindness, validation, honesty, and openness in every interaction. Her unwavering support extended beyond the hospital walls, as she made herself available to us even when we were no longer her patients. . Elisabeth's presence was a beacon of warmth and care during one of the hardest moments of our lives. She exemplifies what it means to care with both skill and heart, making a lasting impact on the families she supports." **Every caregiver should know how powerful it is to simply be present and accepting."**

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SPECIAL THANKS



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Perinatal Wellness for Growing Families



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Our sweet Aaron and Julie we miss you everyday and cherish every moment we got with you. While you have not been here physically, you continue to have an impact on other people's lives. We are grateful for Hope After Loss for helping us, honoring you and helping other families. Because of you we are able to share your story and help facilitate peer led support groups in your memory. We will always love you!

Love, Mom, Dad, Ethan and Lilgana.

Our family and business **Coventry Auto Sales & Service** are proud to Support Hope After Loss in Memory of Aaron and Julie Le Borious and Ava and Kiley Luntta

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The Family and Friends of Samuel Christenson

Samuel, It is incredible to think that we have gone on without you for almost nine years. This year, saying your name brings more joy than grief and we are so grateful for that. How someone whose life was cut so short can still touch so many people is amazing. Losing you helped us find strength and resolve we didn't know we were capable of and because of you, we have been able to offer hope and support to so many families struggling with their grief. We

love you and think of you every single day!
Love, Mom, Dad, Gunnar, Annika and Anders

Stephanie Byrd



In loving memory of

Jaxen Byrd, Kayla Candelora, & Annelise Melillo

The Nelly Family

The Nelly Family would like to thank the Compassionate Care Award recipients for providing care that helps bereaved families when we can no longer hold our babies in our arms and need to hold them in our hearts. You show us how to take those very difficult first steps and you make a difference to every family every day.



The Friends and Family of
Gerry Baird are proud to
support Hope After Loss

The McParland Family

Our sweet Emily, we miss you everyday and will always wish we had more time with you. While you have not been here with us physically, you have had an incredibly positive impact on our lives. We are grateful to Hope After Loss for always being here for us in honoring you and helping other families who experience their own devastating losses and heartbreak.

Love you, Mom, Dad, Liam, JJ and
Camryn

The Rai Family

Dear Dev - we miss you every day.



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PROUD TO SHARE IN THE CARE AND
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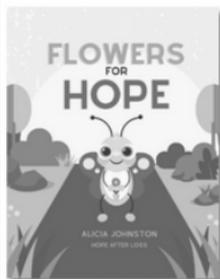
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PERINATAL BEREAVEMENT CAREGIVER RESOURCE

FROM HOPE AFTER LOSS

★ **53** ★
FAMILIES

responded to our survey

- ★ 94.3% of responders identified as white
- ★ 94.3% identified as female
- ★ 84.9% of responder live in CT

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FAMILIES

Personalize care

Be aware of religious & cultural norms. Also, base your care on the specific situation, listen to the family and remember every situation is unique.



Make families feel safe, ordinary, and not different despite the loss

Communicate information clearly and without ambiguity. Use simple and clear language, not medical jargon and scientific information.



Acknowledge, not avoid

Follow up and be present with family. Balance between privacy and abandonment. Use baby's name and be present. Meet families where they are while validating emotions.



Have referrals for mental health and other pregnancy and infant loss resources for both partners they can take home.



Communicate among care team (ie front desk, nurse staff, PP staff) there was a loss, to inform interactions with loss families.

Caregiving is simply caring for patients. Not just sharing research and medical jargon.

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PROCESS OF LOSSES IN YOUR SETTING

Be aware of memory making materials, burial and cremation processes, follow up procedures, other care providers who can support. Help reassure the family there is no rush to make decisions.



Recognize that loss occurs throughout pregnancy and infancy.



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-Frank Bartlett

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