



AQ

AMERICAN QUILTER

DISCOVER • INSPIRE • CREATE

A YEAR OF GIVING SERIES

Donating your time,
talent, and treasure

KIMBERLY EINMO
a quilter for all quilters

Angel Babies



Kassie Howell and Gabriel, her second angel baby. Her 20-week stillborn son is wearing a bunting and hat originally from Teeny Tears.

*“Our little girl had no heartbeat.
She passed away in utero at 20 weeks.”*

Devastation. Tragedy. Broken. Outrage. Shattered lives. Never-ending grief. The unimaginable has happened, not once but twice, to Kassie Howell and her family. Kassie went in for a routine pregnancy checkup and her doctor could not find a heartbeat. Her precious daughter, Chloe Ella, was then stillborn. An angel baby. No specific reason could be ascertained—a fluke of nature, her doctor told her. Shouldn’t happen again. A year later, she was pregnant again. She tried to keep her emotions in check, the further along she got in her pregnancy. This time, they were having a little boy. Kassie says, “A few days before we went in to our appointment at the exact week Chloe passed, I hadn’t felt our little man move. I was frightened but thought I was being overly sensitive because of what happened with our daughter. Appointment day approached and we went in, only to find out the same devastating news. Our little Gabriel had passed away, too.”

How can a mother, father, grandparent, siblings go through any loss of a child, let alone losing two in such a short time period?

Megan Bradshaw knows just how Kassie feels. In November 2008, her identical twin boys were born via emergency cesarean section at 28 weeks gestation. “Our precious Dex returned to Heaven that day due to complications of Twin-to-Twin Transfer Syndrome.” Another angel baby. Dex’s twin brother was in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) until he was able to come home.

On the third anniversary of Dex’s death, Megan began searching for a service project to occupy her mind so she could get through the difficult memories of his passing. Inspired by the work and pattern of a bereavement photographer friend in Spokane, Wash-

ington, Megan decided to sew tiny little bereavement diapers for tiny angel babies. She expected her little diapers to be made once, just until her grief passed for another year. But it morphed. Those little diapers turned into Teeny Tears, a non-profit (501(c)3) organization that sends soft fabric micro-diapers to hospitals all over the U.S. Occasionally they send other items that are gifted to them such as miniature quilts, blankets and more. Now, when an angel baby is delivered, participating hospitals can give the grieving parents a teeny tiny diaper for their angel baby and one to keep for themselves. They always come in pairs. One for the baby and one for the grieving parents. Those final memories of their angel baby outfitted with a teeny tiny diaper, along with a keepsake matching diaper, bring comfort for a long time after they have laid their precious cargo to rest.

Carol Rinehart of Washington state has been a quilter for over 20 years. "I have sewn most of my life and made clothing for my children, until they got old enough to not want to wear it any more. My mother-in-law quilted and she got me interested. That became a strong connection that we had with each other. I then taught my daughter to quilt."

And then the unthinkable happened. Carol's daughter had twin boys, with Carter passing away at birth, caused by Twin-to-Twin Transfer Syndrome. Cohen is thriving, to this day. Those Teeny Tears diapers took on a whole new meaning for Carol. She began making Teeny Tears diapers to help her with her own grief as well as for grieving families everywhere. She was hooked. Since she began sewing the itty, bitty donations, she has made over 20,000 Teeny Tears diapers.

Carol muses about combining her love of quilts with her Teeny Tears charity donations, "My love of quilting has spilled over to Teeny Tears because I LOVE to sew. I find healing in sewing these diapers and buntings and sending love to another family facing the great tragedy of losing a child. I help them see that their child was loved, was HERE and given dignity in wearing tiny clothes to cover their body. Sewing these tiny diapers and blankets has brought such healing and purpose into my life. Many times I am contacted by someone who knows someone who has lost a baby. I will often make donations in that baby's name. There is something about seeing your baby's name on the small card that is included with each donation. Someone else will know that their baby existed. Their angel baby will be forever loved and forever remembered."

Never fear, quilters are always near! Megan says, "We have many experienced quilters that have contributed significantly to the success of our project. They have very generously used their time and talents to create diaper sets, blankets, mini-quilts, and other items for the families that we serve in more than 1,000 participating hospitals across the United





States. Most of our quilters are individual volunteers, while some volunteer as a group or local guild. Under the direction of the Teeny Tears headquarters team, many of our quilters ship their completed treasures directly to hospitals in need. Others will send their items to our central headquarters for distribution.”

Connie Edwards began her association with Newborns in Need after her first child was born prematurely. After months of traveling back and forth to the NICU, she observed many new mothers who did not have the resources to handle the stress of babies being born into difficult health situations. She researched options for support and found the national Newborns in Need organization, a non-profit (501(c)3) and started a North Carolina chapter.

Newborns in Need has a number of suggested donation opportunities on their website. One family could need a quilt. Another family could be in need of an afghan. Whatever a volunteer makes, Newborns in Need will find a special place to donate it. Connie says, “We do not have specific guidelines as we want

the volunteer’s love and creativity to show through. We do ask them to make newborn size as preemies grow so fast. We also provide bereavement items, as needed. A donated wedding dress can yield about eight burial gowns.” There are many who donate to Newborns in Need, some include individual quilters as well as quilt groups or guilds. They are found in many states so feel free to look up a chapter in your area.

Both Teeny Tears and Newborns in Need need help, especially from the quilting community.

They are all in need of blankets and miniature quilts as well as cotton and/or flannel fabric donations, threads, quilt/sewing volunteers and even corporate sponsors. Both organizations make a difference in the lives of the angel babies and premature infants—and in the lives of the families that they serve.

“When I said goodbye to Gabriel’s mortal body, he was dressed and wrapped up in clothing that was so sweet!” Kassie exclaims. “It made me feel good, as his mommy, to know he was wrapped up and warm. When we laid him to rest on December 16, 2013 he was dressed and wrapped in the most beautiful things from Teeny Tear’s volunteers. It brought tremendous peace to my heart.”

Teeny Tears: <http://teenytears.blogspot.com/>

Newborns in Need: <http://newbornsinneed.org/>



TK Harrison is a wife, mother of four, a passionate quilter for 30+ years and a quilt designer for 10+ years. When she's not taking care of her family, she's usually in her quilt studio stroking her fabric

stash or making quilts. TK has a goal to make one of her originally designed quilt projects then one quilt top to donate to a worthy cause—an even quilt-to-life balance. She can be found at www.TKHarrison.com, www.QuiltTherapy.com and www.BOMquilts.com.