

## *Professionally Speaking...*

by Denise M. Paul MA, CT, CPLC

### **One Heart to Another**

I entered the Labor and Delivery room of the hospital on the worst day of Chrissy's life. She and her husband were lying on the bed together cradling their lifeless baby boy, born at 22 weeks gestation. He was dressed in a miniature gown and was wrapped in a 12" square quilt. His tiny hand lay gently over Chrissy's finger, where it had been for hours since his birth earlier that day. He was born alive and had the opportunity to be baptized, and to hear the voices of his parents before he died in his mother's loving arms.

In the brief time that I spent with this heartbroken couple, I wanted to create as many tangible and intangible memories as possible, and bless them with as many "linking objects" as I could to remember their son. I was able to give them several gifts that were donated by other moms in the Holy Redeemer Hospital UNITE Support Group in memory of their babies who died too soon. I presented to them a furry bear from Project B.E.A.R that was donated by a mom who lost one son to stillbirth in 2007 and another son to early infant death in 2009. A hand-made baby quilt wrapped his body that was made by a mom who suffered an 11 week miscarriage in 2012, and a knit blanket created by a mom who had a full term stillbirth in 2011 and two ectopic pregnancies in 2013 lay in his bassinette. The most recent grieving mom, who lost a 19 week son in February of 2015, was inspired with a gift idea to memorialize her baby. While in the hospital with her stillborn son, she and her husband realized that they wished that they had a book to read to their baby, since this was the only time they would ever have an opportunity to read to him. Because of this, she created a gift box for other parents containing a small book called, "Guess How Much I Love You," along with a disposable camera, a small bottle of baby soap, and a washcloth to create special memories. Each of these gifts came with a hand written letter from one grieving parent to another.

I often talk about “grief work” in our support group, and the many ways that parents can do the hard work of grieving, following the loss of their baby. Some parents visit the grave, while others plant a garden, have fundraisers or balloon releases. The women that I have mentioned in this article have used their God given time and talents to companion other parents on this difficult journey, and at the same time, memorialize the babies that they have lost.