



CPC Pregnancy Resources HEARTLINES



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The September 27, 2009, issue of the *Quad City Times* carried the following story by Ann McGlynn. Perhaps you saw it. CPC Pregnancy Resources is honored to have been a part of the courageous journey of this young couple and their daughter. Our sonographer, Char McGovern, performed the first ultrasound at the Davenport Center and Dr. Leroy Yates, who became the couples' doctor, is our medical director. And you, as our supporters, were also involved. We were there for the Houks, because you are there for us! The story is reprinted here with the permission of the Houks and the *Quad City Times*.

HANNAH'S STORY

Davenport couple gives stillborn daughter as much life as possible

When his wife screamed from the bathroom one morning in January, Ben Houk thought maybe she found a mouse in their west Davenport home.

But there was no mouse.

Jessica Houk was pregnant.

The couple wanted children. Jessica went through gastric bypass surgery and lost 100 pounds to do so. Almost as quickly as her doctor gave the OK to start trying, the home pregnancy test came back positive.

She took 15 more in the next few days just to make sure. Definitely pregnant.

The Houks spent the next few weeks test-driving strollers and finding an infant-sized St. Louis Cardinals outfit. Ben's a big fan. Eager to see their child, they went to the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Davenport for a free ultrasound. Usually, the first ultrasound is at 20 weeks. They were 12 weeks along.

They thought they might get to find out whether they were having a boy or girl. Instead, they were told to visit their doctor.

The doctor put a box of Kleenex on his desk and told them: "I don't see how your baby is going to live."

"I couldn't breathe," said Jessica, 25.

They had to make a decision few Iowa parents ever have to make. They could terminate. Or they could continue the pregnancy, even though they knew the baby may never take a breath. At best, the baby would live for a very short time.

They chose to continue on.

"It's kind of like having cancer," said Ben, 28. "You want to spend as much time as possible with the person."

They found a doctor to care for them. They gave her a name: Hannah Faith. Daddy

gave her a nickname just for him: Hannah Banana.

They had no idea how much the next months would change their lives.

THE DIAGNOSIS

Jessica and Ben Houk's love began over a plate of country fried steak with eggs and all kinds of gloppy gravy.

A guy with crazy hair went to visit the woman he had met at a friend's wedding, this feisty blonde who waitressed at a casino restaurant. He knew there was something different about her.

He's so gentle - gentle Ben, she said.

She's so beautiful and funny, he said back.

They married in October 2006. She walked down the aisle to "Canon in D." They began to make plans for a family.

On the day they went to the ultrasound, they met sonographer Char McGovern. As the ultrasound progressed, McGovern knew something was wrong with the baby. But she is not allowed to diagnose, not at liberty to say what 29 years of experience tells her. A doctor must do that.

McGovern had never personally seen the extremely rare condition she thought she saw. It's called ectopia cordis. Some of the baby's organs, including her heart, were growing outside of her body. It is not treatable.

"My heart was just breaking," McGovern said.

After the visit to the doctor, Jessica went to work researching to find out what this was. The couple went to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics to learn more. They were frustrated by the message they heard: The hospital had no data about carrying such a baby to birth.

So they found a doctor with a different message.

continued on page 2

HANNAH'S STORY *continued from page 1*

Leroy Yates practices in Bettendorf. He encourages couples to make the best choice they can live with, he said.

"This helps in grief recovery that the parents do not feel guilty about ending the life of their child," he said. "The impending death of the child is bad enough without the parents later blaming themselves for it."

PINK BALLOONS

When Jessica learned the baby was a girl weeks later, she bought pink balloons and made a pink cake to tell Ben the news. They made a green, pink and brown nursery.

They posed for professional pregnancy portraits. They bought things for Hannah - clothes, toys, a blanket. They tossed coins in a fountain for her. They set up a Facebook page and a Web site to tell the story of her life - www.baby-houk.com.

The Web site has logged more than 10,000 hits.

It allowed the couple to tell Hannah's story without having to handle people's reactions, Jessica said. Still, some people, in different words, told them they were nuts. Sometimes, "I thought I was nuts," Jessica said.

Regular ultrasounds tracked Hannah's growth.

But before her July 1 visit, Jessica had a feeling something was wrong. The nurse had difficulty finding a heart beat. An ultrasound revealed Hannah had died.

"We knew what we were looking at, our baby, a very still baby with no heartbeat. Not the squirming, punching and kicking baby that we had seen on the screens previously," Jessica wrote on Hannah's Web site.

McGovern, the sonographer who performed Hannah's first ultrasound, was the sonographer who performed her last.

They hugged and cried.

"The specialness about Jessica and Ben is they just wanted a baby," McGovern said. "Most people will say they want a healthy baby. They just wanted a baby."

SHE IS YOUR BABY

Ben and Jessica headed to Genesis Medical Center that night. They knew they would be saying hello and goodbye at the same time.

They had prepared for this day for weeks.

"We knew she was sick for so long, we had a lot of time to plan it out," Jessica said.

What about baptism? What kind of certificate would they receive to document Hannah's existence? How would they handle the funeral? A burial?

All choices made, protocol to navigate.

Jamie Park headed to Genesis to support them. She and Jessica had met through mutual friends. Jamie lost her daughter, Mallory, four years ago, two weeks before her due date.

Jessica and Jamie had spent time talking about exactly what the Houks wanted for Hannah and for themselves. They used Jamie's regrets as a guidepost.

"She is your baby," Jamie told the Houks. "You can do whatever you want."

Look at her body. Bathe her. Dress her. Hold her at the funeral home. Keep her for as long as you want at the hospital.

Hannah was born at 9:18 a.m. July 2. She weighed 10 ounces and was 9-1/2 inches long.

For hours after Hannah's birth, surrounded by their parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and medical staff, they held Hannah, had her baptized and took hundreds of pictures.



REMEMBERING HANNAH

Some days, it's nearly impossible for Jessica to get out of bed. She has not returned to work, but she volunteers with an animal rescue in Clinton, Iowa. She struggles when people who knew she was pregnant, but do not know Hannah died, ask her to see the baby's pictures. It happened twice on Tuesday.

Ben, meanwhile, works as a machinist at M.A. Ford. He stands by Jessica's side. His co-workers have been "over-the-top" supportive, the couple said. They are some of the countless people - family, friends and complete strangers - who have helped them through in ways big and small.

Ben and Jessica visit Hannah's grave a few times a week. They often take a picnic lunch.

"Being with her is what counts," Ben said. "It's where we want to be."

They keep her nursery filled with her trinkets and mementos. One of the most important things is a Ziploc bag with Hannah's blankets and clothes inside. Open the bag, and they can still smell Hannah's baby smell.

They talk a bit about having a second baby.

Friday was Hannah's due date. Today, family and friends will mark the occasion with a memorial at church and at the cemetery. There will be balloons, doughnuts and juice.

On her birthday every year, Jessica and Ben will take an outfit or a basket of gifts to a baby girl born at Genesis. Preferably, close to the room Hannah was born in.

Heartlines Editor's note: While this story does not end with the answer to prayer that we wished would have occurred, it does serve to remind us that every life is precious. The Houks made the choice to give their daughter, Hannah, as much life as possible, as much life as God would provide. He created her for a reason and she had a purpose. Psalm 139:16 says that every day ordained for (Hannah) was written in God's book before one of them came to be. Even in her short stay on earth, she had a purpose. Please continue to pray for this young couple who are grieving the loss of their daughter.

Jeri Cook began volunteering at CPC in 1991. She has worn a variety of hats during her tenure: receptionist, services coordinator, abstinence presenter, center director, but above all, she has been a faithful servant of God who has blessed all of us who have worked with her and all the clients God has brought to her. Here, she shares her thoughts on volunteering at CPC Pregnancy Resources as she moves from the QC area and begins a new chapter in her life of service. *See page 4 for how you can become a CPCPR volunteer!*

Watch and See Where God is Working and Join Him

by Jeri Cook

Last month, I said good-bye to the many wonderful people who are at CPC Pregnancy Resources. I will greatly miss every one of them. I remember, one time my son said to me, "When are you going to get a job that pays?" I thought to myself: if he only knew the many rewards there are when volunteering, he would be doing it also. Jesus said "Come, and I will make you fishers of men." That is exactly what the CPC did for me. It gave me a love and desire to see all come to know Jesus as their personal friend and Savior.



Looking back over the years I have been at the CPC, I have grown spiritually and had the privilege to see Him move in so many ways it would take several newsletters to get them all in, so I will just share two short ones. When I first came to the CPC, it was in a little house in Rock Island with just a handful of volunteers. What a sweet time we had together seeing God provide for the clients and watching Him grow the ministry into two centers. What an experience to be part of! I remember one time a coat was donated and the very next day a client came in needing a coat! That kind of thing happens often.

I have seen time and time again where God would put a client with just the right services coordinator. I was adopted as a baby and I cannot remember how many times I was placed with a client who was thinking about placing her baby for adoption, but not sure how the baby would feel when grown up. I could share my story with her.

Before each shift at the center, we pray for God to bring in the clients with prepared hearts, open to His leading. Not too long ago He did just that. It was a Monday morning and I was doing a clothing room intake with a young woman. When I asked her if she had any spiritual beliefs, she said "kind of." Where she works, there was a group of people who would come in and share with her about their faith and their church. They had invited her to their church and had given her a children's Bible for her to read with her son. She had been reading it and really liked the stories. She had so many questions about the Bible and Jesus. When I asked her if anyone had ever shown her in the Bible how she could know for sure that she was going to heaven, she said no and was open to my sharing with her. After looking at God's Word, she bowed her head and prayed to ask Jesus into her life!!! I get

excited all over again thinking about it. What a blessing it is to be part of God's plan. That group of people at the restaurant had been planting seeds deep into her heart and I got the privilege to lead her to Christ!

A few years ago our church did a study, Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby. He said "watch and see where God is working and go join Him. Don't wait around for God to bring people to you. Go where you see Him working." At the CPC, God is definitely working.

Many have asked me if I will volunteer at a CPC in Rockford. I do not know where I will be serving. But I will have my eyes open looking to see where He is working and go. Serving Him has become my life and I know the CPC has played a big part of shaping and molding me into who I am today. I will be forever grateful to all those I have served with. Jesus said "Come, and I will make you fishers of men." I feel with all my heart that is what the CPC did for me and I encourage all who are thinking about taking the training in February to do it. You will see God working and He will make you a fisher of men and women. I guarantee you will never regret the time you spend there. I know I don't!

In Memoriam

We are grateful for the financial donation as a living memorial.

In Memory of

ELIZABETH and BABY RUBY KNUTSEN
RUSS IWINSKI – SUSAN McDOWELL
GENEVIEVE PATRICK

We are grateful for the financial donation

♥ *In Honor of* ♥

LES & MARGARET GUSTAFSON
74th Wedding Anniversary



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Your suggestions and comments are welcome. Please contact Kathy Nagle at 797-3636. This publication is designed to provide information to our readers about the needs, challenges, and rewards of providing free and confidential services to women in crisis.



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As part of our commitment to qualify for the Illowa Bi-State Combined Federal Campaign, CPC Pregnancy Resources is audited yearly. Thanks to everyone who gives to us through the Combined Federal Campaign and United Way's Contributor's Choice Program.

Do You Sense God Calling You?

The first 2010 CPC Pregnancy Resources' Volunteer Training dates will be:

February 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 10th
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Learn more about . . . sharing the Gospel . . . ministering without manipulation . . . communicating with people in crisis . . . explaining why sexual abstinence until marriage is important . . . understanding the pressures and risks our teens and single adults are facing . . . compassionately discussing abortion without a debate . . . understanding the pain of the men and women struggling with Post Abortion hearthache . . . helping people find emotional and spiritual healing for their past.

The training seminar will be held at the **MOLINE CPC CENTER, 829 - 15th Street**

All six sessions are required as a prerequisite to submitting a volunteer application.

\$30 book fee may be waived upon request.

To register or for more information, call (309) 797-3636.

CLOTHING ROOM NEEDS

We are VERY LOW on the following items:

18-24 month boys' and girls' clothes

Newborn clothes

We are grateful for the financial donation

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