

April 2012

Sell-out Spring Ball raises funds for baby peace garden to provide haven for bereaved parents in North Manchester

With over 17 babies stillborn or dying shortly after birth every day in the UK, the North Manchester group of Sands (the stillbirth and neonatal death charity) is on a mission to raise funds to create a baby peace garden in the grounds of North Manchester General Hospital, which will provide a place of quiet and reflection for bereaved parents, family and friends.

To kick start the fundraising, the group is planning a Spring Ball, to be held on Friday 27 April at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, in Manchester.

Michelle Morgan, a healthcare assistant on the maternity ward at the North Manchester General Hospital and secretary of the group takes up the story, "We launched our group only last year and already we have so many bereaved parents getting in touch with us and coming to our support meetings.

'Our aim is to create a peace garden that we can landscape and maintain ourselves with money raised through the Spring Ball. We want the garden to become a peaceful place where parents whose baby has died, or who have received bad news, can go to be with their thoughts and away from the conventional hospital setting.

'The hospital is currently working with contractors to identify the best site within the hospital grounds. We had 240 tickets for the ball and are delighted to say it's a sell-out, so we are all feeling very confident that we will be able to start work on the garden this summer.'

The North Manchester Sands Spring Ball will provide a great night's entertainment with the evening's line up including; DJ Mike Valentine, local band, The Hymek Maneavour and Burlesque dancers, The Glitter Kittens.

Michelle says, 'Everyone has kindly agreed to donate their time for free and so we are hugely grateful. We just need everyone to come along and have a great night out and to know funds raised will be used to create a very special place.'

If you would like to know more about plans for the memorial garden or the work of Sands please contact Michelle Morgan or Collette Riley on 077900 53309 . Alternatively please email nwsands@hotmail.co.uk

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For further information, please contact:

Lyn Peters – 01394 385865 or Lisa Wardle – 07554 454309

Sands Helpline: 0207 436 5881

Sands Office: 0207 436 7940

Web: www.uk-sands.org

E mail: info@uk-sands.org

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 (11 are stillbirths, 6 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