

SANDRA

Attachment B

My name is Sandra Courtney and I have been on the Board of Directors for the Rowan Tree Foundation since 2005. My husband and I were expecting a healthy child when our son Ryan was born in January of 2003 with a genetic condition called Trisomy 18 - you may have heard of it recently because of Rick Santorum's daughter Bella.

When he was just days old we were told that he would probably die before reaching 3 months of age. We were heartbroken, but determined to make the most of our time together. Ryan came home with us and we were blessed to have him with us for 363 days. He liked music, he loved to have someone read to him, he loved the lights on the Christmas tree. He died 2 days before his 1st Birthday. This year he should have turned 9 - instead we are raising his little sister as an only child, and that breaks my heart.

Being Ryan's mother did not stop when he died - his life touches all that I do - as a parent, as a friend, as a volunteer supporting other parents that have lost a well loved child. One of the hardest things that happens after your child dies is that people stop talking to you about him - they are afraid to mention it because they don't want to make you sad, or upset, or they just don't know what to say.

What grief and loss has taught me is that the need to remember and talk about our children is almost universal among parents living through this kind of loss. I think that is one of the reasons that this plate resonates so strongly with me - letting other parents know they are not alone - sharing awareness - sharing our children... that is incredibly meaningful.

Please support the work that Rowan Tree Foundation, and other groups are doing to recognize the value of the lives of these well loved little ones who stay on earth was too short, but whose place in our hearts is forever.

Thank you very much for allowing my testimony to be shared.

Sandra Courtney, Mom to Ryan Michael Wherry 01/31/03-01/29/04

Board Member, Rowan Tree Foundation