

The Sudden Infant & Child Mourning Outreach Network  
Of Vermont & Northern New England

The SIMON Project  
June 20, 2006 E-mail Up-Date

Wow....! Happy Summer! What a change in weather we have been experiencing. For our friends out of Vermont, we are now thrown into hot weather (temps. in the 80's & 90's) in the span of about two weeks. So much for Spring!

Our next SIMON Project meeting is on July 24<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM - location to be announced!

I have much to pass on to you in this e-mail – so please stick with me.

1. Grants up-date. Well the news here is not so good so far. We were rejected for the \$25,000 dollar CJ Foundation grant. I got the letter on Father's Day (we were out of town all weekend). This does not come a big surprise or shock to me because I met the person in charge of the grant in Arizona at the bereavement conference I attended – and she talked to me about having a conference call to discuss other options from the CJ Foundation in the future. I have the rejection letter if anyone wants to actually see it. I'll bring it to the next meeting in July. The second grant I applied for will be reviewed and decided upon by the Kinney Drug Foundation on July 21<sup>st</sup>. Also for a requested \$25,000 dollars.
2. This brings up the issue of a capital fund raising project which I want to begin organizing as soon as I have the time to actually think about how to do it. If you have ideas or experience in fund raising – please contact me. I know we can look for corporate matches attached to individual donation and we will set up different tiers of donations for both individuals and corporations / businesses. Think big and if you have connections to the large Vermont companies / corporations who have a history of helping local Vermonters – please contact me to make a plan to approach them for their support.
3. Our biggest challenge now for The SIMON Project is to keep up the momentum. Most all of us are working full time and have family obligations to tend to as well. We will make progress, but every little bit of help is appreciated and now is a critical time for planning and project development.
4. The Web Site has not progressed to the point of being ready for the State wide media roll out (initially planned for Aug.). I'm waiting to have some conversations with key people in this process to get it moving ahead – keep it up-to-date and functional. This will include some new software I need to purchase and learn how to use.
5. News from around the State related to local projects etc.:  
**Brattleboro Area:** VT. Dept. Of Health's staff presented a safe sleep power point to 23 child care providers. It was discovered that none of them had safe sleep "policies" based on the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines. There is a movement to get the State to take an official role in developing an actual policy around safe sleep for all child

care programs. There seems to be little to no interest from either VDH or the Child Development Division to take the lead on this. Maybe The SIMON Project can put together a proposal for these two State Agencies to consider. It shouldn't be that difficult to do. It might be difficult to implement and that might be the hang-up.

**Burlington Area:** As I mentioned in my last up-date in May, there is a work group developing a professionally facilitated support group for parents who have experienced Infant Death. Sara Lane & Dena Chase are two primary players in this effort. I also heard from Nancy Sugarman – from Chittenden Early Childhood Connection. They have been sending out bereavement bags to families who experience and infant death at FAMC for seven years now! They have a mail back card that families can send back in if they want a peer support hook up and they facilitate that process right there. Way to Go! The more we get our word out about the goals of The SIMON Project the more we are hearing back about what others are doing around the state. We will partner and support any efforts that are out there and make sure people can access services in that area as needed from our web site and referral process.

**St. Johnsbury:** The Caledonia Home Health & Hospice Infant Loss group in meeting this Sunday at their offices at 2 PM. Kathy Roosa is organizing. 802-633-4970.

**Central Vermont:** Ginny Fry recently help host a conference at Lake Morey of palliative care / hospice / bereavement counselors and spoke to them about The SIMON Project. She mentioned that there were about 22 people who attended and she passed out a copy of our web site home page. (Yet another reason we need the site to be up-dated and functional). Also, at the end of this month I will be attending the Maternal Child Health Coalition meeting here at Central Vermont Medical Center. We will watch a DVD called “Losing Layla.” It is a documentary about a women and her partner who are having a baby and the baby only lives for 8 hours. It is an example of the joy, sorrow, grief related to the death, and how supportive hospital staff can be by allowing the family all the time they want with their baby. I own the DVD, so we can view it in any setting. We will follow the DVD with a conversation about grief and bereavement issues and supporting families who experience this type of infant death.

**State of Vermont – Dept. of Health:** A new safe sleep brochure is coming out soon.

6. The SIMON Project has two new friends getting involved in unique ways. First, is Vermont Mother who experienced her infant's death about 5.5 years ago to SIDS. She is an incredible artist who sculpts babies – amazingly detailed and small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. I'll bring one to the July meeting for all to see. It is her intent to give a percentage of her sales related to any sales stemming from The SIMON Project to support the project. She has also expressed an interest in helping develop our funeral and memorial service guide for the project.

The second friend is a Vermont Mother who has a business making and selling candles – she has a cart on Church Street – Dragonfly Gifts / Candles. She has about 10 charities chosen to be recipients of proceeds from candle sales specifically picked as a remembrance for a loved one lost. She is no stranger to the death of a loved one and is in tune with The SIMON Project and our outreach. We chose a candle that is pale green and has a cucumber mint sent – in Simon’s honor – but it really is representative of all our children. Please stop at her cart in Burlington – Dragonfly Gifts / Candles – she has a web sit too. We will develop web links to both sites as they are available. Thanks, Heather!

7. I have begun developing The SIMON Project self-help group facilitators training. It is based (almost completely) on the MISS Foundation Founders work – Joanne Cacciatore, MSW FT. I will be merging the power point presentation into the training for the Peer-to-Peer training along with this as well. I hope to have this prepared to deliver by Fall. We will invite any parent (who is ready to do outreach) or organization staff (like Parent-to-Parent Vermont, New Beginnings, the Chittenden Cty. work group, Home Health & Hospice Folks) to participate in these trainings. If you have an interest in helping me develop this and facilitate it in the fall – please call me!
8. Lastly – I want to tell you about my trip to the “When a Child Dies, A Vow to Remember” Bereavement Conference in Arizona. It was attended by about 350 people (registrants). The conference goal was to bring together professional bereavement counselors with grieving parents and families. It was a great mix of us and was a great benefit to professionals who learned so much more about how to support and companion with those who have experienced the death of a child(ren). I was asked to be on a parent panel the second morning of the conference along with five other parents. I told Simon’s story and although it was difficult emotionally, it was also healing. So many people came to talk with me afterwards both about Simon and about our project here in Vermont. On the last morning – I received a \$240.00 cash donation from another conference participant – I was leveled by her sincere intent to help us help others back here in New England.

I have collected some great resources in the form of books, pamphlets, programming ideas, and made some great friends & contacts with the MISS Foundation and the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation. I would love to have a similar conference here in Vermont – only shorter – say three days (one day for professionals and two days for bereaved parents & families). Anyone willing to work on that one with me? It may be a bit out on our time line but it really could be “doable” in a year if we really want to make it work. Besides, who wouldn’t want to come to Vermont in the summer? Stay at say Stowe or Killington.....and the temps will never reach 112 degrees like Arizona!

Comments or Questions? Want to Help? Please Call or e-mail me at:  
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My best to you all, Jeff