

Early Pregnancy Loss

October 2018, Volume 24, Issue 10

And Then There Were Two.

By Jenn

Written in September 2017

Shortly after Ben died I joined a few support groups online and read a million different stories from people just like me who have lost babies. Some of their babies died before birth, some after, but every single story was as sad as the others.

In the beginning, the stories that shocked me the most were from mothers who have lost multiple babies. Some had more than one miscarriage. Some had a miscarriage and a still birth, or an early infant death and another loss. One lost a twin before birth and went on to lose the other shortly after. The number of women who have had multiple losses is staggering and was shocking to me.

There are many reasons that a woman might lose more than one baby in their lives, and sometimes there is no known reason. Some common reasons are: having an incompetent cervix or problems with their uterus, having eggs with chromosomal abnormalities, and/or having other health issues that make their pregnancies high risk. Usually the case is that the woman doesn't know she has one of these problems until she has lost at least one, sometimes more babies. The reason for this is that OBGYNs have no reason to check into these things until a loss occurs. There are no symptoms of having an incompetent cervix except having a pre-term baby, and there are no symptoms of having eggs with chromosomal abnormalities except having multiple miscarriages.

In the early, naïve days of grieving the loss of Ben I still believed that the world could only be so cruel. I believed that once someone has reached a quota of grief that they would go on to have only good days after that. I believed that I was going through the hardest thing I'd ever have to, but that I would be rewarded with good things soon. I believed that my turn would come, I'd have a healthy baby some day. I believed in rainbow babies and happy endings.

After being a part of the baby loss community for a while I learned that the harsh truth is that some moms don't get a happy ending. Some people have to endure more pain than I used to think was humanly possible. I am glad that I came to this realization sometime last year, because it wasn't as

Continued on page 6

In this issue...

"And Then There Were Two," by Jenn, page 1

Upcoming Events, page 1

"After Miscarriage: "How Many Children Do You Have?" by Jessi, page 3

"5 Ways to Care for Yourself After Miscarriage," by Heidi, page 3

Our Children Remembered and Love Gifts, pages 4 & 5

Meeting schedule, page 7

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

Upcoming Events

HAYDEN'S HELPING HANDS

8TH ANNUAL HANDS ON HOPE BENEFIT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2018

6:30 pm - 10:30 PM

Uptown Billiards Club

Portland, Oregon

Details at HaydensHelpingHands.com

Hayden's Helping Hands is a 501(c)3 non-profit foundation dedicated to financially assist parents with the medical expenses after the birth of a stillborn baby. It will forever be our goal to stand by families who were not able to welcome home a child due to a stillbirth.

NORA MADELYN FUND

4TH ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE WALK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2018

Registration at 1 pm, Walk at 2 pm

Providence Newberg Medical Center, Newberg

All are welcome. The 1.6-mile route is stroller and wheelchair accessible. No dogs, please.

There is no fee to participate in the walk. Donations to the Nora Madelyn Fund are gratefully appreciated to help continue our outreach and community support programs, including this walk as well as the annual Remembrance Ceremony and butterfly release in July.

Register at noramadelyn.org. All participants must register and acknowledge the waiver.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS REMEMBRANCE WALK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2018

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

Remember and honor our children with a 2-mile neighborhood walk to visit the Portland Wishing Tree. Children and infants welcome. Coffee and donuts before as we gather for the walk. Suggested donation of \$20.00 per family. All proceeds go directly to Brief Encounters.

LIGHTS OF LOVE

INTERNATIONAL WAVE OF LIGHT

MORRISON BRIDGE LIGHTING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2018

GATHER AT 6:45

CANDLE LIGHTING AT 7:00 PM

Join us at the Eastbank Esplanade (just north of Fire Station #21 located at 5 SE Madison St, Portland) for a candlelight vigil to remember our babies and view Morrison Bridge illuminated in pink and blue for PAIL Remembrance Day.

Bridge lighting organized by Lights of Love International Wave of Light

From the editor...

I do not personally know the pain and grief of an early pregnancy loss. And yet I've learned over the past few years that whether you had a few weeks or forty with your baby, the loss is the same. We fall in love with those two little lines, a beautiful future laid out in our minds. And that baby, tiny as can be, is so immediately and immensely loved, forever.

Shannon Stemm Patel
mother of Charlie and her big sis



Upcoming newsletter topics...

November
HOLIDAYS

It's one of those times that seem completely impossible. How do you celebrate the holidays with an empty space in your home and heart? Please share how you have "survived" the holidays after a loss to encourage those parents who will be experiencing their first year without their baby.

December
NEONATAL LOSS

How do you say goodbye to your little one so quickly after saying hello? It's impossible to imagine until it happens to you. Please consider sharing your experience here with us.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome and encourage submissions to the newsletter. Submissions may be published anonymously if requested. Sharing your story can provide healing and comfort for you - and other parents. The editor reserves the right to edit and select from the materials submitted. Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Brief Encounters, but those of the individual authors. Please send titled articles and submissions to: newsletter@briefencounters.org

Newsletter printing provided by AnchorPointe

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*You were carried for only a moment
but are loved for a lifetime.*

-Megan Martin

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

2116 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: www.briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Facebook: [private/closed groups Brief Encounters
Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and Brief Encounters
Parenting After Loss](https://www.facebook.com/private/closed/groups/Brief-Encounters-Pregnancy-and-Infant-Loss-Support-and-Brief-Encounters-Parenting-After-Loss)

Established in 1992 by a group of parents, Brief Encounters is a non-profit, non-sectarian support group for parents whose babies have died before, during, or after birth. At informal, mutually supportive meetings, bereaved parents and their families share their stories, discuss issues that arise from pregnancy and infant loss, and remember their children. Through talking or just listening, we learn what grief is --- and how, through understanding and caring, we heal.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AND STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair: Rachel Murfitt

Co-Chair: OPEN

Advisor: Pat Schwiebert, RN

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HOSPITAL LIAISONS

Raina Dey, Fawn Harris, Cheryl Miller, Rachel Murfitt, Shannon Stemm Patel

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Monica Thompson (Spanish interpreter)

BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are conducted monthly each third Monday at Sunnyside Community House, 3520 SE Yamhill, Portland. Those interested in volunteering are welcome to attend. Please email inquiries to RachelM@briefencounters.org.

LOVE GIFTS

Love Gift submission form available on page 5. For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 10th of the prior month.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR REMOVAL FROM MAILING LIST
Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED: INCLUSIONS OR CHANGES

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at megan.k.wright@comcast.net. For children to be remembered in a specific newsletter issue, we must receive your request by the 10th of the prior month.

SAFE ARRIVALS

Please send Safe Arrivals to newsletter@briefencounters.org.

After Miscarriage: “How Many Children Do You Have?”

By Jessi

For the first time ever, someone who doesn't know my story of infertility and miscarriage innocently asked me the question I've been dreading:

“How many children do you have?”

To keep the moment from being awkward in a room full of people, I promptly responded with: “one”, but my heart started racing because I felt like I was lying. Not only was I lying... I was lying in church.

Ever since our miscarriage last summer, my mind has been plagued with potential responses to that question. Do we tell people we have one here and one we never got to meet? When people ask our plans to grow our family, do we tell them that we're trying for baby #2... or #3? If we say we just have one child, are we making it seem like the one we lost didn't matter?

I don't know why this bothers me so much, but I never thought I'd be in the position to have to think this through. I've always been very public with my story, so talking to people has become very easy. But I had no idea how to properly respond to that question when someone who didn't know my story asked it.

How many children do you have?

One...

...on this side of heaven.

And one we're missing deeply.

For the sake of being less awkward, I might lie and say just one. Although I guess it isn't quite a lie because it's just one here... one I can hug, kiss, talk to, read to, play with, and take to Disney World.

The other one is just not here right now, never will be, and the dream of what he (or she) would have looked like, talked like, played like, laughed like... is gone. Because even if we get the blessing of another child, it won't be the same or replace the one we lost. It'll just be new. Different. Someone else added to the Wallace roster.

While I've experienced infertility in some capacity for a decade, being a mother after miscarriage is something new to me. I may never have the “right” answer to the question because it turns out that it's going to be different for everyone... but what I do know is that I'm going to give myself the grace to answer it however I feel comfortable in that moment. Whether I say one... or two... there won't be a wrong answer for me. And I'm going to choose to extend grace to others who also don't acknowledge the loss in their “head count” as well.

And unfortunately, I don't stand alone. For my 8-year-old daughter, the question “do you have any siblings?” is completely debilitating. The same feeling I had in that room full of people is the feeling she gets when the topic is brought up at school or church. She wants to tell everyone that her sibling was a part of her life for a brief moment and that he (or she) mattered to her... but as she tells me: “Momma, I just didn't feel like crying or going into it, so I lied and said ‘no’.”

Instead, she covers up her grief, waits until she gets home, and lets all the tears flow because home is her safe place.

Me, too, baby girl. Me, too.

And that's okay.

Originally posted on StillStandingMag.com

Jessi Wallace and her husband Glenn have spent their 11-year marriage navigating infertility. Between her PCOS and his male-factor infertility, they have struggled immensely to grow their family since the beginning. They share one daughter conceived from fertility treatment (born 2010) and had one surprise miracle pregnancy after five+ years of TTC that ended in a devastating miscarriage (2017). Jessi writes about conquering infertility, embracing motherhood, recovering from a miscarriage, and her faith on her blog *Life Abundant*, on Facebook, and on Instagram.

5 Ways to Care for Yourself After Miscarriage

By Heidi

Love Your Body – Forgive it. Your body did all that it could do. It is okay to feel like it failed you, but also realize all it has done for you. Practice physical self-care: do yoga, take long baths, have a spa day. Do whatever gives you calm and peace. And spend a minute or two during those times telling your body that you love it. It will take time to fully trust it again, but this is a start.

Give Yourself a Break – If you can take some time off of work, then do so. No matter how early your loss was. Do not force yourself to go out, even grocery shopping. If you want to stay home in bed for five days, allow yourself that time, if you can. I canceled plans last minute or I didn't make them at all. I did not push myself to go anywhere I did not absolutely have to. This meant that usually when I went out I was able to feel calmer about the excursion and not break down halfway through.

Indulge – If you don't usually buy new clothes or you only have a glass of wine once every few months, it's okay to indulge during this time. Allow yourself to buy a new shirt. Allow yourself one glass of wine. Buy some cake. Whatever it is, mark a day for yourself to do something you enjoy but do not do often. It's okay to have some extra chocolate right now and enjoy it.

Don't Force Yourself to Feel Hopeful – Hope will come. Maybe not even for a long time. But don't force it. You do not have to put a smile on every day. You don't have to say or feel that things will get better. And you do not have to say thank you or feel comforted when a friend tells you that things will get better either. Keep space for hope and welcome it when it arrives, but also give your grief space right now.

Be Open with Yourself About Your Feelings – This can look like many things. Maybe you journal about everything you are feeling: the good, bad, and the ugly. Or maybe you post openly on social media about your experience. You could also spend some time with a compassionate, non-judgemental friend, and share with them all of your thoughts and emotions. This can help you feel less alone. Or at the very least, it might help you feel a little lighter. Maybe these suggestions sound like too much all at once. That is okay. Just pick one and feel the kindness and care you are giving yourself. After everything you've been through, you deserve it.

Originally posted on StillStandingMag.com

Heidi Beltran is the mother of Talia Luna, who was lost to a missed miscarriage at 11 weeks in April of 2016, and her Rainbow Baby, Atlas Delilah Rose, born December 2017. You can follow her on Instagram to see her journey.

Love Gifts

Donations to Brief Encounters help us to maintain our outreach to bereaved families through this newsletter, support groups, and other resources. Often Love Gifts are given by a family in memory of a child who has died. Others may wish to give a general donation, or give thanks for their own living children. We acknowledge gifts here without reference to amount given.

Brief Encounters is a non-profit 501©3 organization; therefore, no gift is too small. Each donation goes a long way toward printing brochures, maintaining the Brief Encounters website, providing monthly meetings, performing outreach to healthcare providers, mailing this newsletter, and many other ways we seek to care for bereaved parents.

This month, we thank the following donors for their generosity and love:

In loving memory of **Ronan Jack Donahue**, 10/24/06 – 10/24/06, “You would be 12 years old-still can't believe it's been that long. We miss you and love you always.” Donated by Dominique, John, Keegan and Josie

Ongoing Gift: The internet service for the Brief Encounters Web site is provided by the Wedin Ohana out of love for **Marina Alyssa Wedin**, beloved daughter and sister.

Love Gift Donation Form

Enclosed is a donation of: \$
In memory of:

Message to be included in the newsletter with your donation acknowledgement:

Birth date: Death date:

Donated by:

Please consider your employer's matching gift program when submitting a donation. To receive a receipt, please provide your return address:

I wish for my gift to remain anonymous.

Please assist us in reducing the chance of errors or omissions by sending your Love Gift message with this form. Please **do not** send your message separately to the editor or database manager.

Name(s) of Parents:

Thank you!

Send form and payment to: 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, OR 97212

Checks can be made payable to Brief Encounters. For credit card payments, please provide the following:

Name as it appears on card:

Credit/Debit # ____-____-____-____ Exp date __-__ CVC# ____

Please note: For Love Gifts to be acknowledged in a particular newsletter issue, we must receive it by the 15th of the prior month (example: June 15th for July issue).

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS is a non-sectarian, non-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3), Federal ID #45-4822283.

And Then There Were Two

Continued from page 1

much of a shock when it was me that was being told that I was going to lose my second baby in under a year and a half.

This past Monday I had a D&C. I was 9 weeks and 5 days pregnant. The baby died about a week before. We decided to do the D&C instead of wait for it to happen naturally for a few reasons, but the most important one is so that we could have the tissue tested for chromosomal abnormalities. At my age it is the most common reason for an early miscarriage. The results may help us decide what to do with our one remaining embryo.

This pregnancy was a result of the second embryo transfer we've done since Ben died. The procedure went very smoothly and I had no side effects from the hormone shots besides weight gain. Just like with Ben, I knew it worked even before the first pregnancy test.

Our first ultrasound was at 6 weeks pregnant. Most people don't even have an ultrasound that early, but if you conceive through IVF the doctors like to know things as early as possible, so the monitoring starts as soon as it's possible to see anything.

The doctors are looking for the following things at that first scan:

1. How many embryos attached and are growing (in our case, we only had one embryo transferred but it is possible for an embryo to split – which would mean identical twins.)
2. If the embryo is in the right place. (The embryo needs to be in the uterus, not in a fallopian tube or somewhere else.)
3. If the gestational sac, yolk sac, and fetal pole look normal.

At our 6-week ultrasound we were told immediately that although it was too early to know for sure, the yolk sac looked abnormally big and that could indicate an abnormal pregnancy. As much as I knew from being a part of these support groups that I could very well have a second loss after Ben, it was still painful to hear.

The ultrasound after that was one week later. At that ultrasound, I was told that the baby had a heartbeat but was measuring a week smaller than it should and that I should prepare for a miscarriage. I prepared myself for the worst. I cried and screamed and stayed up nights thinking about how unfair it was. I let the very few people who knew I was pregnant know what was happening. But I also continued to treat my body as if it was carrying a viable baby. The baby still had a heartbeat, and until it didn't, I was going to give it as much as a chance as I possibly could.

The ultrasound after that was 5 days later. By now I was 7 weeks and 6 days pregnant. The baby had grown more than 5 days worth of growth (this early on, babies grow one millimeter a day) and still had a strong heartbeat. The doctor's tone was different this time and we were told that we could be cautiously hopeful. The baby was still measuring a week behind but was still in there and growing for now. I read the entire internet the next few days and found a few stories of people who have had this happen who went on to have normal, healthy babies. There were also many stories of people who had this happen who miscarried before the first trimester was over. And in my opinion, the saddest stories were stories of people who had their babies continue to grow, and their pregnancies progress normally--all the while the baby had chromosomal abnormalities that weren't compatible with life (some of these

include Trisomy 13, 15, and 18). They didn't find out what the abnormalities were until their 20 week scans.

The next ultrasound was 10 days later. I was 9 weeks and 2 days pregnant. I was prepared for anything going in. I had a head full of information and facts. I had already been through the unimaginable and knew I would survive any news we were going to get. I hoped for the best, but prepared for the worst. I am a logical Superwoman and can handle everything. Nothing will break me again.

"I am sorry, but there's no heartbeat."

What? But I felt sick the other day and I am always tired. Things smell stronger than normal. My lower stomach is already starting to pouch out a little. I feel weepy and moody.

"Doctor, Are you sure?"

I didn't want to believe it. I didn't mean to, but I subconsciously became attached to this little one. I told myself I was prepared for anything but I still hoped more than I ever should have. I had the middle name picked out. Hope for a girl, Chance for a boy. I planned to tell them about the scare he or she gave us in the beginning. I guess I am not a logical Superwoman at all.

Three days after finding out the heartbeat had stopped, I walked into the same Labor and Delivery department where my son was born under a year and a half ago to have a D&C. I asked my doctor to do one more ultrasound before she put me to sleep and took this tiny deceased baby out. She did, and there on the screen was our only reason for hope and happiness in the last 17 months. There was our reason to go on, our rainbow after the storm. There was the baby that was due on my 40th Birthday which would have made it the best birthday ever.

There it was: Lifeless, Still, No Heartbeat, Dead.

So I went to sleep and woke up as a woman who has lost two babies. I woke up as woman who may have to come to terms with the fact that the room in our house that is still filled with baby stuff, may never get used. I woke up as a woman who knows she may never be a mother to a living child. I woke up as a woman who maybe isn't capable of making her husband a dad.

But this time it's different. I know myself. I know I will survive. I know what I am made of and what I can endure. I know that this loss will change me just like the last one did. I know there are people out there that won't get it, will wonder what we did to deserve all the heartbreak, will think of reasons that this is happening to us, who will think it's God's Plan and feel satisfied with that answer. I won't be shocked when people say rude things this time. I will be prepared for everyone's opinion if we try again. I am armed with experience in grief and will use it to mold my new reality. This time I will not break.

Jennifer Roberts has been married for six years to her husband, Josh. They have survived infertility, the loss of their son, Ben, who died shortly after birth and a first trimester miscarriage. They are now navigating the fears and excitement of pregnancy after loss with a Baby Girl due in December. Jennifer's personal blog is benwashere2016.blogspot.com

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*I will always wonder who you would
have been.*

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS MEETINGS

Our support group meetings are a safe place to talk about your child, your loss, and your grief. You are welcome to share, or just listen. A facilitator guides the meetings.

For more information or directions, please call 503-699-8006.

PARENTS OF INFANT LOSS & PREGNANCY LOSS, INCLUDING EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you.

Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

October 8, November 12

Contact: Rachel Murfitt (RachelM@briefencounters.org)

This group also meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm

October 23, November 27

Contact: Daniele (DanieleR@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF PREGNANCY INTERRUPTION DUE TO MEDICAL REASONS

Out of consideration for other bereaved parents, we ask that children not attend these meetings. Thank you. Meets the fourth Thursday of each month, 7:00pm

October 25, No meeting in November due to the Thanksgiving Holiday

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

PARENTS OF SUBSEQUENT PREGNANCIES, ADOPTIONS, & PARENTS TRYING TO CONCEIVE

Babies welcome. Meets the fourth Monday of each month, 7:00pm

October 22, November 26

Contact: Heather (HeatherS@briefencounters.org)

All meetings held at The Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Avenue, Portland

RESOURCES

Brief Encounters Online

WEBSITE

The Brief Encounters website www.briefencounters.org is a great resource, including past newsletter issues, upcoming events and announcements, helpful links, numerous resources, support meeting information, etc.

TWITTER

@**briefencount** (twitter.com/briefencount) is the Twitter handle to follow for news and helpful links and information about pregnancy loss, infant death, and grief resources.

FACEBOOK

Brief Encounters Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support and *Brief Encounters Parenting After Loss* are the names of our private/closed Facebook mutual support groups. Because they are private, each group requires approval to join, and posts are hidden from anyone who is not a group member.

Please remember to take the usual precautions to protect yourself when using any social media outlets, keeping in mind that online communication is never completely private or secure. And remember that everyone who posts or reads will be in different places in their grief, so let's all be mindful and considerate. You can find articles about online safety with a quick online search. Be safe.

Counselor Referrals

Not all counselors are familiar with the issues that parents face after the death of their baby or during infertility treatment. If you feel like you would like to talk with a counselor, listed below are individuals who have been recommended to us by parents in the BE community.:

- ♥ Gaby Donnell, LCSW, Inner NE Portland
503-287-2295 www.mootherootscounseling.com
- ♥ Teni Davoudian, Ph.D., OHSU
503-418-4500 www.ohsu.edu
- ♥ Britta Dinsmore, PhD, SW Portland
503-913-4791 www.brittadinsmore.com
- ♥ Adria Goodness, CNW, PMHNP, SE Portland
503-224-3438 www.adriagoodness.com
- ♥ Rachel Starck, LPC, North Portland
503.929.2773 www.thethrivingmama.com
- ♥ Laurie Cox, LCSW, NE Portland
503-819-6354 mootherootscounseling.com/laurie-cox
- ♥ Lauren Marie Barthelemy, LPC, SE Portland
412-715-2391
- ♥ Debbie Bensching, MSW, LCSW, SW Portland
503-944-5032 DebbieBensching.com

- ♥ Tina Lilly, MS, Inner SE Portland
503-380-0424 www.foryouaremadeofstars.com
- ♥ Ava M. Stone, Ph.D., PC, SE Portland
503-279-8160 www.pacificcenter.org
- ♥ Tara May, PhD, Vancouver
360-904-1008 www.taramay.com
- ♥ Nalini Kuruppu MSW, LCSW, North Portland
503-753-9157
- ♥ Kari Maljai, LPC, SE Portland
503.936.7658 www.pnwbh.com
- ♥ Brooke Noli, MFT, Inner NE Portland
971-645-1180 portlandbirthcounseling.com
- ♥ Brynna Sibilla, LCSW, Inner NE
503-280-1101 www.psychotherapyportland.com
- ♥ Jennifer Singleton, PhD, PC, Downtown,
503-242-1558
- ♥ Lynne Phillips-Werbel, LCSW, Beaverton
503-690-9119 www.wildwoodpsych.com
- ♥ Audrianna J. Gurr, MS, NCC, SE Portland 503-522-6327
www.gurrcounseling.com
- ♥ The Dougy Center (for bereaved siblings)
503-775-5683 www.dougy.org

Editor's note: We would appreciate receiving suggestions, changes, or corrections to any of these resource listings; please send them to the editor at newsletter@briefencounters.org

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Support for bereaved parents of pregnancy and infant loss

2116 NE 18th Ave.
Portland, OR 97212

Message Phone: 503-699-8006

Web: briefencounters.org

Twitter: twitter.com/briefencount

Find us on Facebook

Nonprofit
Organization
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Permit No. 546
Portland, OR

**Return Service
Requested**

Postmaster: Dated material, please do not delay

Early Pregnancy Loss

Change of Address or Removal from Mailing List

Please contact our database manager Megan Wright at 503-646-1335 or by email at database@briefencounters.org.

Email Opt In

Brief Encounters is considering options for electronic delivery of our newsletter in 2019. If you prefer to have your newsletter delivered via email, please send your name, mailing, and email addresses with the subject "Email Opt In" to emailopt-in@briefencounters.org.
Opting in to the email newsletter will cease delivery of the paper version but continue inclusion of babies' names in Our Children Remembered.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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Meets the second Monday of each month, 7:00pm

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See page 7 for a detailed schedule

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