

Iowa SIDS Foundation

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Supporting Families Today, Educating for the Future

Walk for the Future 2026: Honoring Iowa Babies, Supporting Iowa Families

On Saturday, August 22, 2026, participants, families, friends, and communities from across Iowa gathered at one of five Walk for the Future locations to honor and celebrate Iowa babies. Walk locations in 2026 were held in Cedar Rapids, Le Mars, Mount Ayr, Urbandale, and Washington.

This year, 465 participants joined us across the five Walk locations. As always, our goal is to create a family-friendly atmosphere of support, remembrance, and community. If you attended this year's Walk, we hope you and your family felt surrounded by love, hope, and understanding as your precious baby was honored and remembered.

Together, Walk for the Future participants, donors, sponsors, and volunteers raised \$52,755 to support the Iowa SIDS Foundation's mission. Thank you for the role you played in helping us continue our education, support, and outreach programs. We are incredibly grateful for your generosity and commitment to Iowa families. Our organization could not fulfill its mission without the support generated through this annual event.



Funds raised through Walk for the Future support the daily operations of the Iowa SIDS Foundation, including grief resources for newly bereaved Iowa families, educational materials, presentations and trainings for healthcare and childcare professionals, Pack 'n Plays for families in need, community outreach efforts, and support for SIDS and SUID medical research.

This year's Walk was made possible by the support of 40 generous corporate, community, and individual sponsors. We would like to recognize our

2026 Diamond Sponsors: Jeneary and Erdmann Integrative Dentistry, the Family of Libbi Bendickson, and Joe and Amanda Susemihl. We would also like to thank our media sponsors, KG95 and KLEM, for helping spread awareness of our mission and this important event. We encourage our supporters to thank these sponsors whenever possible through your patronage, referrals, or a simple note of appreciation.

Each Walk location is led by dedicated coordinators and local volunteers who help make this event possible. From securing locations and gathering prizes to coordinating food, activities, and day-of logistics, these volunteers create meaningful experiences for the families who attend. Their leadership, creativity, and dedication ensure that every Walk is a special opportunity for remembrance and connection.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our 2026 Walk Coordinators: Andria Davis and Alyssa Stockman in Cedar Rapids, Alyssa Bendickson in Le Mars, Angela Van Horn in Mount Ayr, and Tony and Tricia Lipski in Washington. We are deeply grateful for their time, leadership, and passion in serving Iowa families.

Continued on page 2

2026 Walk Continued

As we look ahead to 2027, we welcome new volunteers, committee members, and community leaders who would like to help plan, support, or host a Walk location. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact casey@iowasids.org. We would also love to hear your feedback about your Walk experience and ideas for future events.

Thank you for helping us honor the memories of babies gone too soon while bringing hope, support, and education to families across Iowa. Together, we are making a difference.



Honor Your Baby Through Holiday Giving

The holiday season is a meaningful time to remember and celebrate the babies who hold a special place in our hearts. We invite you to make a donation to the Iowa SIDS Foundation in honor or memory of your baby.



Gifts of any size help provide support to newly bereaved families, safe sleep education to Iowa parents and professionals, resources for families in need, and funding for research aimed at preventing future infant deaths.

Donations can be made online at iowasids.org, by scanning the QR code, or by mailing a check with the form below to our office at 2963 100th St., Suite 2, Urbandale, IA 50322.

Thank you for helping us honor precious lives and support Iowa families throughout the year.

This holiday donation is in memory of: _____

Donated by: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Amount: _____

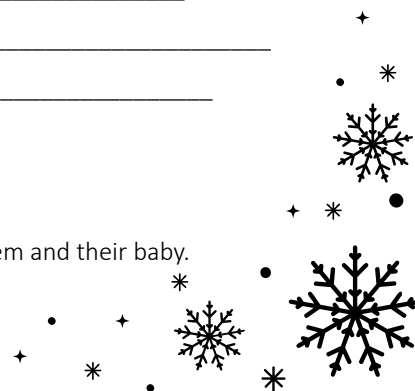
☐ I would like 100% of this donation to be included in the research campaign.

☐ I would like this donation be used for general operating funds.

☐ Please send a note to the above baby's family to let them know that I was thinking of them and their baby.

☐ Please send me a receipt for my tax deductible donation.

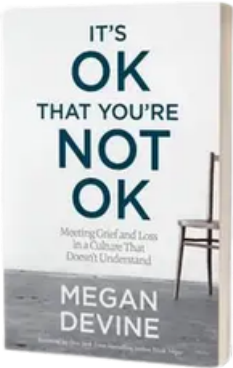
Mail to: Iowa SIDS Foundation, 2963 100th Street, Suite 2, Urbandale, IA 50322



Recommendations for Grief Support Materials

The loss of a baby changes life forever, and the path through grief is different for every family member. While there is no right way to grieve, finding supportive resources can provide comfort, validation, and connection during difficult days. We would like to highlight several resources that may be helpful for families navigating pregnancy and infant loss.

For Parents: *It's OK That You're Not OK* by Megan Devine is a compassionate and widely respected book that challenges the idea that grief needs to be "fixed." Instead, Devine offers understanding, practical guidance, and reassurance that grief is a natural response to profound loss. Many bereaved parents find comfort in her honest approach and emphasis on learning to live alongside grief.



For Fathers and Men: Grief is often experienced differently by men, and many fathers report feeling overlooked in loss support services. *Guys and Grief* is a new podcast created specifically for men who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss. Through personal stories and conversations, the podcast creates a space where fathers and male partners can hear from others who understand their unique experiences and challenges.

For Grandparents: The loss of a grandchild can be heartbreaking, yet grandparents are frequently expected to set aside their own grief while supporting others. Grandparents Grief Support Network (<https://www.grandparentsgrief.com/>) offers resources, education, and community specifically designed for grandparents who are mourning the loss of a grandchild.

No matter where you are in your grief journey, please remember that you do not have to walk it alone. Seeking support is a sign of strength, and connecting with others who understand can be an important step toward healing while continuing to honor your baby's memory.



Virtual Safe Sleep Sessions Help Empower Families

Becoming a parent is an exciting journey, but it can also feel overwhelming. With so much information available and so many decisions to make, families often have questions about how to create the safest possible sleep environment for their baby. That's why the Iowa SIDS Foundation offers Virtual Safe Sleep Family Education Sessions free of charge to families across Iowa.

These interactive sessions provide parents and caregivers with practical, evidence-based information about reducing the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths. Families have the opportunity to learn about the ABCs of safe sleep, ask questions, and gain confidence in making safe choices for their newborn.

One recent participant, Bree from Marion County, shared how the program made a difference for her as a first-time mom: "The virtual Safe Sleep session helped me feel more confident and comfortable knowing the steps I can take to reduce the risk of SIDS and create a safe sleep environment for my baby."

**VIRTUAL SAFE SLEEP
FAMILY EDUCATION
SESSIONS: CONFIDENCE,
COMFORT, AND CARE**



"As a new first-time mom, it can be scary knowing that your baby is completely dependent on you. There are so many things to learn and so many worries that come with becoming a mom. **Learning practical, easy-to-understand steps to help keep Cadence safe while she sleeps has helped put some of those nerves at ease.**"

Bree, Marion County IA



Stories like Bree's remind us that education saves lives. Small changes in sleep practices can have a big impact, and providing families with trusted information helps parents feel prepared and supported during those important first months.

Thanks to the generosity of donors and community supporters, these virtual education sessions continue to be offered at no cost to Iowa families. By supporting this program, you help ensure that more parents have access to life-saving safe sleep education and resources.

To learn more, find an upcoming session, or support this program, visit IowaSIDS.org. Together, we can empower families with the knowledge they need to help every baby sleep safely.

Remembering Our Babies *Always remembered, always loved, never forgotten.*

Happy Birthday

November

Anthony Allan Appley
Jacob Alexander Boles
Marisol Arlett Castaneda
Katie Marie Clarey
Sydney Ann Davidson
Jory James Fisk
Hensley Mae Harms
Adam Randal Jones
Sophie Ann Kracht
Shawn Leon Levi
Taylor Rose Levi
Grant Michael Palan
Matthew Thomas Samuelson
Jaelyn Macie Jo See
Nathaniel Charles Seymour
Easton Steele Sims
Tanner Richard Skelton
Isaiah Thomas Swailes
Taryn Suzanne Tuttle
Tjay Scott VanLangen

December

Robin Christopher Carrell Beimer
Isaac Paul Gellett
Brock Adam Gould
Maverick John Healey
Nekeia L. Hunt
Catherine Louise Jacoby
Ashlee E. Kallsen
Baylee Ann Ludtke
Alyssa Renee Lux
Camden Ray O'Connor

December

Enoch James Padilla
Jaxton Daniel Plathe
Kennedi Eve Sherwood
Preston Douglas Spahn
Presley Nicole Whitaker
Andy Duane Whiteside
Tyler Wayne Williams
Wyatt James Wilson
Keaton James Wirtz

January

Kai Maurice Barnhill-Philus
Libbi Marsha Bendickson
Dalton James Bixby
Joseph Landon Blades
Brianna Alexis Bostock
Brianna Elizabeth Boyd
Lane Kurt Carter
Rita Marie Chadwick
Matthew Paul Eckerman
Gavyn Scott Judd
Logan James Lamoreux
James Allen Magruder
Frederick Robert "Robbie" Dean Mortimer III
Justice Marie Ruthann Newsom
James Nupp Jr. "JJ"
Benjamin David Person
Landon Scott Schaver
Skyler Eugene Smith
Derek Steinkamp
Austin Micheal Vogt
Spencer Charles Walker

February

Tyree R. Barnes
Hannah Jo Blair
Alyssa Coulbourn
Rowan James Dolezal
Bentlee Jacob Edwards
Christopher Scott Evans
Grant Philip Evans
Kenneth Edward Giffin
James Ray Griffin
Tysen Jacob Imbus
Danika Jo James
Hazel Christine Liston
Jalen Joseph Litscher O'Malley
David Mikel Logan
Abigail K. Mar
Jackson Andrew Mueller
Rylan Joseph Ogden
Tanner Lee Port
Alec John Schlotfeldt
Carson T. Sickler
Izzabella Marie Tambornino
Colin Michael Tipping
Presley Nicole Sapphire Whitaker
Lauren Elizabeth Nichole Viaene
Zayden Robert Vote
Elizabeth "Ellie" Christine Williams
Lexis Dawn

In Loving Memory

November

Elizabeth Grace Atzen
Silus J Bigbee
Nathaniel Frederick Borelli
Abel Cenicerros
Cody Michael Coleman
Rylee Alizabeth Erwin
Freya Lynn Kay Keith
Kristina Ann Krienert
Dawson John Lewis
Amara C. Magee
Abigail K. Mar
Shelby Jo McConnell
Johnathan Danial Prescott
DaeShawn Marquis Rodriguez
Laikyn Allyn Shutts
Beth Marie Stukerjorgen
Devon Owen Tripp

McKensie Lynn Wakeman
Gavyn Darwin Webb
Warren Edwin White

December

Kayla Sue Brewer
Cael David Burmeister
Max David Bushlack
Cara Lynn Eddie
Dash Riley Ellingworth
Ryder Martin Harnish
Ryker Edward Huizenga
Chelsea Miranda Jones
Abigail Ilene Knoop
Quinten Matis
Maverick James Lynn Miller
Jackson Andrew Mueller
Knox Owen Palmer
Darran Dasan Perkins
Isaac Thomas Pressley

Jaelyn Macie Jo See
Erika Elizabeth Story
Shane Adam Tate
Kyle Anthony Timmons
Noah James Zarate

January

Dylan Peter Christian Andersen
Kai Maurice Barnhill-Philus
Cody James Beck
Robin Christopher Carrell Beimer
Shialoh Marie Christopher
Sydney Ann Davidson
Robert Carl Davis III
Kory Lynn Dunkin
Isaac Paul Gellett
Ryker Edward Huizenga
Hailey Erin Lincoln
Jacob Anthony Lipski
Gunner Jacob Alex Nail

Jessica Lynne Otto
Ariel Faith Rattler
Zachary Kyle Renaud
Easton Steele Sims
Kellan Rayne Christine Starrett
Taryn Suzanne Tuttle
Andy Duane Whiteside

February

Matthew James Avery
Jacob Alexander Boles
Marisol Arlett Castaneda
Kaleb Dean Hargens
Nekeia L. Hunt
Alexa Jean Jonas
Ashlee E. Kallsen
Peyton Jo Lehman
Samantha Alina Parks
Ryan Allen Robinson
Matthew Thomas Samuelson



A Powerful Partnership for Iowa Babies: Iowa SIDS Foundation and Count the Kicks Join Forces

The Iowa SIDS Foundation is excited to announce a new partnership with Healthy Birth Day, Inc., the organization behind the nationally recognized Count the Kicks stillbirth prevention campaign. This collaboration represents an important step forward in our efforts to reach more Iowa families with life-saving safe sleep education.

This partnership is designed to bridge prenatal education and newborn safety and is made possible through state and federal funding. By connecting fetal movement monitoring with evidence-based safe sleep practices, we hope to create a seamless continuum of education that supports families from pregnancy through infancy.

Count the Kicks has become a trusted resource for expectant parents across Iowa and beyond. Through this collaboration, the Iowa SIDS Foundation will be able to leverage the campaign's strong reputation and statewide reach to share critical information about infant safe sleep and help reduce sleep-related infant deaths.

From September 30 through November 30, Count the Kicks will lead a comprehensive education and marketing campaign focused on promoting the ABCs of safe sleep: Alone, on their Back, and in a Crib. Families can expect to see weekly educational content covering topics such as safe sleep myths and misconceptions, postpartum support for caregivers, and practical strategies for creating a safe sleep environment for their baby. The campaign will also feature targeted Meta advertisements designed to increase awareness, encourage education, and connect families with both the Count the Kicks app and Iowa SIDS Foundation resources.

Additional components of the partnership include public relations and media opportunities featuring both organizations, as well as targeted text messages to third trimester Count the Kicks app users. These messages will help families transition from prenatal health advocacy to newborn safety education, ensuring they have access to trusted information during critical stages of their parenting journey.

By bringing together two organizations dedicated to protecting babies and supporting families, this partnership allows us to amplify safe sleep messaging across Iowa in new and meaningful ways. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Healthy Birth Day and look forward to the impact this effort will have in helping more families practice safe sleep and giving more babies the healthiest possible start in life.



The Power of Tummy Time: Building Strength for Safe Sleep and Healthy Development

From the very beginning, tummy time plays an important role in an infant's growth and development. Tummy time can start right away at birth and should be incorporated into a baby's daily routine from the earliest days. Most importantly, tummy time should always be done when an infant is awake and closely supervised by an adult.

Spending time on their tummy helps babies develop the strength and coordination needed to reach important developmental milestones and helps strengthen the neck, shoulder, arm, and back muscles that babies use to lift their heads, roll over, sit up, crawl, and explore their world. It also promotes healthy motor development, encourages sensory exploration, and provides opportunities for parent-child interaction and bonding.

In addition to its developmental benefits, tummy time can help prevent flat spots from forming on the back of a baby's head. Since babies spend so much time on their backs for sleep, supervised tummy time offers a healthy way to vary positions during awake periods.

"Tummy to play and back to sleep" is important to remember. While babies sleep on their backs, they should spend supervised awake time on their tummies each day. This combination supports healthy development while helping reduce the risk of sleep-related infant deaths.

By making tummy time a regular part of your baby's day, you're helping build the strength, skills, and confidence they need to grow, learn, and thrive, all while supporting safe sleep practices.



Thank You... *The Iowa SIDS Foundation wishes to thank the following donors for their generous gifts made June-September 2026.*

Gifts Given in Memory of:

Libbi Marsha Bendickson

Bobbi Bendickson

Lauralee Rose Bernau

Cheryl Eslick

Noah James Zarate

Linda Gord

Benjamin Scott Meint

Kimberly Kuhlert

Lisa Meints

Bernice Voga

Jacob Anthony Lipski

Jerry and Carol Lipski

Ethan Troy Livingston

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Shaun Sievers

Beth Marie Stukerjurgan

Jay Sturkejurgan

Tjay Scott VanLangen

Douglas VanLangen

Zachary Richard VanVleet

Diana VanVleet

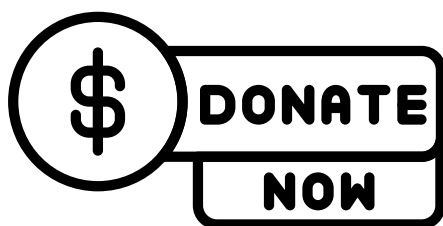
In Honor

*For tiny hands we could not hold,
For stories left untold,
Your gift becomes a light that shines
Through heartache, love, and time.*

*Each donation plants a seed
Of education, hope, and care,
Helping protect tomorrow's babies
With every act you share.*

*Though some sweet lives were far too
brief,
We carry love beyond our grief,
Through every gift and every prayer,
Their legacy shines everywhere.*

*In honor of the babies we miss,
And the families who carry them near,
Your support brings hope, healing,
and help,
Year after year.*



Here's How Your
Gift Can Help!

♥ \$25 helps purchase cards to mail to grieving families so they know they aren't alone.

♥ \$50 provides the materials for our "safe sleep gift bags" given to families who attend our education sessions.

♥ \$100 provides a free pack n play for a family in need.

No donation is too big or small, every time you give you are helping support our mission of supporting families, equipping professionals, and saving babies!

General Donations June-September 2026:

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The “Why” Behind the ABCs of Safe Sleep

The ABCs are more than just a simple slogan. They are evidence-based recommendations developed from decades of research into sleep-related infant deaths. Together, these practices create the safest sleep environment possible by reducing hazards that can interfere with a baby's ability to breathe. Most parents and caregivers have heard the ABCs of safe sleep: babies should sleep Alone, on their Back, and in a Crib (or other safety-approved sleep space). But understanding why these recommendations matter can help families feel more confident in following them consistently.

ALONE- Babies have limited strength and mobility, making it difficult for them to move away from objects that may block their nose and mouth. Loose blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, and other soft items can increase the risk of suffocation if they cover a baby's airway. Objects in the sleep space can also pose a risk of strangulation or entrapment, where a baby becomes trapped against bedding or other items. Similarly, sharing a sleep surface with adults, older children, or even pets can increase the risk of accidental injury.

BACK- Research has shown that back sleeping helps keep a baby's airway open and clear, allowing for easier breathing throughout sleep. When babies sleep on their backs, they are less likely to experience rebreathing, which can occur when exhaled air becomes trapped around the nose and mouth. Rebreathing can lead to a buildup of carbon dioxide and a decrease in oxygen levels. Back sleeping also helps reduce heat entrapment, lowering the risk of overheating, which has been identified as a risk factor for sleep-related infant deaths. In addition, a baby's anatomy naturally helps protect the airway when sleeping on their back. Contrary to common myths, healthy infants are not at an increased risk of choking when placed on their backs to sleep.

CRIB- Where a baby sleeps is just as important as how they sleep. Safety-approved cribs, bassinets, and portable play yards are specifically designed and tested to meet rigorous safety standards for infant sleep. These products feature a firm, flat sleep surface and are built to help keep babies on a safe surface throughout sleep. Unlike couches, adult beds, loungers, swings, or other seating devices, safety-approved sleep spaces are designed to reduce the risk of suffocation, entrapment, falls, and airway obstruction. Their construction helps ensure that babies can breathe freely and remain on a stable surface as they sleep.

By remembering the ABCs and understanding the reasons behind them, families can create a safer sleep environment and help give every baby the healthiest possible start in life.



Strengthening Safe Sleep Education Through National Certification

The Iowa SIDS Foundation is committed to ensuring Iowa families receive the most current, evidence-based safe sleep education available. As part of that commitment, Executive Director Casey Manser recently attended the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor Certification Training in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 28-29 and successfully earned certification as a KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor.

The KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor Certification program was created to help reduce infant mortality by increasing the use of safe sleep practices and equipping professionals across the country with the knowledge and skills needed to educate families and communities. Through a comprehensive two-day training, participants learn evidence-based strategies to promote infant safe sleep and reduce sleep-related infant deaths. A wide range of safe sleep and SUID topics are covered and participants also receive instruction on implementing community-based safe sleep programs and outreach initiatives.

The KIDS Network's nationally recognized train-the-trainer model focuses on building local capacity and creating consistent safe sleep messaging in communities across the country. The certification program was endorsed by the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs Innovation Station as a best practice, recognizing its effectiveness in helping organizations promote infant safe sleep education.

As a certified Safe Sleep Instructor, Casey joins a growing network of professionals dedicated to reducing sleep-related infant deaths through education, advocacy, and community engagement. This certification enhances the Iowa SIDS Foundation's ability to provide high-quality training, support healthcare and community partners, and expand safe sleep education efforts throughout Iowa.

By investing in professional development and national partnerships, the Iowa SIDS Foundation continues to advance its mission of promoting infant safety, supporting families, and working toward a future where every baby has the opportunity to sleep safely.





Iowa SIDS Foundation

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General Submissions

The Iowa SIDS Foundation offers all parents, grandparents, relatives, childcare providers and friends the opportunity to submit information for the newsletter. This may include letters, poems, sharing your family's story or perspective, or highlights of events held in your local community to benefit the Foundation or to bring awareness to SUID and SIDS. Please note that due to space limitations, submitted material may have to be edited or held until a later newsletter.

It is our hope to give as many parents and family members the opportunity to share. For additional information or to submit your story, please contact the Iowa SIDS Foundation by calling 515-965-7655 or by email at info@iowasids.org.

Remembering Our Babies

If you would like to honor your baby in our Remembering Our Babies section of the newsletter, we do require a written parental consent to be on file. Consents may be printed from our webpage or can be mailed or emailed to you by contacting our office by phone or email.

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