

Roe Observance Planned for January 21

On Tuesday evening, January 21, beginning at 7pm, Shelby County Right to Life will hold its annual prayer vigil to commemorate the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which enshrined abortion-on-demand in American law. Please join us for this event, an opportunity to shine the light of LIFE into the darkness of a culture of death.

The vigil begins with a gathering in the basement of the courthouse in Sidney. Following prayer and announcements, participants will move outside, light candles, and proceed around the court square. Attendees are asked to bring wind-protected candles or other illumination and to park across the street from the courthouse.

Following the procession, participants will gather again in the courthouse, where the service will conclude with brief remarks and benediction. Hot chocolate provided by the Knights of Columbus will be available afterward.

Immediately following the vigil, at approximately 8pm, travelers heading to the March for Life in Washington, D.C., will depart.

Doctors Give Baby Zero Chance, Becomes Christmas Miracle

Aaron and Amy Vawter were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their second bundle of joy. Already parents to Micah, then 18 months, the couple went to have the routine 20 week ultrasound done for baby number two when doctors discovered some frightening problems with their baby's heart. "Three days of testing," says Amy, "hours of ultrasounds head to toe with three hours spent just on his heart. And at the end of it all they were telling us that this baby had so many problems there was a zero percent chance of survival."

The Vawters' unborn son had severe heart defects including hypoplastic left heart, which means the left side of his heart was too small to support life. He also had a hole between the top chambers of his heart, a hole between the bottom chambers, and the two valves in the middle of his heart were fused into one leaky valve.

Devastated, the couple listened as the cardiologist told them about four open heart surgeries that could be done to attempt to fix the problems. But still, the prognosis was not good and it would be worse if tests came back positive for Down syndrome. The doctor informed them that of the ten babies with hypoplastic left heart and Down syndrome who had been born at Seattle Children's, none had survived. "So with all the problems combined there was nothing to do," says Amy. "Doctors told me, 'You're young. You can try again. There's no reason to put yourself and your body through the rest of the pregnancy.' We said no we don't believe in that. We're going to carry this baby for as long as we have him."

But the doctors didn't table the abortion discussion. When Aaron took Micah out of the room for a break, the doctor turned to Amy and said, "Don't let your husband influence what you do with your body. We can take you upstairs today and do the abortion. You shouldn't have to do this. You shouldn't have to go through this pregnancy."

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Oratory Contest Coming

Attention juniors and seniors in high school: a great opportunity to put your pro-life principles into practice and hone your speaking skills at the same time!

The annual Shelby County RTL Oratory Contest will be held Monday, February 17 (President's Day) at 6:30 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sidney. Any junior or senior student residing in or attending a school in Shelby County is eligible to enter. There are cash prizes for first, second, and third places, with the champion winning \$300.

Participants will present a 5-7 minute speech to a panel of judges. Please contact Anne Schmiesing, 492-5584, for more information or to register

Clothing center report

In November, 131 clients purchased items, 14 used certificates from classes, and 26 received free items.

Amy simply told him, “No.” After an amniocentesis and further testing it was discovered that the baby did indeed have Down syndrome. Doctors reminded the couple that any child with Down syndrome and severe heart defects would not survive. Because Amy and Aaron were against abortion, a doctor offered another option – inducing early labor at 28 weeks when the baby would be too young to survive. But Amy knew that was the same thing as abortion. The Vawters soon found themselves switching to a Catholic hospital in Spokane, WA because it was closer to family and their support network. The doctors there didn’t once pressure Amy to abort and she says she was very happy with their attitude towards her and her baby. Still, Amy and Aaron were scared for their son. From her blog:

Over the next several weeks, we mourned the loss of our baby. We sobbed, we prayed, and eventually we came to accept the situation. We felt as if we had already lost our son, yet we longed to hold him. We prayed that we would be given a few moments with him before he died. My husband said, ‘If all he ever knows is that he’s loved, that will be enough.’ Our family and friends were all on their knees, too, and somehow this gave us some comfort in the midst of the thick fog of our grief. We named him Matthew, meaning “gift of God.” His middle name would be Nicholas, for St. Nicholas of Tolentino, the patron saint of dying babies. We really didn’t expect a miracle or even dare to pray for one. We just hoped to hold our son.

Despite the poor prognosis and lack of hope, as the pregnancy went on, ultrasounds showed that the problems with his kidneys and brain had improved and the left side of his heart had even grown. This improved his chances for successful surgery after birth, but it was still wait-and-see.

Then at one of the appointments, doctors discovered that Matthew’s heart rate was dropping. Amy and Aaron drove to Spokane for an emergency C-section. Matthew was born at just over four pounds but to the delight of his parents, he was alive. The left side of his heart was still too small to support life and while he could have surgery, the cardiologist said that it wouldn’t improve his chances. So the couple opted to take their baby boy home with the knowledge that he mostly likely wouldn’t live longer than three months.

Matthew spent his first months of life on and off oxygen and feeding tubes, occasionally strong enough to eat from a bottle. Around four months old he became more active – smiling and giggling. Then at six months old, the Vawters brought their son in for a check-up. “They were astounded,” says Amy, “The cardiologist said, ‘Sometimes we speak of miracles in a casual sense, but this is a true miracle. We’ve never seen a heart grow and repair itself the way this one has.’”

It turned out that the left side of his heart and his aorta had both grown to normal size. This meant that doctors could perform just one surgery in order to patch the two holes in his heart and this would give Matthew a full life expectancy. All the Vawters needed to do was help Matthew gain some weight. At eight months old, weighing just ten pounds, Matthew went to the hospital for his one and only heart surgery. A pre-surgery scan of his heart showed that the hole between the bottom two chambers had closed on its own. Now doctors only needed to close the one hole. After four days in the hospital, Matthew and his family returned home where he was more active than ever before and as Amy says, “has been a little champ ever since.”

Today, Matthew is a typical six year old boy. He and Micah are now big brothers to Jesse (4), Mikayla (19 months) and a new baby due in January. Amy homeschools the children and Matthew is learning to read with about 40 sight words under his belt. He loves animals of all kinds as well as cars and trucks. He loves to sit and look at books, ride horses for therapy, snuggle, and take care of his little sister.

Matthew’s miraculous story has been reaching far and wide. Just this month he was featured on the website What to Expect, reaching millions of readers. Because of this, Matthew is helping to change our culture, showing people that everyone deserves a shot at life and that everyone’s life has value. Parents who are receiving a diagnosis for their unborn child can find hope for their baby through Matthew’s story.

On her blog Amy recalls that one of Matthew’s prayer warriors, Benedict, prayed that Matthew would live “so that others could see the Glory of God through him.” It seems that’s exactly what’s happening. Amy wants all parents of children receiving such a diagnosis to not give into fear. She says, “It might not be what you expected, but it’s beautiful. It’s not always easy, but it’s always worth it.”

By Nancy Flanders, LifeNews.com, December 20, 2013. Reprinted from Live Action News and edited for space.

As we observe the 41st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we remember in prayer all of those who have been harmed by abortion, especially mothers and fathers who still grieve for their loss, who seek forgiveness, or who don't yet recognize the source of their psychological and spiritual wounds.



We pray for the pro-life movement: for perseverance in the fight to bring legal protection to all unborn babies, in the labor of bringing aid to those facing troubled pregnancy, and in the effort to bring awareness to a society so often indifferent to the suffering of those in our midst.

We pray in thanksgiving for the countless blessings bestowed on our Right to Life group through the years.

Oregonian on Assisted Suicide: I Voted for It, Now I'm Against It

Editor's Note: The following is a letter written recently by Jeanette Hall of King City, Oregon. Versions of it have appeared as letters to the editor in various newspapers.

My name is Jeanette Hall and I live in the state of Oregon, USA, where assisted suicide is legal. Our law was enacted via a ballot initiative that I voted for.

The reason I had been in favor of assisted suicide when our law went into effect was that I had no previous health issues, loved ones and friends were there to encourage me, and I used my favorite aunt as my reason why assisted suicide should be legal. My Aunt had been a strong woman, a lawyer, and I watched her die, a slow death with her cancer. As I look back now, what I really was seeing was her appearance as she slumped in her hospital bed with no hair and looking so sick. My thought then was no one will do that to me and I will end my life before it comes to that. That was my reasoning, at the time, when our law went into effect.

Then, on July 17, 2000, I was rushed by ambulance to the emergency room of Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland, Oregon, with excessive blood loss. I had been seeing a doctor (OHSU colon doctor) and my appointment to see him was at the exact time I was admitted to the ER. The doctors and nurses were trying to stabilize me when the my doctor entered the room and prepared to tell me that the biopsy came back (squamous cell carcinoma) and that I had colon cancer. I was soon to learn that it was inoperable and the only way to survive this type of cancer was with chemotherapy and radiation and without it, I was given a year or less to live.

Life as I knew it seemed to end that week for me (in and out of ICU with a tube down my throat): fear of losing my job, not being able to care for my mother with dementia, hospital bills, and fearing I would end up just like my aunt. My hope turned into despair, and I prepared to die before the suffering got worse, since I was determined not to have chemo or radiation.

But, then entered Dr. Kenneth Stevens (OHSU radiation doctor), who did not believe in physician-assisted suicide. I thank all the Dr. Stevens of the world, who are there for you to give you hope when yours is gone. He battled me to think of living instead of dying and brought me back to reality with the question, "Don't you want to see your son get married?" He did not know that at that given time, I thought I would only become a burden to my son and my thought was that he would be o.k. without seeing me suffer.

I am so grateful that Dr. Stevens worked with me and helped me change my mind to fight. If he believed in physician-assisted suicide, I would not be here 13 years later to thank him, I would be dead. I would not have been able to hold my mother's hand at the end (as the death certificate read) with Alzheimer's.

Everyone needs a Dr. Stevens along the way. He was there again for me two years ago in ER at OHSU when I suffered some seizures and could not talk or swallow. It's great to be alive to have one more day and be able to encourage others to not give up when there seems to be no hope when given a terminal illness.

I say "NO" to assisted suicide. Thank you.

From NationalRighttoLifeNews.org, December 10, 2013.



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Membership Matters

Reminder: Newsletter Change

As reported last year, with this issue begins our revised newsletter schedule. Newsletters will be printed and sent every other month. More frequent communication will occur via e-mail. We encourage members to provide us with e-mail addresses if available (if you provide an e-mail on your membership form, you are automatically signed up to receive RTL announcements). For the most frequent and timely information, stay connected with RTL on Facebook (search for "Right to Life of Shelby County").

RTL strives to serve our members as fully and efficiently as possible. We will continue to publish print newsletters for the foreseeable future, but with the expansion of opportunities for communication provided by digital media and the increasing number of our members using those media, it makes sense for us to devote more resources to electronic communication. If you have any thoughts about this change or suggestions for improvement, don't hesitate to contact us.

Membership Letters Coming Soon

Everyone on the newsletter mailing list should be receiving membership renewal letters before the end of January. If you don't receive one, please contact the office. We appreciate your prompt response and payment of dues, which helps us to organize volunteers and update information, and minimizes the task of sending out reminder notices. Thank you in advance for your consideration, your generosity, and your continued dedication to this supremely important cause.

Wishing You and Yours Peace and Many Blessings in 2014