

KIDBIZ Resources Newsletter

A Newsletter for Child Care and Early Childhood Professionals

December 2010 In this issue [Baby Blue](#) [Tips and Tricks](#) [In The News](#) [This Month's Sale Items](#) [Upcoming Events](#) *Holidays are a time to believe in miracles, in human connections, and to hope. Those of you who care for children have an abundance of opportunities for these to occur in your lives, take a moment to be grateful. As always, I'm forgoing my usual newsletter article to share with you simply a good story, my holiday gift to you. This is a short story I wrote last summer after a conversation with a neighbor who had found a balloon with a note attached in his yard. The story is fiction, but I am always thankful for inspiration, which he provided. Enjoy!*

Hug a kid for me!

Patricia

BABY BLUE

Thoughts of the unborn child never failed to bring a smile to his face. His heart felt the collision of sadness and joy, but by the time the emotions reached his face, the joy always won out.

It had been two years, Troy thought, yet every time he rode the mower, especially that first time each spring, he remembered Baby Blue. It had been a beautiful Wisconsin afternoon in April. No flooding like the year before, just occasional gentle rain that led to an early necessity of mowing the grass. Troy had always looked forward to this day each year. The long strip of grass that separated the highway from his bar gave him plenty of time while mowing to enjoy the view. Surrounded by forests and hills, it never got old. And the certainty that he would spot a white tail deer, wild turkey and probably a couple of eagles made him eager to start the job. Not all of his work was this enjoyable though.

Operating a bar on a country road tucked among the hills of the Wisconsin River was a tough life for such a tender heart. The drunks, and tough farm country boys that were his lifeline now, often threatened to take it away when their alcohol supply was cut off. Knowing that most of his clients kept a shotgun in their truck didn't put Troy at ease either.

But he endured the fallout of the final call each night, and enjoyed the story telling and camaraderie that occurred in the hours before that final bell. And the story of the baby boy who had died, yet made him smile, was his favorite tale to share.

He had brought a garbage bag with him that day, like he did every year, to pick up the litter so many had left in the deep snows over the winter. The first mow of the season always took the longest as Troy stopped to pick up the trash along the way. He had spotted a baby blue balloon ahead and put the mower in neutral, leaning over to scoop it up and toss it into the bag behind him. As he swung his arm back his eye caught something. A blue card was hanging from the end of the balloon's string. He brought the balloon back to the front, laying it in his lap, and followed the string until the card was in his hand. He was never sure

exactly why he had done this, it was just trash. He didn't typically stop to look closer at the items he found. But something about it intrigued him and he held the card up to examine it. On one side was a simple drawing of a baby, swaddled and sleeping. On the other it said:

"This is one of 35 baby blue balloons that we are releasing today to honor our precious baby boy and the 35 weeks he had been with us, until he lost his life at the moment we thought it was to begin, his birth. We pray that the spirit of our son reaches across the rivers and valleys through these balloons, spreading his joy to others as it had touched us. May God Bless you and bring you joy."

The parent's names and address were on the bottom of the card.

Troy had looked at it in disbelief. The card had come from a town he had not heard of in Iowa. This meant it had traveled a minimum of 200 miles to reach him! He forgot the mowing and his mind reached Iowa, picturing the loving family, engulfed in sadness, releasing the balloons like tossing a posy of bluebells to the wind, watching the soft blue petals scatter in the breeze. He imagined they stood there a long time. Watching as each balloon disappeared against the matching sky, not wanting them to slip from their view. When they were all gone, he believed they must have clung to each other for awhile, letting go of the hurt and sadness to make room for the joy of hope they so desperately needed.

Staring silently for a long time, his breathing went from erratic to slow, thinking of the travels the little boy's spirit had had in the soft blue ball he now held in his hands. He would have crossed the mighty Mississippi, Troy thought. Over the bluffs, across the fields, and into the hill country. It also crossed the Wisconsin River, where eagles soar high and proud and the sand hill cranes make their home. All that God's country, Troy thought. All that beauty. Then it landed here. Here in front of my old stone tavern in the middle of nowhere. Here where the drunks beat each other up, and each night with them beat Troy down. Why would it land here? Troy didn't know the answer, but he was glad it did. Thinking of that boy's spirit coming so far, made him smile. For three days the smile stayed on his hard face. He hung the limp balloon on the wall behind the bar with a tack and each time a customer yelled at him he'd look at the string, think of Baby Blue, as he had begun referring to the stillborn child, and smile.

After three days he was ready to share the story, the baby had brought joy to his life, and he thought the best way to honor that was to share it, so he did. Each patron, from the locals to those passing through, was shown the balloon tacked to the wall and heard the story.

Now, two years later, as he did the first mowing of the spring again, his thoughts once again turned to Baby Blue. He came to a decision during the chore that he would write to the parents, tell them how their boy had spread joy and softened the hardness of his days. He felt sure Baby Blue would want his parents to know of the amazing journey they had sent him on. His letter was simple and short, letting them know their little boy had conquered "Old Man River," soared with eagles and had landed in a place where the joy of his spirit could be passed on to others. He included wishes for them to have a happy life, a \$20 bill to help a little bit in case they hadn't, and his address. He felt a bit foolish for waiting so long to write to them, but knew he wouldn't have been able to do it sooner.

Troy didn't expect a reply, but thought it'd be nice for them to know his address so they could check a map, as he had, and follow the 400+ mile journey from their home to his.

Just a few days later the phone rang mid-morning. Odd for Troy since most of his friends and family understood he would sleep in after working all night. He grumbled, rolled over in bed and grabbed the phone, expecting to give a healthy piece of his mind to the telemarketer he expected on the other end of the line.

"What!" he growled, shoving his leathered hands through the thick black bangs that always fell over his left eye.

"Is this Troy?" a woman's soft voice asked nervously.

"Yeah," said Troy, "who wants to know?" His voice was close to a snarl.

"Is this the Troy that found our son's balloon?" she asked quietly.

Troy's growl caught in his throat and he coughed. "Yes," was all he could get out.

"This is Emily," said the woman, "we received your letter yesterday morning."

"Oh," said Troy, "I'm glad you got it, I thought you'd like to know your son had an awfully nice ride through the country on that balloon. Finding it really meant something to me."

"We're so glad," she said. "I can't believe it's really you! I never thought you were even real!"

Now Troy was confused. Maybe the grief had really messed her up. "I'm afraid I don't know what you mean," said Troy.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Emily, "I have so much to tell you!"

Troy figured there was no harm in letting the woman share her thoughts, he did it for perfect strangers every night at the bar. "Go ahead," he said, "I'm listening."

She seemed breathless before she even began, "I'm not sure where to start! After our son died the doctors recommended we adopt rather than attempt a pregnancy again. We registered with a local agency, and waited. We were on the list for over a year and the waiting was so hard! I prayed to my son asking him to find his sibling and bring the child to us. About six months ago we got a call, a birthmother from Minnesota, but attending college here in Iowa not far from us, had chosen us!"

"I'm happy to hear it," said Troy, genuinely glad to hear they got a happy ending, knowing those endings don't always come.

"But there's so much more!" Emily's voice was gaining speed and was at least an octave higher now, "We got to meet her. When we did she told us about how a friend of hers in Minnesota once told her a story she had heard about a bartender in Wisconsin who had found a blue balloon that had traveled all the way from Iowa that the parents of a stillborn child had sent up in his honor. She told us that the story had touched her so much that she had decided to place her child for adoption in Iowa where she attended school rather than in Minnesota as a way to bring some joy back to some parents in Iowa. Imagine our surprise when we heard this! But she had just heard the story recently so she was sure it had

just happened, and we assumed the balloons we launched never made it more than a dozen miles or so. So at the time, we assumed that it was probably standard advice to parents of a stillborn to send up balloons in their memory since our doctor was the one who recommended the ceremony to help us with our grief. We never dreamed the story could have been linked to our baby, even though the idea was nice."

Troy was completely awake now. He stood up and started pacing the small room above the bar he called home. Emily continued, "Then yesterday we got your letter. We realized the story she heard must have been about YOU! We called her to tell her and she got so excited. A couple of hours later she went into labor! Everything went well and we are so blessed. Our son's baby brother will be coming home tomorrow and I just really thought you'd like to know."

Troy took a deep breath. The joy he felt each time he thought of Baby Blue now filled his entire body. He had helped his spirit find a way back home. He could hardly believe it. "Congratulations," he said, "I'm so happy to hear this! I appreciate your calling."

"Oh no!" said Emily, "Thank you!"

"I'm really happy for you," said Troy, "Can I ask? What is your son's name?"

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"Michael," she answered.

Troy's heart stopped. The pain hit him full force but for the first time in years, this time the pain was quickly washed away and joy slowly forced new beats in his chest.

"Troy?" asked Emily, "Did you hear me? Are you okay?"

Troy took a shaky breath and sat down, the old wooden chair giving a warning creak as his full weight landed hard on the torn wicker seat. "I'm okay," he answered, the words just above a whisper. "I'm really happy for you," he repeated, "thanks for calling."

Emily shared a few more details about her new son then they said their goodbyes, Troy didn't take much of it in.

After he hung up the phone, he walked slowly down the stairs, and through the bar. He walked behind the bar and up to the wall where the blue balloon was still tacked, graying from the dust. He slowly raised a shaky hand and placed it on the photo just above the tack. The walls of the bar were filled with photos of Troy and friends or family. Camping trips with buddies, snowmobile trips with his brother, Troy serving the first beer the day he opened the bar, Troy and his Dad fishing on Lake Wisconsin when he was 10. Dozens of photos of his life and those he loved. His fingers moved slightly to reveal the faces in the photo. Troy, young, happy, and so obviously in love, and his dear Annie. The tears fought to fall once more, and this time Troy let them. "Annie," was all he could manage.

What he hadn't told Emily, what he had never shared with any of the faces on the wall, or that sat at the bar, was that after Annie's car crash, when the doctors finally let Troy go to her side as she slipped away, they told him that she was two months pregnant and that they would be unable to save her or the child. He grasped her hand desperately, kissing her face, saying "I love you, don't leave me, we're a family now!"

She had smiled weakly and answered, "His name is Michael."

Make a New Year commitment to professionalism and children strong again - get my KIDBIZ Professionalism Kit to get you back on track! On Sale in January at:

www.patriciadischler.com

Holiday Tips and Tricks

Parent Gifts for Holiday or any Special Occasion

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- Keep a log of what gifts are made by which children each holiday so when your group changes you can repeat the good ones!**
- Parents like things made with the child's handprint.**
- Look at stores to get ideas.**
- Oriental Trading Company, www.orientaltradingcompany.com has lots of great crafts and are very inexpensive.**
- Consider decorating frames, buy inexpensive ones at thrift shop and paint or glue items on it. Frame a piece of the child's artwork or a photo.**
- My two favorites:**
 - **Pillows - buy sheets/curtains in white or light colors from thrift store, cut in squares, use fabric paint to paint handprints randomly in two complimenting colors (find out the colors of the parents bedrooms). Sew together and fill.**
 - **Baker's Aprons - buy solid color aprons (white is best), use fabric paint and paint upside down handprints in pyramid to create a tree in green. Use fingertips in other colors to create "balls" on the tree. Sponge paint a gold star on top.**

These tips are from my "Holiday Tips & Tricks" Teleseminar - available at www.patriciadischler.com, get yours for dozens more great holiday ideas!

My New Blog!

There's been a lot on my mind lately that I want to write about, that doesn't always fit neatly into my two current categories of writing, child care and adoption. So I've started a new blog: <http://www.blogspot.com/celebratingfailures.com>. Odd title, I know, but my intent is to share "Lessons in Humility", in other words, that journey we take called life where we make mistakes, or something happens when we think we failed, but in the big picture it was all meant to be and we become a better person. Check it out and it'll make more sense! I'm hoping to post to it at least once a week, so check it often for a little pick-me-up inspiration!

Exploration Early Learning Webinars

High quality, in-home training, in a wide range of topics presented by experts in the field! Check out these great trainings at: http://www.explorationearlylearning.com/shop/webinars/cat_5.html. Use promotional code: Webinar170 to receive a 20% discount!

NAFCC 2011 Conference

Quest for Quality: Supporting Happy, Healthy Children

Come join me and all the nations top experts in our field for high quality trainings, networking, and the opportunity to rejuvenate you and your career! We'll be at the beautiful Green Valley Ranch Resort Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada, July 21-23, 2011. Easy layaway plan available, check it out at: www.nafcc.org and I'll see you there!

This Month's Sale Items

December Sale Item: Patty Cake Preschool Parent Handbook CD - 20% Off!

This is a copy of my 50 Parent Handbook that was the cornerstone to my success! More than just policies, it shows the parents what your program is all about, the policies that guide it, and clearly lay out your partnership. Used as a tool for conducting interviews as well as defining my business for marketing, and parent communication, it is now on a re-writable CD, with prompts in bold to show you where to add your information to make it your own. A fast-track to a comprehensive contract with parents, and the resource used by the authors of the Business Administrators Scale (BAS), this Parent Handbook is all you need to give your professionalism a boost!

Regular Price: \$25.00 Sale Price: \$20

January Sale Item: KIDBIZ Professionalism Kit - 20% Off!

Everything you need to start the year out right! A copy of *From Babysitter to Business Owner, Tips & Tricks*, the Patty Cake Preschool Parent Handbook CD, a binder, a one-hour Marketing & Interviews Teleseminar, business card paper, and a wipe-off board. All of my best-selling items put together to get you on the path to professionalism and success!

Regular Price: \$65 Sale Price: \$52

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com or www.KIDBIZResources.com! Upcoming Events:

Spending Holidays with family, hope you are too! See you next year!!

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.php.