

# MEMORIES

BY KATHY SUERTH

Photography  
By Country Park  
Portraits



## IN THE MAKING

This special scrapbooking program captures the early days of Texas Children's Hospital's tiniest patients.

On any given Monday morning, you'll find several women and even some men elbow deep in colored paper, tape rolls, punch-out shapes, and photographs, all contentedly trimming their creations with stickers, filling in captions, and journaling. No, this isn't just another scrapbooking club; it's a room inside Texas Children's Hospital, just down the hall from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. For parents, a visit to the NICU at Texas Children's is a stressful time to say the least. If they are there for any length of time, it can be a heartrending roller coaster. However, a brand new program called FirstMemories Texas is helping to ease some of the emotional burden parents experience when their infant child is sick.

For Kirsten Jordon, a co-founder of FirstMemories, scrapbooking was already a well-loved

hobby when her infant daughter, Kate, contracted bacterial meningitis at three weeks of age. During her stay at Texas Children's, Jordon found it therapeutic to chronicle Kate's progress through pictures and journaling in her



scrapbook. Additionally, the parents she met in the NICU waiting room reminded her of how lucky she was that Kate was otherwise healthy and would be going home in a few days. So many of the stories she heard were much, much more tragic. Later that year, Jordon began to make plans to start a scrapbooking room at Texas Children's Hospital.

Since April 2007, the FirstMemories program has offered parents of infants in the NICU at Texas Children's the opportunity to create memory cards, scrapbooks, and grief albums, giving them a much needed outlet during the heartbreaking experience of holding vigil at their child's crib. Parents are provided four pictures of their infant, a memory card, and myriad supplies to help them create a unique piece that reflects their child's experience at Texas Children's. For parents who are there longer and want to do something more, FirstMemories offers albums for them to work on during their stay.

"We offer a room for them, and it's almost like another support group," says Memorial resident Diane Shoemaker, who has volunteered at FirstMemories since the program's inception.

“As they are creating, they talk to one another.” Shoemaker has seen many parents helped by the program, and says even some fathers who initially say they “aren’t into it” end up producing beautiful memory albums filled with words and pictures of their little one.

Because there was already a network of mothers who enjoy the hobby of scrapbooking, it didn’t prove that difficult to obtain the initial supplies to get the program up and running. Finding volunteers to staff the room once a week was another story. Many people involved with the organization are mothers with babies and very young children and therefore lack

the time and flexibility to volunteer on-site. This problem was solved another way. Many busy moms create pre-finished story cards and grief albums at home, on their own time. Additionally, several of them help by donating supplies and recruiting volunteers among their scrapbooking friends. Katy resident Heidi Farmer gets her scrapbooking group together regularly to pool supplies, to create invitations for parents to visit the FirstMemories room, and to craft pre-made story cards.

The fact that these moms want to help other parents with infants at Texas Children’s is a simple concept for Farmer: “I have seen so many

people who have been in similar situations, and they just so want to help.” Farmer has also offered her home as a Katy-area drop-off spot for scrapbooking supplies and continues to help solicit donations of money and materials to support FirstMemories.

For Diane Shoemaker, a stay-at-home mom and avid scrapbooker herself, volunteering with FirstMemories offered an opportunity to combine her favorite hobby with an altruistic endeavor. “I love it. It’s a phenomenal program,” Shoemaker says. “Every week, I walk away with another heartwarming story.”

## GET INVOLVED

**VOLUNTEER:** Do you have a scrapbooking club, or do you just enjoy the hobby? Consider helping out with the pre-made memory cards and albums. If you have one morning a week, or more, free, consider volunteering to staff the scrapbooking room at Texas Children’s Hospital.

**MAKE A DONATION:** FirstMemories Texas continually needs scrapbook supplies and items to keep the room up and running.




**FINANCIAL DONATIONS:** For those willing and blessed to contribute financially, please write your check to The Auxiliary at Texas Children’s Hospital. On the memo line, please put FirstMemories Texas. Address: Volunteer Services, 6621 Fannin Street – MC1-3260, Houston, Texas 77030.

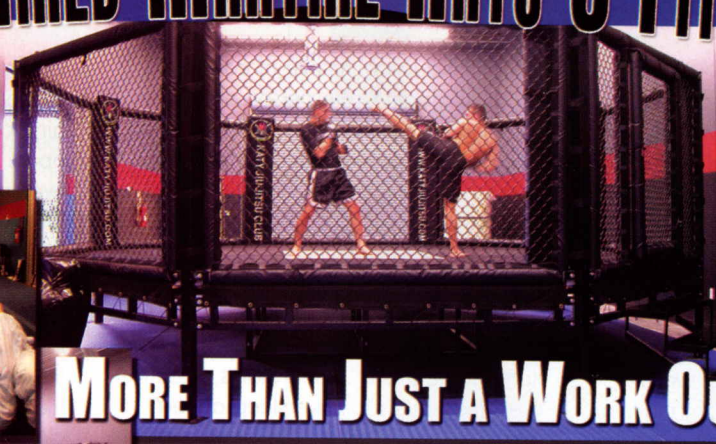
FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL [FIRSTMEMORIESTEXAS@MSN.COM](mailto:FIRSTMEMORIESTEXAS@MSN.COM).

**281-647-MMA1 (6621)**

**Westside MMA**  
21734 Provincial Blvd  
Mason Creek Industrial Park

# KATY MIXED MARTIAL ARTS & FITNESS



MORE THAN JUST A WORK OUT

WORLD CLASS INSTRUCTION • CLASSES 7 DAYS • TEAM SPIRIT  
CONDITIONING • STRENGTH TRAINING • FAMILY FITNESS

WEST HOUSTON'S  
1 STOP MMA

[www.KatyJiuJitsu.com](http://www.KatyJiuJitsu.com)

MEMBERSHIP  
ONLY

- Brazilian Jiu Jitsu
- Judo
- Kick Boxing
- Wrestling
- Boxing
- Sambo
- MMA

Fully equipped state-of-the-art athletic center geared for all types of conditioning for all levels of fitness - from beginner to professional athlete.

