

Moments tips, tricks and stories that make being a Consultant fun!

Consultants help families celebrate life in times of crisis

Kirsten Jordan CONSULTANT, TEXAS

In the fall of 2006 a social worker at Texas Children's Hospital asked Consultant Kirsten Jordan of Sugar Land Texas if she would donate scrapbook supplies to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

This request triggered a response from deep within Kirsten. She jumped on board with the idea and asked other Consultants for help in donating supplies. "The NICU is an amazing place," Kirsten says. "The care, facility, the way people treat you. . . it's incredible."

Kirsten's remarks are based on personal experience. Last fall her newborn son Will spent two days in the NICU due to breathing issues. Kirsten's 5-year-old daughter Kate also spent time in the NICU when she was one month old because of viral meningitis.

In January 2007, Kirsten decided she wanted to do more than just donate supplies. She and Consultant Shannon Blake co-founded a unique program they named FirstMemories Texas (FMT).

Kirsten and Shannon lead a team of about 20 FMT volunteers who give of their time to NICU families. For parents who are interested, volunteers capture pictures of children in their current state – whatever that might be. Parents are often numb and very fearful.

Providing a service such as this allows them to still celebrate and honor their babies. "When you can connect your passion with a deep need, you really feel that you have a purposeful life," says Shannon.

Volunteers wander through the NICU talking to parents about their free service, offer to take photos, and show sample Short Story Cards. Photos are printed using a portable printer. The rest of the images go on a CD. FMT volunteers show parents how to mount the paper, crop the photos and add enhancements to the Short Story Cards.

FMT also creates grief albums for parents whose children are not going to make it. "We help parents work through their grief," Kirsten says. "And it's not just grief for those who've lost a baby, but those who are missing out on all the firsts: first feeding, first diaper change, first time holding the baby. . ."

The average stay in the NICU is 10 days. Some families are there for many months. Volunteers work in three-hour shifts every Wednesday and two Saturdays each month. Often, they



see the same family repeatedly. For long-term families, FMT helps them create an album about their child.

Kirsten and Shannon are in awe of the support they have received from Consultants around the country. Recently, at the Celebrate! Houston Event, Consultants predecorated Short Story Cards to donate. "My first e-mails to the Houston Creative Memories Consultants were forwarded on to other Consultants, customers and friends," Kirsten says. "The monthly e-mail updates have also been shared with many bringing in supplies, new volunteers and donations. To me, this is a great testament to the Creative Memories family and our Mission."



More than 900 families have been served and 1,236 Short Story Cards have been created through the FMT program.