

# St. Tammany Picayune

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## Grieving parents replace sorrow with foundation

*Stillborn babies are effort's main focus*

By Carol Wolfram  
St. Tammany bureau

Candy and Stephen McVicar of Albertville, Minn., have two daughters, Grace and Tatum.

The sisters share more than their parents' adoration.

Grace, stillborn Dec. 20, 2001, after an umbilical cord complication, lives on in their hearts and through their work as founders of The Missing Grace Foundation.

Tatum Shay McVicar was born Aug. 19 in Slidell, nearly six weeks before her due date after a related umbilical cord complication put her tiny life at risk.

The grief that enveloped the McVicar family at the loss of their first child led the couple to establish the foundation dedicated to providing personal support, medical information related to the cause and prevention of stillbirth, information on ways to take action state-by-state to promote stillbirth awareness and access to national and international support groups.

Research into available resources led the couple to Dr. Jason Collins, a Slidell obstetrician who has spent much of the past 15 years at work on the Perinatal Umbilical Cord Project, research aimed at solving the problem of stillbirth, which in the United States alone results in about 30,000 deaths per year. Collins' research has deter-

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## The Missing Grace Foundation started

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mined that most babies die between midnight and 6 a.m., and that increased fetal monitoring during those critical early morning hours can help determine babies at risk unless delivered early.

Collins told the couple that if they decided to have another child, he'd help see them through it. "He said, 'If you can find that strength within yourself, I'll be with you every step of the way,'" Tatum said.

Though the outcome of the couple's second pregnancy was a beautiful 5-pound, 13-ounce baby girl, Tatum's birth was not without drama.

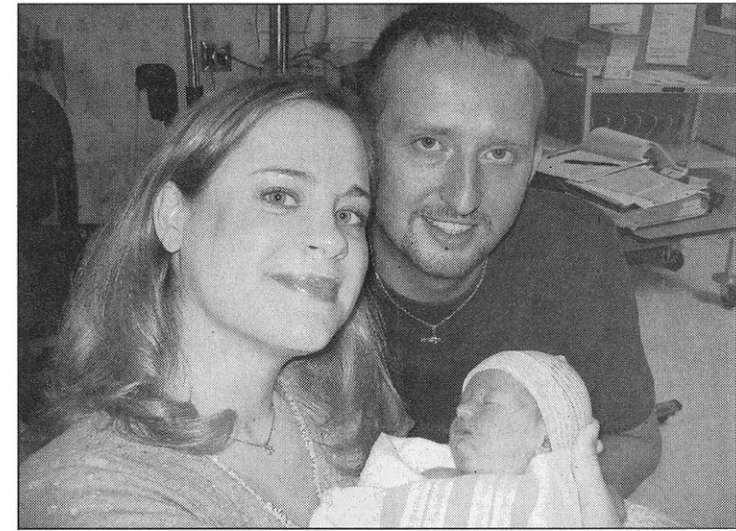
Long-distance fetal monitoring indicating Tatum had a poor heart rate pattern ultimately led Candy McVicar to travel to Slidell where, after 14 weeks, labor was induced and the baby was taken by Cesarean section. Eight days after Tatum was born, and while still a patient in the NorthShore Regional Medical Center Neonatal Intensive

Care Unit, Hurricane Katrina was setting its sights on Louisiana and the new family evacuated, all the way back to Minnesota. "Hurricane Katrina was a disaster for everyone else, but it helped us get our baby home," Candy McVicar said. "It was an amazing journey, everything we went through."

Today, the McVicar family spends their days as do most parents — caring for and getting to know their baby as she begins to "check out the world." Stephen McVicar, a pharmaceutical sales representative and self-professed sports nut, dreams of the day he can coach his daughter. Candy McVicar loves watching her daughter's glee in the bath and looks forward to the day she can teach Tatum to dance and sing.

"We just want to enjoy Tatum's life," Candy McVicar said.

But the McVicar family's life also will include embracing The Missing Grace Foundation, supporting other bereaved parents, and making information available that will bring about the



Candy and Stephen McVicar, founders of The Missing Grace Foundation, hold their daughter, Tatum, born Aug. 19 at NorthShore Regional Medical Center.

awareness and prevention of stillbirth.

"I am a parent to two children. My way to parent Grace is through the foundation," Candy McVicar, said.

Stephen McVicar agrees that the foundation will always be a part of their lives. "We do it for others, and to honor Grace," he said. "I don't think we'll ever move away from it."

Membership in the Missing Grace Foundation is \$40 annually, which includes four newsletters a year, a tote bag and a

wealth of resource information on issues including stillbirth, fertility and adoption.

Volunteers wanting to support the foundation through donations of time or resources also are welcome to contact McVicar at (763) 497-0709 or on the foundation's Web site, [www.Missing-GRACE.org](http://www.Missing-GRACE.org).

Stephen McVicar stressed that people need not have gone through a related tragedy to become involved or support the foundation. "They just have to have a heart," he said.