

MEMORIES

BY KATHY SUERTH

Photography
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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.

