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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAILS Helps Those Navigating the Loss of a Child During National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month

Laurel, MD, October 6, 2021 — October is National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and SAILS (Stillborn And Infant Loss Support) was founded to provide a platform of community, mentorship, education, and advocacy to families impacted by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby before his or her first birthday. SAILS, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization based in Laurel, Maryland, was founded in 2017 by its CEO Sadija A. Smiley in loving memory of her daughter, Ivyanna Salene. Ivyanna was born sleeping at 36 weeks on November 13, 2003.

President Ronald Reagan designated October as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month in 1988. All 50 states now honor those who have lost a child during pregnancy or during infancy. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), “about one pregnancy in 100 at 20 weeks of pregnancy and later is affected by stillbirth, and each year about 24,000 babies are stillborn in the United States.”

Smiley was positioned to start SAILS as she knew the grief of losing a little one, and she was also a longtime professional in the not-for-profit community.

“I needed an organization like SAILS when I lost my daughter, and I started the association to raise awareness of the issue of stillborn and infant loss and to support individuals who’ve experienced tragedy similar to my own,” she said. “I’ve been in the nonprofit sector my entire career, so I understood how associations operated and I wanted to give back to the community.”

SAILS makes an impact through outreach programs and fundraising, and its annual Survivor's Summit achieves both goals. The third annual gathering was held virtually on August 28 and the theme was “building resiliency.” Participants heard from mental health and grief experts, as well as parents who experienced a loss. In addition, guests participated in a candlelight ceremony to commemorate the many babies who have passed on too soon. Forty people attended this year’s online event, and plans are underway for a fourth such function on August 27, 2022.

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This year's summit raised more than \$2,600. Proceeds will be used to purchase CuddleCots for Baltimore area hospitals to support bereaved families, allowing parents to spend more time with their baby. A CuddleCot is a cooling pad inserted into a baby bassinet that helps preserve an infant's body. SAILS donated this item to GBMC (Greater Baltimore Medical Center) in October 2020 — it was the first to be given to this medical system and each typically costs between \$3,000 - \$5,000.

Angela Mendelson is the interim board president of SAILS. Mendelson and her husband, Eric, are the parents of Parker, 2-years-old. Angela has a special appreciation for the group, as the couple struggled to start a family.

"I wanted to be part of SAILS because the mission is so powerful and it targets a population where there is such a need for support," she said. "The journey to start my family was difficult as I struggled with infertility and often felt isolated, but finding support groups, talking about the journey, and being open made it much easier. My involvement with this organization allows me to help others and provide support and visibility to a population where the need is great and support services can be hard to find."

SAILS MISSION

To provide a platform of community, mentorship, education and advocacy to families impacted by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby before their first birthday.

Be sure to follow the SAILS journey of healing on FB, Twitter and Instagram @bornintosilence. Visit the organization's website at bornintosilence.org to learn more about its work, make a donation, and/or join its mailing list.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

SAILS-MediaRelease-Photo1: Sadija A. Smiley, founder and CEO of SAILS (Stillborn And Infant Loss Support).

SAILS-MediaRelease-Photo2: Smiley presented GBMC (Greater Baltimore Medical Center) with a CuddleCot in October 2020.

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