



Almost Home News

Our Journey

Ashley Miles

We are honored that Almost Home has asked us to write this article for their Newsletter.

Daryl and I always knew we wanted to be parents. We spent the last 15 years as Aunt and Uncle to 11 incredible nieces and nephews. Next up was the title of Mom and Dad for us. This title did not come as easily as we thought it would. Our first pregnancy 3 years ago was a tubular pregnancy. It ended in heartache but we were still hopeful. Pregnancy #2 occurred one and half years later. We had an ultrasound at 5 weeks where we saw that the baby was in the right spot this time. We were so excited! But there was no heartbeat at the 7 or 9 week ultrasounds, and we had miscarriage #2 at 12 weeks. Our hearts were broken. Hope dwindled.

10 months later (seemed like years) came a positive pregnancy test. We were super excited but then the fear took over. Could we handle another loss? This pregnancy was closely monitored. My due date was August 9th. Everything was going great and hearing that beautiful heartbeat brought tears to my eyes every time.

On May 7th, 2017 we took a trip to Belleville Emergency. I had been up most of the night with cramps and wasn't sure what 'normal' was. Our doctor happened to be working and ran some tests. It turned out I had a small fluid leak. Because I was just over 26 weeks, I was sent to Kingston, where further tests confirmed that I was in labor.

Miss Emma Dawn Miles was born on May 9th at 26 weeks and 5 days gestation, weighing 2 lbs 2 oz. Emma

showed her strength and feistiness instantly with arms and legs kicking, trying to pull out her breathing tube. She was tiny but mighty!

I was discharged from KGH on May 11th. This was the absolute worst feeling. Being down the hall from



The Miles Family

Emma and knowing we could be at her side in seconds was so comforting. Now what would we do? Clare our Social Worker set us up to stay at Almost Home. We were very thankful but very nervous as well. Almost Home was literally our home for 2 months. At first we were unsure about how it would work out. What we didn't expect was how accommodating Almost Home is, with a lovely sitting room, phenomenal kitchen, laundry facilities and a comfortable bedroom just for us.

The most important part of our day was being by Emma's side. We left for the hospital early every morning and stayed until bed-time. The second most important part of every day was coming 'home' and unwinding by writing in our daily journal, completely letting all emotions out, or just watching a movie

with no thought at all. This is what we needed at the end of a long day in the NICU – a safe place to go, with a comfy bed, where we could shut the door and just be us. Almost Home was our safe place.

Emma's NICU journey was a roller-coaster ride. We had many ups and many downs. The NICU team made our stay at KGH so warming. We were hugged when needed and given space when needed. I spent 10-14 hours a day in the NICU and Daryl was there every day after work. It was a wonderful friendship we had with our NICU team. The nurses really know how to fill a Mommy's and Daddy's hearts: homemade cards with Emma's hand and foot prints, homemade outfits and blankets made specially for Emma, Emma's own little photo shoot and the absolutely perfect Milestones album.

We had a few backwards steps during Emma's journey but nothing the three of us couldn't handle. There were days when Emma's monitors seemed to be beeping constantly and days when she couldn't handle being out of her isolette for a cuddle so back in she would go. CPAP would go down and back up the next day because Emma would struggle with it. Each day Emma's strength and determination floored us.

Emma was discharged on July 11th, 2017. She was 63 days old (35 weeks and 5 days gestation) and weighed 4 lbs 11 oz. Seven months later, Emma weighs 15 lbs 6 oz. She is full of spunk and continues to amaze us daily. She loves her BFF Gracie (our dog), spending time with her cousins, splashing

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SPRING 2018 WISH LIST

Like any home, Almost Home is always in need of household supplies.
Any donations of the following items would be greatly appreciated!

Pantry/Kitchen

- White sugar
- Condiments: ketchup, mustard, mayo, honey & margarine
- Canned/boxed soups & quick meals
- Snack items (cookies/granola bars)
- Olive/vegetable oil
- Tea/hot chocolate
- Cake & cookie mixes
- Coffee (regular ground)
- Peanut butter & jam

Household Supplies

- Toilet tissue
- Paper towel rolls
- Liquid hand soap
- Laundry detergent (regular powdered & liquid HE)
- Dryer sheets
- Dish soap
- Liquid dishwasher detergent
- Clorox or Lysol wipes
- All purpose cleaner (Mr. Clean or Lysol)

Other Items

- Gift cards for area grocery & discount stores
- Taxi vouchers/bus tickets
- Pre-paid long distance calling cards
- Travel sized toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, soap, body wash, deodorant, toothpaste & mouthwash only please)
- Canadian Tire money

To all those who have donated wish list items in the past, *thank-you!*

Our Journey, Continued...

the tub, jumping in her Jolly Jumper and watching Baby Einstein. Emma has everyone she meets wrapped around her little finger instantly. Her doctors are really pleased with her progress.

Our advice to families with a premature baby is to stay strong and take one day at a time. We found journaling very helpful and love to read back on those days now. Also, you will never ever get a better babysitter than an NICU nurse, so take some time to go out for dinner and relax. (It took my husband and a nurse a lot to convince me and I am so thankful they did!) We are forever indebted to the NICU team and Almost Home for making our 65-day stay in Kingston feel like we were at home surrounded by friends and family. This is OUR journey and although we don't wish for any family to have to go through this we would not for the life of us change OUR journey.

Thoughts from Victoria

The first thing you notice when you step inside the Night Manager's apartment on the second floor of Almost Home is the amount of light. Enormous living room windows offer a classic Sydenham ward panorama of churches, red brick row houses and of course the Annandale. It's a wonderful view, belonging to a unique apartment, belonging to an incredible organization. When I first applied to the Almost Home Night Manager position two years ago I was not sure if anything would come of it. I had worked in community housing and property management-type positions in the past. Fixing toilets, shoveling snow and raking leaves did not phase me, but I was apprehensive about living alongside families with sick children. Would it be too difficult, too sad an environment? For those of you who have stayed at Almost Home or who volunteer with Almost Home, you know the answer. Given its purpose, there is a surprising and unrelenting lightness to the house. It is not simply a large, old, beautiful house with a yellow door. It's a space where people can relax and unwind from whatever is happening outside. There is food and coffee and community, space and privacy and respect, in whatever combination you need. There is always someone available to help you with whatever you may need. During the night-time from Sunday to Thursday, that person has been me.

It's an unusual job, this Night Manager's position. You pay an inordinate amount of attention to the weather and to the city collections calendar. Weekday nights, you're on call. You check-in families, usually dead-tired from having spent long hours at the hospital. You push stuck cars out of the parking lot, unlock doors for families who accidentally lock themselves out, fetch extra



Victoria & Guillaume

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Event Announcements



Almost Home Charity Gala - Mardi Gras Masquerade!

The Almost Home Charity Gala, formerly the Bid of Entertainment, is taking place this year at the Ambassador Hotel on Thursday, May 3rd. We are excited to celebrate Mardi Gras in style for our donors, sponsors and community members. The gala will feature a 3-course dinner and entertainment, as well as both live and silent auctions. Auction items include food & drink, travel, theatre, spa & entertainment packages, tickets to sporting events, retail & service gift certificates, works by local artisans and more.

To purchase an early bird ticket (\$75) contact Jen today at 613-548-3987. Only a limited number of early bird tickets are available and once they are sold tickets will be at the regular price of \$80. If you are interested in donating to our auction or learning more about our sponsorship opportunities call Christine today 613-548-3009. The title sponsor is Investors Group. This event is sponsored by: 98.3 Fly FM, Haven Home Climate Care, Signature Homes, RBC Dominion Securities, Keystone Property Management, Butternut Creek Flowers, Digi Graphics, and Brad Snider Auction Services.

25th Anniversary Almost Home Golf Tournament

Please join us for an afternoon of golf at our 25th Anniversary Golf Tournament on Friday, May 25th at Loyalist Golf and Country Club. The tournament brings together golf participants, local celebrities, volunteers, corporate sponsors and community minded organizations, committed to supporting Almost Home. To register a team today please contact Christine at 613-548-3009.

☞ 1:00 PM Shotgun Start

☞ Cost: \$135 for individuals or \$540.00 for a team of four (includes green fees, carts, dinner and use of the driving range)

☞ Awesome Silent Auction Items! Raffle Table! Prizes for the Winning Teams!



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Coins for Kids Campaign

This Spring, Almost Home is excited to launch our Coins for Kids Campaign across our community. At a number of local businesses, our new Almost Home Coin Houses will be on display to encourage shoppers to donate spare change. Little by little we can do a lot, and it all starts with a little change!

If you are interested in joining our planning committee, or know of a business that might like to showcase a coin house, please call Christine today at 613-548-3009.



I would like to make a monthly contribution of

- \$20.00
- \$35.00
- \$50.00
- Other \$ _____

On the 1st - or - 16th of each month

I would like to make a single contribution of \$ _____

Method of payment

- Cheque payable to Almost Home
- VISA MC AMEX

Credit Card # _____ Exp: _____

Signature _____

Name: _____

Address : _____

City: _____ Prov _____ PostCode _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____

Donations to Almost Home help in the overall operation of the house
Please complete this section and return with your donation to:
Almost Home P.O. Box 2204, 118 William St, Kingston ON K7L 5J9
Phone: (613) 548-3987 Fax: (613) 547-6948 www.almosthome.on.ca

Thoughts from Victoria, cont...

blankets and pillows, and kill the occasional menacing spider. You can fall back asleep (mostly... usually) until five or six in the morning, depending on the day. You have an established routine of daily, weekly and seasonal chores, and every now and then you dash to a hardware store to secure what is needed for an urgent repair. You are always at home and at work simultaneously. You wear jogging pants a lot.

Some of you know I am working on my PhD in maternal health and breastfeeding. Some of you also know I am pregnant (jogging pants can only hide so much). And those of you who have recently volunteered in the Almost Home office have seen the precious and delicate and unthinkable tiny premature baby diaper that one of our lovely families brought to us from the KGH Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). I have been asked by more than one thoughtful volunteer during the evening shift-change if, because of my pregnancy, it is harder to hear updates about our families with premature babies. This is something that my partner Guillaume and I discuss frequently and I'm thankful for the opportunity to address it here. The answer is no - in fact, the opposite is true. Before working at Almost Home I hadn't met a mother whose baby was born at twenty-four weeks. I have since met many, and I have seen them return home after many months with their healthy children. I am in awe of the courage and resilience of the parents we house. I have heard heartfelt praise, time and time again, for the KGH NICU doctors and nurses and social workers who help these babies and families thrive. Again, there is more lightness than darkness, more gratitude than fear. This is the perspective of Almost Home.

Lastly, Guillaume and I would like to thank everyone we have had the pleasure to meet and work with at Almost Home. We deeply appreciate this unique experience and how it has shaped us as individuals, as a couple and as to-be parents. We'll be in touch!

- Victoria Niva Millious, Night Manager, April 2016-April 2018

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IMPORTANT DATE

Annual General Meeting
 Thursday April 26th 2018
 6:00 PM
 Ambassador Hotel
 and Conference Centre



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