RTS Training Sponsor Spotlight

Based on years of experience working in U.S. Air Force facilities that offered perinatal bereavement training, Captain Lakeatta Tonge had come to think it was a standard practice. But when she arrived at Moody Air Force Base in 2017, she quickly realized that was not the case; the base and community lacked education and support for professionals and parents. Knowing that evidenced-based perinatal bereavement training was imperative, Captain Tonge started a campaign to bring training to her facility. After months of discussion and research, she entered a business competition at her base where she pitched the idea of establishing a perinatal bereavement program using the RTS training model. She won first place. The money Captain Tonge was awarded covered expenses to hold an RTS training event and educate dozens of professionals at Moody Air Force Base.

Five months after the training event, RTS reconnected with Captain Tonge to discuss her program’s development and her hopes for the future.

RTS: Tell us about your history with RTS.

I initially joined the US AF in 1996, working in the labor and delivery as well as the postpartum environment. I can remember, even then, the nurses were trained on how to care for bereaved families. In 2009, I became a nurse and was stationed in Misawa, Japan on the labor and delivery unit. It was our standard of practice to become trained utilizing the Resolve Through Sharing training model to assist families who experienced perinatal loss.

RTS: Why was RTS training selected for education at your base?

As a nurse, I have only been assigned to three in-patient facilities. I had assumed that all military bases had some form of support for women and families who experience perinatal loss. Yet, upon arrival to my current duty station, Moody AFB, I quickly realized that the base and the Vadosta, GA community did not have any support systems that were specific to perinatal loss and bereavement. I began to do my research to try to figure out why there wasn’t a system and how to obtain such needed support. In April 2018, I was provided an opportunity to present an idea that would help support the base care for our Airmen and families. I contacted the RTS team and asked a few questions; I received several quotes and a guide for our leadership to determine how to best provide RTS services here on Moody AFB. I competed in our local base Spark Tank and won first place. The award covered the cost for RTS to come to our base and train 30 members in RTS Bereavement Training: Perinatal Death and 15 as coordinators.

RTS: How has your bereavement program changed in the last year?

The program is called Airmen’s Angels, and we have developed our own logo and t-shirts. We currently have 2 active FB pages: Airmen’s Angels and Airmen’s Angels Support Group. At this time, we have 174 likes/members across 14 bases—both state-side and oversees (Moody AFB, Langely AFB, Hanscom AFB, Ft Sam Houston, MacDill AFB, Mountain Home AFB, Buckley AFB, JBER, Eglin AFB, RAF Alconbury, Scott AFB, Travis, AFB, Robbins, and Wright-Patt AFB).

RTS: How has leadership support for your program changed since hosting RTS Bereavement Training?

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Guided Participation in Pediatric Nursing Practice: Relationship-Based Teaching and Learning With Parents, Children, and Adolescents” Wins AJN Book of the Year Award

RTS Training sponsor continued from p. 1

The support is still there, but the challenge is funding and keeping the momentum.

RTS: What hopes do you have for the future of your program?

I am praying that the AF recognizes that there is a huge need to continue to support all Airmen and their families, no matter where we are stationed. My hopes are that this becomes an AF-Level program and that it drives policy changes that further support our active duty female fitness exemption for those with multiple miscarriages back-to-back. Airmen should not have to worry about healing and taking a fitness test at the same time. Additionally, across the AF, I would like to see a minimum of a few days off immediately after a loss. The only way to sustain such a program is to have policy changes.

Securing funding, raising awareness, and changing organizational policies are common hurdles we hear about from Coordinators developing their bereavement programs. If you are struggling with any of these issues in your organization or community, consider taking these actions:

• Create an interdisciplinary team by connecting with other professions in your organization (e.g., leadership, nurses, social workers, chaplains, child life specialists, organ procurement officers).
• Establish a recurring meeting with fellow Coordinators and the rest of your bereavement team to discuss strategies for developing and maintaining your bereavement program.
• Schedule a 2-Day RTS bereavement training at least once a year.
• Inform others in your organization about the importance of bereavement care at every point of entry (e.g., ED, OR, L&D, ICU, hospice).
• Know your current policies, create a list of things you wish to change, ask other disciplines for feedback, and discuss your ideas with leadership.
• Highlight stories of patients who have been thankful for and satisfied with their bereavement care.
• Develop a plan to measure patient satisfaction.
• Create social media pages for your bereavement program. Post events, highlight successes, and share fundraising activities.
• Join civic groups that provide financial assistance for programs like yours.
• Enter competitions, submit grants, showcase your work, and connect with external funding sources.
In her chapter, “Case Examples: Using ‘Holding in Mind’ and ‘Joining Attention’ as Relational Strategies,” Dr. Limbo explores specific GP principles to help readers adapt issues, competencies, and processes to their clinical work. Dr. Limbo and Ms. Hensel’s chapter, “Using Principles of Guided Participation to Develop and Maintain a Bereavement Program,” deftly weaves together the origins of the RTS program — where Dr. Limbo was the first coordinator — and Ms. Hensel’s MBA research project from 2015 measuring the effects of RTS training. Their chapter is unique in that it provides outcomes data on RTS trainings that incorporate GP as the teaching/learning theory on which the education is based. On seven separate measures, participants reported statistically positive change in learning outcomes.

This is the second AJN Book of the Year award for Dr. Limbo, who, in 2016, was granted first place in the palliative and hospice category as an author and co-editor of Perinatal and Pediatric Bereavement in Nursing and Other Health Professions.

To purchase a copy of either award-winning book, visit the RTS online store. [https://glbereavement.dcopy.net/category/bookstore](https://glbereavement.dcopy.net/category/bookstore)

**Compassionate Goodbyes™: Bereavement Education for Veterinary Professionals**

This spring, RTS will launch Compassionate Goodbyes, a bereavement education program for veterinary professionals. Compassionate Goodbyes began as an idea in 2015 when RTS leadership identified a lack of support for people bereaved by pet loss and a need to validate their grief. As is often the case for healthcare professionals, veterinary professionals receive little or no training in developing competencies around providing relationship-based bereavement care to their clients or managing their own grief responses and supporting their colleagues with the same.

In May, Compassionate Goodbyes will host a pilot course for veterinary professionals in the La Crosse community. In addition to training, Compassionate Goodbyes will offer support materials for pet owners and professionals. The RTS model, with its transferrable concepts and properties, provided a logical framework for creating this program.

Since its inception in 1981, RTS has incorporated profound stories of loss in its education and support materials. To ensure Compassionate Goodbyes programming is equally authentic, we are soliciting feedback and testimonials from people who have or have had significant relationships with animals.

**We'd love to hear your feedback. Click here for a brief survey.** [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YQ5VCXG](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YQ5VCXG)

**RTS Releases New Position Statement on Cooling a Baby’s Body After Perinatal Death**

There are many false beliefs surrounding cooling a baby’s body after death. To equip professionals with the knowledge they need to sensitively discuss this option with parents while providing an evidence-based prospective, RTS has released a new position statement. The position statement addresses myths and facts of cooling, reviews the history of mandated cooling—an ill-informed healthcare practice, explores reasons parents are led to believe cooling will improve their time with their baby, introduces low- and no-cost cooling options available in hospitals, and discusses the realities of deterioration and infection risk after death.

The truth is quality bereavement care can be provided with or without cooling. Regardless of the equipment a hospital uses, parents will remember best their time with their baby and their interactions with their care professionals. Training in evidence-based bereavement care and dispelling the myths surrounding cooling are key to accomplishing this. It is imperative that professionals not engage in the misleading notion that cooling will transform this devastating experience.

Attend Our Annual National Training Event in La Crosse, WI

Each summer, participants across the country gather on the Mississippi River for the RTS annual event in La Crosse, Wisconsin, the birthplace of our relationship-based bereavement training. On the agenda for this year’s event are RTS Bereavement Training: Perinatal Death and RTS Coordinator Training. Join Marie Walter, MS, RN, C-EFM, CPLC and Deb Rich, PhD, LP, CPLC to improve your comfort levels and skills in perinatal bereavement and program leadership. Ms. Walter’s clinical expertise as a former high-risk OB nurse combined with Dr. Rich’s extensive background in psychotherapy, professional training, and consultation make this an experience you won’t want to miss.

**RTS Bereavement Training: Perinatal Death**
- June 10-11, 2019
- Cargill Room, The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern, 332 Front Street South, La Crosse, WI 54601
- Topics include making meaning, co-creating ritual and mementos, being in relationship, offering options, relieving stress and burnout, and practicing self-care and mindfulness.

**RTS Coordinator Training**
- June 12, 2019
- Cargill Room, The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern, 332 Front Street South, La Crosse, WI 54601
- Topics include project management, guiding change, program implementation, quality outcomes, and team building. Completion of RTS Bereavement Training: Perinatal Death, Neonatal and Pediatric Death, or Adult Death is required to attend.

Join Us in Welcoming Seth Barna, BSN, RN as RTS National Faculty

Seth received his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI in 1999. Since then, he has worked at Gundersen Health System, spending the majority of his career in the critical care setting. Over many years of caring for those with a wide range of specialty conditions, Seth has developed a particular interest and skill set for supporting patients, families, and staff through end-of-life care and the organ donation process.

In 2016, Seth accepted his current role as Organ and Tissue Donation Liaison for Gundersen Health System. Prior to this, he served on the Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center Organ Donation Team for approximately 15 years. Seth's special gifts and his passion for this work are evidenced in the various educational opportunities he leads in his organization and community. Earlier this year, he joined the Viterbo University Nursing Department as Adjunct Faculty.

Articles and Editorials

RTS Director Emerita Dr. Rana Limbo served as co-guest editor of the January/February issue of MCN: The American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing, a special topics series on perinatal bereavement care. She co-authored two of the featured articles as well as the guest editorial. Visit the MCN website https://journals.lww.com/mcnjournal/Pages/toc.aspx?year=2019&issue=01000 to read her contributions and more.

- “Perinatal Bereavement Care” (Guest Editorial) by Rana Limbo and Marianne H. Hutti
- “Using Theory to Inform and Guide Perinatal Bereavement Care” by Marianne H. Hutti and Rana Limbo
- “Application of Caring Theory to Nursing Care of Women Experiencing Stillbirth” by Natasha Nurse-Clarke, Barbara DiCicco-Bloom, and Rana Limbo

Enter to Win a Free RTS Bereavement Module 3-Pack

RTS online modules are user-friendly, interactive, evidence-based, and available 24/7. They provide in-depth introductions to fundamental bereavement topics appropriate for professionals who may interact with grieving individuals. Each month, multiple winners are selected to receive a free RTS Bereavement Module 3-Pack. You could be next! Visit our website http://www.gundersenhealth.org/resolve-through-sharing/bereavement-training/online-education/. RTS Bereavement Module 3-Pack includes
- Communicating With the Bereaved
- Memory-Making and Ritual
- Guided Participation: A Method of Teaching and Learning