

## **Stillbirth Happens – let's talk Podcast**

### **Finding Community – The legacy of Wilder Jay**

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In this episode, we hear from Kimberly Lockhart, bereaved Mama to Wilder Jay, who was stillborn at full term. Kimberly shares Wilder Jay's birth story and her deep need for connection and resources to support her grief journey. This need prompted her to organize, with other bereaved parents, the inaugural Vancouver Butterfly Run in 2019. Today, the Butterfly Run supports the Butterfly Support Network, a province-wide network for families whose lives have been touched by infertility, pregnancy loss, and infant loss. As Wilder Jay's legacy, the Butterfly Support Network aims to ensure that anyone who experiences loss on their journey to parenthood finds community and doesn't walk alone.

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Erin Bohn 0:03

Welcome to our podcast, *Stillbirth Happens - let's talk*. My name is Erin Bohn, and I'm a proud mother to three children. My daughter Gracie is 17 years old, my daughter Ryann would have been 15, and my son Quinn is now 13 years old.

Jaime Ascher 0:29

My name is Jaime Ascher, and I'm also a mother to three. My daughter Marissa is 20 years old. My son, James, was stillborn in 2010, and my son, Zachary, was stillborn in 2013. Erin and I met at a conference and have been friends ever since. Our shared identity as bereaved parents and our commitment to support other families whose lives are touched by stillbirth has bonded us forever.

Erin 1:00

Jaime and I are here to help you feel less alone. We are working to break the silence around stillbirth. As Jaime and I know, personally, stillbirth happens, let's talk.

Jaime 1:12

In this episode of *Stillbirth Happens*, we're talking with Kimberly Lockhart. She's a mom of Wilder Jay, who was stillborn at full term. She's also the Founder and Executive Director of the Butterfly Support Network, a province-wide support network for families whose lives have been touched by infertility, perinatal loss and infant loss.

Erin 1:31

Kim shares Wilder's birth story and how she keeps his spirit part of her family. She helps us understand how Wilder's stillbirth led her to create the Butterfly Support Network and foster a

community where anyone who experiences loss on their journey to parenthood doesn't need to walk alone.

Erin Bohn 1:51

Miss Kimberly! I am so excited to finally be doing this interview.

Jaime Ascher 1:58

Kimberly, it's such a pleasure to meet you--who has also been doing this work and has done incredible work. So, thank you for being here today.

Kimberly Lockhart 2:06

Thank you both. It's so nice to be here. Really excited to join you for this podcast and to share a little bit about my son, Wilder.

Jaime Ascher 2:13

And that's exactly where we'd love to start. We'd love to learn about Wilder.

Kimberly Lockhart 2:18

In a nutshell, my son, Wilder Jay Lockhart, was born at 40 weeks and five days, and that was in 2017, so we will be celebrating his eighth birthday coming up this year. His birth and delivery came after a very typical and normal, healthy pregnancy, and I was in active labour when I went into the hospital, and I had a hospital bag packed with little boys' and little girls' outfits because we didn't know what the sex was of the baby. And that's when we learned that he had no heartbeat. I feel my voice shaking a little talking about it, because it was such a shock, and I was also in active labour, so it was, like, really hard to even, like, wrap my head around it, because I was, like, having contractions. So, I don't think it was really real for me until he was delivered three or four hours later. And he was nine pounds, 10 ounces, he had, like, a full head of black curly hair, he had such beautiful hair. We learned later that he had passed about 12 hours prior to delivery, so he was in good physical shape; he was beautiful and perfect. And he was born in Langley Memorial Hospital, and we had an incredible team of care providers that were really wonderful and gave us a lot of time and a lot of space. We were fortunate that we were able to have access to a Cuddle Cot™. So that gave us the gift of time, and we were able to take a couple days to stay with him—something I sometimes feel guilty about, because I know not everybody has access to a Cuddle Cot™, and I wish everyone was able to have that time. And we did all the things. You know, we had a photographer. I actually had a really beautiful gift, which was there was somebody from my midwife's office who was the receptionist, but she was also a doula, and she came into our room and she shared with me about a niece that she had that was stillborn 16 years prior, and she shared with me some of the regrets that her, her sister, and the family had had about not taking photos, not introducing siblings, and some of these things. It was such a gift for me, because every decision that I had to make, like every bridge I had to cross, I was like trying to ask myself, "Is this something I'm going to regret down the road?" and try to make decisions from a place of like, "Am I going to wish I did this, or am I going to wish I did that?" That was really helpful, that I had this beautiful soul that came in and sort of shared with me about how their family had been touched by loss, too.

Jaime Ascher 4:51

That is absolutely beautiful, and that's one of the reasons we're here today to have this conversation. When you learned that Wilder would be born still, and like you said, you were in active labour, and so it was just very surreal, I'm sure for you, how did you learn about what the

next steps would be, what supports were in place to help you walk this path, once you found out that Wilder didn't have a heartbeat?

Kimberly Lockhart 5:16

Well, I think after we learned that he didn't have a heartbeat, the first question was like, do I have to go through the delivery process? And of course, the answer was yes, right? You have to go through that. And so, I think the initial steps were just around, do you want an epidural? And questions like, specifically around the delivery. And then once he was born, I was immediately like, where's the photographer? When's the photographer gonna come? Like, I, that was really important to me, and it actually was not coming together, like the hospital was having a difficult time to find somebody. We did end up having somebody that we knew through our midwife's office, also who was able to come and do photography, which was amazing. But in terms of, like, the resources that were offered to me, like, I think I got a duo tang with a couple sheets of paper with a couple lists of, like, different support groups or different things that existed, and, like, the names of different funeral homes and stuff, and it was really kind of all given to me, and I was like, your brain doesn't feel like it's working when you're grieving and you're in this, like, trauma situation. And I remember saying to the social worker, like, "Can you call the funeral homes? Like, can you just tell me which one to go with?" "Cause, like, I can't make any decisions right now," and so to be honest, it felt very, very limited for where I could access support. I did not know anybody that had experienced a third trimester, full-term stillbirth. I felt really alone, and I was desperate to find community and to find connection with others that had experienced something similar, and I, like, immediately reached out on a Facebook group to say, "This is out of my comfort zone, but does anybody have a lived experience that I could connect with?" And I quickly began having some, like, chat discussions with a few moms that had experienced a third trimester stillbirth, which was a lifeline. Like, that was so helpful at that time, because every time that I was asked, like, "Do you want to have an autopsy? Do you want to have cremation? Do you want to do a burial? What do you want to do for this?" I would be like, "I don't know" and then I would be asking one of these other moms that had been through it, like, "What'd you guys do?" That was more helpful than anything, to have these other people that had walked down this road before me that I could turn to and say, "What did you do? How did you decide?"

Jaime Ascher 7:39

So, you were in the hospital, online, making these connections, because those questions that you spoke of are the ones they ask you immediately in the hospital, right?

Kimberly Lockhart 7:48

Yeah!

Jaime Ascher 7:49

Thank goodness for the people you found online.

Kimberly Lockhart 7:51

Totally. Those are impossible questions you never in a million years would think to make plans in advance, around a burial or around cremation or around even, like picking out an urn, the funeral home goes, here's the options, and you're like, they all are awful, and so you're shopping online, like, "Where do you buy a baby urn?" How awful.

Erin Bohn 8:13

Did you have to ask those questions before you gave birth to Wilder? Or was it after?

Kimberly Lockhart 8:18

No, it was definitely after, because between the time that I learned that he had died and the time he was delivered was like nighttime, like middle of the night. So, it wasn't until after he was delivered, we were presented with different options and different choices. And so yeah, it's it's wild to think that I was in the hospital, like reaching out to Facebook-land, looking for people to connect with, but I was searching for community, and I was looking for people who understood. And it's such a balm to a bereaved mother's heart to be able to connect with another bereaved mother that understands and that has been through it, and that connects. And like, I can't tell you how many times I've met a grandmother at a park that's asked me about my kids, and I've shared about Wilder, and she's gone on to share with me about like an infant that she lost, like, 40 or 50 years ago. And it's like, I feel so honoured every time that someone then turns around and shares part of their story and their heart with me too.

Jaime Ascher 9:17

So, after being discharged from the hospital, what do you remember about your immediate stages of grief once leaving the hospital?

Kimberly Lockhart 9:27

That's a great question. In the immediate stages of grief, I remember having a lot of people surround me that loved me, that wanted to show up, and so they would ask questions about, like, what I needed, and you're faced with more decision-making about what you need for support. And so that was challenging, because you don't really know what you need when you're in this stage. To be honest, I just wanted to get into bed and not get out ever again. And we kind of had a bit of a period of like, isolation for two or three weeks where we didn't really go anywhere, didn't really do a whole lot, didn't really talk to many people, didn't have company, and just kind of huddled close to home. And that was what we needed. Even I remember it being like, beautiful sunny day and being like, "Close the blinds like," I don't, you know, the world just keeps going on, and you are in a place of such pain and darkness, and it's hard to reconcile that the world is still going on and there's kids out in the road that are playing and laughing and people are shopping, just carrying on. So, it was a difficult, difficult time. And I knew, like, from the very beginning, I was like, "Okay, how does somebody get through this? Like, what are the books that somebody could read, what are the support groups that somebody could access? Like, who do I connect with?" And so, I was also kind of on a, like, a search, and there was definitely like, in that duo tang that they sent home with me, like there was some support groups in there that I called or emailed just to find out that they were no longer operating, and things like that. And it already was taking, like, all my energy, even just to make a phone call or even just to send an email to say, like, my baby died and I want to join a support group, or I want to come to something and then, like another letdown, to find out that, you know, it's not running anymore.

Erin Bohn 11:25

So, when we met two years ago, there was a lot going on at that conference. And Kimberly, you are a powerhouse in this bereavement world and doing so much work behind the scenes. The moment I fell in love with you was when you allowed yourself just to be Wilder's Mom in front of me and sharing that it was Wilder's birthday that day, and it was the first time you had been away from your family on Wilder's birthday. And so as much as the work that you do, and I respect and I admire that I love, that you give yourself time to still be Wilder's Mom. But with the help, the connections that you were looking for, shortly after coming home, when did you decide

to start doing something in memory of Wilder and to have supports there for other families? How long did it take you from Wilder's stillbirth to get going on that?

Kimberly Lockhart 12:27

Okay well, first I just want to respond to everything you said. Erin, that PAIL Network Conference in September of 2023 was like a really hard decision for me to come to, because it was, it fell on Wilder's birthday, and I was really grateful to have a safe place to be vulnerable with you and to share that it was his birthday, and then you lit a candle, and we, like, had a little tiny birthday and sang happy birthday. And that was really one of the highlights of that PAIL Network Conference, and it meant the most to me. So, I really am grateful for that. And I felt when we met, like there was like this instant, bereaved parent connection, you know that comes. And so, to jump back to the question you asked about, like, after Wilder was born, it was like, immediately, like, "Where's my people?" And then I think it was probably like, maybe six months after he was born, six to nine months I was like, okay, "So now as we're approaching his first birthday, like, what are we going to do for his first birthday? What exists here?" That's when I learned about there was another Tiny Footprints Walk that was in Alberta. There was another Memorial Walk and Run Butterfly Run Ottawa, but there was nothing like that in Vancouver. And by that time, I had made, you know, maybe a dozen friends that had been through a stillbirth, and I had made some connections. So, it wasn't hard to be like, "Hey you guys, let's do this together, what do you think?" We really were just a group of bereaved parents that came together with no clue what we were doing to plan a memorial walk and run to bring together other people in the community so that other people could see and hear their stories and could make their own connections and friendships and feel less alone. And we were, like, we didn't have any fundraising skills or knowledge. We were like, we just want to raise a few thousand dollars to cover the cost of this thing. And like, maybe we'll have 100 people attend. We rented a gym that had, like, a capacity of 500 people, and then, like, a week before the very first Butterfly Run Vancouver, we had, like, exceeded the capacity of the gym, so we had to turn off the registration for this event. There's, like, a lot of people that are really, really wanting a space to remember and to honour their babies. So that was kind of the beginning.

Erin Bohn 14:45

It was bigger already, before it even started, and you didn't even know.

Kimberly Lockhart 14:50

Yeah.

Erin Bohn 14:51

Yeah.

Jaime Ascher 14:52

Can you tell us a bit about that first event?

Kimberly Lockhart 14:55

Yeah, it was, so we had a connection with somebody who was from Vancouver that delivered her her stillborn son in Vancouver, but she was currently in Ottawa, and so she had was like volunteering with the Butterfly Run Ottawa. And she said, "You know, I'm moving back to Vancouver, and I'd really love to help you guys, and to be able to join once I come to Vancouver." And so, we were lucky that she sort of gave us some information about all the different pieces to putting on an event. And, I think it was a lot more work than we anticipated, but it was, there was just so much love there, and there was a lot of tears, and it was really,

really beautiful. Actually, Emma Hansen came and was a guest speaker in 2019 at that Run; I know she was a podcast guest on a previous episode, and so that was really beautiful and impactful. And we had a couple other guest speakers as well. And it was beautiful. We learned really quickly we needed to find a better, bigger space.

Jaime Ascher 15:51

We'll talk a bit more about the Butterfly Support Network, but I just want to go back a little bit. You made a decision to donate Wilder's milk, so would love to ask you a bit about that.

Kimberly Lockhart 16:03

Yeah, when Wilder was born, I had a toddler that was less than two, that I was nursing and that I had been nursing through my pregnancy with Wilder, and I was anticipating and planning to tandem nurse them or to continue, I was fortunate that I had excellent milk supply. And so, pumping after stillbirth was something that I did that was, like, therapeutic in some ways. I can remember, like waking up in the night and needing to pump, and like having a cry while I pumped his milk. And so, in the end, I had, like, quite a stockpile, and so I was able to donate that milk, and that was really meaningful for me to be able to give back in that way.

Jaime Ascher 16:47

Absolutely, thank you for sharing that. It's we know that a difficult part of the grief journey after stillbirth is the milk coming in. Many people aren't even aware that that's going to happen.

Kimberly Lockhart 16:57

And also, you know, talking about that, Jaime, like, I don't know that a nurse or a social worker or a doctor ever said to me, like, "Hey, you can donate your milk", like it was something that I, on my own, kind of looked into. And I feel like maybe more bereaved mothers would make the choice to donate their milk, if that was presented as an option?

Jaime Ascher 17:18

Yeah. I mean, I remember being not discouraged, but just, okay, let's try and stop this milk production as fast as possible, right? Like that was sort of my experience with it, so embracing that it is a natural part of childbirth, and there is something that we can actually do to help and that was there for our child, I think is beautiful. So yeah, I agree, for sure.

Erin Bohn 17:44

Yeah.

Jaime Ascher 17:45

Another piece that I wanted to ask you about was stigma. And did you experience that with Wilder's stillbirth?

Kimberly Lockhart 17:52

Yeah. I think there's still a lot of stigma around stillbirth. I think that actually, it has roots that go beyond stillbirth in that we just we live in a society that's so uncomfortable with death. There's so little education and little conversation about death. So, for myself and for many people, when we experienced a stillbirth, it was our first time having a death close to us or in our family. I would like to think that that's shifting. I think that people fear the things they don't understand. And so, when you talk about something that someone doesn't understand and that they're scared could happen to them or happen to someone they love, they're like, they freeze.



Jaime Ascher 18:33

Yeah. So with your experience, how do you think stigma plays a role in how parents grieve after stillbirth?

Kimberly Lockhart 18:39

I think that because it's not discussed, then families that experience stillbirth feel like they have to be quiet or feel like they have to hide, and it's because they're trying to often not make anybody else uncomfortable. I think that reducing the stigma around stillbirth is making it so we're able to share more of our stories without, like, fear of upsetting someone else.

Erin Bohn 19:04

I think you nailed it right there. I sometimes think about, you know, like the grandma at the park—what was she offered? I guarantee I was offered more than what she was offered. And you had a Cuddle Cot™ in your hospital room, and I didn't have that. And we're a vast few years apart, right? So, I see the changes, which is phenomenal. It's just a little slow sometimes.

Jaime Ascher 19:31

Yeah.

Erin Bohn 19:32

Is there anything, Kimberly, that since the days that you've started doing all the work with the Butterfly Run, are there other things that you do, just for yourself or for your family to honour Wilder?

Kimberly Lockhart 19:47

I really love candles, and so I often will, like, light a candle and take a moment to connect with Wilder. And to be honest, I feel like I have a really full, busy life, and I, sometimes I will have a bath, and I will put on some songs that really resonate with me, and, like, carve out time to just let myself have, like, a big cry. Sometimes I feel like I'm holding a lot, and so I've gotta schedule that to like, let it, let it go.

Jaime Ascher 20:17

So important.

Kimberly Lockhart 20:19

Yeah, something really interesting that I think happens for families after they experience a stillbirth is you often have to be also like, educating family and friends about, like, what to say or what not to say, and what Erin said about how family and friends, they don't want to upset you further, so they sometimes will say nothing. That was an interesting thing that I wasn't anticipating after loss, was having to be, like, really clear with family and friends that I wanted to talk about him, or I wanted to share his birth story, or I wanted to share photos, and that it was okay to ask. And so, I think that kind of ties into the Butterfly Support Network, because one of the things we have is like a blog, you know, where people can share their baby's stories. And there's been a few people that have even written posts about, you know, things they wish their family or friends would know. And it's just like a sharing that allows people to find community and connection.

Jaime Ascher 21:18

Can you describe what is now the Butterfly Support Network for us?

Kimberly Lockhart 21:23

So, Butterfly Support Network evolved from the Butterfly Run Vancouver to then be Butterfly Run BC, because we expanded to have multiple memorial walks and runs. So, for 2025 we have a walk and run in October in Vancouver, Kelowna, Nanaimo and Whistler, which is incredible, and means there's gonna be a lot of people that are gonna come together on October 4 to remember their baby and to have the chance to share parts of their story. And so the Butterfly Run is kind of the beginning, and then we've evolved to be the Butterfly Support Network, and some of the other things that we do within the Butterfly Support Network is we have support groups with registered clinical counselors in different cities across BC, as well as virtual support groups, both for perinatal loss and for infertility. We donate bereavement boxes to hospitals all across BC and like smaller emergency room care kits for emergency rooms for ultrasound clinics, midwives' offices, things like that. And we have an exciting new Peer Mentor Training Program that we're launching this year in partnership with BC Women's Hospital. And so that's just one more way that we're going to be able to connect families to others, so that hopefully people feel less alone on their journeys.

Jaime Ascher 22:37

That's amazing, that there are so many different options now for families to find support. So, our listening audience is diverse. And if you were to share advice from your lived experience with Wilder and your professional experience of the Butterfly Support Network, what could you share about the importance of finding community after stillbirth?

Kimberly Lockhart 22:59

You ask excellent questions, Jaime. I think that we find healing in community. And I often struggle with the word healing, because I don't know that we ever fully 100% heal from going through a loss like this and and I often joke that I don't want to heal from my grief, and, you know, because it's so it's so tightly wound with my love, and I want to keep it. But I think that finding community, it allows us to navigate all of the parts, like hand-in-hand with other people that understand. And it doesn't matter at what gestation you lost your baby, whether you've, you know, gone through fertility treatments. There's a lot of families we support that are going through terminations for medical reasons or maternal health reasons, and stillbirth and infant loss. And I think there's just such such value in finding others that have a story similar to yours, that resonate with you, because you're not alone, and there is others that have gone through something similar to you, and there's such power in that connection.

Jaime Ascher 24:01

No, I absolutely agree. Finding community, for me, was such an important piece of my journey, being able to be with others who just understood, and you didn't even have to say a thing. That is so important.

Kimberly Lockhart 24:14

It's this community that just gets it.

Jaime Ascher 24:17

Yes.

Kimberly Lockhart 24:18

You can be truly authentic in your love and in your grief without having to guard yourself when you're in community. And so that's really, really important. It takes a lot of courage to like, to reach out, to look for help, or to go to an event where you've never met anybody, or you don't



know anyone, and it's scary sometimes, and my experience has been that this community of bereaved parents is such a beautiful, loving, soft place to land.

Erin Bohn 24:49

The conference that Jaime and I met at, it was the first time I had left my kids, which was a huge step. So, and it is, it's very scary. But then as soon as I was there, I think I was the only one in that whole entire room that said I was excited to be there. And I get that people don't, you know, maybe weren't happy to be there, but I was so excited, because I was finally around my people, like I finally was in a room where we didn't have to educate, we could just be.

Jaime Ascher 25:17

I remember feeling like I could breathe for the first time in three weeks.

Erin 25:22

The work you've done, Kimberly, and the work that you continue, are continuing to do, because we know that you're not done at all.

Jaime 25:33

Is there anything that we didn't ask you about, that you want to share with us?

Kimberly Lockhart 25:37

Yeah, I just have to say that I often feel like I can't really take credit for Butterfly Run or for Butterfly Support Network, because the only reason that it exists is because we have these incredible committees of volunteers in Vancouver, now in Kelowna, on the Island, and in Whistler, and these are bereaved moms that are showing up and are wanting to put on something and create community for others too. And so, it is so much bigger than me. We have so many incredible hearts and so many incredible mamas that are pouring in with so much love for their babies and for other bereaved parents too. So that's what I think I'd like to end with, just to give a shout out to everybody that's been involved from the start.

Jaime Ascher 26:24

Kimberly, thank you so much for sharing you, for sharing Wilder for sharing about the Butterfly Support Network. It's truly a testament of Wilder, his legacy, your work and, like you said, all of the other moms and babies that make it happen.

Kimberly Lockhart 26:42

Thank you both so much for having me.

Erin Bohn 26:49

Thank you so much for listening and spending time with us.

Jaime Ascher 26:52

This episode of Stillbirth Happens - let's talk was brought to you by the Hummingbird Project of BC Women's Hospital and Health Center. It was produced by Jasmine Coleman.

Erin Bohn 27:02

If this episode resonated with you, we invite you to take care of yourself in whatever way feels right, whether that's by accepting support, setting boundaries or connecting with others who understand.

Jaime Ascher 27:18

You can find information, resources, connections and ways to take care of yourself in the show notes of every episode and on our website. Go to [bcwomens.ca](http://bcwomens.ca) and search for stillbirth happens.

Erin Bohn 27:28

To stay connected, follow us and drop us a comment or a review on Spotify or Apple podcasts; we truly do love hearing from you.

Jaime Ascher 27:38

Thank you again for joining us. Until next time, remember to be gentle with yourself. You're not alone.