

Volume 1, Issue 2

# CARING CRADLE

"We give a little more time when it means a lot."

"Time has proven that in caring and sharing comes healing."

Lorena Tapia, Mother of Loreal  
Founder, Project Loreal

"Some say you are too painful  
to remember. I say you are  
too precious to forget."

Anonymous



## The Story of a Baby Girl

Some stories feel impossible to tell. They are difficult to hear. They are impossible to accept. This is one of those stories.

A story of a baby lost to stillbirth; one who never took a breath.

The story of Loreal and her mother,  
Lorena.

And is often the case, the storyteller holds both the honor and weight of caring and telling the story. The honor in the story begins with Loreal: a beautiful baby girl who went straight from the womb of her mother to heaven.



And while she never drew a breath in this world, her name is becoming more known, inviting donors and families to contribute towards efforts of compassion and comfort.

And the weight of the story is in the mother's heart.

Lorena lives breathing life and love into the memory of her baby girl.

A baby shower is a joyous celebration brimming with anticipation, love, and laughter. It's a special time to shower the parents-to-be with support, gifts, and well wishes as they eagerly await their bundle of joy! Filled with chatter, laughing, and eating, this is a time for the mother to feel an extra surge of love and support.

On April 6, 2014, Lorena Tapia felt that extra surge of love and support as she attended the baby shower for her daughter. At 34 weeks, both mother and baby were ready for Loreal's birth. Family and friends gathered to shower Lorena with love and support.



## Something Wasn't Quite Right

The shower was perfect, but once home, Lorena wasn't feeling well. By 2:00 a.m., Lorena knew what was happening.

*"The labor pains were beginning; they were light at first, but I knew what was happening. Loreal was coming."* Lorena, Mother



Lorena went to the hospital to be checked. When labor pains come early, going to the hospital is normal for many parents. Thousands of parents take this very same trip. Like many other mothers, Lorena was checked and scanned at the hospital. When labor seems to come early, parents are looking for the all-clear to return home and come back later or stay and give birth.

Lorena's story took the shocking, unexpected path that approximately 26,000 other women in the U.S. take each year: stillbirth. As is common, before Loreal's stillbirth, Lorena had experienced an uneventful, healthy pregnancy.

## Stillbirth

On April 7, 2014, Loreal was born blue and purple at 2:10 pm, with her umbilical cord wrapped around her delicate, perfect, tiny neck.

*"I remember being half sedated still on the operating table. My best friend Sylvia was right there with me. I can hear people speak in and out. I remember the Dr. asking me if I wanted to wake up and hold Loreal; he said, It's okay if you want to rest. I said I wanted to rest. At that moment, I didn't want to wake up knowing that I was not waking up to my living baby. I also remember the doctor saying they gave my baby Loreal to my best friend Sylvia to hold while I rested."*



*"The next thing I knew, I woke up in my room, feeling cold, foggy, and numb. That's when the nurses brought Loreal to me."*

Already in heaven, her still body was placed in the arms of her loving mother.

Holding her close, Lorena wept.

## And How?

How does a mother "go" from expecting a baby to a stillbirth? She doesn't. No mother "goes". And this mother was no different.

Like mothers before her, Lorena was swept into a torrent of unrelenting reality that her baby had died. With the memory of her baby shower far removed from her present moments of holding the lifeless body of her baby girl, Lorena felt unable to grasp reality.

## Shattered

*"We can say we know love, but we don't truly understand the depth one can love until we have a child.*

*We can say we know pain, but we don't truly understand the depth of pain until we've gone through the loss of a child.*

*I was shattered."* Loreal's Mother, Lorena



How do parents feel as months, and maybe years of dreams and plans for their baby evaporate in hours?

They feel shattered.

And shattered may be the most awful, perfect word to describe their feelings and how their future looks.

As Lorena stepped out into a stark reality after being discharged from the hospital, she was shattered. Many mothers describe this same condition of hollowness, maybe with different words, but they all feel this feeling as they leave the hospital with empty arms.

Some hospitals (and we mean nurses) will do their best to send families home with some memories. Lorena's nurses gifted her with a box when she was discharged from the hospital. Lorena reflected: *"Inside, I found a little onesie of Loreal's, a tiny baby bracelet, and a lock of Loreal's hair. That was all I had."*

That box, which was profoundly more empty than anything else, ignited the tiniest spark somewhere deep inside Lorena. The spark was so new and small that even Lorena didn't recognize the promise of its future. But within a year, that tiny spark would provide the impetus for how Lorena would honor her baby girl.

## But First, Mourning

Like other parents, Lorena found ways to privately acknowledge the loss of her daughter. As her mourning turned to grieving, she discovered that talking about what happened was a saving grace, a salve for her soul.

A secondary loss that Lorena experienced is all too common for anyone experiencing a profound loss. Some of her dearest friends couldn't talk with Lorena to the depth and extent she needed. Others felt it would help not to talk about it. Still, others worried that mentioning it would remind Lorena of her loss.



## Say Their Name

What many of us fail to understand or acknowledge is mothers never forget. Never. Or better said, they always remember. Mothers love to hear the name of their baby spoken. Families want to be assured that others remember their children because the families remember.

While she completely understood, Lorena knew she had to find a community that could support her. She researched online and found mothers, families, and groups to engage with. *"These communities were just what I needed. I needed to talk with people who understood...talk(ing) helps with your healing process."*



## From Darkness to Light

The following year was a long, lonely time. *"I contemplated ending my life. I couldn't (even) get a grasp on the depression I was feeling."*

*"There is no time limit on grief."* Lorena



During this time of connecting, grieving, and talking with other mothers, something began to change inside Lorena. While the life of Loreal was over before it even began, Lorena realized that Loreal's memory could be given life. Lorena was the only one who could do this!

She knew that she could not, would not, allow Loreal's short life to be forgotten. She would honor the memory of her baby girl and her life.

But how? During this healing time, that tiny spark those nurses first ignited with the box they gave Lorena began to grow. And that was when she knew.

Lorena would make memory boxes for other mothers who lost their babies!

Lorena remembered how empty that box felt when she left the hospital. She wanted the boxes she made to feel very different from the ones she received. She wanted her memory boxes filled with hope for healing, resources for connecting with an understanding community, and mementos that mothers could treasure.

And it was at this time Lorena realized she had found her healing path.

## The Creation of Project Loreal & Memory Boxes



*"Project Loreal provides custom memory boxes as a gift of remembrance to anyone who has known or has experienced a loss of a pregnancy or infant loss. We journey together and are here to aid you in your healing. The first box was the hardest."* Lorena Topia, Founder, Project Loreal

**"PROJECT LOREAL has helped me cope with my ongoing grief in many ways."**



### Grief Hit Hard

As Lorena assembled the very first memory box made in Loreal's memory, tears fell. *"I cried because it brought it all back."* But Lorena knew this was what she was supposed to do. She delivered that first box to a mother whose baby had died.

They embraced. *"We just hugged; no words were exchanged."* Words were not necessary. Hearts connected. The mother was encouraged and seen. She knew she was no longer alone.

Box number one was all it took for Lorena to know she'd found her way.

*"I didn't have a big budget and still don't. I collect little mementos as I find them. I buy boxes as I can afford them. The more boxes I give, the more calls I receive for boxes. And I am glad about that. There's nothing I love more than knowing these boxes bring a little bit of comfort."* Lorena Tapia, Founder, Project Loreal



Today, Lorena honors Loreal by giving comfort and hope to other families suffering infant loss. She does this first on such a personal level by hand-picking and creating each memory box during her evenings and weekends. Lorena puts each box together with love and compassion, filling them with small, inexpensive but heartfelt mementos. The memory boxes are hand-filled by Lorena. Quietly. Purposefully. With intention.



What touches the heart of one mother could be meaningless to another. She works to restore choice and life to the mother by giving her the most gentle and simple of opportunities: the memory boxes are filled with bits of encouragement, and the boxes are packed so mothers can choose what meets them in their moments of need.



## And Where has the Love and Compassion of this Mother Taken Lorena Tapia?



*"I will continue to support and empathize with other families who have suffered the same pain as myself.*

*I will honor and celebrate Loreal and keep her memory alive for as long as I am on this earth."* Lorena Tapia,  
Mother to Loreal Muldrew



2020 Project Loreal was recognized with the Guidestar Platinum Seal of Transparency award. This recognition acknowledges an organization's transparency and integrity. This award highlights both the character and commitment of Lorena and her work.



2021 Project Loreal was nominated and subsequently won the Valley PBS Neighborhood Mister Roger's Trolley Award. The award honors Mr. Fred Rogers by recognizing someone in the community who stands out by reflecting the attributes and kindness of Mr. Rogers.



To know Lorena is to know kindness, a value she holds in the highest regard. *"As a child, Mr. Rogers instilled within me values and morals. I want to continue to extend that same level of kindness to everyone Project Loreal serves."*



2022 April Project Loreal donated its first Caring Cradle to Reedley Birth Center. Caring Cradles, invented by Wendy Kowalski for hospitals, are sold out of Lakeland, Florida. Caring Cradles are cooling units designed to slow the natural changes after death. This allows families more time to say goodbye to their baby before leaving the hospital. Project Loreal understands how beneficial and essential extra time is to families.



2022 September Project Loreal was gifted a grant of \$2,500 to continue the work of creating and donating memory boxes to families. The grant was from the Central California Women's Conference and their partner PG&E.



2023 April Project Loreal donated their 2nd Caring Cradle to Clovis Medical Center.

## What's Next for Project Loreal?

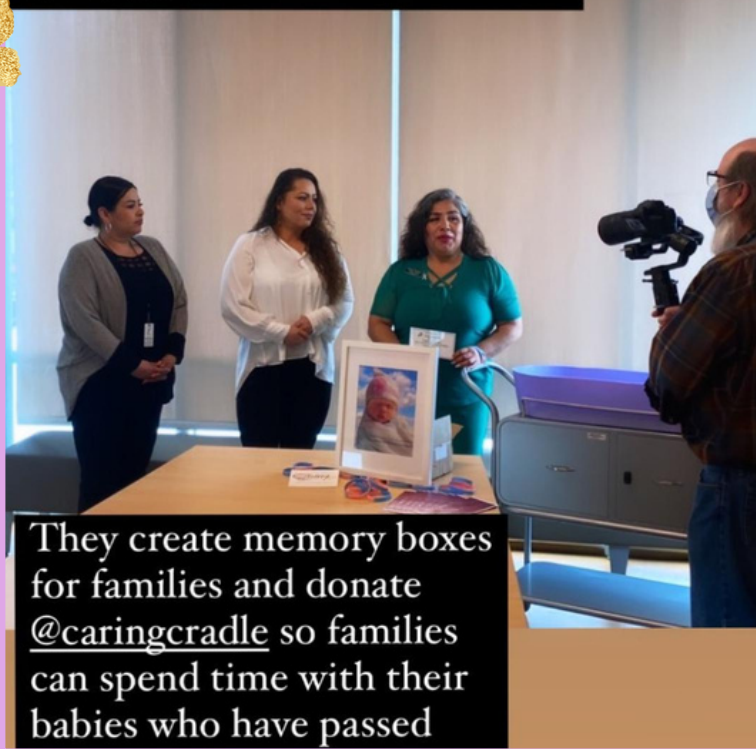
*"My mission is to keep Loreal's memory alive while lending a hand to other grieving parents who are also struggling through this journey called grief. We provide custom memory boxes as a gift of remembrance to anyone who has known or has experienced a loss of a pregnancy or infant loss. We journey together and are here to aid you in your healing."* Lorena

Despite being a 501C (3), Lorena often personally funds these memory boxes.

Finding donations and supporters is not something that she is experienced in. Finding supporters while working full-time and being a single mom leaves her little time to fund raise.



Thank you [@project\\_loreal](#) for sharing your story and providing hope and support to families who grieve an infant loss.



They create memory boxes for families and donate [@caringcradle](#) so families can spend time with their babies who have passed



Lorena is always grateful for any donations, regardless of the amount.

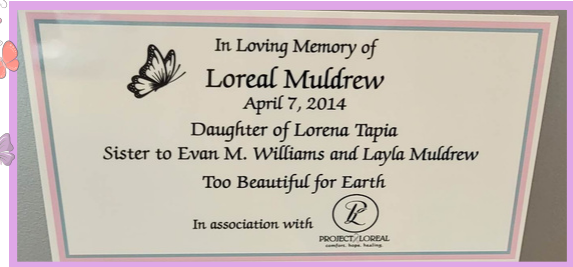




(L-R) Evan Marquis Williams, Lorena, & Loyla Muldrew

Caring Cradle asked Lorena to share two ways she suggests to us on how to support parents and families who have lost an infant, regardless of how the loss occurred.

- 1) give a sympathy gift
- 2) donate to a children's charity or fundraiser in their child's name.



Project Loreal can be found all over the internet.

Their socials include:

Website: <https://projectloreal.com/>

Facebook: ProjectLoreal

Instagram: @ProjectLoreal

Project Loreal invites you to follow them online. Even if your resources are limited, the kindness of a follow and/or a share or comment is a free way anyone can support Lorena's work on behalf of mothers and families struck by the terrible loss of stillbirth and infant death.

Lorena's work will continue regardless. However, fundraising can be a challenging experience, especially for a mom who never intended to sign up for something this difficult.

If you would like to contribute to either another Caring Cradle or the purchase of memory boxes, please get in touch with Lorena at [MyAngelLoreal@yahoo.com](mailto:MyAngelLoreal@yahoo.com). Her gratefulness is boundless and she will make quick use of any donations.

*"I appreciate everything: a kind word; financial support; requests for memory boxes, and donations towards my future work."*

Lorena, mother to Loreal  
Evan Marquis Williams, 10/8/08, brother to Loreal  
Layla Muldrew, 6/10/15, sister to Loreal