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### **Kathy Rutledge, Kentucky State Leader**

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As a high school senior graduating with honors and voted “most likely to succeed,” I was focused so intently on my career goals that I simply ignored all of the signs that I was pregnant. Breaking through my denial, my family insisted that we didn't have the money for another mouth to feed.

With college just a week away, I began to panic. I allowed my mother to transport me out of state to an abortion facility referred to us by our family doctor. After being rejected by three clinics for being too far along, I was referred to a teaching hospital that could take care of it.

Before the procedure, the medical staff assured me that it wasn't a baby yet, just “fetal tissue.” But, looking back, my heart and conscience were telling me something else. As I was being prepped for surgery, I started to get sick and informed the nurse that I had changed my mind. As I started to crawl off the cold metal table, she pushed me back and said it was too late as she put me to sleep.

The next day, I woke up in a hospital room, cramping severely. I didn't realize that the injections administered the day before were forcing my body into violent premature labor. I was totally unprepared to deliver a dead baby all alone, but even the trauma of the procedure paled compared to the immediate profound regret I experienced afterward, wishing I could reverse time and bring my baby back.

For years, I alternated between silent numbness and periods of crying and despair. I couldn't erase my baby's image from my memory, and I continued to grieve over his loss and what might have been. My sacrifice of his life to protect my own from shame

and inconvenience caused me to enter an emotional state of numbness that lasted for many years.

Though no one else condemned me, my own heart pounded the truth – this baby was unique and couldn't be replaced. Even the births of two additional sons did not replace my sense of loss over my aborted child. The choice that had seemed so simple – to get out of my predicament and get on with my life – delivered me instead into a depressive tailspin that threatened my own life.

Struggling to get over my secret pain, I eventually attended a healing retreat for post-abortive women where I received a deeper healing and forgiveness that I didn't think was possible. Naming my unborn child also provided a focus for my grief and acknowledging him through a few simple words of dedication at a memorial service broke the shackles of my personal pain, brought closure to my grief and set me free.

Through God's grace, I now look forward to holding my aborted child one day in Heaven. Until then, I will be his voice to reach out to other post-abortive women who are still suffering in silence to let them know that they are not alone in their grief and that God is the healer of hearts broken by abortion.

Realizing that my son was not a mistake, but a gift from God, has made me realize that none of us are mistakes. He has a special plan for each of us.

*Kathy Rutledge is the Kentucky State Contact for Operation Outcry. She is also the Chairman of the Kentucky Memorial for the Unborn established to provide a sacred place of closure and healing for those who have lost an unborn child, the Kentucky Regional Coordinator for the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, and a co-facilitator of a church support group for women who are suffering after abortions. A mother of two wonderful teen-age sons, she is a Certified Public Accountant, an avid tennis player and lives in Lexington, KY. You may contact her at KYMemorial@aol.com.*



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Restoring Justice*