

CHARITABLE WORK

Group helps mothers bear with grief

Bears for Bereaved Mommies is holding a candlelight vigil tonight

BY DAVID KELLY

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A non-profit pregnancy and infant loss organization in Saint John puts a lot of love into each of its projects.

Founded by Terra-Lynn Coggan, Bears For Bereaved Mommies offers handmade bears to mothers who would otherwise go home empty-handed following a pregnancy or infant loss.

Ms. Coggan, a victim of four pregnancy losses, has organized the group's first public event, a candlelight vigil at 6:30 tonight at the Millennium Dome near the Garden Street Irving in Saint John.

"They deserve to be remembered," Ms. Coggan said.

Bears for Bereaved Mommies had originally intended to do a balloon launch, but complaints about potential environmental hazards prompted Ms. Coggan and her committee to chose a vigil instead.

"We are for the preservation of life and that is all life alike," Ms. Coggan said.

The idea for such an organization took root after Ms. Coggan's nephew, Riley Joseph, was born still last year.

After presenting Riley's mother, her sister, with a bear, Ms. Coggan thought all mothers who experience such a loss should have a gift to remember their child.

Ms. Coggan has given out about 10 more since that first bear one year ago. Each of the winged-bears is made by a volunteer and bares the group's pink and blue remembrance ribbon.

"We raise money through remembrance items that we make available to bereaved families," she said. "The money is then turned over to buy the materials necessary to run our organization."

Bears For Bereaved Mommies supplies all materials to volunteers making the bears.

Over the last year, Ms. Coggan has been extending the service to hospitals and

local funeral homes with bereavement programs. One day she hopes Bears for Bereaved Mommies can gain national and North American status.

"We certainly would like to be able to have our numbers of bears we give out be a small number," she said, "but we want to make sure everybody who does require a bear after a pregnancy or infant loss is getting a bear."