



Huge Tucson Art Installation Unveiled

for Immediate Release

September 20, 2023

Huge Community Art Project Makes Infant Loss Visible

The first-ever exhibition of 20,000+ handmade baby booties

Tucson, AZ— October 21, 2023 —The Mourning Project will co-host, with the March of Dimes Arizona Market and the Center for Compassion, the first-ever complete exhibition of this huge community art project at Children’s Memorial Park, 4875 North 15th Place in Tucson from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The event coincides with Infant Loss Awareness Month. The installation is 50’ by 38’.

Thousands of makers from around the world have created a little elegy—a pair of handmade baby booties—to honor each American infant lost before her first birthday each year. The United States has the worst infant mortality rate in the developed world, a fact that the *Washington Post* called “a national embarrassment.”

“By ‘drawing’ a picture of this problem, we can understand the enormity of it and begin a discussion about what we can do to save little lives.” said Mary Vaneecke, the founder of The Mourning Project. “This art installation is like the problem of infant mortality itself; we all need to contribute to solve this puzzle.”

What Our Co-Hosts Say

Shadie Tofigh, Director of Maternal/Infant Health at March of Dimes emphasizes: “In the U.S., infant mortality remains alarmingly high. With 2 babies lost per hour, it's an urgent call for lawmakers and the community to unite, drive proven solutions, and stand by grieving families.”

Terri Waibel, Clinical Director at Center for Compassion states: “The death of a baby can have absolutely devastating immediate and long-term effects on the family system. It is critical that the

community has increased awareness of this issue to better understand how to support grieving individuals and families after the death of a child."

What Makers Say

Thousands of makers have contributed baby booties to the project. "It was a very cathartic project for me, and I appreciated the opportunity to make booties to honor our grandson Maxwell," said one maker "...I can't thank you enough for heading up such an important project for awareness of infant mortality and for loved ones to make peace with their loss." Merle Eintracht, a knitter from southern Arizona wrote, "My love is in every stitch."

Schedule of Events

- 10:00 a.m. **University of Arizona student athletes** roll out 20,000 baby booties
- 11:00 a.m. Acknowledgements and A Call to Action
- 11:30 a.m. Group photo of installation with makers
- See the **March of Dimes Mom and Baby Mobile Health Center**
- Make a pair of baby booties
- Learn about the issue and what you can do to help.
- Visit the **League of Women Voters** booth to learn about the next election.
- 1:00 p.m. Exhibition closes

The event is sponsored in part by Cathey's Sew and Vac and DroneHouse Photography.

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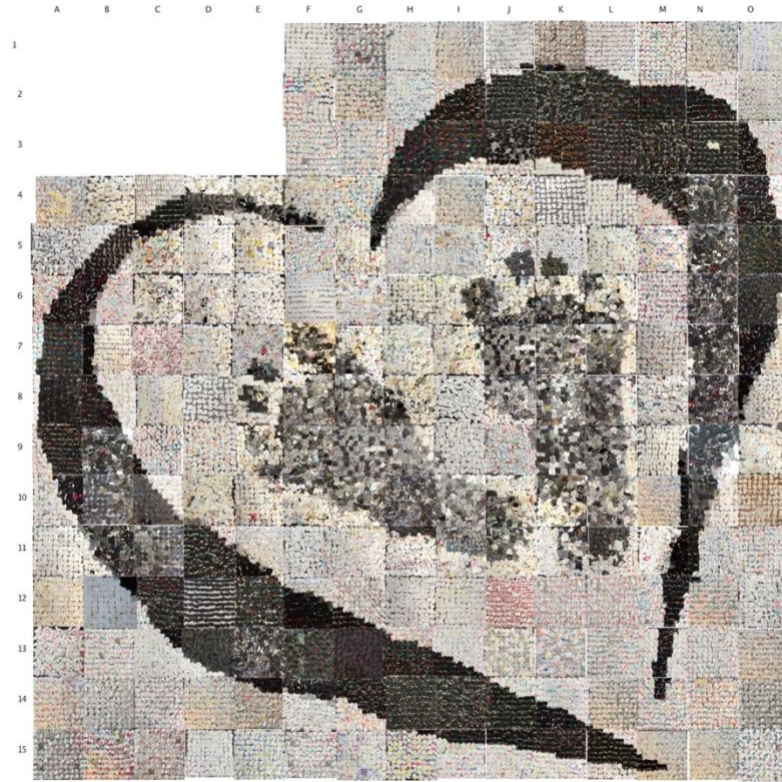
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For more information on The Mourning Project, go to: <https://themourningproject.com>



Aerial view of 20,000+ baby booties. Complete installation is 50' by 38.'

Image by Janet Windsor



The Mourning Project, installation view, detail. Photo by Mary Vanecke

Background Information

March of Dimes: Fights for the health of all moms and babies.

For more information: [About us | March of Dimes](#)

Infant Mortality Data in the United States and Arizona from March of Dimes PeriStats

webpage: [Home | PeriStats | March of Dimes](#)

United States Data

- In the United States in 2019, 20,969 infants died before reaching their first birthday, an infant mortality rate of 5.6 per 1,000 live births.
- Between 2009 and 2019, the infant mortality rate in the United States declined more than 12%.
- In 2019, 66.1% of infant deaths occurred in the neonatal period, and 33.9% occurred in the postneonatal period.
- Some of the leading causes of infant death in the United States include the following: birth defects; prematurity/low birthweight; sudden infant death syndrome; maternal complications of pregnancy and respiratory distress syndrome.
- In the United States in 2019, the rate of perinatal mortality was 5.6 per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths.

Arizona Data

- In Arizona in 2019, 431 infants died before reaching their first birthday, an infant mortality rate of 5.4 per 1,000 live births.
- Between 2009 and 2019, the infant mortality rate in Arizona declined 10%.
- In 2019, 61.1% of infant deaths occurred in the neonatal period, and 38.5% occurred in the postneonatal period.
- Some of the leading causes of infant death in the United States include the following: birth defects; prematurity/low birthweight; sudden infant death syndrome; maternal complications of pregnancy and respiratory distress syndrome.
- In Arizona in 2019, the rate of perinatal mortality was 5.6 per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths.