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Labyrinth to offer solace to grieving parents

By: Tamara Lindstrom

For many who suffer the loss of a child before birth or in the first days of life, grieving is a silent process. But as our Tamara Lindstrom reports, a new project brings to light the pain of loss and the celebration of life.



ITHACA, N.Y. -- It's a defeat, darkening what should have been one of life's brightest days.

"We lost our son to stillbirth November 3rd, almost two years ago," said James Cherian.

Just days before he would meet his parents, baby Cyrus' life was already over.

"He died at 39 weeks," Cherian said. "So it shook everything about us because we're waiting for this new baby to come. We already have a daughter. She was looking forward to being a big sister, and all of a sudden he's not there anymore."

But it's a grief many bear in silence.

"Perinatal loss is a lot more silent," said Kate Dimpfl of Ithaca's Perinatal Loss Support Group. "It's secretive. I mean, it's so personal and private. It's a private part of someone's life to have a child. And so it's not really talked about."

But soon, Cyrus' parents will have a place to go to remember their son: a bulb labyrinth built in Ithaca's Children's Garden.

"I think it's important to have this, not only to have people have a space to memorialize their children, but to acknowledge their role as parents even though it was brief," Dimpfl said.

A winding stone path through 30,000 blooming bulbs will give families a place to contemplate and honor the deaths of their children, but also a place to celebrate their short lives.

"Labyrinths have a huge role across cultures and for many hundreds of years in offering a place for contemplation, meditation, healing," said Erin Marteau, executive director of the Ithaca Children's Garden. "And bulbs, as well, really symbolize hope and the natural rhythms of the seasons."

"It also brings out the beauty of it," Cherian said. "We don't want to just look at the sad parts of us having lost our son, but even the nine months of him growing inside my wife. That was something real."

A beauty to be reflected in the ever changing garden, when the bulbs open for the first time next year.

The group has raised about half of the \$30,000 needed to build the garden.

For more information, or to help, visit www.ithacachildrengarden.org/bulb-labyrinth.html.

