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THE SUN, LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

A tale of sorrow and grace

Chelmsford native Kara Glad's book helps children understand the loss of a premature baby

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Most children's stories start with "once upon a time." They involve kings, queens and knights in shining armor in a land far away, a long time ago. For author Kara Glad, her children's book was based upon an event that happened only two and a half years ago — in Connecticut.

No unicorns, no fairy princesses and no big red dogs. Just a girl named, Katie, and a baby boy named, Ryan.

Heaven's Brightest Star is a short story with a lesson. Only child Katie is excited about becoming a big sister, until her brother Ryan is born prematurely. Katie doesn't understand why her baby brother cannot come home from the hospital and even asks her father if she had anything to do with his eventual passing.

Glad, who now lives in Knoxville, Tenn., experienced a similar situation when her first child, Ryan, was born 16 weeks early on Jan. 28, 2005. He only survived four days.

At the time, the Chelmsford native was a second-grade teacher in Trumbull, Conn. Her students waited anxiously for Mrs. Glad's return to share in the joy of her newborn son. Unfortunately, the principal and social worker had to explain to them what had happened.

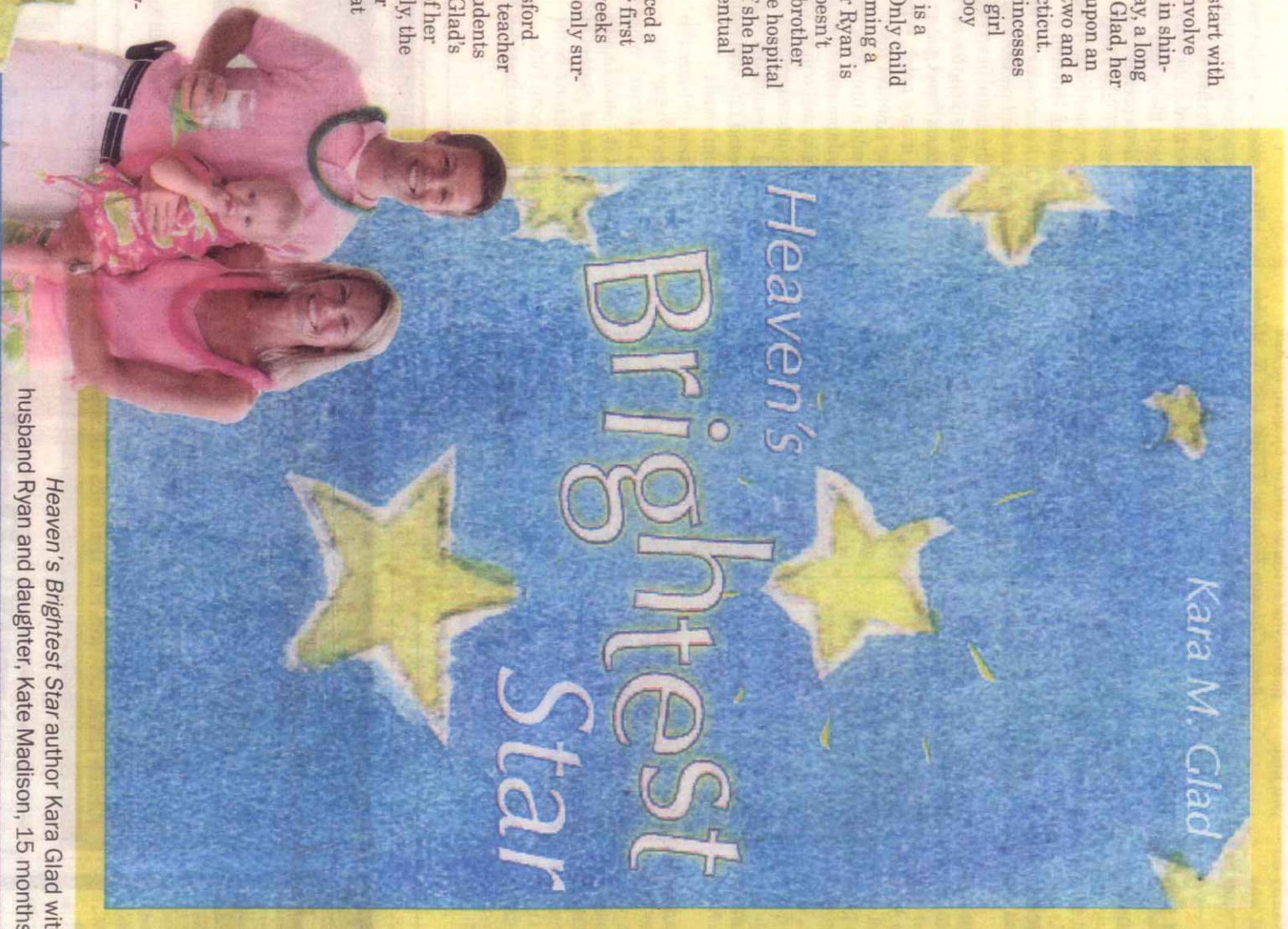
"They had a difficult time. They didn't realize how many questions and tears (there would be ... did doctors give enough medicine, did we do anything, is Mrs. Glad OK? I remember being really nervous to return to the classroom," said Glad.

The tragedy of losing her son and the experience she shared with her students inspired Glad to pen a book. She realized there was a lack of books for young children detailing with discretion what happens when a baby is born prematurely, which happens to 500,000 babies annually in the U.S.

"I had a goal to write a children's book and this helped me through the healing process," she by phone from her home in Knoxville.

Part of Glad's mission is to get copies of *Heaven's Brightest Star* into bereavement packets available at neonatal intensive care units. Lowell General Hospital recently purchased 100 copies of *Heaven's Brightest Star*.

"Personally, I have not come across a



Heaven's Brightest Star author Kara Glad with husband Ryan and daughter, Kate Madison, 15 months.

book like this in my travels," said Tina Santos, the director of Maternal Child Health Services at the hospital. "Most support is geared toward the parents. It is a wonderful tool to have."

Santos came across the book when a colleague brought it to her attention. Now, she is recommending it to other professionals and organizations.

"It's not only useful in neonatal care, it's a book that transcends all perspectives ... this is support not just for kids, but everyone involved in any situation," said Santos.

Glad, then Kara Main, graduated from Chelmsford High School in 1993. After receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Villanova Uni-

versity, she taught kindergarten in West Chester, Pa., then in Connecticut. She now lives in Knoxville with her husband, Ryan, and their 15-month-old daughter, Kate Madison. Glad volunteers much of her time to the March of Dimes, speaking at events and donating money from her book sales to the cause.

"For such a tragic experience, my purpose is helping others. I am not looking for recognition. I just want those who lost their baby to know that they are not alone," she said.

To purchase "*Heaven's Brightest Star*" e-mail kglad1@yahoo.com or go to <http://www.heavensbrightest-star.org>. Each book is \$10 and a portion of sales will be donated to the March of Dimes.