



Tara Hansen

As told by Tara's husband, Ryan Hansen.



"For 36 hours we celebrated a homecoming..."

It was March 25, 2011, and the day had finally arrived. After years of dreaming about becoming a mother, Tara Hansen had spent the previous nine months preparing with her husband and high-school sweetheart, Ryan Hansen, for the arrival of their first child and the start of their new life together as a family.

No detail was missed in preparation. Nursery items were purchased and put away for safekeeping. Doctor's visits were scheduled and plans were made for the delivery. And, as a lifelong athlete and model of good health, Tara was vigilant about maintaining her healthy lifestyle during pregnancy—eating well, staying fit, and fully committing herself to those regular, recommended prenatal appointments. She used to joke with her family that she was the first pregnant woman to crave spinach and mushrooms, not ice cream.

Hers was not a "high-risk" pregnancy, and there were no red flags of any potential problems before delivery.

Yet, just six days after giving birth to a healthy, 9 pound 4 ounce baby boy, Brandon Ryan, at a hospital close to the family's home, Tara passed away as a result of complications due to childbirth.

"Between our two hospital stays, we spent 36 hours at home as Mom, Dad, and baby. Thirty-six hours looking for all the things we had 'conveniently' put away. Thirty-six hours to laugh with each other, and to love one another as a family. For 36 hours we celebrated a homecoming that was a lifetime in the making. That's it," Ryan recalled.

"Ultimately, Tara's death was attributed to an infection from a third-degree tear that

had gone unnoticed and uncontrolled, neither caught early enough nor treated aggressively enough to make a difference in saving Tara's life," he said.

The condition that cost Tara her life had not come entirely without warning. She began to feel unwell in the hospital after delivery, taking the time to speak to her health care providers about her concerns and suspicions that her body did not feel the way it was supposed to. But Tara was considered a healthy postpartum patient and therefore sent home.

"In my experience, the only person who knew something was wrong was Tara, and she was right. To me it appeared that her complaints just kept falling on deaf ears, with everyone assuming that the pain she was describing was to be 'expected' because she just had a baby," Ryan said.

Following this experience, Ryan wanted to be a part of enhancing the way health care providers communicate with patients. Listening to patients' concerns and not assuming they're part of the norm may make a difference in helping to prevent maternal morbidity and mortality.

With a firm belief that sharing Tara's story has the ability to possibly make things better for the next patient, wife, mother, or family member, Ryan launched The Tara Hansen Foundation in 2012 and now shares the message about the importance of maternal health and safety.

Ryan sees the foundation's mission of education and raising awareness—the first steps toward real change—as a fitting memorial for the devoted elementary school special education teacher who, with her passing, left her husband with "her final lesson plan, her most important lecture." It is one he fully intends to see passed on, to be a part of the educational initiatives that it is hoped will enhance a safer, more successful birth experience for all.

One of the educational initiatives the foundation hopes to support is the idea of **Stop, Look, and Listen!**—a reimagined safety campaign to focus on maternal health and safety. Ryan is pleased to be collaborating with the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists through their Safe Motherhood Initiative.