

State Council Program Awards

Entry Form

ENTRY MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE STATE COUNCIL TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE COMPETITION
THIS REPORTING FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BY EACH COUNCIL AND FORWARDED TO THE STATE COUNCIL.
(A separate reporting form should be completed for each program category.)

CATEGORY (MARK ONE): Faith Family Community Life

COUNCIL INFORMATION:

1 Council Number: 3230 Total Council Members: 108
Grand Knight: Jeffrey T. Kerner E-Mail: gk3230@mikofc.org

PROGRAM INFORMATION (complete all sections):

2 Program Title: Restoration of Babyland Program Date: September 2020
Participation: 12 Members + 9 Non Members = 21 Total Participants 487 Total Volunteer Hours
Program Planning: \$5,138 Costs & 487 hrs Time Members Recruited: 2 Donations: \$15,000 Local Currency

3 Describe the program in full detail using the space below and on page 2. Programs must be organized by the council or involve significant participation by council members to qualify. Programs must also engage members by enhancing faith and spirituality, serving a charitable purpose, or a combination of the two. Program descriptions should reference how they meet these criteria. Along with the description of the program, provide the program's purpose, goals, accomplishments and why it deserves to win the award.

Supplementary material may be submitted along with the nomination. Accompanying materials can include letters, testimonials, news clippings, photographs, pamphlets, etc. Do not submit tapes, videocassettes, DVD's, display materials, films, etc., as they will not be considered in judging the nomination.

The essay in these two windows is duplicated/accompanied with supporting materials (in its entirety) in the attachment.

In 2019, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ypsilanti, MI, at the encouragement of Dr. Alvin Rudisil, parishioner and PGK, established a Cemetery Restoration and Preservation Advisory Board. Most of the original members were Knights of Columbus Council 3230, and remain on the board today. It was determined that of the many areas throughout the cemetery that required attention, the most obviously pressing one was the area referred to as "Babyland".

DO NOT SUBMIT THIS REPORT FORM TO SUPREME COUNCIL

MAIL ORIGINAL TO: State Deputy or State Program Director

COPY TO: Council File

Available in electronic format at www.kofc.org



(continued on reverse)

Continue your program description in the space below.

The purpose of this project was to restore, update and dignify the area. This area is designated for the interment of babies (aged preborn to 3 yrs. old). The earliest date identified was 1939 and burials continue to this day. Out of the approximately 330 total burial sites in this area, 68 already had family-provided permanent markers, 160+ sites had either no marker or a "temporary" aluminum marker, many of which were provided by funeral homes at the time of the burial. Many of the temporary markers were broken, misplaced, illegible, or missing vital information. The goal of this project was to provide these 160+ sites with a suitable grave marker and to restore this area to a dignified resting place for the babies interred therein.

The project was formally begun in the spring of 2021. The first phase of the project was to create and initiate a fund-raising drive for the entire cemetery highlighting the priority of Babyland. The mailing resulted in raising \$45,000, of which \$15,000 was specified by some donors for the Babyland project. We were overwhelmed and grateful, praising God's blessings! The next step was to rectify and verify, through several sources of available information and cemetery maps, the accuracy of the data. Once the information was verified, we proceeded to purchase, engrave and set the pavers in the appropriate locations. In addition to the 160+ baby markers that were placed in Babyland, numbers were placed on the rows and columns. The map of Babyland was also updated to make it easier to navigate to specific grave sites.

The greatest accomplishment is that an appropriate and dignified space has been properly and respectfully restored for these babies. As a result of this project, families have an easier time finding the exact location of their baby. It also benefits those who, unfortunately, may suffer the loss of a baby in the future, knowing that their child will have a sacred and dignified burial site. The entire cemetery has been enhanced by the Babyland restoration.

Many people who visit the cemetery have commented about the dramatic improvements in the dignity, beautification and overall appearance of Babyland. Many people have noticed more visitors to Babyland, more flowers and other remembrances being placed on the sites. This has occurred on Memorial Day, Easter, and Christmas as well as throughout the year.

Another rewarding aspect of this project has been the fellowship and camaraderie that was developed and experienced by all who have volunteered, including many Knights, parishioners and a seminarian. This experience brought us all closer to Jesus and to living our faith as He calls us to do. The final phase of this project is to select and place an appropriate memorial marker to all unborn babies and the babies resting in peace in Babyland now and in the future.

We believe that the Knights of Columbus, Council 3230 deserves to win the 2024 Knights of Columbus State Council Program Award for Faith in Action for the following reasons:

The last act of dignity that is bestowed on every person is a proper and honorable burial after death. The consignment of the body to the grave is the last tribute, the final honor each of us receives. Three years ago, The Knights of Columbus recognized the need to restore the dignity of the area of Babyland that had been long neglected, undignified and was not honoring the precious deceased babies therein. We chose to restore Babyland not because it would be an easy project, but rather because it was the right thing to do.

The Knights believe and encourage "Respect for Life" and we have sincerely acted upon that belief. In an era when "Respect for Life" is continually being devalued by many in our society (especially the lives of the unborn and very young) we chose to live our faith and honor our belief in respecting all lives by restoring Babyland to a more fitting and dignified area. We want all to know who visit Babyland that these deceased babies now have a fitting, dignified, respectful and honorable burial site. These babies are not forgotten; their short God-given lives mattered and that we, as Knights, with God's blessings and guidance, have done our best to make this happen.

Signed: _____



Grand Knight

14Feb2024

Date

Restoration

† *of* †

Babylonia

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Psalm 139:13-16

Table of Contents

Page	
1	Project Kick-off and Fundraising Effort
2	Intro and Purpose
4	Plot Map Accuracy
5	Help Needed!
5	Help Showed Up
6	Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!
7	Respect and Dignity
9	Last Act of Dignity
9	Key Participants, Roles, and Acknowledgements
10	Testimonials
11	That's a Wrap

Project Kick-off and Fundraising Effort



St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

411 Florence Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Office Phone: 734-483-3360

Website: www.ypsilanticatholic.com

St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery

1400 North River Street, Ypsilanti, MI

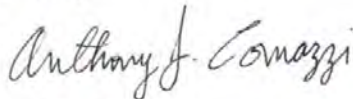
St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was founded in Ypsilanti in 1845 and our cemetery was founded in 1865. The cemetery is the sacred, final resting place for deceased members of many members of the Catholic community in Ypsilanti.

In 2019 the parish formed a **Cemetery Restoration and Preservation Advisory Board** to begin a program involving the repair and restoration of the cemetery. To date this has included upgrading the onsite office, updating the entrance way gating and signage and the overall appearance of various portions of the cemetery.

One area that is particularly in need of restoration, and our current highest priority, is what is now called "Babyland". We intend to restore and improve the overall appearance of this sacred space to make it a more dignified resting place and memorial to the infants and children buried there. This will include the purchasing, engraving and placement of markers on all identifiable plots where there are no markers, missing markers, or temporary aluminum markers.

We are hopeful that you will consider making a tax deductible donation in support of this program for the restoration and upgrading of Babyland. Checks should be made out to **St. John the Baptist Catholic Church with Cemetery Preservation** in the memo and mailed in the return envelope enclosed. If you are aware of others who have family members buried in our Babyland, please pass this information on to them or have them contact me directly. St. John is a (501c-3) organization. Federal Tax ID: 38-1358405

Sincerely,



Anthony J. Comazzi, Chair – Cemetery Advisory Board (734-649-7138)
St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery

Kick-off and Fundraising Letter

Intro and Purpose

In 2019, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ypsilanti, MI, at the encouragement of Dr. Alvin Rudisil, parishioner and PGK, established a Cemetery Restoration and Preservation Advisory Board. Most of the original members were Knights of Columbus Council 3230, and remain on the board today. It was determined that of the many areas throughout the cemetery that required attention, the most obviously pressing one was the area referred to as “Babyland”.

The purpose of this project was to restore, update and dignify the area. This area is designated for the interment of babies (aged preborn to 3 yrs. old). The earliest date identified was 1939 and burials continue to this day. Out of the approximately 330 total burial sites in this area, 68 already had family-provided permanent markers, 160+ sites had either no marker or a “temporary” aluminum marker, many of which were provided by funeral homes at the time of the burial. Many of the temporary markers were broken, misplaced, illegible, or missing vital information. The goal of this project was to provide these 160+ sites with a suitable grave marker and to restore this area to a dignified resting place for the babies interred therein.



Temporary Markers



More Temporary Markers

The project was formally begun in the spring of 2021. The first phase of the project was to create and initiate a fund-raising drive for the entire cemetery highlighting the priority of Babyland. The mailing resulted in raising \$45,000, of which \$15,000 was specified by some donors for the Babyland project. We were overwhelmed and grateful, praising God's blessings!

Help Needed!

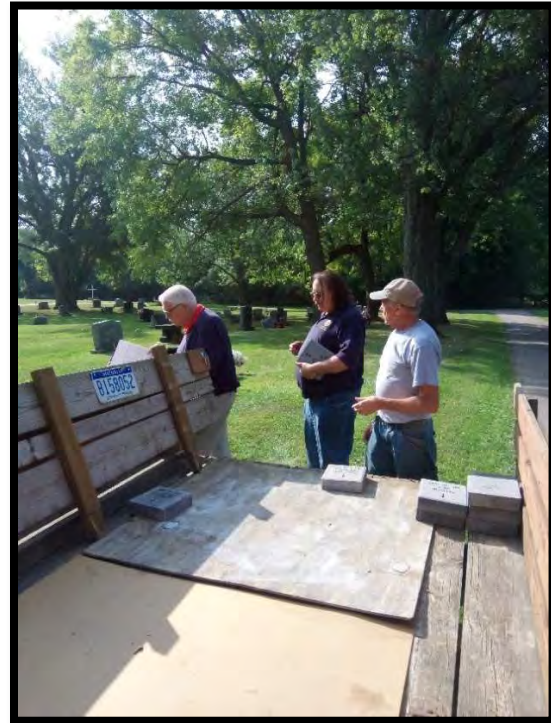
BULLETIN ARTICLE WE NEED YOUR HELP

Several years ago, The St. John Cemetery Board took on the mission to renovate a part of the cemetery that has been referred to as “Babyland” where babies of our parish (3 yrs. and under) have been buried. We have procured a dignified marker for each of the initial 144 gravesites that have no permanent marker.

These markers now have to be set. If you can help with this important ministry please join us at the cemetery on Saturday, September 17, 2022 at 9:00 am. If you have questions please call the parish office at 734-483-3360”.

NOTE: This is the article placed in the St. John requesting volunteers to help with digging of holes to set the first 144 engraved markers. The response was overwhelming. See thank you bulletin article on separate page.

Help Showed Up



Al Rudisill (PGK), Fred, Daryl “Let’s lay it out and get to work”



Tony (Chairman & DGK), Jeff (GK), Dean (PSW), Charley (PGK)

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

BULLETIN ARTICLE

"THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!"

We asked and they came! Thanks to God and to all who answered the call. Last Saturday, 9/17, twenty one people came to the Baby Land section of St. John's Cemetery to help with the final phase of restoring this area to a respectful, dignified and sacred resting place for the youngest of our parish family.

This project was initiated over two years ago by the St. John Cemetery Restoration and Preservation Advisory Board with the St. John Knights of Columbus Council 3230. The task was to identify all the burial sites in this section that had no markers, missing markers or "temporary" tin markers that were badly damaged or otherwise unsightly, and have an appropriate marker made and put in the respective places. After much work of checking and cross checking names and locations, the pavers were ordered, engraved and have now been set in place thanks to the help of the following people who came on the 17th: *Tom, Paul, Jeff, Charlie, Doris A, Colleen, David and Michael, Tom and Maria, Ed, Mark and Caleb, Maralee, Jackie, Dean R, Fred, Mickey, Daryl, and Al.*

My personal and special thanks to Al, Daryl and Mickey who worked tirelessly for the past three years on the preparatory work and heavy lifting to make this project a success.

Tony Comazzi

Deputy Grand Knight, Knights of Columbus Council 3230 Chairman, St. John Cemetery Restoration and Preservation Advisory Board"

NOTE: This is the thank you article submitted for the St. John bulletin after this overwhelming response to our request for help in Babyland on September 17, 2022. It should be noted that the four hours volunteered by the nine non-members that Saturday was the total of each of their hours for the entire project. Last names have been eliminated for privacy and safety reasons.

Respect and Dignity



Respect

Many people who visit the cemetery have commented about the dramatic improvements in the dignity, beautification and overall appearance of Babyland. Many people have noticed more visitors to Babyland, more flowers and other remembrances being placed on the sites. This has occurred on Memorial Day, Easter, and Christmas as well as throughout the year.



Dignity

Another rewarding aspect of this project has been the fellowship and camaraderie that was developed and experienced by all who have volunteered, including many Knights, parishioners and a seminarian. This experience brought us all closer to Jesus and to living our faith as He calls us to do. The final phase of this project is to select and place an appropriate memorial marker to all unborn babies and the babies resting in peace in Babyland now and in the future.

Last Act of Dignity

We believe that the Knights of Columbus, Council 3230 deserves to win the 2024 Knights of Columbus State Council Program Award for Faith in Action for the following reasons:

The last act of dignity that is bestowed on every person is a proper and honorable burial after death. The consignment of the body to the grave is the last tribute, the final honor each of us receives. Three years ago, The Knights of Columbus recognized the need to restore the dignity of the area of Babyland that had been long neglected, undignified and was not honoring the precious deceased babies therein. We chose to restore Babyland not because it would be an easy project, but rather because it was the right thing to do.

The Knights believe and encourage “Respect for Life” and we have sincerely acted upon that belief. In an era when “Respect for Life” is continually being devalued by many in our society (especially the lives of the unborn and very young) we chose to live our faith and honor our belief in respecting all lives by restoring Babyland to a more fitting and dignified area. We want all to know who visit Babyland that these deceased babies now have a fitting, dignified, respectful and honorable burial site. These babies are not forgotten; their short God-given lives mattered and that we, as Knights, with God’s blessings and guidance, have done our best to make this happen.

Key Participants, Roles, and Acknowledgements

Al Rudisill did all early research regarding record verification. There were multiple card and paper record files including maps. Many errors were discovered, data missing, and many discrepancies needing research, correcting, and resolve. Al played a major role in organizing the initial fund drive.

Daryl Sell spent endless hours updating and rectifying information cross checking with various sources then digitizing to Excel format with the anticipation of one day uploading to a cemetery management software product. Daryl assisted Mickey Ichesco and Tony Comazzi with purchasing multiple 50 lb. bags of Paver Base and Leveling Sand and digging initial 15 +/- holes to determine the ideal size and depth of each to get an accurate determination of how to best set the engraved markers. Daryl marked each row and column in Babyland to assure accuracy when digging holes and settling the markers.

Tony Comazzi did considerable research to organize the necessary information and best format to use when uploading information to the memorial company responsible for engraving the markers. Tony purchased many bags of Paver Base and Leveling Sand and delivered these to the cemetery shed. Tony was also involved with digging initial 15 +/- placement sites. Tony organized the Saturday work day and the bulletin articles requesting help and the thank you article.

Mickey Ichesco along with Tony did all of the purchasing of the 166 paver markers in Ann Arbor and transporting them to the engraver in Northville. Once engraved, Mickey and Tony picked them up and delivered them to the cemetery in time for the designated Saturday work day. They made six such trips to do all 166 markers. Mickey also had a hand digging initial 15 +/- holes placement sites.

Tom, Paul, Jeff, Charlie, Doris, Colleen, David, Michael, Tom, Maria, Ed, Mark, Caleb, Maralee, Jackie, Dean, and Fred all helped out on Saturday, 9/17, helping dig and place 144 engraved baby markers.

The above list of key participants and their roles are worthy of acknowledgment and 'Thank You'. There is no intention to leave anyone from this list. One day we will come before Him and be judged and He will know.

Testimonials

"The Babyland section of St. John Cemetery was in dire need of upgrading when the Knights of Columbus took on the task. Comments from people who visit the cemetery have been positive and appreciative of the new, clean look of the markers identifying each infant buried there."

-Janice

"As an owner of plots at St. John cemetery, it has been truly heartwarming to see the transformation of Babyland. God bless the Knights of Columbus Council 3230 for all of their hard work in honoring the sweet little souls of Babyland."

-Terri

"After growing up in Ypsilanti, and seeing "Baby Land" many times during visits to St. John's cemetery, it was a beautiful, refreshing sight to recently see it go from disarray to an organized, peaceful, reverent area to honor the short-lived lives of many babies. Much praise and thanks to the Knights of Columbus for their hard work and dedication to make this an area for families and friends to be able to locate and commemorate their loved ones."

-Gina

"I have many family members buried at St. John's cemetery and the appearance of the restored Babyland is an amazing improvement to the property. More importantly, with thanks to the Knights of Columbus Council 3230, it is a wonderful tribute to all of the babies buried there."

-John

"I would like to thank and honor the K of C Council 3230 for their commitment to the Babyland area of the St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery in Ypsilanti Michigan. There were many plots with no markers or "temporary" markers badly damaged and illegible. As a member of St John's Catholic Church, I am very grateful that the Knights dedicated themselves to this project which has beautified and dignified this area of the cemetery. God Bless the Knights!"

-Laurie

"Babyland is now a beautiful spiritual and dignified place to help ease the emotions of such an unfortunate life event between a mother, father, and young life."

-Cathy

That's a Wrap

*The selection of **Restoring of Babyland** evolved out of a need to dignify and organize a neglected area of St. John Cemetery. Many Brother Knights were and are still on the cemetery board so this project was a natural fit to see through. This is only a small percentage of testimonial published to put into perspective that this was truly a worthy project to be witnessed by many.*

Vivat Jesus,



Jeffrey Kerner
Grand Knight 3230



† RESTORATION OF BABYLAND †

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church Cemetery Ypsilanti, Michigan
Knights of Columbus Council 3230
March 1, 2024