Create an Info Site

Contributed by Laura
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For people who feel a need to "do something", two things often spring to mind: creating a website, or writing a book. I won't cover writing a book here, but I can offer some help in creating an informational website. This is something more than a Memorial website. An Info Site attempts to address common questions, fears, and needs in a more direct way than a Memorial website. You can do it with no investment except time if you feel a need to do so.

Getting Software - You can get free software to make web pages. You have to learn how to use it, but there are two that I can recommend as being usable and free. Search Google for them. Web Dwarf is a web page builder that uses objects that you can layer on a page. NVU is a web site creator that will let you use tables, and page templates to build a site. NVU is the more functional of the two. I will be writing instructions for making a page with each of them as soon as I get a little time!

Making a site - Basic Site instructions are available at: http://www.onlinecomputerinstruction.com/.

Using Templates - A template can REALLY save you time! A basic template has a design that you can add your personal information to. If you decide to make a site, then find a template you like, or make one with just the page layout and colors done. The next step either way is to add your site title at the top of the page, and a picture there if you want to. Put your navigation links in, and link them to the pages you plan to make (make the links BEFORE you make the pages!). Basic navigation links usually include About Us, Contact, Email, Resources (or Links), and links to each of your information pages. Put your copyright info at the bottom of the page. THEN you can duplicate your page for each of the pages you plan to make. That saves you having to put the same links on every page manually. When you want to add a page later on, you can just make a copy of one of your other pages and use it for a template, just replace the content.

Webspace - You can use webspace that comes with your ISP account (internet accounts usually have a little bit of space to use for a website), or you can use free space through Tripod, Geocities, Yahoo, Netfirms, etc. If you use free space you will have ads that you cannot control on your site. No matter how you do it, the server company will have a web page with instructions on what you need to know to upload the site into the space.

Ads - You can place ads on your website if you choose. With a serious subject, it may be appropriate or not. Google Adsense ads are placed on your site and are chosen by what your site keywords are. This can backfire sometimes, but is probably the most accurate type of advertising for a site with sensitive subject matter. This kind of advertising is called "content based". We chose to put ads on our site because we spend a lot of time doing this, and we have it in paid web space. We can justify spending more time on it if we get something back for our time. You must choose for yourself whether you think you want to do that or not.

Information - What kind of information are you going to present? You cannot present medical information if you are not a doctor. You can give opinions on medical information if you state that it is just your opinion. The best way to decide what to present is to think about what you worried about, and what helped you, or what you learned. Start with telling people about that. You can also ask other people what they felt, or what they did. You can find information that you think is good on the web, and provide links to it. And when people email you, you can ask them if you can quote them, if they say something you think is good. There are lots of cheap ways to get information to help others. You cannot quote anyone (written words), or any other website without their permission.

Keywords - A search engine lists your site by keywords. They are the words that other people use to find you. Make sure you use the keywords in what you write. If you are writing about Carrying to Term with an Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis, then include the words Continue, Pregnancy, Birth, Negative, Poor, etc, in your text on the first page of your site. Do that

even if you DO know how to put in Metatags with keywords on them (where you can put even more words), because some search engines will ignore all keywords that are not included in the text on the page.

Getting Your Site Noticed - You can read about tips for marketing a website at http://www.effectivefreemarketing.com/. The most effective type of promotion for this kind of site though, is link exchanging. It is hard to figure out what to look for when you first start looking, so if someone finds one site, they will look for links to find more. Working together with other people who feel the same as you, and who are trying to put forward a similar message is particularly effective with this topic.

Site Layout Ideas - You will want to find a careful balance between the very personal feel of a memorial site, and the professional feel of a business site. And you will want to make sure you have a navigation bar or other means of making site navigation logical and consistent through your whole site. If the site is logical, people will feel better being there, and will be more likely to stay long enough to find what they are looking for, and to browse for more even after they find what they thought they wanted. When you can give them what they wanted, and then give them something they needed, but may not have even known they needed, you have really made a difference!

Remember to have good contrast between your text, and your backgrounds! Otherwise it may be very hard for many people to read your words. Sites show up in slightly different colors on different computers, so high contrast is the best way to be sure that your site is readable.

This is not the choice for everyone. But if you feel that you have a desire to help others in this way, you most likely CAN do it. Email us if you need help that you think we can give you.