



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

May, 2004

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

When first attending our monthly meetings, in spite of hearing of other's loss, I focused totally inward to deal with my personal grief. It took a meeting or two for me to realize that everyone there was truly feeling the same pain and emotions, to the same intense degree as myself.

As the number of meetings I attended grew, I was able to not only deal better with my loss, but begin to understand the importance of the bond established with everyone attending the meetings. Sharing their stories and thoughts and how they cope with the day to day reality of losing a child made me realize that although we are members of an organization that nobody should have to be a member of, I thank God that I have the support of those who attend. I have also learned that after those first few meetings, I have become one of those, like the other attendees, that provides support to those looking for comfort and direction.

Attendance numbers at our meetings vary every month, for many reasons. Some people are fortunate enough to have reached a point where their grief management doesn't require attendance. Others may feel that even though they continue to struggle with their grief, they may need a break from the intense emotions that these meetings evoke.

Knowing that our newsletter distribution number continues to increase, and from feedback given by readers, it is evident the newsletter provides a level of comfort for not only those that attend our meetings, but those who either cannot or prefer not to attend. I would like to take this time to encourage anyone who has either not attended one of our meetings, or if you haven't been to one for a while, to come back for a time or two. You may enjoy the meeting not only for yourself, but the support you offer the others attending is benefit and gift to all.

Rick Tomaszewski

GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
 - to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
 - to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
 - to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
 - to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
 - to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.
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*The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated
by Carol Boslet*

*In loving memory of her grandson
Ryan Boslet*



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Anne Arundel County Chapter
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It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand...your compassionate friends.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editors 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed.

June submissions are due by May 20th.



Our **lending library** is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above. Thank you.

The Bereaved Parents of the USA is a non-profit self-help organization. We operate on donations from the community we support and concerned professionals in order to produce our newsletter, Service of Remembrance, library, and other needed services. Donations are tax deductible.

Refreshments at our monthly meetings:

A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter. For questions, contact Dave Alexander at 410-544-3634

**Inclement weather on a meeting night :**

Meeting canceled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect at 5:00 p.m. You can also check our website on the day of the meeting for an announcement about cancellations.

**MEETING INFORMATION**

Next meeting: May 6, 2004; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.
Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.
(Meetings usually occur on first Thursday of month)
Calvary United Methodist Church
301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis
Park in the back of the church

PROGRAM: Helping Our Surviving Children

NEXT MONTH: June 3, 2004

PROGRAM: How Different Are We

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

Marie Dyke, single parent, daughter, 17, only child, car accident

410-969-7597 Janet Tyler, daughter, 5 and brother, 33, car accident

410-360-1341 Tia Stinnett, miscarriages and infant death

410-721-6457 Sandy Platts, infant death

OTHER RESOURCES:

* **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, (410-321-7053).

* Stephanie Roper Committee, **for victims of violent crime**, Anne Arundel County chapter representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).

* The Compassionate Friends, **Reston Satellite Group (support group for parents who are now childless)**, second Saturday of the month, 1:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. For info., contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608, InLvMemory@Comcast.net); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049); website - www.inlovingmemoryonline.org

* **Seasons, a suicide support group**, 3rd Tuesday, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lutherville (Dorothy Schanberger, 410-803-2098).

* **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park (410-987-2129).

CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

Hope and Healing Conference

Saturday, May 15, 2004

at

Calvary United Methodist Church

Keynote Speaker: Father Joe Breighner,
heard every Sunday morning on WPOC and WCAO

Workshops to include: Where Was God When I Needed Him, Loss of a child through drug abuse, I can handle this...but how (sibling grief discussion), Using the Written Word to Remember your Child, Early years of bereavement, Rebuilding your lives after the loss of a child, Loss of a child through Suicide, Angels by our side, Art Therapy for grief, Now Childless, Writing 4 Relief, Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant loss. **Please make plans to attend...**

For any information , please call or email Pat Schultz
(410-255-7760; jim.n.pat@juno.com)

Online information and registration is available at:
www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org/HTML/Conference.htm

Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through

Lisa Beall (bealls@erols.com).

**Newsletter printing costs \$150
and mailing is \$50 each month.**

Thank you!

Chapter Website

To place your child's name on our website, email Dave Alexander (dralex@sdalex.com), or send him a note, (PO box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401). Include your name, your child's name as you would like it to appear, and your child's date of birth and date of death.

To have a picture of your child on the website, email a digital file with the picture or send a printed picture to Dave. (Photos will be returned.) If you have any questions, please call Dave at 410-544-3634.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

May 6: How Different Are We?

We all grieve differently. These differences can introduce new stresses into a couple's relationships. As we anticipate Mother's Day and Father's Day in the coming months, understanding these differences (and the similarities) can be helpful. There will be separate sharing groups for men and women.

June 3: Writing as a form of healing

As a newly bereaved parent Donna Rohrbaugh needed to know when if ever she might expect to experience some relief from the dark sadness and physical pain of her loss. She just needed to know that it would get better because she felt she certainly could not live for an extended period of time feeling as she did after burying her baby boy, James Ryan. Writing was always a form of relief for Donna, but after James Ryan there simply no words that could describe who she was or what she was feeling so she read the words others were able to write. When she was able to put pen to paper the depth of her words stunned her. Donna will talk to us about how writing can help in our grieving process.

AMAZON.COM BENEFITS OUR CHAPTER

We have a link on the home page of our website which pays a commission of 5% of any purchases made through that link. (This does not increase the purchase price.) Tell your friends, relatives, and colleagues!

To access the site: go to www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org, click on the butterflies on the welcome page, scroll down to the bottom. Find the Amazon.com graphic and click on it. This links our chapter to the site and if a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. (Purchases made from Amazon.com without going through that link do not get credited.) Since our chapter is a not-for-profit organization and has no dues or fees, we are dependent on donations and fund raisers. We are hopeful these commissions will help fund some of our community outreach activities.

Many of you who receive our **newsletter** were referred by a friend, physician, or clergy. You may have never attended a meeting. In this case, it is likely that your child's name does not appear in our **monthly list of "Children Remembered"**. This is because we require your permission to do so. If you would like your child's name added , please send a note to our post office box. List your child's name, your name(s), and the dates of your child's birth and death. Please allow 6 weeks to be sure it arrives in time for the appropriate month.



A Mother's Day Letter



Her Day

by Heidi Rath Hope

When I was a little girl, I thought that Mother's Day was simply a day that we showed our mother how much she was appreciated. We made Mother's Day cards in school, and Dad reminded us several times that we were to be extra special nice to Mom that day. It never occurred to me that it might have meant more to my mother than just a day that she received flowers and cards.

When I was in college, my friends and I, being the intellectuals that all college students believe themselves to be, decided that Mother's Day and all of those other similar holidays were capitalist plots by the card companies, telephone companies and florists.

However, we all dutifully sent our cards, made our phone calls and wired our flowers. I still didn't have a clue about what Mother's Day meant to mothers. Then several years later I became a mother, a bereaved mother.

Our first child, Maria, was stillborn just two-and-a-half months before Mother's Day of 1989. So much changed that year. My youth and my carefree view of the world vanished with the words.... "I'm sorry, your baby has died."

My first two Mother's Days are the only ones that are really etched into my memory. I'm not sure why that is the case, for I do know that the basic emotions have been the same for all of them.

However, those first two are like old home movies that I can play over and over in my mind and in my heart.

On Mother's Day at our church, the children pass out flowers to all of the women of the congregation. I didn't want to be there that first Mother's Day, but I had been talked into playing my violin for that service.

So there I was on my first Mother's Day as a mother. My beautiful baby daughter had died. I felt old beyond my years and I was at a place that I didn't want to be. I decided to avoid the children, for I didn't want to take the chance that they might not hand a flower to me. I hid in the balcony behind my music stand. As the service wore on, I looked at all of the other women with their flowers and I listened to the sermon on what special gift mothers were.

Tears welled up in my eyes, and I questioned whether I really was a mother.

When the time came for communion, my husband Michael went down with the choir. I didn't want to go because I was having such trouble fighting back the tears.

I stayed upstairs and accompanied the organ on the hymns. I concentrated on the music. I thought that would be OK.

When the choir came back, Michael wasn't with them. A few minutes later he appeared. He had a flower in his hand and he gently laid it across my music stand. He understood how badly I felt and how much I needed to be acknowledged as a mother.

That little flower was carried home as gently as if it were Maria. Later that afternoon we took it to her. It felt good to be there with her. I was proud of my little girl and I felt blessed to be her mother. I just wished with all my heart that she had not died.

That first Mother's Day was my first real exposure to the strange sensation of feeling both happy and sad at the same time. The feeling has since become a part of who I am.

By the time my second Mother's Day rolled around, we had been blessed with a beautiful, healthy baby boy named Austin. I think that everyone, including myself, believed that this Mother's Day would be an ecstatic one for me.

I finally had a baby to hold and I could stop being sad. I didn't avoid the children at church. I put on a happy face and I showed off my sweet little boy.

However, something just wasn't right and I wasn't sure what it was. That afternoon I went to softball practice. Throughout practice I kept getting more and more agitated. Something was really wrong. All of a sudden it came to me. I *had* to go to Maria. I left immediately and drove the half-hour to the cemetery, crying all the way. I stayed with Maria quite a long time, and during that time I realized that for me, being a mother meant being Austin's mother *and* being Maria's mother. I couldn't ignore my feelings for Maria any more than I could ignore my feelings for Austin. Because of that, my Mother's Days were destined to be a mix of emotions.

We now have another little girl. Her name is Kellen, and she is a joy to us all. Since that second Mother's Day, my Mother's Days have become something predictable. I feel happy. I feel sad. I feel blessed, and I feel denied.

But through all those emotions runs the intense love that I have for each of my three children. I don't need the flowers or the cards, although I do cherish those little voices whispering or shouting "I love you Mommy" and those wonderful heartmade cards. Mother's Day for me is about mothers and their children, and the indestructible bond between them.

When I was pregnant with Maria, my mother gave me a little potholder that said "A mother holds her children's hands for a little while... their hearts forever."

How true that statement is and how wonderful, but may I add that they hold my heart too.

SIBLING PAGE

A Love Letter To My Children

You are great kids. You have always been great kids, although I haven't always been a great Mom. After your brother died, I was hardly any kind of Mom at all. I was so lost in my own grief, I wasn't there for you. You were bewildered, scared and hurt, but I couldn't seem to reach out to you beyond my own pain. I was like a day-old helium balloon drifting along, not sure whether my place was with you or with your brother.

I didn't drift for long. You grabbed my string and yanked me back! The yowls and shrieks still ring in my ears! "Mom, all my underwear is dirty!" or "Mom, I'm starved!" or "Mom, he punched me!" Your brother was being cared for by his heavenly Father, but you needed your earthly mother. It was your need for me that saved my life.

I'm sorry that your brother's death robbed you of your childhood. While other kids fretted about what to wear or which movie to see, you wondered when the tears of sadness would ever end and if we would be a family again. If I could have shielded you from such great sorrow, I would have; but I couldn't.

Your lives were changed forever, and the future was uncertain, but you kept going. You supported and inspired me as we traveled that rocky road of grief together. You talked about your brother when no one else would say his name. You kept his picture in your rooms and proudly pointed out to your friends. "This is my brother". You reminded me of the cute, funny things he said and did. You included him in your bedtime prayers. You still do. Some day I believe you will tell your own children about your brother.

Thank you for keeping his memory alive. Because of this tragedy you experienced, you are more mature than other kids your age. You possess strength and courage beyond your years. You are resilient; little things don't get you down. Best of all, you are kind, sensitive and compassionate to others. I adore you. You are my life.

Love Mom



By: Patricia Dyson
TCT/ Beaumont, TX



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Love shared can bring comfort to a broken heart.
Please remember the following families this month.



Jordan Edward Ambrozewicz
son of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Ambrozewicz
May 27, 1993 - May 10, 1995

Veronica Anne Arata
daughter of Rick Arata
June 12, 1968 - May 25, 2000

Christopher Lewis Borngesser
son of Diane M. Borngesser
December 21, 1961 - May 28, 2001

Paul Shane Brough
son of Theresa and Steve Bleemke
friend of Helen Conners
May 18, 1982 - April 4, 2003

Ronald E. Cordell, Jr.
son of Ronald and Darlene Cordell
July 3, 1973 - May 28, 2003

Kathleen Yvette Denevan
daughter of Gregory J. Denevan
August 10, 1970 - May 13, 1971

R. Daniel Ferrer
son of Anna Severn
May 25, 1972 - August 29, 1986

Tracy Fotino
daughter of Martha Murphy
May 14, 1971 - August 25, 2000

Andrew Gawthrop
son of Brenda Gawthrop
May 25, 1990 - August 12, 2002

Matthew Haines
son of Peggy and Gordon Haines
May 3, 1977 - July 4, 1996

Brian Keith Jones
son of Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Jones
May 22, 1974 - May 22, 1974

Stephen Aaron Luck
son of Charlotte and Paul Koehler
August 2, 1966 - May 27, 1985

Graham Kendall Miller
son of Ken and Abby Miller
February 3, 1981 - May 4, 1999

Emily Marie Parker
daughter of Valerie Nowak and Brian Parker
May 9, 2002 - July 18, 2002

Sydney Elaine Patronik
daughter of Holly and Michael Patronik
March 26, 2002 - May 11, 2002

Mark R. Pohlmeier
son of Lou & Jack Pohlmeier
December 27, 1956 - May 6, 1986

Wendy Dawn Saunders
daughter of Aljuana and Ronald Saunders
May 20, 1972 - May 14, 1998

Donald Lee Seyfferth
son of Jody Seyfferth
December 16, 1977 - May 8, 2000

Ryan M. Sheahy
son of Deborah L. Sheahy
May 4, 1977 - March 16, 2001

Christopher Lewis Strader
son of Peggy and Lewis Strader
May 27, 1979 - June 21, 1997

Russell J. Tarr
son of Lorraine A. Tarr
December 22, 1963 - May 12, 1994

Carole Ann Wilford
sister of Aljuana Saunders
January 7, 1944 - May 4, 1998



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

(continued)



Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the memorial service, library books, and other literature. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

Dorothy & Norm Heincelman, in memory of
Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Lillian Mueller in memory of
Leslie Davis

John & Terre Belt in loving memory of
daughter Cortney Belt and niece Traci Heincelman

Deb & Kenny Fiscus in loving memory of
Andrea Faith Fiscus
“She is always this shining star in our lives”

Rita Whitby in loving memory of her 3 sons,
Wally, David, and Danny

EASTERN SHORE BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP

Our Chapter has assisted some bereaved parents who live on the Eastern Shore to form a group there which now meets monthly. The group held its first meeting in March. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 18th, at 7:00 pm, at Queen Anne's Hospice, 300 Del Rhodes Avenue, in Queenstown. Subsequent meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesdays of the month and will start at 7:00 pm.

All are welcome to come! For more information, call Dave Alexander at 410-544-3634



ADULT LOSS OF A SIBLING

When an adult sibling dies we lose someone who has been in our lives a long time. We may feel a little insecure and anxious because a constant in our life is gone. Even if we didn't have frequent contact with our sibling in adult life, at least we knew that another member of our family was there.

We may feel guilty as we recall a closeness between us in our youth, which changed as we became adults. We may also experience guilt, sadness and regret that our relationship was never what we would have liked it to be.

Frequently siblings become closer in later years. Old sibling rivalries may no longer exist and we may have established a mature and friendly relationship. As a result, his or her death may seem particularly unfair, untimely and cruel.

If our parents are still living, their response to the death of the sibling may have a profound impact on us, our grief and many aspects of our subsequent life. It is difficult to see our parents suffering such a loss and we may want to alleviate it. We may attempt to parent our parents.

Because frequently others fail to validate or recognize the significance of the loss of an adult brother or sister we might fail to get the social support we need to grieve successfully. We may have to demand this support and assert our right to grieve for this loss.

Excerpt from Margaret H. Gerner, MSW, CGC

The one who leaves
a legacy of love
to generations that follow
has lived a life worth remembering

The one who leaves
gentle footprints on our hearts
has left a story worth telling

The one who leaves
happy memories
dancing in our thoughts
has given the gift of timeless
moments worth holding in our
hearts forever.

Unknown author



I remember when he was so tiny that I could
Cradle him in my arms and watch him sleep —
So oblivious to the world. When he awoke, he'd
Smile at me and curl all his fingers around one
Of mine, and hold on so very tightly that
I thought he'd never let go.

Those same precious fingers wound themselves
Around my heart, too... and to this day,
They have never let go.

— Maria Shockley Erman

The Dance

Looking back, on the memory of
the dance we shared beneath the
stars above...

For a moment all the world was
right, how could I have known that
you'd ever say goodbye...

And now I'm glad I didn't know
the way it all would end, the way it
all would go. Our lives are better
left to chance. I could have missed
the pain, but I'd a had to miss the
dance.

Holding you, I held everything, for
a moment wasn't I the king? If I'd
only known how the king would
fall, then whose to say you know I
might have changed it all.

And now I'm glad I didn't know
the way it all would end, the way it
all would go. Our lives are better
left to chance. I could have missed
the pain, but I'd a had to miss the
dance.

Yes, my life it's better left to chance.
I could have missed the pain but I'd
a had to miss the dance.

by Garth Brooks

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Bereaved Parents of the USA CREDO

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort, and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family. We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA.

We welcome you.