



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

March, 2005

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

I Am a Survivor...Leslie, age 12, Texas

*I am a survivor, I will survive
I wonder deep inside myself why I let him go.
I hear my sobbing, it shakes the heaven up above.
I see the world through shattered glass.
I want to be alone.
I am a survivor, I will survive.
I pretend he is still here.
I feel the pain seeping through my body.
I stroke the diamond teardrops that rest upon my face.
I weep for myself, I weep for him.
I am a survivor, I will survive.
I understand my tears and nothing else.
I say I'll be all right; I lie.
I dream of happier days, if only they would come.
I try to understand why I was left alone.
I hope he is happy now but I will never know.
I am a survivor, I will survive.*

Note from Leslie: *I wrote "I Am a Survivor" three years after my father's suicide. Now, four years older, I hope this poem might touch your heart and deliver a message of hope. Grief has many stages. At that time, I was still*

struggling with my father's death and was feeling increasingly uncomfortable with myself. The poem reflects that although I had undergone a devastating and life-changing experience, I was a survivor. The poem I would write today would reflect the hope and joy I have found through successfully moving through the grief process.



Although our meetings are based on parents whose child has died, the poem and note from Leslie illustrate that grief and the stages of grief can have the same impact whether a child or parent has died.

Note: The poem and comment was taken from a book by Laura Dower "I Will Remember You - a Guidebook Through Grief for Teens". I highly recommend this book not only for teens, but for siblings or anyone that has had a loved-one die.

...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.

The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated by
Jayne and John Astle in memory of their son
David Sheridan Astle



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Anne Arundel County Chapter
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Mailing: Barbara Bessling - **Librarians:** Debra & Richard Kerr
Thank you notes: Fran Palmer - **Treasurer:** Fran Palmer
Mailing List: Dave Alexander - **Programs:** VACANT
Hospitality: VACANT *note - as you can see we have several vacancies... we hope someone will consider helping!

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.

April submissions are due by March 15th.

Library:

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.

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: March 3, 2005

Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

(Meetings usually occur on first Thursday of the month)

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Please park in the back of the church

PROGRAM: "Understanding Mourning is a Monumental Task"

April PROGRAM: None Scheduled at this time.



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.

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

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

Sandy Platts, infant death. 410-721-6457

OTHER RESOURCES:

* **Bereaved Parents of the USA, (BPUSA)**
National contact number (708-748-7866)

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

* **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

Upcoming Meeting Topics

March 3, 2005: Fran Palmer will share her thoughts on "Understanding Mourning is a Monumental Task" Mourning is the process that takes you on a journey from who you were and where you were before the death of your child to who you will be and where you will be, as you struggle to adapt to this change in your life. Each individual experiences his or her loss in his or her own personally intense way. If left up to us, most of us would just ignore mourning and every other distressing experience in our lives. Mourning is an important aspect of recovering and finding joy once again, in our lives. Join Fran Palmer in discussing how best to help each other mourn the death of our child

April 7, 2005: None Scheduled at This Time.

Annual Conference of Hope and Healing

Saturday, May 21, 2005

To Help and/or for informa-

tion



contact

Pat Schultz

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.

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.

EASTERN SHORE BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP

The Queen Anne's County Bereaved Parents Group meets on the **First Wednesday of each month**. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 2nd, at 7:00 pm. The Group meets at the **Calvary United Methodist Church in Queenstown**. The Church is located at the intersection of Maryland Avenue and Steamboat Lane in Queenstown.

All are welcome to come. Please pass the word to other bereaved parents.

For more information, contact Joan Gray at 410-827-7471 or Dave Alexander at 410-544-3634 or send an email message to QueenstownGroup@sdalex.org

Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child's name can be arranged through Lisa Beall (bealls@comcast.net). Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$50

DO YOU USE AMAZON.COM?

If you use Amazon.com, perhaps you could use the Chapter's website to make the connection and purchase. We have a link to Amazon.com on the home page of our website. Amazon.com gives our chapter a commission of 5% of any purchases which are made through that link. Using the link does not increase the cost to the purchaser. Alert your friends, relatives, and colleagues to the link and suggest they use it as well.

You can access the site at:

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org.

click on the butterflies on the welcome page to enter our site, and then scroll down the first page to the bottom. On the bottom left corner is the Amazon.com graphic. Clicking on the graphic takes you to Amazon.com's site. When it does so, it links information relevant to our chapter to the visit to the site. If a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. Purchases made 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.

DONATIONS

Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the annual Remembrance Service, the annual Conference of Hope and Healing, and books and other materials for the Chapter Library. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations made in the last month:

Dorothy and Norm Heincelman in memory of their granddaughters **Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman**
Ken Smith in memory of his niece **Tracy Fotino**

Donation to Library: Carol Boslet has donated 6 books to our library in memory of her precious grandson, Christopher Ryan Boslet

The books are:

Not by Accident: What I Learned About My Son's Untimely Death by *Isabel Fleece*

Sad Isn't Bad When Someone You Love Dies (For Kids) by *Michaelene M. Mundy*

Good Grief by *Granger E. Westberg*

Gone But Not Lost by *David W. Wiersbe*

When There Are No Words by *Charlie Walton*

Jesus Wept by *Leory Brownlow*



THOUGHTS

So long as you can sweeten another's pain,
life is not in vain...

- Helen Keller

Pain is part of being alive, and
we need to learn that. Pain
does not last forever, nor is it
necessarily unbearable, and
we need to be taught that.

- Rabbi Harold Kushner



Truly, it is in darkness that one finds the
light, so when we are in sorrow then this light
is nearest to all of us.

- Meister Eckhart

The main thing in one's own private world is
To try to laugh as much as you cry.
- Maya Angelou



SIBLING PAGE



The Distance

The month of Sean's anniversary this year was very hard for me. I don't know why this year was different than last year, maybe because I find myself forgetting things about him or maybe because it has been seven years. Whatever it is, I just know that some days I don't think I can stand to be away from him for another minute.

In January, I bought a new CD. The CD is by two brothers named Evan and Jaron. I was skipping around, randomly skipping around, randomly listening to songs on the CD, when I came to a song called "The Distance". Almost word for word, I heard what I was feeling. I have shared many times that both Sean and I are music people. I know that some people hear a song and think, "Oh that is a love (romantic) song." But I can listen to that same song and can hear that it could pertain to anyone. I want to share with you some of the words in the song that made me feel Sean was sending me a message.

The Distance

By Evan & Jaron

*I still believe in feelings, but sometimes I feel too much.
I make believe you're close to me, but it ain't close enough,
not nearly close enough.*

*I can't take the distance, I can't take the miles
I can't take the time until the next time I see you smile.
I can't take the distance and I'm not ashamed
That I can't take a breath, without saying your name.*

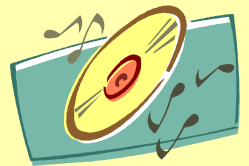
*And I could brave a hurricane, still be standing tall
When all the dust has settled down.
But I can't take the distance.*

Over the past seven years, I have felt that Sean has often sent songs to me when I really needed them. At this point in my grief, I feel that I am so far away from him. Both physically and emotionally. I like to believe that one day I will see him again and he will be waiting for me with open arms. Maybe he knows I can't take the distance.

Peace until next time.

Traci Morlock

Taken from the St. Louis BPUSA Newsletter



My Sister, My Friend

With our hearts
you will always be.
Our minds will be
filled
with sweet
memories.

Your spirit and love
will never be gone.
For each life you
touched
will carry
them on.

Catherine Hall
TCF- Hinsdale, IL

Who Knows?

Who knows what it is to look at a face in a picture?
To see the eyes with the light of life
The smirking smile with the grand dimples
And know the feeling not to see him again?

Who knows what it is to have the longing for a hug
The tugging on a heart
And know the feeling not to see him again?

Who knows what it is to see the unending pairs
Of siblings whose lives are shared
And know the feeling not to see him again?

Jamie Martchenke
Beaverton, OR



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Please remember the following families this month.

Hope Barber
Daughter of Doug and Vonda Barber
March 11, 2003 - April 25, 2003

Linda Lou Boyce
Daughter of Cori Boyce
March 29, 1967 - November 30, 2004

Richard Allen Bessling
Son of Barbara and Robert Bessling
March 18, 1982 - March 15, 1995



Preston Leon Bromley
Son of Leon and Sandy Bromley
March 30, 1982 - September 2, 2003

David Michael Copeland
Son of Jay and Lois Copeland
March 27, 1978 - January 30, 2000

Kevin Crawford
Son of Loretta Crawford
January 21, 1959 - March 10, 2004

Michael J. Dickens Jr.
Son of Marla and Michael Dickens Sr.
July 7, 1968 - March 29, 1996

Rebecca Lynn Faires
Daughter of Georgia Hughes
March 16, 1985 - December 18, 2003

Brian Jeffrey Haley
Son of Pamela and Jerry Haley
October 26, 1973 - March 4, 1990

Sgt. James Michael Hall
Son of Patricia and George Hall
November 4, 1965 - March 28, 1992

Sidney Mark Hardesty Jr.
Son of Dawn Watkinson
March 10, 1979 - May 17, 2003

Traci Jeanne Heincelman
Daughter of Ed & Jeanne Heincelman
Granddaughter of Dorothy and Norm Heincelman
Niece of John and Terre Belt
October 6, 1980 - March 10, 2002

Daniel Embert Hinton Jr.
Son of Dan and Pamela Hinton
September 23, 1970 - March 7, 2003

Matthew James Katz
Son of Bob and Sue Katz
March 13, 1982 - September 7, 2003

Gary Wayne Keats
Son of Delores Shuey
December 3, 1964 - March 3, 2004

Darin Michael Kilton
Son of Twanda and Gil Kilton
March 21, 1974 - June 5, 1985

Matthew Louis Lupero
Son of Barbara and Guy Lupero
March 24, 1965 - February 16, 1991

Richard McKinny Jr.
Son of Ellen and Richard McKinney
March 6, 1975 - February 19, 1998

Matthew David Miles
Son of Donna and David Miles
March 24, 2000 - April 7, 2000

Jennifer Margaret Neafsey
Daughter of Beth Neafsey
March 20, 1969 - February 25, 1984



Michael Dwayne Nokes
Son of Ellen Foxwell
November 9, 1963 - March 15, 1988

Brian James Para
Son of Joan and Carl Para
February 19, 1970 - March 19, 1991

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

Michael A. Persetic
Son of Joan Persetic
March 26, 1968 - July 2, 1986

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED (continued)

Daniel Keith Rogers
Son of Lauri and Thomas Rogers
June 16, 1981 - March 18, 2000

Philip Francisco Saff
Son of Teri and Jeff Saff
March 12, 2001 - March 16, 2001

Ryan Michael Sheahy
Son of Deborah L. Sheahy
May 4, 1977 - March 16, 2001

Mark Edward Smeltzer
Son of Peggy Smeltzer
December 11, 1969 - March 15, 1997

Christopher John Smith
Son of Debi Wilson-Smith
March 27, 1981 - June 30, 2000

Misty Dawn Smith
Daughter of Anne and DeWitt Wilcox
March 15, 1976 - January 12, 1997

Darin Lacey Valerio
Son of Sharie and Gerard Valerio
July 26, 1967 - March 18, 1991

John Kirkpatrick Wallace
Son of Kay and James Wallace
March 3, 1953 - July 14, 1971

Note: If your child's name appears in the printed version of our newsletter but does not appear in this online version, it is because we have not received explicit permission from you to list it online. If you would like your child's name to also appear in future online editions of the newsletter, please send an email to dralex@sdalex.com



HUMOR AND SURVIVAL

Recently, my daughter paid me one of the highest compliments a bereaved parent can hope to receive. Having made a change in her primary care physician, her doctor was taking her history and he reached the place where he inquired about her parents' health. He started with me, and my daughter just started laughing and said, "You're not going to believe her history." With that she ran off a litany of woes, past and present. Her doctor asked if I had gone out looking for things to happen to me. She said she assured him that wasn't the case and she added, "In spite of all of it, she has never lost her sense of humor." Now I consider that a compliment because I'm sure there were times she couldn't have said that.

I tell you this because when one of our children dies, we seem to lose other things as well. One of them seems to be our sense of humor. We are hard put to find things that tickle our funny bone. Life becomes tedious and surviving becomes a deadly serious

business. After a few months, when things strike you as humorous and you laugh, you'll find that the old devil guilt makes his presence known.

Next time you're tempted to laugh, go ahead! Laugh long and hard. You'll feel better after you do, for eventually you come to realize that laughing does not mean you're "all over" your child's death. It just means you needed some relief from all that pain that comes with grieving. Those of us who allow humor to become part of our lives again survive better. If someone nearby hears you laughing and attributes it to problems with your mental health, just tell them that that's mental health, all right, but it's no problem.

BP/USA



By Mary Cleckley
Member at Large

DEAR CHILD OF MINE

Betty Stevens, BP/USA Baltimore, MD

Dear child of mine, who died before your time
I am grateful for your life.

Though death brought the end of hopes and dreams
Still I am grateful for your life.

Though you and I have known joy and sorrow,
laughter and tears. Through you my life has been
enriched, compassion heightened and I am more keenly
aware of the grief of others.
I am grateful for your life.

Now I draw on memories of you—some happy, and some
sad. They are priceless, precious memories that help
me bear the pain. Through them I will learn to live
again.

I am grateful for your life.

I have been blessed by your life and left with your
love. I will share that love and strive to live to be a
blessing to others. Dear child of mine, though you died
before your time, you are never far away from me. I
have locked you in my secret heart of hearts and there
I will love you through eternity.

I am grateful for your life—dear child of mine.

Closure....

Over the past six years, whenever a well-meaning friend said something inappropriate with respect to George's death, I would try to focus on the intent of the comment instead of the comment itself. After all, I've felt worst when it seemed people were trying to avoid saying anything, as if he'd never existed. Wouldn't it be overly sensitive and critical of those who at least said something?

So when a relative told me three years ago that she hoped I was approaching "closure" in my grieving for George, I tried to respond graciously. In fact, mild irritation was what I felt. First, "closure" struck me as one of those annoyingly trendy words that came out of the psychobabble of the self-help craze. I'd never even heard the word used in that context before George died. More important, although her words were ostensibly sympathetic, they carried an underlying message of impatience: "OK," she seemed to be saying, "it's time to get over it." Was I being overly sensitive? Probably, I thought.

At a recent meeting of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I saw otherwise. A mother mentioned how much the word "closure" bothered her, and everyone jumped right in to agree. The "c word," it turned out, pushed all our buttons.

We understood the uneasiness in the presence of pain that makes people want to wish away our grief. But we resented the implication of failure or self-absorption if we didn't adhere to a recovery schedule.

In a newspaper column about the so-called "healing process" of the families of the Oklahoma City bombing victims, Ellen Goodman wrote that the media coverage suggested 'death is something to be dealt with, that loss is something to get over - according to a prescribed emotional timetable.' She recalled a personal experience of her own: "At a Christmas party, a man offered up a worried sigh about a widowed mutual friend. 'It's been two years,' he said, 'and she still hasn't achieved closure.' The words pegged her as an under-achiever who failed the required course in Mourning 201, who wouldn't graduate with her grief class."

We do, in our own individual ways, gradually get better at bearing our loss. Mainly, the pain simply softens with the passage of time.

George stays with me in the way he continues to influence the choices I make, in how I relate to his brother, in how I live my life. He stays with me in the happy memories he blessed me with. Sometimes, too, there's sadness, regret and, yes, pain. It's a living presence and I want it to last forever. That's what's denied by that presumptuous word, "closure." Let's scrap it.

~David Pelligrin, TCF Honolulu Chapter

Anniversary Days Mean Saying Good-bye

"Does it get easier?" "Will I always feel saturated with pain?" "Will I ever be happy again?"

These are the questions we ask after the door has slammed and we've sunk into a dark and bleak pit. These are the questions that crowd our weary bereaved minds, along with all of the "what ifs" and "whys."

Our child has died. Our world has caved in. Breathing is difficult. Misery and hopelessness are eaten with breakfast. The ache in our heart is so profound we are certain we will die of heartache.

We dread each day without our child. Holidays approach and he is not with us to join in the fun. Her birthday arrives, without her here.

And then a year since her death is about to pass. We relive how we felt when first told our son or daughter or sibling had died. We replay in our minds how it was on that horrible day, the day we lived the worst possible nightmare.

We have what no parent wants - a death date to place next to the birth date. We call the death date, the anniversary date. It doesn't matter what we name it, it means the same - a day that belongs to us that we wish was just another any-ol'-day.

The years pass. We gain a little strength. We learn the bereavement ropes. We find others like us to help hold our hand on this rocky and uncertain journey of longing for our child's voice. We try not to let others who do not understand bother us too deeply.

Yet each year that date arrives.

For me it is February second, known in the USA as Groundhog Day. February second is the day I watched my son Daniel die. I told him good-bye then although the words came out unwillingly from my mouth. No one wants to have to tell a child good-bye forever.

Each February second, I light my vanilla-scented candle in memory of my tomato-picking-peeing-in-the-woods-watermelon-and-Little-Foot-Dinosaur-loving boy.

Each year I am acknowledging his life of four years and his cancer death. I am saying those words I never wanted to say. I am saying good-bye.

After eight years, I am still not ready to say good-bye. Yes, the pain has diminished. Yes, I can smile and laugh again. I can get through months without tears. But the hole in my heart is as real and as present as sand at the beach.

After eight years, February second is still a day I wish never came and a day I wish would never show its face again.

Because saying good-bye each year always makes a part of my heart feel chopped up and pounded.

So do the passing of years make it easier on the bereaved? I think so.

But anniversary days are always filled with bleak and unique sorrow.

Light the candles. If you can remember the pleasant times, do. If you can soak in the love your child has for you and you for him, do it.

And when the impact of the day grips your heart, freely cry. And if you still find it hard to say good-bye, know you are not alone.

~ Alice J. Wisler
TRI-CO MO CHAPTER
BEREAVED PARENTS



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

P.O. Box 6280

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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.