



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

November 2011

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For That I am Thankful

It doesn't seem to get any better,
but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken,
but there are memories to be cherished.
For that I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table,
but the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller,
but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter,
but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there,
but it lasts only moments.
For that, I am thankful.

The calendar still turns,
the holidays still appear and they still cost too much.
And I am still here.
For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty, the soul still aches,
but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come, the dishes pile up,
but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing, the words still unspoken,
but the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

The snow still falls, the sled still waits,
and the spirit still wants to.
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains,
but the sadness is smaller.
For that I am thankful.

The moment is gone,
but the love is forever.
For that, I am blessed.
For that, I am grateful...

Love was once (and still is) a part of my being...
For that I am living.
I am living... For that, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the
most wondrous reason of all.

— Darcie D. Sims & Sherry Williams
(from *Holiday Help ~ A Guide for Hope and Healing*)

*The November 3rd Chapter meeting will take place in the Sanctuary of the church instead of the lower level of the church.
Enter through the front door and come into the sanctuary on the left.*

Announcing the Chapter's Gift Giving

For many mourning the loss of a child, holidays are difficult days, and gift giving loses its luster. This year, consider buying a gift in memory of your child and bringing it to our monthly meeting in DECEMBER. We'll donate these "love gifts" to children in need through local charities. Doing good deeds in memory of your child lets you stay connected to them while providing for children who have very little.



2011 Service of Remembrance

Our Children Remembered
Together...we share...we heal...we grow anew.

Please join us for this special Service sponsored by the
Anne Arundel County Chapter of the
Bereaved Parents of the USA
3 p.m., Sunday, December 4, 2011
St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church
Severna Park, MD

Survivors of Suicide Day November 21

National Survivors of Suicide Day is a day of healing for those who have lost someone to suicide. Every year the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention sponsors an event to provide an opportunity for the survivor community to come together for support, healing, information and empowerment. (Go to www.afsp.org/survivorday for more information.)

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

Next Meeting: November 3, 2011

Using Writing as a Healing Tool -- Laurel Goodrick of Gilchrist Hospice will discuss how writing can be healing and will show members different types of writing that may work for them. She will share guidelines for creating a comfortable and safe writing environment and will provide handouts for those interested.

Sharing groups – a key part of each Chapter meeting – will be held as usual for first-time attendees, and the newly and non-newly bereaved.

Calvary United Methodist Church
301 Rowe Boulevard
Annapolis, MD 21401

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month and are open to anyone grieving the death of a child. The meeting this month will be held in the sanctuary.

We are a self-help support organization dedicated to assisting parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child. We provide information and education to extended family and friends. Our greatest strength as bereaved families is the unity we find in shared experiences which can lead us out of isolation, give us a place to “belong,” and offer us hope that together – we can make it.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT OUR CHAPTER MEETINGS

Our Chapter gathers one evening a month to address topics and offer support to those who are mourning the death of a child. Our meetings last for approximately 2 hours. Sometimes we schedule a 30-minute presentation at the beginning of our meeting. When the speaker or panel has concluded the presentation, we introduce ourselves and say our child's name. We then take a short break before dividing into sharing groups.

Sharing groups are facilitated by fellow Chapter members and are completely confidential. During this time, the issues that are discussed—particularly for the newly bereaved—focus on the issues facing participants today.



Submissions for the November newsletter due to the Newsletter Team by October 1.

Send an email to: newsletter@aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org.

Chapter Leader:	Terre Belt 410.721.1359 tbelt@nahbrc.com
Newsletter Team:	Terre Belt Kathy Ireland Eryn Lowe
Treasurer:	Fran Palmer
Correspondence & Hospitality:	Rick & Carol Tomaszewski
Librarian:	Bob and Sandi Burash
Programs:	Paul Balasic

Do You Use Amazon.com?

If so, AND you enter through our Chapter's website (www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org), the Chapter will earn a commission of five percent on your purchases. Using the link does not increase your cost (and information about your purchase is not shared with the Chapter), but it does earn the Chapter a commission from Amazon. It's an easy way for you to support our Chapter's activities.

Go to the Chapter's home page, click on the butterflies on the welcome page, and then scroll down the first page to the bottom, where there is an Amazon.com graphic that takes you to Amazon's site. Entering Amazon's site in this manner – through the Chapter's website – ultimately credits the Chapter with the five percent commission on any purchases that follow. Thanks in advance for your help!



Would you like to sponsor the Chapter's newsletter or website (www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org) for one month in memory of your child? It's a wonderful way to honor your child's memory – to say his or her name for all the world to hear – while providing financial support to the Chapter and its many activities offered to all those mourning the loss of a child.

Newsletter sponsorship is \$75 and website sponsorship is \$25. Just send an email to Chapter Leader Terre Belt (tbelt@nahbrc.com), or call her at 410-721-1359, or sign up at a monthly meeting.

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BPUSA/AA County Chapter
P.O. Box 6280
Annapolis, MD 21401-0280



Veterans Day (November 11)

For each grave
Where a soldier
Lies at rest

For each prayer
That is said today
Out of love

For each sign
Of remembering
Someone who died

Let us also give thought to
The mothers and fathers
The brothers and sisters
The friends and lovers
Whom death left behind.

— Sascha Wagner

The Empty Chair

I remember the first Thanksgiving after Tony was killed. I didn't know how we could possibly get through that dinner, with his empty chair.



The solution that occurred to me was to fill his chair with someone else – several someones.

Grandpa came to spend the week; a newly widowed friend came to dinner, and so did her delightful young nephew and his bride, who had just moved to town. They brought the salad. And we were thankful – for each other, for the love among us, and for memories.

If this will be your first Thanksgiving, do something different. The pattern for your life has been broken. Break it some more! Have dinner at a different place, or with different people. Go away for the weekend. Be kind to yourself. You do not have it all, but you have something.

— Ronnie Peterson, Northern NY

Here Below

To see you once more would scarce be enough.
Here without your smile it's screaming tough
I smile and remember unaware of my tears
What a treasure I had for twenty one years.

Now I live without you and try to give love
To the others down here in pain
Your sweetness and vitality still shine above
But down here its rain rain rain.

I still have babies to cherish and hold.
And you dear boy will never grow old.

I have life still and mean to live it
I push myself for the effort I give it.
I feel to blame for what I can't change
My power so slight this world to arrange
I turn my back on what if and why
To watch the stars illumine the sky.

— Christine Brungot, BP/USA
Anne Arundel County, MD
In memory of her son Johnny Brungot

At the Chapter's Memory Walk, someone asked one of our members (June & Jed Erickson) about the butterfly decal they have on the back of their vehicle in memory of their daughter Jenna. If anyone is interested, go to www.decaljunky.com/c-283-memorial-decals.aspx.

Here's what it looks like on their car:





Surviving the Holidays

If this is your first year at surviving the holidays since your child died, it is important that you accept that there are no magic words to get you through November, December and January. I'm sure you already know these months will not be the fun days you have experienced in the past. Rather than fun days, let's try to at least make them no worse. Give yourself permission during these months to fall apart when you need to and you'll probably need to! That person you lost is very important and you have that right. Better still, you have that need.

Let's talk first about tears. When you need to cry, do it! Tears are healthy. They are a sign that you are doing well, for you are allowing your grief, rather than denying it. You can't move ahead through the grief process until you've become well acquainted with the normal signs of grief. The people who care about you may feel uncomfortable when you are obviously grieving. If they haven't experienced this loss themselves, they don't understand your needs now, any more than the old proverbial man on the street. Remember how unprepared you were for the deep pain of grief? It's important that you let those caring people know that you are profoundly changed by this tragedy.

It's the time of year when friends and neighbors plan parties. Some may invite you no matter if it's the last thing on your mind. If you do decide to attend, please leave the back door open in case you need to escape. Some may mistakenly think it's possible to keep you so busy that you'll forget that your child died. You know that's impossible. No matter how well intended these plans are, they are the wrong plans for your family. Don't worry about the impact on your friends.

Thanksgiving can cause problems if you aren't ready to sit around a turkey trying to act thankful! It probably is going to be awhile before you have that ability again. You may consider having pizza that day and pretend it's just another day. Grief can make you do strange things!

You may find you need to change lots of things that have been the way you observed the holidays in the past. For instance, you may decide not to have a Christmas tree this year. Some will see this as weird, but those of us who have made that same decision think it makes perfect sense. Maybe you'll ignore the holidays and run away to places where holidays aren't uppermost in most minds – maybe the beaches in Florida or California or the skiing in Colorado or a cabin in north Georgia. Maybe this is a good time to explore the treasures of New York City, Washington, DC or New Orleans.

You will survive the holidays better if you take control of them. Some think they have no control of anything, but if you feel that way, you probably haven't explored the possibilities that are available to you. Your brain is very curious. If someone suggests things that are different, it rushes around madly trying to come up with a few. Here's a plan for you.



First, get input from family members for their suggestions. You already know that small children don't take too kindly to changing anything. Maybe they'll be happy about seeing what Santa brought. Afterwards, go to a nearby skating rink. Have hot dogs for all later. Also, consider some of the things in the previous paragraph.

Maybe your needs keep you at home. If so, plan to do it the easiest way. Can another member of your family have the meal? Can others bring favorite items to help with the meal? If not, can you have the meal on Christmas Eve? Some people do that instead of having it on Christmas Day. It leaves Christmas Day itself not so rushed.

Any change seems to help. Go to a different place of worship. It's okay to cry. Sit in the back so you can either cry in peace or if you feel a need to, you can leave. If you feel Christmas cards are needed this year or a very few presents, could a relative or friend help with the addressing and shopping? If you must shop yourself, select a place where there is less atmosphere, such as music and decorations. Take advantage of the discount stores.

Things don't have to be perfect. Give up perfection this year. Everyone will understand. Don't overdo. You're already tired.

Grieving is exhausting. Next year or the one after that or whenever, you'll be ready to resume some of the old traditions. Maybe not! Some traditions may never be done again. It's up to your family.

Take care of yourself physically. If you are in a depressed state, don't make it worse by over-drinking or over-eating or too much caffeine.

Take time for you. Read in a quiet place. Exercise by running, walking or swimming. Rest. Eat nourishing food. Establish priorities and make a list of them. Check them off as you accomplish them. This helps to maintain control.

Seek help if you need it. Call one of the telephone friends listed in your newsletter or call one of your friends. Seek professional help if you feel you need it.

Whatever you do, don't isolate yourself! Withdrawal is not the answer. It's important to know that you are not alone. Others out here care and understand. I am one of them. We do not have to walk this lonely road alone.

Your attitude is important. You can/will survive. You have greater strength than you know. You have already survived the worst thing that can happen. Stay flexible. If the plans you made don't seem right now, dump them! Do something on the spur of the moment that does seem right. Care not if other people don't agree or that your brain isn't too excited about it. Outsmart them all!

The New Year is ahead. Let's hope for better days. The holidays will come again and one of these days you and your family will have figured out how to survive the holidays now that things have changed for the better.

Know that there will be more peaceful days ahead for you and your family. Take it as a promise!

SIBLING PAGE

**If you're old enough to love,
You're old enough to grieve.**

Friendship is a Comforting Sort of Thing...

The end-of-year holidays are fast approaching, which also signifies another anniversary of the death of my brother Rob, of leukemia. The reality of his death still catches me off guard at the most unexpected moments.

Sometimes I am certain most of my grief is behind me, yet I am not quite sure the reality of Rob's death has hit me. It's still a mystery to me how I get through each day. My parents have always been a strong source of support for me, but they also have their own grieving to do. Therefore, I find myself relying on my friends for strength. It's true they don't always have the right things to say. I've learned not to expect that. They have their own way of handling my grieving.



I have friends who are always willing to listen, even though they acknowledge only a vague understanding of my loss. Certain friends can't talk about my brother, but they never neglect to call me and check up on me. Some of my friends are better at jokes than sympathetic gestures. Yes, they admit the jokes aren't always appropriate to my mood, but they try. All of my friends are aware that Rob's death has a lasting effect on my life. They constantly remind me how much life still has to offer.

My friends are far from perfect. When they talk about their siblings, they don't seem to notice how my mood changes. Sometimes it makes me angry that they can be so insensitive. It always hurts, even though I know they need to share these things with me.

I love my friends, yet I envy them. They support me, but they also remind me that life goes on. I also have a responsibility to give them back the support they give me. My grief doesn't totally excuse me from this. I have realized how important my friends are to me since the death of my brother. I need to let them be a part of my grieving because they all have been a significant part in my healing process.

— Julann Pontician, Pottstown, PA

There Are Times

There are times when I see a fiery sunset
Or the silver glow of the moon,
And I see my brother,
And feel the peace that he still exists.
But these times are few,
And most of what I see is –
What he is missing.
Cry now, my silent tears, quietly, so no one hears.
They don't know the pain
I go through day after day
And through the years.

— Alisa Roeder, TCF
Pikes Peak, CO

Love Remembers

In times of darkness...love sees

In times of doubt...love hopes

In times of silence...love hears

In times of sorrow...love heals

And in all times LOVE REMEMBERS!!!



Our Children Remembered

Jon Russell Aikin
Son of Susan Eisel
Grandson of Elizabeth and Barry Aikin
September 4, 1983 - November 19, 2001

Dakota Kelly Alder
Son of Denise and Robert Alder
October 20, 1990 - November 11, 2009

Karlee Marie Andrews
Daughter of Brian Andrews
November 15, 1992 - August 11, 2007

Joseph Benjamin Antonelli
Son of Carole Antonelli
November 6, 1961 - September 9, 2003

Glorimar Arán
Daughter of Sandra Arán
July 26, 1989 - November 11, 2001

Douglas Lee Baer III
Grandson of Shirley Baer
August 21, 1983 - November 14, 2006

Jennifer Michelle Bare
Daughter of Howard and Judy Gray
May 17, 1974 - November 15, 1997

David A. Boss
Son of Ron and Sally Boss
January 6, 1968 - November 5, 2000

Linda Lou Boyce
Daughter of Cora Boyce
Sister of Lisa Schell
March 29, 1967 - November 30, 2004

Eric Reynolds Burns
Son of Beth Burns
October 20, 2000 - November 7, 2002

Maranda Machelles Callender
Daughter of Dean and Christina Callender
November 11, 1988 - June 2, 2006

Makayla Gabrielle Carpenter
Daughter of Tarica Carpenter
November 10, 2008 - July 30, 2010

Kevin Machado Da Silva
Son of Susan Da Silva
November 18, 1995 - November 20, 2003

Kevin Grady Davis
Son of Debbie Jasper
November 16, 1975 - November 16, 2006

Brandon E. Davis
Son of Lewis Davis and Karen Smith
Brother of Michael Davis
September 21, 1985 - November 10, 2005

Raymond Joseph "Ray" Day
Son of Donna Day
Grandson of Ruby Russell
Nephew of Patricia Brightwell
November 11, 1968 - October 22, 2005

Kerry Michael Marx Decker
Son of Sophia Marx and William Decker
January 18, 2006 - November 4, 2008

Michelle Marie Dyke
Daughter of Marie Dyke
May 19, 1975 - November 10, 1992

Alice Engleman
daughter of Elizabeth Engleman
November 20, 1997 - June 21, 2011

Leah Madison Fosdal
Daughter of Shannon and Jonathan Fosdal
January 27, 2009 - November 25, 2009

Kathleen Marie Frandé
Sister of Liz Frandé
November 17, 1982 - September 13, 2009

Christopher Joseph Galdi
Son of Kathy Galdi
November 14, 1985 - February 20, 2003

Jennifer Marie Garvey
Daughter of Mark and Cheryl Sylce
November 4, 1983 - October 18, 1999

Lauryn Beth Grapski
Daughter of Kathleen Grapski
September 17, 1980 - November 17, 2000

Sarah McSweeney Gray
Daughter of Kathy and Bob Gray
November 12, 1983 - September 21, 2003

Gregory Alan Grening
Son of Beverly Grening
February 19, 1971 - November 12, 1993

Jeffrey Andrew Grimm
Son of John and Linda Grimm
November 25, 1973 - September 28, 1989

Romana Alice Hale
Sister of Bobbi Remines
October 8, 1948 - November 5, 1976

Devin Hall
Son of Cyndia Hall
November 10, 1985 - May 17, 1990

Galen Andrew Harig-Blaine
Son of Clare and Stephen Blaine
November 14, 1989 - April 22, 2007

Michael James Hayes
Son of Belinda Hawkins
August 16, 1975 - November 22, 2008

Paul Alan Hillier
Son of Judith Clark
April 14, 1969 - November 26, 2008

Doray Delente Jones
Son of Margie Johnson
November 13, 1985 - August 20, 2004

Chloe Victoria Kimbrell
Daughter of Stephanie and Ben Kimbrell
August 18, 2004 - November 7, 2004

Edward Harold McGrath II
Son of Edward H. McGrath Sr.
Son of Brenda McGrath
February 21, 1976 - November 29, 2009

Our Children Remembered

Jolene Dawn McKenna
Daughter of Charlene Kvech
February August 1967 - November 22, 1971

Paul Brian Michael
Son of Deborah Michael
November 23, 1971 - July 19, 1991

Julia Milesky
Daughter of Stanley Milesky
October 26, 1986 - November 22, 2003

Michael Wesley Miller Jr.
Son of Michael Miller Sr.
November 11, 1981 - June 19, 1985

John Carl Moreland
Son of Debbie and Fred Moreland
November 7, 1981 - October 28, 2007

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

John David "JD" Openshaw
Son of David and Lily Openshaw
November 9, 1994 - February 21, 1997

Arthur Gordon Phillips
Son of Cheryl Alderdice
August 24, 1983 - November 26, 1999

Nicholas Grant Poe
Son of Nelson and Shirley Poe
Son of Karen and Michael Willey
November 9, 1982 - January 23, 2002

Samantha Ann Rankin
Daughter of Vickie and Bart Rankin
November 19, 1988 - May 31, 2010

Joseph William Remines
Son of Bobbi Remines
November 16, 1980 - January 3, 1994

Christopher J. Rogers
Son of Louise G. Rogers
February 21, 1990 - November 4, 2003

Karen Ann Scully
Daughter of Ann Boteler
June 30, 1970 - November 14, 2004

Erin Michelle Shannon
Daughter of Karen Shannon
November 21, 1979 - March 18, 2009

Gary "Jake" David Spirt
Son of Dee Spirt-Rayment
November 19, 1962 - November 21, 2002

Karen Leese Stevens
Daughter of Judith and John Leese
July 19, 1962 - November 17, 2009

William Henry Stevens
Son of Peg and Lou Stevens
February 26, 1965 - November 28, 2003

Albert Frances Stinnett
Son of Tia and Rodney Stinnett
November 5, 1986 - November 5, 1986

Luther "Scamp" Stowe II
Son of Agnes and Luther Stowe
August 27, 1963 - November 12, 2001

Tyler Hill Stubbs
Daughter of Geri Thompson
August 6, 1978 - November 11, 2003

Shonto Taylor
Grandson of Stephen and Carolyn Tew
September 7, 1979 - November 7, 1994

Michelle Marie Tewey
Daughter of Michael and Marie Tewey
August 26, 1980 - November 15, 1998

Catie Lynne Thrift
Daughter of Sheila and John Thrift
July 24, 1995 - November 27, 2004

Reece Nelson Tolbert
Son of Jamie Tolbert
January 7, 2005 - November 6, 2005

Ralph Leroy Tongue Jr.
Son of Mary Jackson
September 22, 1985 - November 9, 2008

Marshall Maurice Tullier
Son of Martin and Kathryn Tullier
October 29, 1986 - November 10, 1986

Robert Matthew White
Son of Kathleen Savage
September 20, 1972 - November 13, 1993

Leslie Donn Whitman
Daughter of Donna Buono
October 28, 1963 - November 16, 2003

Edward Williams, Jr.
Son of Burnell Williams
January 23, 1959 - November 7, 2010

Wayne Wilson Jr.
Son of Needra Gorman
November 22, 1968 - June 24, 2003

Maraki Yemane
Daughter of Patrizia Giorgio and Menelik Yemane
April 1, 2006 - November 21, 2010

*This is for all the caterpillars that never became butterflies.
All the butterflies that never caught the wind in their wings.
And all the hearts that had hopes and dreams of a
wondrous flight together.*

Donations may be made to offset the costs of our local Chapter's events and communications. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations made in the last month:

DONATIONS:

Kristi Adkins in memory of Zachary Dukes and Ricky Bessling

Debbie Ahern in memory of Tim Umbel

Linda Ambrose in memory of Zachary Dukes and Ricky Bessling

Stan & Elaine Arnold in memory of Ivan Bullock

Anna Beales in memory of Joseph Smith

John & Terre Belt in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Angela Berger in memory of Tim Umbel

Kendra Berry in memory of Tim Umbel

Robert & Barbara Bessling in memory of Ricky Bessling

Wayne & Wanda Bessling in memory of Richard Bessling

Joe & Vicki Bors in memory of their parents

George & Christine Brungot in memory of Johnny Brungot

Bob & Sandi Burash in memory of Paul Burash

Max Cadorette in memory of Tim Umbel

Stewart Camden in memory of Tim Umbel

Samantha Carlson in memory of Zachary Dukes

Phil Carr in memory of Tim Umbel

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William Clark in memory of Samantha Rankin

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Kris DeWitt in memory of Tim Umbel

Mary Douds in memory of Tim Umbel

Gary & Cindy Dukes in memory of Zachary Dukes

Gary & Beverley Dunn in memory of Dayden Dunn

Earp & Associates, Realty Inc. in memory of Samantha Rankin

Alli & Holly Enders in memory of Christine Enders

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Kathy Franklin in memory of Tanager Ricci

Carol Fritz in memory of Katie Fritz

Cynthia Gammon in memory of Samantha Rankin

Brenda Gawthrop in memory of Andrew Gawthrop

Gayle Grimm in memory of Tim Umbel

Michelle Harman in memory of Tim Umbel

Grace Leigh Hughes in memory of Zachary Dukes

James and Cheryl Hughes in memory of Zachary Dukes

George & Kathy Ireland in memory of Melissa Ireland Frainie

Yvonne Jenkins in memory of Samantha Rankin

DONATIONS CONT.:

Robert & Sue Katz in memory of Matthew Katz and Robbie Trapasso

Mark Kirehner in memory of Tim Umbel

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George & Amy Messina in memory of Andrew Gawthrop

Justin & Becky Michaud in memory of Samantha Rankin

Kevin & Kellie Mueller in memory of Samantha Rankin

Alice Neary in memory of Brittany Tyler

Shawn & Debra Nicklin in memory of Tim Umbel

Ron Opel in memory of Tim Umbel

Barbara Palmer in memory of Deonte Simms

Fran Palmer & Rich O'Donnell in memory of Scott Palmer and Steve Cooper

David & Tracie Parkinson in memory of Zachary Dukes

Tyler Parkinson in memory of Zachary Dukes

Leroy & Josefina Patterson in memory of Zachary Dukes

Brian Price in memory of Tim Umbel

Bart & Vickie Rankin in memory of Samantha Rankin

Joseph & Mary Redmiles in memory of Thomas Redmiles

Gary & Marla Reichbecher in memory of Tim Umbel

Jaden Robinson in memory of Tim Umbel

Thomas & Joyce Schall in memory of Tommy Schall

James & Pat Schultz in memory of Kelly Ann Schultz

Anna Severn in memory of Danny Ferrer

Kristi and Francisco Silva in memory of Kelcey Silva

Deborah Simms in memory of Deonte Simms

Roger & Brenda Lee Sisler in memory of Tim Umbel

Susie Smargissi in memory of Samantha Rankin

Kenneth Smith in memory of Tracy Fotino

Daniel & Janet Tyler in memory of Brittany Tyler and Fred Carter

Ervin & Brenda Umbel in memory of Tim Umbel

Matt Umbel in memory of Tim Umbel

Richard & Mary Ann Umbel in memory of Tim Umbel

Bob & Nancy Wayne in memory of Tim Umbel

Burnell Williams in memory of Edward Williams, Jr.

Phillip & Debra Workman in memory of Tim Umbel

E.C. Wright III in memory of Katie Fritz

Craig & Robin Zentz in memory of Danny Ferrer

Chapter members were also present and walked in memory of Deana Lenz, Robby Ostrowski, Jayda Powell, Karen Stevens, David Tomaszewski and others.



Mrs. Butterworth Original

Every parent who has lost a child knows these words to be true. Whether it is a baby food or a toddler's newly discovered favorite, junk food for teenagers or an adult child's old-time favorite, the grocery store can be a rough trip.

I lost my son, Stephen, when he was 18, so it was the junk food—potato chips, Funyuns, french bread for pizzas, Ragu sauce, pepperoni, Cheetos, cheesebread, cereal of all kinds, Chex Mix, and so on that haunted me and made me not want to grocery shop. But it was the golden face of Mrs. Butterworth that brought me to my knees.

As I stared in horror at her face, I remember sticky little handprints on the wall when the highchair had been just a little too close, I remembered a chubby little toddler sitting next to me at the table, talking seriously, his blue eyes wide. “I sink I saw her wink at me,” he said of Mrs. Butterworth, sounding a little like Tweety Bird.

“Really?” I asked. Mrs. Butterworth always winked on the commercial—she seemed quite lifelike.

I took Mrs. Butterworth and made her walk toward his plate. She tripped when she was just the right distance from his plate, and syrup spilled from her head right onto his pancakes. He looked at me, and I saw it coming in his eyes—laughter. There is something so precious about a toddler's laughter. It seems to start deep within and rolls from their chest until they lose their breath. He cackled, he gasped, his body shook with laughter as Mrs. Butterworth regained her footing and said, “Oh, my—silly me!” He laughed even more.

Thereafter, Mrs. Butterworth made a ritual of tripping and spilling syrup onto his pancakes. Sometimes she let out a shriek as she fell; other times she would say something about how clumsy she was or how she had tripped over her apron. Whatever she did, he rolled.

When Stephen was 15, the two of us often shared a quick breakfast before rushing out the door. He usually ate pancakes that he cooked for himself now, and I joined him for a granola bar and a Diet Coke. I was lost in thought one morning, a particularly stressful day ahead of me, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mrs. Butterworth come walking toward me. She was helped by a hand as big as mine with slender fingers wrapped around her base.

“So—how have you been?” she asked in a voice that tried to sound feminine but came out a little like a drag queen. She tripped suddenly and screamed in apparent horror. “Oh, crap!” she said as she stood back up. It may be the only time that Mrs. Butterworth has ever said crap—I'm not sure. I laughed until I was sick and left for work with a smile in my heart.

But now, I did not laugh when I saw her face. I cried. Other shoppers probably thought I was insane. I walked away. I couldn't look at her. Cheetos and Funyuns and potato chips had already stabbed at me over on aisle four, Captain Crunch had almost tripped me, the Tombstone Pizzas had made me as cold as they were in the freezer just to look at them, but the little golden-faced lady broke my heart.

For the next four years, I had a peculiar interest in shortening and oil—you see, they were across the aisle from Mrs. Butterworth, and I had to keep my back to her. She was an old friend, but I couldn't face her. Just last week, I felt Mrs. Butterworth's stare on my back as I once again stared at the Wesson and the Crisco. I dared turn and peek at her. She boasted of lowering the calories—so, she, too understood being mid-forties, huh? I dared turn a little more to fully face the little lady who had meant so much to Stephen and me. The tears came, but a smile came with them. The memories that the golden face evoked were gentle, worth remembering forever. Older grief is, indeed, kinder.

I put her in my shopping cart and took her home with me. She stands on one of the top shelves in the kitchen, guarding my granola bars and my memories . . . handprints on a wall, a toddler's laughter, a teenager making his stressed mom laugh.

And, Stephen—you know, buddy, I think I saw her wink at me.

— Marcia Carter, TCF, Marietta, GA (Marcia is the author of *Stephen's Moon*.)



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NEXT MEETING: November 3, 2011



Time sensitive
Must be delivered by OCTOBER 30, 2011

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Using Writing as a Healing Tool

Thursday, November 3, 2011

Laurel Goodrick of Gilchrist Hospice will discuss how writing can be healing and will show members different types of writing that may work for them. She will share guidelines for creating a comfortable and safe writing environment and will provide handouts for those interested.

Introducing Our Children

Thursday, December 2, 2011

The focus will be on our deceased children, giving everyone the opportunity to tell others about who they were. There will not be a presenter; sharing groups will be the focus. For all who want to participate, bring a picture or memento of your child; each person will then show the picture or memento and introduce the child and describe what he or she was like. Sharing groups will be held for first-time attendees, the newly bereaved, and the non-newly bereaved.

Service of Remembrance

Sunday, December 4, 2011 @ 3 p.m.

St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church
Severna Park, MD

Worldwide Candle Lighting

Sunday, December 11, 2010 @ 7 p.m.

Sponsored by the Compassionate Friends
(www.compassionatefriends.org)

RESOURCES:

Bereaved Parents of the USA

www.bereavedparentsusa.org or 708-748-7866

Hospice of the Chesapeake

www.hospicechesapeake.org or 410-987-2003

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center

www.mdcrimevictims.org or 410-234-9885

Suicide Support Group

410-647-2550; meets the first Tuesday of each month
in Severna Park, MD

MIS Support Group (miscarriage, infant death or stillbirth)

443-481-6114; meets the first Monday of each month
in Edgewater, MD

Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP)

www.grasphelp.com or 843-705-2217

The Compassionate Friends of Prince George's County

Meetings are on the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.,
United Parish of Bowie, 2515 Mitchellville Road, Bowie, MD

We appreciate feedback on our Chapter meetings. If you have suggestions for future topics of discussion, please contact our Program coordinator: Paul Balasic at pjbस्पmd@gmail.com or **443.566.0193**.