



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

February 2012

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A Valentine Waiting for You



There's a valentine waiting for you
That's different from all the others.
It's there every month at our meetings
For fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers.

Its envelope is made of caring,
The glue of understanding seals it tight.
This non-judgmental group who have been there,
Help to take away your fear and fright.

So, come join with us together,
Read your loving message printed clear,
In not only this month's valentine,
But all those throughout the year.

— Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA

Darlene Goatley, a licensed social worker for 30 years and author of "When a Loved One Dies – Bereavement Information and Resources," recently attended one of our Chapter meetings, and she has graciously volunteered to serve as a Mental Health Resource person to our Chapter and our members. She will make herself available by phone (410-980-3165) or email (dargoatley@verizon.net) to those who have questions about available community resources.

"I believe that having information and having support resources make a big difference in the coping process. Uncovering resources, however, is a challenge," Darlene explained.

Darlene will also write articles for the Chapter's newsletter and will present a program at one of the Chapter meetings this Spring. A BIG THANK YOU TO DARLENE.

The printing and mailing of this newsletter have been donated by
Mary and Joe Redmiles in memory of their son

Thomas H. Redmiles

February 22, 1985 – March 14, 2011



Tommy, Happy 27th Birthday. Thank you for being our guardian angel and continuing to send us strength. We miss your smiling face, kind heart and the way you made us laugh. We wait for the day our memories will make us smile again and dry away our tears.

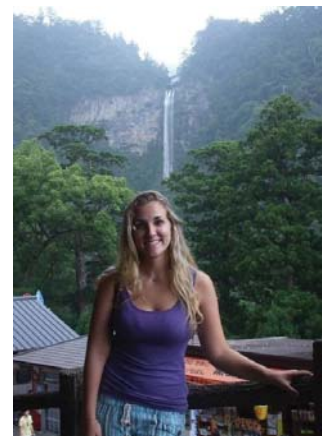
We love you always.
Mom, Dad, Katie, Matt,
Colleen, Jon and Regan.

Jed and June Erickson in memory of their daughter

Jenna Leigh Erickson

February 21, 1988 – February 5, 2011

In Loving Memory



Next Meeting: February 2, 2012

Using Music in Dealing with Grief — Some bereaved parents find that music can be helpful in dealing with their grief. A bereaved father will relate his experiences with music in his grief journey and talk about the role he believes music can play in the grief process. Members are urged to bring CDs or cassette tapes with music they have found particularly meaningful and helpful as they deal with their grief. We will use these as part of the discussion in some of our sharing groups, which are a key part of each Chapter meeting.

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. Come around to the back of the church—there is parking and an entrance directly into our meeting room.

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 March newsletter due to the Newsletter Team by February 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!

Inclement weather on a meeting night? Our meeting is cancelled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect that same day at 5:00 p.m.



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. Say Their Names!!! And help the Chapter, too!

REPRINT POLICY: Material in this newsletter of the Anne Arundel County Chapter/ BPUSA may be copied only: 1) if the article is copied in its entirety; 2) if the person writing the article is identified as noted in the newsletter; 3) if it is clearly stated that it was taken from the newsletter of the Anne Arundel County Chapter/ BPUSA; 4) if our website is cited in the credits. This material is to be used and given to help persons with the grieving process and may not be sold or become a part of something being sold for profit, unless first obtaining the permission of the author of the article and/or the current Editor or Chapter leader as noted in this newsletter.

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



A Special Valentine

A touch of your hand,
 A smile on your face
 Another time, another place.
 You were my girl,
 I was your Mom
 Together we met the world head on
 Death cannot dim the memories so fine,
 Your place is there
 This world is mine
 But, you will always be MY SPECIAL VALENTINE.

— Arlene Burroughs, TCF, Pikes Peak, CO



You Were Loved

You lived your life and now it's done.
 No more moonlight, no more sun.
 We didn't always share our feelings or our thoughts,
 We sometimes laughed together and sometimes fought.
 Each life has a beginning and an end.
 We never know what's coming up around the bend.
 You look down upon me from up above.
 You know in this life, you were loved.
 I miss your voice, your laugh, your smile
 How you made me feel special with your own unique style.
 Your absence is felt each and every day.
 Your name is always mentioned when I pray.
 As you fly among the peaceful dove,
 Always know that you were loved.

— Russ Gowin, Warner Robins, GA

Jenna

At one glance she was a beauty queen,
 But look inside and you'd find a world of wonders,
 Someone sweet and compassionate,
 Someone who gave the best hugs,
 Someone who lit up a room whenever she entered,
 Someone many people young and old admired,
 Someone whose mind and intelligence were truly remarkable,
 Someone who made everyone laugh,
 Someone with a great smile,
 Someone I know will always have my back,
 She is so much more than a pretty face,
 She is my guardian angel.
 I am so upset He took her from me,
 How could you? How do you expect me to keep my sanity?!!
 But yet I can close my eyes and hear her say:
 "Vicki, it was just meant to be this way."
 No one can ever replace or even come close,

To the friendship I valued the most,
 She knew my secrets, the troubles I've had,
 And stood by my side as long as we've lived.
 As tears stream down my face,
 Missing the friendship I valued so much,
 I take a deep breath and close my eyes once more...
 There she is smiling and she says,
 "Vicki, I am still here with you, don't forget we promised each
 other to be best friends forever."

— Victoria Ewing, in memory of Jenna Erickson



Happy Birthday, Boys

Happy birthday to my wonderful boys;

You would be two years old today.

Instead of singing "Happy Birthday to You,"

I cry.

Instead of opening your gifts,

I open the boxes of your clothes and mementos and think of what might have been.

Instead of lighting birthday candles on your cake,

I light a candle and think of you when I'm alone.

Instead of feeling my lips kiss your cheeks

I feel the tears stream down upon mine.

Instead of feeling my arms hugging the two of you,

I feel the emptiness of an embrace that is not to be here on Earth.

Instead of dealing with the "terrible two's,"

I have my own meltdowns, which come and go at whim.

Happy Birthday, boys...you gave me the gift of knowing the real and endless meaning of love.



— Janet Sutton, TCF, Southern Maryland, in memory of Jacob and Adam



Memories Are All I Have of Him

I remember him, doesn't anyone else?
No one will even mention his name.

It's as if he never existed at all,
And it's driving me insane.

Surely in his four years
He brought somebody hope or cheer.
And if you'd let me show you,
I can talk of him without shedding a tear.

You say it makes you uncomfortable.
You don't know how to handle the pain.
So you just avoid the whole issue –
I wish I could do the same!
You're afraid if we talk that I just might cry,
And you'd feel guilty and want to run and hide.

Well, let me share this with you, please.
Do not fear my tears.

Let me share the joys of him,
My loneliness, my fears.
If you love me, let me love him,
For I'm his mother still,
And if you do not set me free,
Then it's my memories you'll kill.

— Debby Grogan, TCF, Atlanta, GA

It Takes a Lot

It takes more than will power to stop thinking of someone you have loved and lost. I could see that in the slump of his shoulders and the way his feet were set close together. He had tried, in a burst of energetic resolve. But it would take more than that to stop. Whatever new beauties he would discover in the world would still, for a long time and maybe his whole life, not be quite enough to keep his memories away.

At first, we have no choice but to think almost constantly of the one we have lost. An hour does not pass that we are not aware of our loss – remembering the person, recalling episodes and moods of our life together, thinking of what can no longer be.

Then maybe one day we are startled to realize that for several hours, maybe even a full day, our thoughts have been elsewhere. We are beginning to heal.

But we do not need to worry that we will lose the memory of those we love. What we need to remember, we will. And sometimes when "new beauties" come, the memory of the loved one shines even more brightly, as we imagine sharing this new joy with the one we have lost. There is pain in this, but perhaps there is also a refreshed sense of the loved one's being.

The memory of my loved one is part of my life forever.

— Josephine Humphries



SIBLING PAGE

This is My Story

My name is Kate Summers. My big brother Alex died when I was only seven years old and my big sister Sarah died when I was ten. This is my story.

Probably like a lot of you, I remember the day they died like it was yesterday. I can even remember the smell of the church at Alex's funeral. Sometimes I sit in my room and cry with a picture of Alex and me the year before he died. I can remember Alex's love for the Simpsons and his love of orange juice. I can remember how Sarah loved to use straws in her drinks. She also loved strawberry and lemon jols. There are sometimes when I forget how Alex spoke and what he felt like and even what he acted like and that makes me feel really sad, but I will never forget how much I loved him and Sarah and how much they loved me. Whenever I am sad, I think of the things Alex and I used to do and it makes me feel better. I sometimes dream about when Alex used to put me on the front of his bike and ride around the yard. Sometimes I think to myself, why did this happen to me, but I know that it can make me more understanding of other people. I know that somewhere in Heaven, Alex and Sarah are watching over me. Last year at school, when we were doing a personal profile, someone said to me, "Why are you putting your brother's and sister's names down, they're dead, aren't they?" As if they are not my family! That comment hit me like a ton of bricks. But then I thought to myself...just because you can't see them doesn't mean they aren't there. All I have to do is keep them in my heart and they will always be with me. When I go to sleep at night, I say goodnight to them and then put my hand out of the covers so Alex can hold it. Sometimes I feel a warm sensation in my hand like he really is holding it. It has been five years and I still think he will be there tomorrow. Alex's and Sarah's spirits will always look after me as long as I live...at least that's what I think. Having someone die is a thing you can never get over...not like most people think, because they don't understand. Sometimes people think, because you are young, it doesn't hurt as much. So I don't talk about it very often! Sometimes when you do talk about it, your heart just feels like it is being ripped out, but afterwards, you feel better that you did talk about it. There are things about everyone that will live on forever. Our brothers and sisters may not be here with us, but they will always be in our hearts.

— Kate Summers, TCF, Australia



A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here.
Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real,

so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

— Robin Holmon, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

The Light that Casts No Shadow

The girl in the picture is not just beautiful, she is radiant. The dark, soft brown hair cascades around her shoulders, but cannot shadow her bright face, which seems perpetually alight. The skin is smooth white, sprinkled with a flurry of freckles, and rich with a lively flush of pink that paints her prominent, mature cheekbones. Her smile, one which could give color to a thousand rainbows cannot even be flawed by the recently acquired braces.

Indeed they only seem to make her laughing face sparkle that much more. The nose is straight and inconspicuous, a perfect complement to her other features. Certainly the most breathtaking features are her eyes, which shine like sea-green emeralds on a velvet pad. Large and full of wonder, they spill forth vitality and desire in pools of radiance, and one would be mesmerized in their captivating presence. They are the windows inside, and if we could go through them deep inside the girl, to her heart, we would find not darkness, but a warm, glowing light that would bathe us in its peace. The girl in the picture is dead now, but she is not death. She is the embodiment of life. She is my sister, and she will be beautiful, inside and out, eternally.



— Larry Wilson, TCF, Dallas, TX

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, eating when you are hungry, or sneezing when your nose itches! It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

— Rabbi Earl Grollman

Three Questions

Why? Why? Why? After months of asking this question, I still don't know why. I only know that asking why is normal and that even if I knew the reason why, I would still cry. I would still hurt. I still wouldn't like it. I have noticed lately that the why question is hardly ever running through my head (only on the very bad days). I have a new question now running through my mind....

What? What? What? What do I do with my life now? I think that moving from the why question to the what question is part of the healing process (I hope). The what question occupies my mind often. It will take time to answer this one.

In the future, I imagine that a third question will need answering: How?

— Sally Burnell, TCF, Des Moines, IA

A Parent's Beatitudes

Blessed are those who realize they do not fully understand our pain
Because they have not walked this pathway.

Blessed are our ministers and spiritual leaders for guiding us
When we are too confused to pray.

Blessed are those who do not say, "Time heals all wounds,"
Because for us time has lost its meaning.

Blessed are those who forgive our weariness on those days
When it's a great effort just to think.

Blessed are those who bring flowers but sense
That part of our "family bouquet" is with the Saviour.

Blessed are those who bring nourishing food,
For our refrigerator abounds with too-rich desserts.

Blessed are those who have patience with our tears
And ask not why we're still grieving.

Blessed are those who help us laugh again,
For we need their love to make this happen.

Blessed are other children,
For through them we find a reason to go on with life.

Blessed are those who share their children with us,
For we always see something of our own child in theirs.

Blessed are those who listen while we talk of our deceased child
And who share the memories we hold of him.

Blessed are those who realize a phone call or card that says, "I'm thinking of you,"
Will help bring cheer to our days.

Blessed are those who share our grief with a big hug,
For it warms the empty, lonely corner of our hearts.

Blessed is our beloved child, now with his Creator,
For he was truly a gift from God and is now celebrating "joy unspeakable."

— Mabel Mundy, TCF, Huntington, IN



Permission to Grieve

Grief is not a mountain to be climbed,
With the strong reaching the summit long before
the weak.

Grief is not an athletic event,
With stop watches timing our progress.

Grief is a walk through loss and pain
With no competition and no time trials.

— Doug Manning (from *Permission to Grieve*)

A Short Course on Understanding Grief

Dear Family, Friends and Co-Workers:

My life, and that of my family, has changed dramatically since the death of my child. I appreciate the support that you have given us. You should understand, though, that I don't know how long this grieving process will last – as it varies from person to person. I do know that it will not be over in a matter of weeks or months; it may even go on for years. Your desire for me to "get back to my old self" is really appreciated, but you have to understand that I will never be the same as I was before my child's death. This is not unusual. It is normal for a person to change after experiencing a trauma.

I need you to do us a favor. Tell those around you that we, as a family, still need them – even when we are not being sociable. Even though we need a lot of time alone to sort out our feelings (and sometimes just being around a lot of people is difficult), we still need our friends. We need you to stick around and not give up on us. We need you to be good listeners. But – and this is the tough part – to listen without giving advice.

I, like most grieving parents, have a need to talk about my dead child, my memories, my concerns about the future. I may even need to talk about the circumstances of my child's death. I know this is difficult to listen to. Most people don't like to hear about or talk about death. Many people are afraid to mention my child's name in front of me because it might make me "feel sad." Believe me, it's just the opposite. When others mention my child, I feel better. This does not mean that tears will not come to my eyes. But don't worry if you see me cry. Crying is a normal, healthy, human response – and it probably won't last for more than a minute or two.

Another thing I need to warn you about: special days. This could be my dead child's birthday, the anniversary of his/her death, my birthday, Mother's Day, Father's Day – you name it. I will be wanting to do something different on those days. I don't yet know what that will be, but it could be very different from what I have done in the past. Please be patient with these changes.

Bear with me as my values change, and don't be surprised if my interests and hobbies change, too. Material things, especially, just don't seem to be as important to me as they were in the past.

This is all new to me, too, and I don't know what to expect in the long term, as I really do my best to focus on one day at a time. If I look tired or I'm "wearing" my grief, don't worry about me. Just being there for me when I need you is the best help you can give.

Sincerely,

Bereaved Parents

Our Children Remembered

Bethany Anne Balasic
Daughter of Paul and Claudia Balasic
February 13, 1981 - April 5, 1996

Susan Lawrence Barr
Daughter of Bryant and Missy Lawrence
July 14, 1961 - February 16, 1991

Christopher Ryan Boslet
Grandson of Carol N. Boslet
October 23, 1985 - February 20, 2003

Chrystal Marie Clifford
Marilyn Mabe's son's fiancé
July 16, 1978 - February 17, 2001

John Mario DeMichiei Jr.
Son of John and Linda DeMichiei
February 24, 1979 - October 23, 2008

Jenna Leigh Erickson
Daughter of Jed & June Erickson
February 12, 1988 - February 5, 2011

Melissa Ireland Frainie
Daughter of Kathy and George Ireland
December 12, 1971 - February 12, 2007

Katie Fritz
Daughter of Carol Fritz
October 29, 1977 - February 27, 1993

Kimberly Judith Gardner
Daughter of Joan F. Gardner
February 6, 1968 - August 16, 1992

Carolyn A Griffin
daughter of Rick and Jan Griffin
February 15, 1983 - June 1, 2011

Timothy Jarrett Mabe
Son of Marilyn Mabe
October 29, 1977 - February 18, 2001

Jolene Dawn McKenna
Daughter of Charlene Kvech
February 8, 1967 - November 22, 1971

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

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

Adrian Bernard Andrew Ortega
Son of Rachael Hand
August 28, 1964 - February 17, 2005

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

Thomas H Redmiles
Son of Mary and Joe Redmiles
February 22, 1985 - March 14, 2011

Tanager Rú Ricci
Son of Kathy Franklin
October 19, 1977 - February 16, 2004

David C. Schmier
Son of Gordon and Virginia Schmier
June 26, 1964 - February 10, 1992

Patrick F. Smith
Son of Fran and Len Smith
February 20, 1978 - June 23, 2000

David William Tomaszewski
Son of Richard and Carol Tomaszewski
September 4, 1974 - February 6, 2001

Timothy Allen Umbel
Son of Richard and Mary Ann Umbel
Brother of Dawn Umbel
Brother of Christina Umbel
February 16, 1982 - September 15, 2002

Evyn Bryce Wygal
Son of Pam and Bill Wygal
February 15, 1991 - February 24, 1994

Zachary Lee Dukes
son of Cndy Dukes
February 12, 1989 - March 20, 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:

Louie and Judith Bolly in memory of Wendy Bolly

Carol Fritz in memory of Katie Fritz

Connie Grabill

Joseph and Mary Redmiles in memory of Thomas Redmiles

Kenneth Smith in memory of Tracy Fotino



*As we release the spirit...
we hold onto the love....*

May love be what you remember most.

Happy Valentine's Day to Our Children

Bereaved Parents of the USA Anne Arundel County Chapter

P.O. Box 6280

Annapolis, MD 21401-0280

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

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NEXT MEETING: February 2, 2012



Time sensitive

Must be delivered by JANUARY 31, 2012

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Using Music in Dealing with Grief Thursday, February 2, 2012

Some bereaved parents find music can be helpful in dealing with their grief. A bereaved father will relate his experiences with music in his grief journey and talk about the role he believes music can play in the grief process. Members are urged to bring CDs or cassette tapes with music they have found particularly meaningful and helpful as they deal with their grief. We will use these as part of the discussion in some of our sharing groups.

Healing through Helping Thursday, March 1, 2012

A bereaved parent will provide an overview of her Project Grace trip.

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.