



Tampa Bay Chapter

P.O. Box 3226
Tampa, Florida
33601-3226
www.bpusatampabay.com

June 2008

This month's newsletter lovingly sponsored by the families of:

Josef Varga

MEETING INFORMATION

Regular Monthly SUNDAY Meeting

(held the second Sunday of the month)

Sunday, June 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

St. Joseph's Hospital

Medical Arts Building, Auditorium

3001 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

(We will have separate break out sessions for men and women)

Call Beverley Hurley at 813-832-3175 for directions or information.

Regular Monthly DAYTIME Meeting

Riverview/Gibson/Brandon areas

(held the second Friday each month)

Friday, June 13, 10:00 a.m. to Noon

The Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce

330 Pauls Drive, Brandon, Florida 33511

Please call Linda Delk at 813-661-0680

for directions or information.

Regular Monthly PLANT CITY Meeting

(held the fourth Thursday each month)

Thursday, June 26, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

South Florida Baptist Hospital

301 N. Alexander Street, Plant City

in the Community Conference Room

Call Sue Bowditch at 813-661-9334

for directions or information.

Upcoming Events:

Angel of Hope monthly meeting

Please call Beverley Hurley 813-832-3175 for info!

Next meeting 7:00 pm June 2

Butterfly Decorating in June

We will be decorating Butterflies to be taken to the National Gathering at our June meetings. Please bring your craft supplies to share with others to decorate a butterfly in memory of our child. Please see Page 5 for the butterfly cut out. We will also have patterns available at the meeting!

MONTHLY MEETING TOPICS

June - Bring something that was your child's or about your child?

July - Do you need a vacation from your grief?

August - Grief - Do we ever "just get over it"?

September - Back to school for who?

October - Surviving the Holidays!

November - Gift donations!

December - Candle Light Service!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30			JUNE		

Our 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 tears, 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, our color, our affluence, 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.

A special gift will be given to each Dad and Grandfather at our June meetings in honor of Father's Day!



We understand how difficult it is to attend your first meeting. Feelings can be overwhelming; we have all experienced them and know how important it is to take the first step. Our stories June be different, but we are alike in that we all hurt deeply. We can not take your pain away, but we can offer friendship and support. Bring a friend or relative to lean on if you wish! We need not grieve alone! See you at our next meeting!



Chapter News



ANGEL OF HOPE UPDATE

Please check out our NEW improved website at www.angelofhopetampabay.com
 Angel of Hope, P.O. Box 2573, Lutz, FL 33548

Angel of Hope monthly meeting

Please call Beverley Hurley 813-832-3175 for info! Next meeting June 2, 2008 ,

Angel of Hope Pins

We have available our specially designed **Angel of Hope pins**. You have a choice of a pair of angels with boy and girl with a heart and butterfly and the words **Hope**, or a lapel pin with angel wings, a heart, a butterfly and the word **Hope**.

Size of boy and girl pin - Wing span to wing span is 2 inches, top to bottom about 1 1/4 inches.

\$20.00



Size of angel wing lapel pin – Wing span to wing span is 1 1/4 inches, top to bottom about 3/4 inches.

\$10.00



Please call Julie Leyde to order at 813-784-6929!!

Angel of Hope Memorial Bricks

Please get your order in for a memorial brick in memory of your child, grandchild, sibling, niece or nephew.



Telephone Friends

Need to talk? Call one of our Telephone Friends. They're here to lend a knowing ear because they've been there. Don't hesitate to call, we understand.

Linda Delk (General Information)	(813) 661-0680
Theresa Farmer (Homicide)	(813) 994-0707
Traci Cooley (Drowning)	(813) 300-6877
Ron Ellington (Suicide/Grandparent)	(727) 410-2308
Charles L'Homme (Accidental Death)	(813) 335-7628
Debbie Nemitz (Long Term Illness)	(813) 907-1441
Serena Graves (Sibling Contact)	(813) 810-7169
Violeta "Cookie" Fernandez (Se Habla Espano)	(813) 996-4281
CRISIS CENTER	211

Love Gifts

Debbie & Bill Nemitz
 In loving memory of their daughter
Robyn Michelle Nemitz
 12/28/82 - 06/16/98

Maritza & Jeff Patet
 Sisters, Mallory Patet and Gina Casal
 Grandparents Gus & Lourdes Arenas
 In loving memory of their son, brother and grandson,
Nathan Gabriel Patet
 12/18/88 - 06/10/90

Beverley & David Hurley
 In loving memory of her daughter
Debbie (Hurley) Bray
 11/14/1967 - 6/1/1990

Love Gifts-A Thoughtful Way to Remember

Love Gifts are a beautiful and loving way to remember a loved one. Through Love Gifts, we are able to reach out to others with our brochures and newsletters as well as obtain books and other information for our library. We truly appreciate every Love Gift, donation and sponsorship. Our Chapter work is done by volunteers and these donations help us reach out in many ways, including the preparation and mailing of the newsletter.

A Special Way To Remember Your Child: Sponsor A Newsletter Page

Anyone can sponsor a page in this newsletter in memory of their child. The price for a full page is \$60 which includes one black and white scan of one color or black and white photograph and your tribute to your child, which can include poems, stories or whatever you like. Your contribution supports the chapter and helps pay for the printing of the newsletter.

The newsletter page will also be posted on our new and improved website for one year on the *Our Children* page!

To sponsor a newsletter page, contact Beverley Hurley at (813) 832-3175 (email bee.hurley@gte.net). Please note that sponsorship pages are **due by the 15th of the month BEFORE the publication month.**

CHECK THIS OUT!

Most families do not have the resources to cope with the incredibly difficult grieving process following a traumatic loss, especially when young children and teenagers are involved. The Suncoast Kid's Place provides understanding and support in a safe, nurturing environment, where children, teens, and families can share their experience as they move through the process of grieving the loss of a loved one.

Through peer groups, discussion, education, and play, Suncoast Kid's Place provides the resources necessary to help families grieve a devastating loss, while finding strength and joy in the shared memories of someone special. Here, participants will have the opportunity to meet others who also have experienced the death of a parent, primary caretaker, brother, sister, or friend.

For more information, a schedule, or to pre-register, please call 813.990.0216. For information about the program itself, visit www.suncoastkidsplace.org.



Bereaved Parents/USA National Office
 Post Office Box 95, Park Forest, IL 60466
 Phone/Fax: (708) 748-7866
www.bereavedparentsusa.org



Our Children . . . Remembered

So long as we live, they too shall live ... For they are a part of us as we remember them.

June Birthdays

Aviles, Joseph
6/3/1974-4/24/2007
M-Carolyn Aviles

Brown, Alex Marie
6/6/1995 - 6/6/1995
P - Jane Ann & Thomas Brown

Burney, Trevin Sean
06/04/78 - 02/04/97
M - Georgia Burney
F - Willie Burney
S - Renae & Janae Burney
B - Arkiva Burney
N - Robbie & Marquiz Burney

Carlan, Robert Hope
06/02/78 - 07/25/99
P - Arnold & Linda Carlan

Eggly, Keiran Catherine
6/4/2004 - 6/4/2004
M-Elizabeth Eggly

Frederick, Mark Hunter
6/10/1998-6/26/2004
F-Mark Anthony Frederick
GM-Becky Frederick



Gilliam, Hayden Charles
6/20/1999 - 8/4/2001
P - Sean & Marion Gilliam
Sibs- Sara & Cole
GP-Joe & Nancy Gilliam, and Rose-
marie Trescrey

Hayes, Douglas
6/3/1969-6/3/1969
P-Martha & Michael Hayes
Sibs-Cheri Hayes Knapp & Travis
Hayes

Johnson, Georgina
6/10/2003 - 6/10/2003
P-Laurie & Goerge Johnson

Lane, Matthew Alexander
6/22/2001 - 2/13/2003
M-Mary Ann Muschick
S-Nikol
B-Devvin
GP-Hieu & David Muschick

Martin, Brian James
06/09/1979 - 07/18/1993
P - Stan & Adrienne Martin
B - Christopher Martin
GM - Evelyn Golding

Owens, Kenny Dwayne
6/27/1961-2/25/2005
P-Jimmy & Sylvia Mingo
S-Tina and Donna

Panico, Ryder
6/22/2004-4/27/2005
M-Kristen Panico
GM-Jeanne Buckstein

Ponder, Manda Lynn
06/13/1995 - 07/03/1995
P - Marilynn & William Ponder
B - Travis & Mike Ponder
S - Amanda Ponder
GM-Grace Ponder

Ramirez, Arthur, Jr.
6/10/1951 - 12/30/1997
M-Helen Ramirez

Schulman, Adam J.
6/7/1971 - 9/26/2004
M-Pat Schulman, Freddie Kelly
Jr. & Kenny Schulman

Sorrells, Blake Austin
06/03/1998 - 06/03/1998
P - John & Monica Sorrells
S - Cassidy Sorrells

Timothy, Joshua
6/29/2004 - 7/18/2005
P-Doug & Kerri Timothy
GM-Mary Ann Neglrete

Weber, Barbara Jean
6/4/1953 - 12/14/1994
P - Weldon & Jean Weber
S - Kristi, Teresa, & Pamela

Jozsef Varga
06/11/88 - 08/04/07
M-Carmen Varga
B-Kiel Varga
B-Bruce Senra

Our Apologies

The following names were omitted from the May Birthday and Anniversary list:

Taylor K. Pike
11/9/1985-5/14/2007
Parents-Bob and Connie Pike
Sister-Megan Pike

June Anniversaries

Alvarez, Dean
4/28/1965 - 6/12/2000
M-Diana Stenglein
B-Nadie Alvarez
S-Athena & Lynette Alvarez

Bray, Debbie (Hurley)
11/14/1967 - 6/1/1990
M - Beverley (Bray) Hurley
S - Kimberly Gonzalez

Brown, Alex Marie
6/6/1995 - 6/6/1995
P - Jane Ann & Thomas Brown

Combs, Phillip "PJ"
3/24/1986-6/12/2004
P-Lisa Pyche & Phil Combs Sr.
B-Travis D.Combs

Cowen, Chad
3/31/1973 - 6/7/1997
P - Mary "Pete" & Mike Cowen
S - Tiffany Larson

Eggly, Keiran Catherine
6/4/2004 - 6/4/2004
M-Elizabeth Eggly

Faber, Nicholas (Nicky) Paul
08/13/89 - 06/08/95
P - Paul & Kathy Faber
S - Danielle Faber
GP - Esther Kubler & Anna Banks

Funk, Benjamin
9/9/1976 - 6/25/2001
P - Mr & Mrs Funk

Harrill, Jason
1/23/1984-6/12/2006
P-Mr & Mrs. Harrill
S-Michelle "MiMi"

Hayes, Douglas
6/3/1969-6/3/1969
P-Martha & Michael Hayes
Sibs-Cheri Hayes Knapp & Travis
Hayes

Howard, Steven T.
8/11/70 - 6/30/1999
M-Cay Pelaez

Johnson, Georgina
6/10/2003 - 6/10/2003
P-Laurie & Goerge Johnson

Kellogg, Benjamin
- 6/7/2002
P-John & Barbara Kellogg

Landrum, Mark
03/03/79 - 06/24/94
M - Joan Landrum Adams-Hilliard
F - Steve Landrum
B - John Landrum

Lawrence, Charles E.
03/23/1965 - 06/22/2001
P-Dave and Terry Lawrence
S-Carolyn & Cindy
C-Ashley, Christina & Stephanie
W-Nicky

Mercer, Bret
10/5/1988 - 6/25/1992
P - Eddie & Darlene Mercer
S - Lindy, Crystal & Kaley
GP-Loren & Christine Mercer
GP-Beverly Jaudon Quincannon

Nemitz, Robyn Michelle
12/28/82 - 06/16/98
P - Debbie & Bill Nemitz
B - John Nemitz
GP - Laura Nemitz

Noriega, Aiden
4/4/2001 - 6/18/2001
P - Rick & Ethal Noriega

Orsi, Kristen McCall
8/5/1980 - 6/27/2002
P-Kimberly & Leo Orsi
GP-Wm. & Jeanne Armiger and
Stephanie & Rich Orashen

Patet, Nathan Gabriel
12/18/88 - 06/10/90
P - Maritza & Jeff Patet
S - Mallory Pater & Gina Casal
GP-Gus & Lourdes Arenas and
Don Patet

Roberson, Richard Joseph
07/23/1959 - 06/02/1997
P-Richard & Jeannette Roberson
S-Sue & Shelfy
B-Randy

Sehorne, Lee
3/11/1970-6/7/2007
M-Juanita Sehorne

Smith, Cameron Troy
5/24/1983 - 6/4/1999
M-Martha Honn
B-Aaron Smith
S-Jasolyn Evans

Sorrells, Blake Austin
06/03/1998 - 06/03/1998
P - John & Monica Sorrells
S - Cassidy Sorrells

Steen, Michael Anthony
8/4/1956 - 6/20/2003
M-Nancy Holdren
B-Rick, David & Donald
Father to Jessica, Christine & Mi-
chelle
Married to Doreen

Stock, Jessica
9/21/1978-6/6/2004
M-Rose Stock

Therault, George L.
10/13/1951 - 6/1/1996
P - Mae Therault

Waller, Albert Marcus
5/2/1994 - 6/16/2000
P - Marc & Charlotte Waller

Wright, Travis
7/16/1973 - 6/15/2001
M - Joan Wright



If we have omitted your child, misspelled your child's name, or listed incorrect dates, please accept our apologies and call Beverley Hurley at (813) 832-3175 to correct the information. Call any of our telephone friends if you are having a hard time on these days. We truly understand your pain; for we, too, remember our own children.

MEN IN GRIEF: A NATURALLY COMPLICATED EXPERIENCE

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Only four days after the sudden and tragic death of his ten-year-old son, Roger returned to his job as manager of a large retail store. Within five minutes of entering the office, a well-meaning, yet uninformed assistant manager emphatically announced, "We have created more than your normal, busy workload. We decided you should keep very busy so you won't feel sad."

Unfortunately, Roger's story is not that unusual for many males whose lives have been touched by the death of someone they loved. Even in the face of tragic loss, many men are encouraged to be self-contained, stoic, and to express little or no outward emotion in general. Those few males who are able to openly acknowledge the pain of loss are often met with judgments about their "inability to be strong and handle grief."

We hear discussions about how today's male is more able and willing to express feelings, but there is still tremendous discomfort in our culture when a man weeps openly, admits being disoriented or shudders with fear. Even among family and friends, the tolerance for him being able to acknowledge his pain is often minimal, and he usually follows with an apologetic self-justification, i.e., "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cry, but I can't seem to help it." Being strong for others is often reinforced as an honorable and admired quality.



From infancy, boys are typically conditioned to be "masculine" and girls to be "feminine." Watching young children at play, the observer quickly notes a distinct difference in "appropriate" male-versus-female behavior. A classic example is that boys are usually discouraged from crying, while girls who cry are thought to be sensitive and warm. In other words, if he is a "good boy" he is a masculine boy who learns that certain feelings (aggression) are acceptable, while other feelings (helplessness) are unacceptable

The common notion that differences between males and females are grounded in genetics tends to discourage us from learning how we can help young boys and girls to acknowledge a wider range of feelings. In fact, the male who fits society's idealized image of masculinity is often among those men who have the most difficulty when confronted with loss.

This social-conditioning process of glorified masculinity creates a major impediment to a male's expression of grief. If being a male means repressing normal feelings after loss, the man is set up to move away from his grief instead of toward it. A temporary dependence on other persons is a normal part of healing in grief. Yet, for the majority of men, dependency is equated with weakness.

Many young boys learn early in life that masculinity and "being male" equals not depending on anybody but yourself. During times of death and grief, we might even overhear well-meaning adults telling the little boy, "Now you have to be the man of the house."

Dependency in the typical male usually creates anxiety, fear, and overwhelming feelings of vulnerability, and he typically moves quickly to repress them. Although allowing himself to be temporarily dependent would actually assist in the healing process, the American male fights fiercely against dependency.

The grief experience naturally creates a turning inward and slowing down on the part of the mourner, a temporary self-focus that is vital to the ultimate healing process. Yet, for most men this is threatening. Masculinity is equated with striving, moving, and activity.

By the time a boy becomes a man, he is usually driven by a never-ending need to prove himself, which equates with keeping busy. Perhaps it is not coincidence alone that male children have a four-to-eight-times-greater incidence of hyperactivity than female children. Perhaps it is also not coincidence that the high rate of heart disease among men may be partly due to the overstress of constant activity without slowing down to rest. Unfortunately, the male who throws himself into his work following loss is not an unusual occurrence.

Another critical grief-healing ingredient is the ability to ask for or accept support. For many men, asking for help means letting go of control and allowing oneself to be nurtured and having to ask for emotional support makes many males anxious and uncomfortable. How many of us know men who will drive around lost for hours without asking for simple directions? Actually, this analogy to grief works well -- driving around lost, he searches for a destination, assuming no one can help him.

Many men, lost in the turmoil of grief, refuse to ask for the guidance and support that might well lead them in the direction of healing. He usually prefers to suffer in silence, questioning if anyone really cares about him. Outwardly expressing grief equals weakness to many men. The more "in control" he sees himself, the more appropriate he sees himself as being. The need to overcome grief denies him the opportunity to heal. When he feels surges of grief welling up inside, he invests his already drained energy level into repressing and fighting off the outward expression of these feelings.

It is very much in vogue today to encourage men to openly mourn (express their grief feelings outwardly). However, simply urging men to mourn does not adequately address the factors outlined above. The contemporary male is still busy protecting himself from feeling and/or expressing pain, and he often detaches both from his inner self and from people around him if they stimulate feelings of grief. As denial of real feelings takes over, symptoms of grief become enemies to be fought instead of friends to be understood.

The result is a virtual epidemic of complicated grief among males in our culture. Among some of the more common consequences of complicated mourning in the male are the following:

- Chronic depression, withdrawal, and low self-esteem.
- Deterioration in relationships with friends and family.
- Complaints such as headaches, fatigue and backaches.
- Chronic anxiety, agitation, restlessness and difficulty concentrating.
- Chemical abuse or dependence.
- Indifference toward others, insensitivity and workaholism.

This list does not mean, however, that all men who experience the death of someone they loved will suffer these consequences.

Observers might assume that men consciously choose to repress their grief. However, to openly mourn is not something some men won't do, it is something they can't do. Prisoners within themselves, they experience total frustration of even where to begin in the healing process.

Perhaps as a culture we need to begin to teach the little boy in childhood the freedom of being open to pain and loss. Working with grown men who have come to know loss in their lives suggests to me that usually a male will become aware of his grief only when he begins to realize how deprived he is of being fully alive and living. Only then can the male begin to relearn how to be a feeling person.

As we work toward creating what we might term this "new male" we must be patient and understanding with ourselves as a culture. The "new male" will continually affirm his right and need to openly share his grief outside of himself. He will give himself the gift of a total experience with grief, emerging a more whole and healthy person. He will acknowledge his fears, his hopes, his dreams. Becoming a "new male" demands a commitment and awareness of how important experiencing grief is to the ultimate quality of one's life.

(to be continued next month)

Graduation Day

Graduation Day: A day cherished by the graduate and his or her parents; one of the long-awaited "rites of passage" to the new status called "adulthood."

Laughter is heard among the students; tears of joy and nostalgia from the parents.

The teachers heave sighs of relief and feel a mixture of accomplishment with just a tinge of sadness for the days of laughter and childhood attachments that must be left behind.

Awards are given.

Gifts are received.

Parties are planned.

Future plans are discussed.

New goals are dreamed.

There are new hurdles to climb.

Disappointments are intermingled with successes.

All of these things are a part of life for those fortunate enough to have survived the dangers and pitfalls of this complicated society in which we live.

There was no prom night at our house.

There were no award ceremonies to attend.

There were no graduation gifts to buy.

There was no college to choose.

There was no future to plan...

Jimmy doesn't live here anymore.



His home now is a neatly trimmed patch of grass with bright-colored flowers; a tombstone inscribed with love; a small space carefully tended and watched over lovingly by someone who finds it most difficult to cope, to accept, to go on, or to find joy or peace on anything.

Tears are a way of life; now, and spare time is filled with emptiness.

There is sorrow now for a cheerful young boy who will soon be forgotten by all but a few.

Broken dreams.

Unanswered prayers.

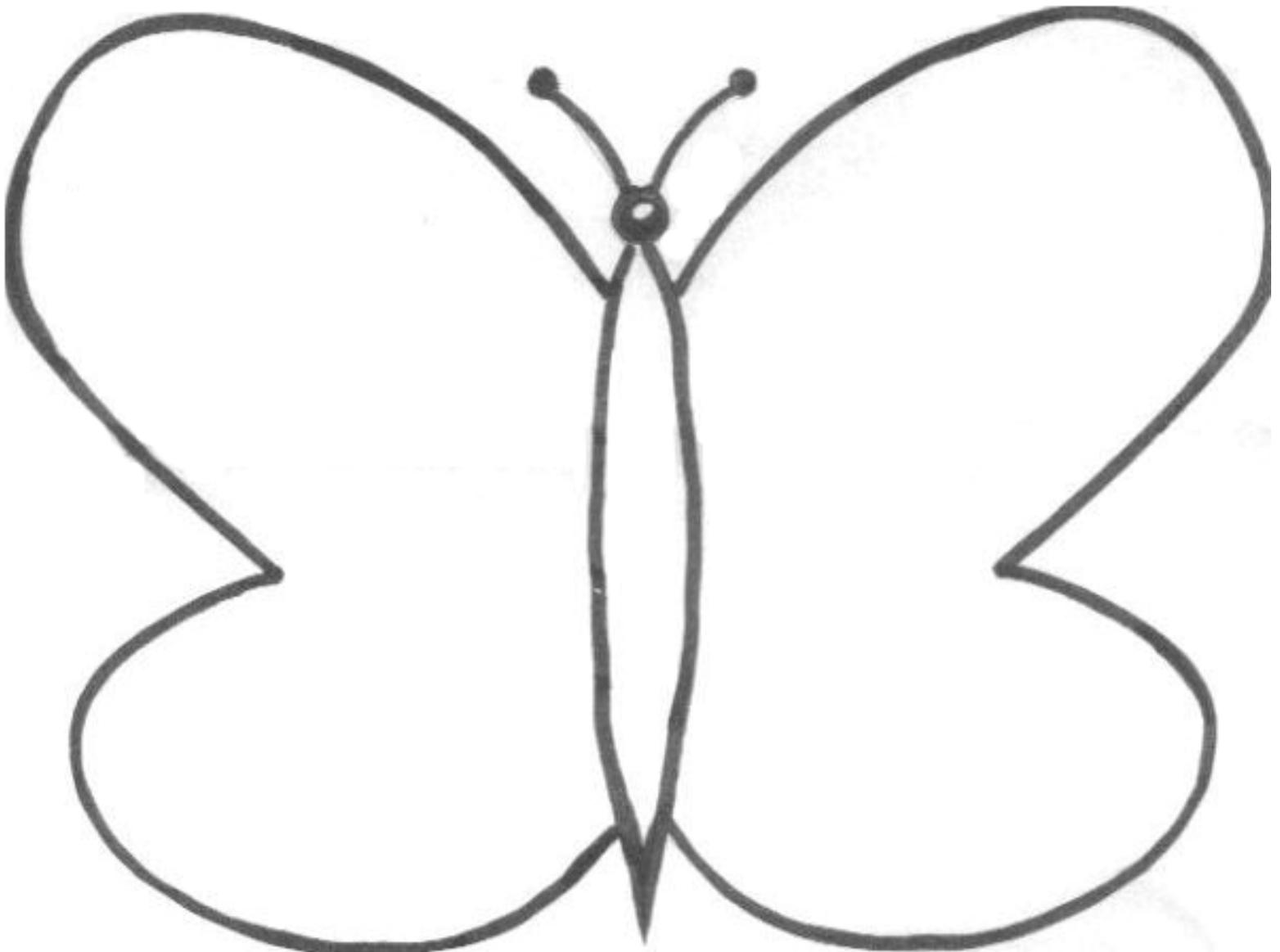
Disbelief.

Loss of faith.

And maybe years of endurance of a situation so unacceptable, so intolerable, that from the inner depths, a scream is stifled.

With one word my entire being cries out, "WHY?"

by Ann Ianni





BP/USA 2008 National Gathering

www.bereavedparentsusa.org OR www.2008gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org
618-244-1203 or 304-645-3048

It's time to make plans to attend the BP/USA National Gathering, *Seeds of Hope* on July 11-13, 2008, at the Airport Crown Plaza, St. Louis, Missouri. While each National Gathering June have a different theme, each gathering offers a safe environment where we can share our feelings and concerns and have an opportunity to learn ways of coping from people who truly do understand our pain. This year's National Gathering is hosted by the Southern Illinois Chapter, Mt. Vernon, IL, with assistance from the Lewisburg West Virginia Chapter. The co-chairs for this event are Gene and Martha Honn from the Southern Illinois Chapter and Jack and Betty Ewart from the West Virginia Chapter.

If you have never attended a National Gathering, I encourage you to make *Seeds of Hope* your first one. After attending my first National Gathering in Dallas, Texas in 2001, I was "hooked." While I had support from family and friends, the National Gathering gave me the opportunity to spend an entire week-end with other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who were actively searching for tools to help them through this unwanted journey of grief. When you are newly bereaved, you are like a little seed thrown into a deep, dark place. You need nurturing and encouragement to begin to come up out of that place and who better to offer it than those who have walked that walk. By meeting others who have walked this walk, you see that they have somehow found the courage to reinvest in life. Those who are a little further down the road in their grief have acquired tools to help deal with the pain. By sharing coping tools each of us has acquired over the years, you will have the opportunity to help the newly bereaved come up out of that deep, dark place. *Seeds of Hope* will not only offer suggestions about how to handle your grief but the opportunity to meet and start friendships with other bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents and others from all over the United States. I'll look forward to seeing you at the 2008 National Gathering.

REGISTRATION

The Gathering will be from Friday July 11 to Sunday July 13, 2008. Plan to arrive on Thursday, July 10. There will be a get together program on Thursday evening. The opening ceremony begins at 9am on Friday, July 11. The Gathering ends Sunday morning with a special closing program. Registration for the Gathering will be \$35 per person or \$85 per family. **SO GET YOUR RESERVATIONS IN EARLY.** Registrations at the Gathering June be by cash, check or, new this year, credit card.

HOTEL

The Crowne Plaza Hotel - St. Louis Airport, 11228 Lone Eagle Dr., St. Louis, MO 63044, 314-291-6700 – Ask for In House Reservations, Tell them that you will be with BP/USA. The Crowne Plaza Hotel features an eight-story atrium with a waterfall as its focal point; its wide-open airy design lets light flood into the Gathering workshop areas. The Hotel has been very generous to discount the room rate to \$75 per night plus tax. Remember that it is your responsibility to make your own reservations by calling the number listed above. The hotel provides doubles, kings, non-smoking and handicap rooms. To reduce the rate further, up to four persons June share the room and the cost. Reservations must be made directly through the hotel. When making your reservations, ask for In House Reservations and inform them that you are attending the BP/USA Gathering so that you will receive the special discounted rate. **RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY JUNE 15, 2008** in order to take advantage of the discounted room rate. Rooms are available, at the same cost, for 3 days before and 3 days after the Gathering. So get those reservations in early!



QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, please contact Martha Honn at 618-244-1203 or Betty Ewart at 304-645-3048. You June also contact either of them by e-mail at 2008gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org. Please see the BP/USA national website for registration forms.



"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance...."

Wm. Shakespeare



Throughout history the fragrant herb rosemary has always held a place of great esteem as the symbol of remembrance. Sprigs were laid at the grave of loved ones as a token of loyalty and commemoration. What better promise could be given to those we hold dear than the vow that they will never be forgotten?

Rosemary may be scattered at the gravesite or any place of shared remembrance. The act of scattering some and keeping the rest symbolically recognizes "Love that will forever live... Some to keep and some to give."

In loving memory of
Jozsef Varga
 06/11/88 - 08/04/07



*If tears could build a
 stairway, and memories
 a lane, I'd walk right up
 to heaven, and bring you
 home again.*

Happy 20th birthday Joe. We all love you and miss you so much!

Mom, Bruce, Kiel, your friends Justin, Steph, Will, and everyone else who's lives you touched.

Joey Bear,

There are no words that can explain the loss I feel for you. My life will never be whole again. You took so much of me with you when you left. I love you with all my heart and soul. I don't believe anyone could love someone as much as I love you. Each day is a battle because all I think of and pray for is to be with you. I miss your hugs, kisses, phone calls, surprise visits, and most of all, your love for me. You were not only my son, my baby boy, my big man, my Marine, but you were also my friend. You always had time for me and listened to anything I needed to talk about. I never realized how much I depended on you to get me through each day. You struggled for everything you wanted in life, but never gave up. I am so proud of you and all of your accomplishments. Your friends stay in touch with me. I can see why they were so special to you. They all love you and miss you so much. It is so hard for any of us to accept this. None of us want to believe it is true. The only way I get through each day is to believe it's NOT true. I can't let my mind focus on reality, or I will lose it. I don't know how to let you go, but I don't want to. You will always be apart of my heart and soul, and you will always be loved by me and by everyone who was blessed enough to know you during your short life. I am so thankful that God let me be your mom. That was the greatest gift He could have given me. I love you more then you will ever know. Mom

To my little brother , my fellow Marine, you are loved and missed deeply. Kiel

My Brother Jozsef Varga. Jozsef Was A Very Enthusiastic Person. With A Kind Heart And Good Morals. He Has Been A Fighter Since He Was Born. And Whatever He Wanted In Life He Had To Work And Fight Hard For. But He Always Succeeded When He Put His Mind To It. Jozsef Has A Lot Of Friends That Cherished Him. And A Family That Loved Him Unconditionally. Me And My Brother Have Been Very Close Since Day One. And Have A lot Of The Same Interests In Life. It Is A Struggle Every Day To Not Have Him Here With Me. But I Hope He Is In A Better Place, Because He Deserves To Be. I Love My Brother Very Much. And Know I Only Have The Memories We Had Together To Cherish. Jozsef Has Taught Me To Live My Life To The Fullest With No Regrets. And Cherish The Short Time We Have Here. And To Never Settle With Anything Less Than The Best. THANK YOU. My Brother Was A Very Proud United States Marine. And His Family And Friends Were Very Proud Of Their Marine. You May Be Gone From Our Sights BUT NEVER GONE FROM OUR HEARTS. I love You And Miss You Very Much My Brother. And Look Forward To Seeing You Again. Your Big Brother Bruce. God please Take Care Of My Brother!!! B.F.F.B. L.

"To the world Joe was just one young man, but to the people who loved him, he was the world!"

Joe, We miss you and love you and am so glad to have so many memories of you. Even though we didn't see each other often, you left an imprint on my heart that we will treasure forever.

We hope you are raising hell up there!

Aunt Luisa & your Cousin Scott



A Lesson in Grief in Re-Potting Plants

By Connie Pike, Tampa Bay Chapter, BP/USA

The past several months I have bemoaned the condition of all our potted plants. “Look at them all, they’re dying”, I whined to my husband. He was the one with the green thumb, spending hours pulling weeds, tending to the flower beds, changing out the perennials with the seasons. But the condition of the potted plants was no pressing matter to him, no matter how many times I broached the subject. Finally, Bob said that WE would tackle this project together. I was not impressed. However, I accompanied him to the Home Depot and selected an assortment of new, larger containers and huge bags of potting soil. “We should just throw them out,” I said, “they are practically dead anyway”. His response was that we were to be responsible caregivers of Mother Earth and leave our carbon footprint. Besides that, they weren’t dead, they just needed some pruning, new soil, new homes and some love and care. I begrudgingly agreed, but what about just composting?

As I began to attack each plant with my shears, cutting back all the dead leaves in preparation for re-potting, I became lost in thought of what the plants really represented. One year ago, our 21 year old son, a Junior at the University of South Florida, was leaving to go to San Francisco for a brief business trip before starting summer classes on May 15. He returned from his adventure and spent the weekend of Mother’s Day here with us in our Apollo Beach home. We had a great Mother’s Day. I made him do the shopping for me, we had a steak dinner. I requested extra hugs. He, his sister, and two friends spent the night and stayed up late playing music upstairs. At 2am, Taylor decided to go for a spin on his motorcycle. He loved to drive fast, and was just out for a spin around the block. Just a half mile from home, he “failed to navigate a curve” as the newspaper article penned it, hit a curb and was hurled from his bike into a railing. His friends heard the accident and woke up Bob and I. What followed was a 911 call and a rush to the scene. Taylor was already gone; a blunt trauma to the neck which severed his brain stem, aorta and heart. His helmet was cracked and of no protection for such an impact. We beat the paramedics and police to the scene. No parent should ever have to.....

So, then there is the funeral to plan, followed by all these flowers and plants. THESE dying plants, they are all from his funeral. These plants were neglected. Grief is hard work. You get distracted. They were all dying, to be sure. So here we were at a cross-road – dump the dying plants or bring them back to life. Is there some symbolism here? What about my grief; my decisions of how to process it, continue living or die? These plants, my spirit, my life-force, my faith; they all have something in common.

Some say that our greatest spiritual growth comes to us in our greatest pain. I believe that. As with these plants, our spirit and our faith can die or thrive. It is a choice. For the plants, do we dump them or do we nurture them? For me, now a bereaved parent, do I die away or do I nurture my spirit and thrive despite the tragedy and loss? I’m glad we chose to revive our plants. I learned a lot today, even though I don’t like to get dirt in my fingernails.

In assessing the plants, I noted that there was a lot of dead growth. It needed to be pruned away. I’ve learned to prune away a lot of unnecessary activity this year in order to heal. I’ve spent more time in nature; walking outdoors instead of going to a gym, doing yoga instead of shopping, letting go of anything in my life not serving my healing. In so pruning, I allow new growth through my journaling, prayer, attending my Bereaved Parents group, spending time with Bob and my daughter, Megan, fostering friendships with Taylor’s friends; even my work has become more meaningful.

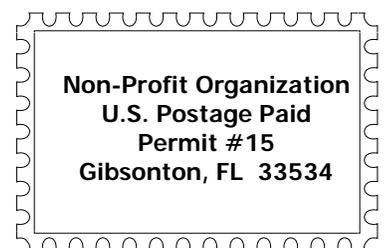
Many of the plants had been deprived of water; or were in a pile of putrid sour soil from over-watering and no drainage. I’ve learned this past year about “watering” my soul. The balance is necessary. With regard to tears, they are an important part of grief. The tears must fall, yet too many tears can cause a break-down or a spiral into a deep depression. The soul loses vitality either way. There is a time to weep and mourn, but also a time to dance, as the Bible so aptly advises.

As I clipped away half or more of each plant, I was amazed at how resilient these plants really were. All this new growth was there waiting underneath just to be nurtured. They were all root-bound from spending too much time in their “homes”. As we set them free into a bigger home and fresh soil, I could almost feel them beginning to breathe more deeply and settle into a healthier way of being. “And so can I”, I thought, “so can I!” My heart can grow bigger. My son’s death took a part of my heart away, but if I do this grief thing well, I can become a better person for all the pain and suffering. My faith and my ability to love can grow.

Mother’s Day is approaching. We’ve planned a trip to the beach. May 14th is the first anniversary of Taylor’s death. We’ll light some candles and talk about good memories. Will I survive it? You bet, just like all those plants we re-potted today.



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