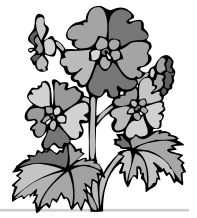


The Primrose



Vol. 31, Issue 2

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Summer 2011



Grief and the Creative Process

Some of us after the death of our child, find words are inadequate when trying to describe our feelings. To say we feel devastated, empty, hollow, hopeless, helpless or desperate still may not get to the core of what we're experiencing. That said, I know several of you were non-poets before the death of your child, yet found words flowing from your heart after. These poems have allowed you to creatively or analogically describe your experience. They have not only helped you to heal, but they have helped others to understand. To reach beyond words, whether we are trying to explain to someone what we're feeling or to help ourselves heal by tapping into the depth of our grief, the creative process can be the answer.

Others, who have not been able to heal through poetry, have reached beyond words into other creative ways. Some, like me, have turned to painting as a way to reach these depths. The paintings can be as personal as a journal, never to be seen by anyone but the painter. One father I counseled who had never painted before tried this medium. Often, painting over and over on the same canvas, he would just splash on color. At other times he tried to be more specific. It didn't matter. Afterwards, he would often write in his journal.

If painting or poetry is not for you, there are many ways to be creative when grieving that can console us. A mother, whose thirteen-year-old daughter died in a biking accident, made a necklace out of her daughter's favorite colors and calls it her "Barbara" necklace. She gets great comfort, feeling closer to her daughter, when wearing it. Another mother, whose ten-month-old baby died, made a beautiful wall hanging with the help of a quilter out of some of her baby daughter's clothes. A friend of mine whose son committed suicide, found a harmonica in his son's room and now has taught himself to play. He feels an intimacy with his son when playing that soothes him. Another parent plays his son's guitar and feels like he has his arms around his son when cradling it. A mother, whose toddler died, embroidered her son's name on several pillowcases. This has helped her to feel closeness to him when she rests her cheek on the pillow.

Use your own creativity to find the right expression for you.

On another note, I joined Facebook in order to facilitate a conversation with other bereaved parents.

You can go to my web site: www.carolkearns.com, and click on the Facebook icon under my book on the right hand side. I would love to have this interaction with you and hope you will take part.

My book "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My Daughter's Death Taught Me the Meaning of Life" is available on www.amazon.com. All profits will be donated to bereaved parents organizations.

Carol Kearns has been a member of the Marin chapter since her daughter's death 30 years ago. For more information about Carol and her book, go to her website: www.carolkearns.com

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

National Office Information

Phone Number (toll free) (877) 969-0010

Fax Number (630) 990 -0246

Mailing address: P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Web address: www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Coordinator

Al Visconti (518) 756-9569

PARENTS RESOURCE CORNER

Please feel free to call the following people if you wish to speak to someone whose child's death was caused in a manner similar to your child's.

Accidental – Pam Kroft	Ph: 239-4222
Illness - Shirley Mehal	785-5710
Adult child - Claudia Simonis	648-6715
Suicide - Cindy Hutchinson	757-9465

The Compassionate Friends of Broome County

1250 Front Street, # 147 Binghamton, NY 13901

Web Address:

<http://tcfbc.homestead.com/Home.html>

**For information pertaining to the
The Compassionate Friends of Broome County, call:
Pam Kroft (607) 239-4222**

Monthly Meetings

First Monday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Third or fourth Saturday 10 AM – 12 PM

Nimmonsburg United Methodist Church

918 Upper Front Street Binghamton, NY 13901

(across from BCC)

Steering Committee

Chapter Leader & Delegate - Pam Kroft

Outreach - Luann Ford & Elaine Sahre

Library - Sherry Bailey

Hospitality – Jean Scolaro

Treasurer – Val Ambrose

Newsletter Editor – Val Ambrose

Website Master - Marv Conover

Community Awareness Coordinator - Claudia Simonis

Secretary - Angela Carro

Programs/Events - OPEN

***** Please consider joining our steering
committee as additional help is always
welcome.**

**Next steering committee meeting
Thursday July 21st
Call Pam Kroft for information**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Meetings:

First Monday 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Unless otherwise indicated

Third or fourth Saturday 10:00 A.M.

(Check calendar!)

NIMMONSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

918 Front Street, Binghamton

(Across from BCC, next to the Credit Union.

Parking in the rear, enter through rear door.)

June 6th, 2011 (Monday)

7:00 “ Was it Dad, Father, Pa, Daddy? ”

June 25th, 2011 (Saturday)

10:00 OPEN FORUM

July 11th, 2011 (Monday)

7:00 “ Making Strides Through Summer ”

July 18th, 2011 (Monday)

6:00 “Balloons to Heaven”

July 21st, 2011 (Thursday)

6:00 Steering Committee Meeting

August 1st, 2011 (Monday)

7:00 “ Take My Hand”

September 12th, 2011 (Monday)

7:00 “ I am Stuck, Are You? ”

**Please Note - There are NO Saturday Meetings
In July and August**

The Primrose is published quarterly
Deadline for newsletter materials:
February 1st: May 1st: August 1st: November 1st

Send Information to: Val Ambrose 730 River Rd.
Binghamton, NY 13901
Or email JTL7899@yahoo.com

**NOTICE: If you receive this newsletter,
forwarded through the funeral home, please call
Val Ambrose at (607 648-8598) with your correct
address so new issues can be mailed directly to you.**

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hello Friends,

June, that's what the calendar says...Unbelievable, it seems like 2011 just began. As a young child, teen years and into my twenties it seemed as if I was always anticipating an event, my next birthday, Christmas, summer vacation, anything of any significance in my life. I remember my grama telling me that once fifty candles appeared on my birthday cake that life would go very quickly, time would pass, no more anxiously awaiting a date on the calendar. I can say, it's been a few candles more than fifty but she was so right. Life is flying by, it's Friday and then at a blink of an eye, Friday again. That brings me to my point, as time passes I fear getting further and further away from Sean's life, forgetting his smile, his scowl, his smirk, his smell, his voice and most of all his hugs. After he died there was little doubt in my mind that I would ever forget anything about him....I know we all have experienced this same fear...though on the flip side of that there are so many that feel like life has stopped, for those only a few weeks, months or even years from the death. In the beginning it seems like the sadness and sorrow will never end, each day is a lifetime. If you are in the later take it from me that someday you too shall be where I am. So before anymore time passes get yourself a journal, an old shoebox or photo album and enter your child's life. Write down all you remember, keep all the mementos, and put a story with each photo. I love it when family or friends will bring up something that happened, especially a story that I had forgotten or never knew. That goes directly into Sean's box, which is an old trunk my sister gave me several years ago. Many of my treasured possessions in the box have no significance to anyone but myself, Sean's dad and Aaron. There are days even after all these years that I sit and look through his stuff and wonder....and still ask, "Why?" Let us all take the time to preserve our memories, that is what we have left, my friends.

Our meeting this Monday we will focus on our Dads' and Grandpas' struggles and encourage them to find the hope. Come and share your stories, we never tire of them. There is a change in the calendar this month, June's Saturday meeting will be held on the 25th, because of the Relay for Life on the 18th. Please make the changes on your calendar.

Next month, July we will once again host our Balloons to Heaven held at the park in Port Dickinson on Monday, the 18th. One of my favorite evenings of the year, a relaxed night filled with friends and family that have come together to lift off balloons to our children, sent with well thought messages tied to each ribbon. A walk down the paved path to our Angel of Hope is always on the agenda along with the delicious potluck supper prepared by everyone. We never let the rain deter our fun so put the 18th on your calendar, a postcard will be sent as a reminder.

In the months of July and August we meet only on Monday, I know our grief does not take vacation nor stop during the summer so if there is a need to meet please call and we will get together. September we will be back to two meetings a month.

As we travel through the summer months and into early fall let us all take one special memory and tuck it inside, close to our hearts, close enough so we may feel the love that we shared with our children and the love that shall remain forever and ever. My greatest hope is that there never be another parent or grandparent who must endure this sadness, but I know that is not possible. I know there will always be parents and grandparents just like us, joining the "club" that no one wants to join, the "club" that has the highest dues, the death of a child or grandchild. May you also remember that you never need to walk alone, there is always a hand willing to take yours, so reach out....

Hugs to all,
Pam
(Sean's Mom)



Observing the Day

How do you observe the day your child, sibling, or grandchild died? The answers are as varied as how your child passed away. Many go to the cemetery, say prayers, refrain from working, plan a special meal, light candles, set up an altar, special family time, or a time of seclusion.

Our family rented a house secluded in the mountains of West Virginia for several days. No television, radio, or telephone. We talk, reminisce, cook, listen to music, read, hike, play games and just be. Since we go the end of January we always have a roaring fire going. This adds warmth, spirituality, and serenity. On the day of David's passing we light candles and spend the day quietly. Some of us go to the cemetery.

The time together is not always peaceful: there may be tension or frayed nerves. We try to remember we are not in the same place in the grief process. This is especially important. Our children (who are young adults) learned that winning at Scrabble is not always the longest words, but placement and strategy (taught by their father after many late night games). They also learned to play Bridge and Pinochle and increased their skill at Hearts.

Each year is different. The first two years was more emotional and intense. There are few rules; respect for one another and cooks don't do dishes. We plan ahead, but our emotions and mood set the tone.

Each year ends with massages. Our children never had a massage; this was a new experience for them. The massage and massage therapist is critiqued for the rest of the day. We've had quite a few laughs. This has become part of our tradition. Last year we bought the house in West Virginia. David has never been to the house, but the house is infused with his spirit! This is our family's ritual.

We each observe this sad day differently. The way to manage this day, at least initially, is to take charge and make a plan. Create a new day of remembrance, of ritual.

Lois Copeland, TCF Arlington (VA)

It's Okay

It's Okay to grieve: The death of a loved one is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without any anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that death cannot be reversed, and that somehow our dear one returned. Such hurt! It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to cry: Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life. It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to heal: We do not need to "prove" we loved him or her. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty", for this is not an indication that we love less. It means that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing. It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to laugh: Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh again. It's okay to laugh.

The Mask

It doesn't fit me very well,
But it matters not, you see.
Because most people do not want
To see the real me.

It's much too painful for them,
So they avert their eyes.
Their platitudes are only words,
That I've come to despise.

They can't bear to confront it,
They don't know what to say.
They think if I ignore it,
The pain will go away.

But I cannot ignore it,
It is too deep and real.
And those who've never lived it,
Just don't know how I feel.

No one wants to face it,
When a baby dies.
They quickly try to hush,
A grieving mother's cries.

They say I should be moving on,
They don't know what they ask.
So, to spare their feelings,
I put on the mask.

- Gwen Flowers



My son Brian wrote this on Joshua's anniversary this year while visiting his grave...

Twelve years ago today,
I thought that I might lose my way.
My heart still aches and tears still flow,
A pain that far too many know.
And though I wished that you could stay,
Your life and death has made me
Who I am today.

Love you Bro!!!
R.I.P.

Submitted by Valerie Ambrose

Like The Butterfly



It fluttered above my head
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand
It lit on my finger.
Waving glistening wings gently,
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello once more

BECAUSE

Because you can't feel me,
Doesn't mean I'm not there.
Because you can't see me,
Doesn't mean I'm not near.
Because you can't hear me,
Doesn't mean I don't speak.
Because you can't see me,
Doesn't mean I'm out of reach.
Because I am dead,
Doesn't mean I'm gone.

Beth Oldani TCF, Arlington Heights, IL

YOU'RE STILL HERE

By Richard Lepinsky

At the finest level of my being,
You're still with me.
We still look at each other,
At that level beyond sight.

We talk and laugh with each other,
In a place beyond words.
We still touch each other,
On a level beyond touch.

We share time together in a place
Where time stands still.
We are still together,
On a level called Love.
But I cry alone for you,
In a place called reality.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

In each issue, we reach out with our arms and hearts to the parents who will be facing difficult days during the next three months. Please remember them on the anniversary of the death of their child. The children's names listed are those of parents who have made a love gift and are subscribing to the Primrose.

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OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED *continued*

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Steps to Making Progress

- Allow yourself
 - ♥ To be imperfect
 - ♥ To do whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace
 - ♥ To remember your child in whatever way you feel appropriate
- Force Yourself
 - ♥ To keep communication open
 - ♥ To accept offers of help from family or friends
 - ♥ To go through the old routines again
 - ♥ To really listen to your spouse and children
 - ♥ To try an activity you used to enjoy
- Convince Yourself
 - ♥ That every member of your family will and should grieve differently
 - ♥ That you won't feel dead inside forever
 - ♥ That your confusion about intimacy with your spouse is normal
- Let Yourself
 - ♥ Off the hook for problems
 - ♥ Feel the anger
 - ♥ Feel whatever it is that you do feel about God
 - ♥ Treasure your special friends
- Teach Yourself
 - ♥ To establish small goals
 - ♥ Everything you can learn about grief
 - ♥ To ignore well-intentioned, unhelpful comments of others
 - ♥ To let go of the moment of your child's death
 - ♥ To embrace the memories of your child
- Talk to Yourself
 - ♥ To change the negative ways you think
 - ♥ About everything
- Forgive Yourself
 - ♥ For not being the most perfect parent
 - ♥ For all the things that you did or did not do
- Find Yourself
 - ♥ Now that you have changed into a different person
 - ♥ Without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.
 - ♥ By relying on positive techniques such as reading, writing, new hobby, etc.
- Indulge Yourself
 - ♥ By being selfish and doing something just for you
 - ♥ Because you deserve it

Steps to Making Progress continued

- Express Yourself
 - ♥ By talking out your feelings
 - ♥ In a safe place such as TCF
 - ♥ Through a new activity
- Forget Yourself and Give of Yourself
 - ♥ By seeking out other bereaved parents and others in trouble
 - ♥ By concentrating on others who are in pain
 - ♥ To discover that We Need Not Walk Alone
 - ♥ As a tribute to your child

A Word About Closure

I don't use the word "closure" anymore. For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I no longer think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process—a long slow process. There are events that are memorable, but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts that is gone.

We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real." We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.

It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping.

They are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope. ~ Doug Manning

Love Gifts

Our chapter is a self-help group with no required dues. We rely solely on contributions. Your donations help us pay for the cost of this newsletter, the postage, all the books in our library, meeting and event supplies which are a great help to bereaved parents.

Your contributions are tax deductible and very sincerely appreciated. The following donations were received since the last Primrose deadline:

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Love Gifts continued

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Occasionally mistakes are made with children names and dates in the Children Remembered and Love Gift Section. Please let me know if I make one so I can make corrections.

*** NOTICE ***

The Primrose Newsletter, published quarterly, is available for a year with a suggested subscription of \$8.00 - \$10.00. You may pay as little or as much as you like towards our newsletter printing and mailing fund. Your expiration date is shown in the lower right hand corner of your mailing label. Please let me know by this date if you wish to continue receiving the Primrose. This is my way of knowing if you want the newsletter.

Send your Tax deductible donations to: Mrs. Valerie Ambrose 730 River Rd. Binghamton, NY 13901
Make checks payable to: Bereaved Parents.



Name _____

Please check if new Address

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Child's Name _____ DoD ____________

Newsletter \$ _____ Library \$ _____ Other (specify) \$ _____ Generic \$ _____

Please specify if there is a specific fund you want the money used for (newsletter, books, supplies, ect...)
ALL donations will be mentioned in the Love gift section of the newsletter.

The Coping Hours

Ellen Schick

Did you ever hear of a nightmare
That occurred in the midst of day?
Webster must have named it wrong
It just doesn't happen that way.

It might be while I'm driving
Or watching some TV
Looking at your picture when
This shock grabs hold of me.

Sleep is such a short time
While the coping hours are long
Day in, day out, I sort it out
Somehow this all seems wrong.

So nightmares aren't for nighttime
It's for the light of day I fear
The ever-constant reality
Is the fact that you're not here.

Beautiful Dream

by Robert Willis'

Eyes open wide
I awake from a beautiful dream
Within seconds the painful reality
of my life sets in
...I find myself wanting to scream

Grief so strong
Impossible to explain
Living with a broken heart
Struggling with the pain

Eyes closed tight
I pray for that beautiful dream
A short escape from the painful reality
That makes me want to scream

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Please let me know by this date if you wish to continue receiving the Primrose.

Bereaved Parents Group

Broome County Chapter
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