



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

April, 2006

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

Regardless of the calendar or the meteorologists, April marks the beginning of spring for many of us. The world outside begins to awaken from its winter slumber, and the sights and sounds and smells of spring abound, from the flowers peeking out of the ground to the birds chirping merrily outside our windows to the smell of the blooming trees as we venture out for our first walk of the season.

This is what spring is all about unless, of course, you are a “newly” bereaved parent, and then you might just be oblivious to it all. In fact, you may even resent the reappearance of spring and its symbolic rebirth. The message to you from an “old timer” on this grief journey is to be easy on yourself...it won't always be this hard, and just feel whatever you feel. Don't let anyone tell you how you “should” feel this spring (or next).

Like all seasons, spring will have its share of emotional triggers for the newly bereaved – graduations, Mother's Day, planning for summer vacations, favorite flowers, and just waking up. But just as April showers bring May flowers...the tears of grief will ultimately sow the seeds of hope, and someday you, too, will see the beauty of spring again.

For those of us who have been on our grief journey for awhile, not only do we recognize (and welcome) the beauty of spring again, but we also see our children in everything that is beautiful in spring. It's our way of carrying them with us through spring and through all of the seasons. So, as spring unfolds, here's wishing each of you peace and whatever joy you are able to find.

Terre Belt
Anne Arundel Co. MD Chapter BPUA

GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
- to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
- to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
- to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
- to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.

The printing of this newsletter has been donated
By Daynie Showacre in memory of her daughter

Rachel Beth Showacre

The mailing of this newsletter has been donated
By Maren Sheidy in memory of her son

Travis Brandon Beyerle



**Bereaved Parents of the USA
Anne Arundel County Chapter
P.O. Box 6280
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-0280**

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Editor	Chapter Leader
Rick Tomaszewski 410-519-8448 akuahi@aol.com	Dave Alexander 410-544-3634 dralex@sdalex.com

Mailing and Thank you notes: Barbara Bessling
Treasurer: Fran Palmer - **Hospitality:** Carol Tomaszewski
Mailing List: Dave Alexander - **Programs:** VACANT
***note - as you can see we have several vacancies... we hope someone will consider helping!**

It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editor 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed.

May submissions are due by April 14.

Library:

Our lending library is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above. Thank you.



Refreshments at our monthly meetings:

A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter. For information, contact Carol Tomaszewski at 410 519-8448.



MEETING INFORMATION

Next meeting: April 6, 2006

Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

(Meetings usually held on first Thursday of month)

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Please park in the lot behind the church

TELEPHONE FRIENDS:



Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

Marie Dyke, single parent, daughter, 17, only child, car accident.

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

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

Sandy Platts, infant death. 410-721-6457

OTHER RESOURCES:

- * **Bereaved Parents of the USA, (BPUSA)**
National contact number (708-748-7866)
- * **Stephanie Roper Committee, for victims of violent crime, Anne Arundel County chapter**
representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).
- * **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)**
meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road,

Conference of Hope and Healing

Saturday, May 20, 2006

For information: Pat Schultz, Chair
410-255-7760

jim.n.pat4@juno.com

Debi Wilson-Smith, Co-Chair

410-757-8280

dwsmith@pgcps.org

CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

HELP!! ZIP CODE CHANGES

If you are one of the ones in the Annapolis and Arnold areas whose zip code is changing, please call Dave Alexander at 410-544-3634 or send him an email at dralex@sdalex.com with your new zip code so we can update our mailing list.

PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE HELP US SAVE ON PRINTING AND POSTAGE

If you *move*, please let us know your new address. If you *don't want* to receive our newsletter any more, please let us know. If you would rather read the newsletter on our website, please let us know, and send us your email address, and we will send you a reminder each month when the newsletter is put on the website. (The newsletter is loaded on the website as soon as it has been produced — about 10 days before it is delivered in the mail.)

You can contact us by mail at our address at PO Box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401-0280 or by sending us an email at ChapterLeader@sdalex.org.

MEETING TOPICS—ANNAPOLIS

April 6: How Men and Women Grieve Differently

We each grieve differently. These differences between men and women can introduce new stresses into a couple's relationship. As we anticipate Mother's Day and Father's Day in the coming months, understanding these differences (and the similarities) can be helpful. During the general session we will have a panel of husbands and wives talking about their experiences and their differences in grieving after their children died. In addition to the First-Timers Sharing Group and the Newly Bereaved Sharing Group, there will be a separate sharing group for men and another one for women.

May 4: Memorializing Our Children: Creating Garden Memorial Stones

Many bereaved parents seek ways to memorialize their deceased children and to keep their memories fresh in the minds of family, friends, and the community. Fran Palmer will discuss the making of garden memorial stones and, during the sharing group period of the evening, will lead a workshop for those

Many of you who receive our **newsletter** were referred by a friend, physician, or clergy. You may have never attended a meeting. In this case, it is likely that your child's name does not appear in our **monthly list of "Our Children Remembered"**. This is because we require your permission to do so. If you would like your child's name added, please send a note to our post office box. List your child's name, your name(s), and the dates of your child's birth and death. Please allow 6 weeks to be sure it arrives in time for the appropriate month.

Eastern Shore Bereaved Parents Group

The Queen Anne's County Bereaved Parents Group meets on the **First Wednesday of each month**. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 5, at 7:00 pm. The Group meets at the **Calvary United Methodist Church in Queenstown**. The Church is located at the intersection of Maryland Avenue and Steamboat Lane in Queenstown.

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

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



Recommended Books

"After The Darkest Hour, The Sun Will Shine Again", A Parent's Guide to Coping With The Loss of A Child, by Elizabeth Mehren

"Packing for the Big Trip", Enhancing Your Life Through Awareness of Death, by Charlie Walton

Donations:

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

Thank You

Dorothy & Norm Heincelman in memory of their granddaughters **Cortney Belt** and **Traci Heincelman**

Ken Smith in memory of his niece **Tracy Ann Fotino**

Debi Wilson-Smith in memory of her son **Christopher John Smith**

Understanding Your Grief – A Discussion with Dr. Alan Wolfelt

On the evening of May 9th, Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., who is the Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, CO, and an internationally noted author, educator and counselor, will hold a discussion for bereaved parents, "Understanding Your Grief." Based on three decades working with the bereaved and on his popular book *Understanding Your Grief- Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*, Dr. Wolfelt will outline what he has learned to be the physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual trail markers for mourners to look for as they journey through grief.

"Grief is not a disease," says Dr. Wolfelt. "Instead, it is the normal healthy process of coping with the death of someone loved. If mourners see themselves as active participants in their healing, they will experience a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life."

Copies of Dr. Wolfelt's book will be available at Middleton Hall Tuesday, May 9th, but it is suggested that you read it before the discussion, so you will be more prepared to participate. The Anne Arundel County Library has copies of *Understanding Your Grief*, or it can be ordered from Amazon.com.

This evening with Dr. Wolfelt, will be held Tuesday, May 9th, 7:00 - 9:00 pm, at Middleton Hall in Waldorf, MD and promises to be a night of hope and healing. For more information on Dr. Wolfelt's talk, which is being provided free of charge by the Compassionate Friends of Southern Maryland, call Russ Horton at 301-580-1756 or email Cathy Bowie at cbbowie@comcast.net. This free event is expected to fill up quickly so please RSVP to ensure seating.

In addition, on Wednesday May 10th, Dr. Wolfelt will be presenting a full day seminar on "Death, Grief and Mourning- Wisdom Teaching for Caregivers". This conference is directed toward professionals and caregivers. Fee is \$100 for the day and includes lunch. Please call (301) 580-1756 to register.

Preparing for the May Meeting

The May meeting topic deals with creating memorial garden stones as a way of to memorialize our children. Fran Palmer will discuss the making of such stones and, during the sharing group period of the evening, will lead a workshop for those interested in making the stones. If you plan to participate in the workshop, you might want to begin to gather some small items to bring to the May meeting to personalize your stone. These items should be mementos which remind you of your child. E.g., Fran's stone has a small plastic baseball from one of Scott's birthday cakes. It has a small rubber turtle, that looks like his pet. It has small shells he had in his room from their many trips to the beach, which she used to make the shape of a butterfly. Be sure the objects are waterproof if you are going to use the stone outside. Fran will bring some things with her (e.g., cement, round and square pans, little objects).

See Pages 3 and 8 for pictures of some memorial stones from last year.



SIBLING PAGE



What About Me?

By Traci Morlock
St. Louis Chapter BP/USA

Have you ever felt that, as a surviving brother or sister, we are often forgotten? I have felt this way quite often in the last six years. Over time, the feeling becomes less and less.

Our parents' grief is so much different from ours. No more or less hurtful than ours, but different. They lost their child. I hope that, in my lifetime, I never have to know how that feels. I know how painful it was when Sean died. I don't want to know the pain of having a child die.

But, often times, we are the "forgotten mourners". I love my brother very much and miss him just as much. I think that people sometimes forget that we are hurting also. My parents were offenders of that too.

I know they know my sister and I were hurting, but they were so wrapped up in what they were feeling that they didn't have time to worry about what we were feeling. I tried so hard to make my parents well again that I neglected my grief. Pretty much denied it. We really want to make our families "normal" again.

I have had some awful things said to me over the last six years. Two weeks after Sean died, someone said to me, "Well, you do still have a sister." Well, yes, I do still have a sister, but that still doesn't lessen

the pain of my brother's death and my sister can't possibly replace my brother. Probably the worst thing anyone has said to me is "Why aren't you over this? Sean has been dead for six months." Well, it is not something you just "get over."

I have learned a lot of things over the years and if I hadn't been in such a state of shock, maybe I would have had some good responses. When I think back on it, I wish I had. I have decided that, from what I have learned, I need to educate people and make them understand that siblings and friends have the right to grieve too.

As surviving siblings and friends, we also have to realize that we need to find a new "normal." We also need to know that it's okay to feel all of the things that we feel, be it anger, sadness, guilt or any other emotion. Just know that you're not crazy or wrong to grieve. Know also that it is all right to think and talk about them when you're ready, not when someone else says or thinks you should be ready. Death and grieving are, unfortunately, a part of life.



A Sibling's Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations; that life really isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best stuff isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the floppy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss, I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all, I have been given the gift of time — time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister's life.

...Cathy Schanberger

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Please remember the following families this month.

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

Jeff Baldwin
Son of Aurelia Ferraro
April 27, 1967 - April 26, 1991

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

Patrick John Bennett Jr.
Son of Patrick and Deborah Bennett
September 27, 1975 - April 15, 1999

Travis Brandon Beyerle
Son of Maren O. Sheidy
April 17, 1981 - June 23, 1995

Alexandra Elizabeth Bolander
Daughter of Tom and Susan Bolander
April 1, 1996 - April 1, 1996

Wendy Jean Bolly
Daughter of Judith and Louie Bolly
April 6, 1977 - October 11, 2002

Paul Shane Brough
Son of Theresa and Steve Bleemke
Friend of Helen Connors
May 18, 1982 - April 4, 2003

Faith Campbell
Daughter of John and Cathi Campbell
April 5, 1994 - April 5, 1994

John Christopher Campbell
Son of Kathy and Jeff Campbell
April 18, 1981 - October 9, 2002

William Frederick Carter Jr.
Son of Dot Carter
April 24, 1959 - August 16, 1992

John Scott Droege
Son of Teri Droege
April 30, 1984 - April 5, 2002

Isaac Paul Elliott
Son of Debbie and Paul Elliott
August 24, 1979 - April 27, 2003

Joseph Fredrick Errichiello Jr.
Son of Susan and Joe Errichiello
April 6, 1979 - May 29, 2004



Joe A. Esterling Jr.
Son of Joe and Michelle Esterling
June 7, 1967 - April 27, 1990

Sherri Leigh Fant
Daughter of Vern Pierce
January 24, 1958 - April 1, 2003

Andrea Faith Fiscus
Daughter of Debby and Kenny Fiscus
April 27, 1982 - October 9, 1993

Donald R. Forbes III
Son of Janet Hall
August 3, 1975 - April 12, 2002

David Jonathan Frame
Son of Carol Brothers
April 12, 1967 - September 11, 2001

Christopher George Gilmour
Son of Carole and Paul Gilmour
Brother of Sean Gilmour
October 17, 1997 - April 2, 2003

Andrew Thomas Gwaltney
Son of Hope Dorman
October 1, 1987 - April 6, 2004

Mallory Heffernan
Daughter of Dianne and Edmund Heffernan
December 19, 1985 - April 18, 2003

Alison Marie Hylan
Daughter of Jan and Leo Hylan
April 24, 1986 - January 9, 2005

Chrystal Lynn Isaacs
Daughter of Tish and Darrel Isaacs
April 12, 1984 - February 1, 2003

Lilith "Lily" Sappho Kelm
Daughter of Kathy Kelm
April 4, 1973 - April 6, 1973

Steven J. Landis
Son of Edwin and Susan Landis
April 4, 1968 - October 10, 1991

Zachary Laurence Luceti
Son of Linda East
April 20, 1978 - July 5, 2003

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



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED (continued)

Robert Antonio Morgan Jr.
Son of Paul and Kathy Waters
April 23, 1984 - June 21, 2003

Amelia Evans Mufson
Daughter of Neil and Beth Mufson
April 6, 1995 - September 28, 2002

Melanie Carol Murphy
Daughter of Fred and Phyl Murphy
April 21, 1966 - October 17, 1985

Craig Steven Nelson
Son of Karen Coulson
April 2, 1974 - January 31, 1995

Jonathan Michael Noon
Son of John Noon
February 3, 1982 - April 18, 2004

Glynn Allen Owens
Son of Michael Owens
October 21, 1973 - April 2, 2003

Lee Ann Platts
Daughter of Sandy and Jeff Platts
April 21, 1999 - April 21, 1999

Dennis Richard Rohrback
Son of Dennis and Joan Rohrback
April 8, 1964 - July 3, 1988

David Michael Schell Jr.
Son of Betty and Joseph Jones
April 7, 1981 - March 20, 2005

Matthew Jason Temple
Son of Jim and Karen Temple
October 6, 1987 - April 23, 1995

Heather Brooke Tepper
Daughter of Michelle Tepper
June 11, 1986 - April 3, 2005



Gregory Adam Thorowgood
Son of Margie Strong and Kenneth W. Wenk
July 24, 1975 - April 7, 2004

Albert W. "Wally" Whitby Jr.
Son of Rita and Albert Whitby Sr.
April 25, 1951 - June 2, 1981

Alisa Joy Withers
Daughter of Jan Withers
July 7, 1976 - April 16, 1992

Austin Wolfe
Son of Bonnie and James Wolfe
April 3, 1999 - April 6, 1999

Samuel Kingsley Wood
Son of Melanie Loughry
April 14, 2003 - July 26, 2005

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



To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart,
Mine flow down my cheeks.
Your anger lies with thought and movements,
Mine gallops forward for all to see.
Your despair shows in your now dull eyes,
Mine shows in line after written line.
You grieve over the death of your son,
I grieve over the death of my baby.
But we're still the same, still one,
Only we grieve at different times



Over different memories
And at different lengths.
Yet we both realize
The death of our child.

By Pam Burden, TCF Augusta, GA
Lovingly lifted from the May/June 1998 Atlanta Newsletter



10 Years Without Our Baby 4-5-96 to 4-5-06



It seems like a long time
It seems like yesterday

Nothing has changed
Everything has changed

The memories are painful
The memories are sweet

We see your smile and sparkling eyes
We can't remember your sweet voice or touch

The road had been rough
The road has been long
The road has had many twists and turns

The hills are steep
The valleys deep
The detours were many

We haven't moved at all
Yet we are far along

The pain of missing you is terrible
The pain of missing you is finally bearable
It is our burden which we embrace

Sometimes we can't stop thinking about you
Sometimes we can't start

We cry when we think of you
We smile when we think of you

Sometimes it makes us crazy
Sometimes it makes us very crazy

We missed you then
We miss you now
We'll miss you always

We loved you then
We love you now
We'll love you always

It's been a long journey
but we can now think of you
and breath
and smile

You were a gift

You still are

XOXOXO

Mom & Dad

Paul & Claudia Balasic
Anne Arundel Co. MD Chapter BPUA



If They Only Knew

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid, I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved – this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him. I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him, as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, I do not cry in self pity for what I have lost. I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, and for all he still longed to hear, for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death. If only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken – that "time heals" that "you'll get over it", that "it was for the best", that "God takes only the best", and realize that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we are prepared to try to stand in the shoes of others. We will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

By Jan McNess, TCF, Victoria, Australia



WHEN A CHILD DIES

The death of a loved one is one of life's tragedies. But society somewhat accustoms us to some deaths. The death of a parent seems to be the natural order of things, we bury our parents and our children bury us. Even the death of a spouse is in keeping with the natural order, barring an accident, one spouse will outlive the other.

But society is of little help when one of our children dies. Whether that child is a baby, very young, or middle aged, the pain and sense of loss felt by the parent is the same. Nature, it seems, did not intend for parents to bury their children. The death of a child is often called the "ultimate tragedy" in life.

Most people feel a sense of detachment or numbness for a period of time after the death of their child. It's as if life is not real, that the only reality is that your child is dead, and you don't want to live with that reality. After detachment comes the pain. No one has gone through this tragedy without thinking at one time or another, "No one can possibly know what this feels like. No one can know the pain that I am feeling." But that isn't the case; every parent who loses a child feels that same terrible sense of loss, the same pain.

It is during the periods of detachment and pain that the urge to simply withdraw from life is tremendous. But withdrawal from life is the worst thing that you can do.

Withdrawal from life robs you of the only mechanism at hand to ease your hurt, companionship of your fellowman.

To survive the death of your child, you cannot give in to your terrible sense of loss or to the tremendous grief that you feel over that loss. Life goes on, and you must make a choice to live that life, not to just exist in it. You must reach out beyond your grief to those around you.

Returning to life won't be easy, nor is there a magical formula that I can give you. You must simply take a series of small halting steps back to living. All of those steps will be painful and some of them will even be backward steps. The funeral, which you didn't think you could survive, but did, is a small step back. Returning to work is another, renewing friendships is another and re-establishing your interests and hobbies is another.

You must understand and accept that while you have suffered the greatest tragedy that life can give you, you have before you the rest of your life. You have already dealt with the worst that life can give and you've survived; now what you do with the rest of your life is a matter of your choice.

~~~~~author unknown

# Bereaved Parents of the USA

## Anne Arundel County Chapter

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

DATED MATERIAL



## **Bereaved Parents of the USA CREDO**

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort, and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family. We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA.

**We welcome you.**