



Vol. 15, No. 6

November/December 2018

caring & sharing news
Helping rebuild lives following the death of a child

That Their Light May Always Shine . . .

*The Bereaved Parents of the USA
Northern Virginia Chapter*

Invites you to the

2018 Annual Service of Remembrance

Sunday, December 9, 2018, 5:30 p.m.

First United Presbyterian Church

14391 Minnieville Rd

Woodbridge, VA 22193



Please RSVP by

Sunday, December 3, 2018 at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/annual-service-of-remembrance-tickets-51903996250>

For more information contact Jodi at 703-656-6999

or email: bleachermom2000@aol.com

The Annual Service of Remembrance provides an opportunity for parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives and friends to remember our precious children.



Please join us in celebration of our children's lives as we enter this Holiday Season with Love, Compassion and Hope for all.



Slide Presentation ~ During the program, we will be presenting a slide presentation of our children. To have your child(ren) included, please provide a photo of your child to Jodi Norman, 539 Harrison Circle, Locust Grove, VA 22508. Photos can be mailed or e-mailed to bleachermom2000@aol.com. If you are sending an original photo to be scanned, it will be returned to you. Also, provide the child's name, date of birth and date of death. **Deadline to submit a photo is Sunday, December 2, 2018. Photos will not be accepted after this date.** Any questions, contact Jodi at 703-656-6999.

Fellowship and Pot Luck Dinner to follow the service. Please bring a main dish, salad, side dish or dessert to share. Beverages will be provided.

Please bring a framed photo of your child (no larger than 8x10) identified with your child's name and age. A table will be set up for you to display your child's picture.

Poinsettias will be used to decorate for our Service. If you would like to sponsor a poinsettia in memory of your child, we are asking for a \$15 donation. You may take the poinsettia home with you at the end of the evening. Please let Jodi know by Sunday, December 2nd if you would like to sponsor a poinsettia.

We encourage people to participate in the program. If you would like to participate please let Jodi know by December 2nd, so you can be included in the program.

Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. with the service starting promptly at 5:30 p.m.

Again, this year we have chosen "Colby's Ride" as our charity to support this Holiday Season. Colby's Ride, founded in honor of 11-year-old Colby Smith, who died in a biking accident on October 11, 2015, will provide bikes to children who cannot afford them at Christmas. Donations of bicycles and/or bicycle helmets made in memory of your child would be greatly appreciated. Helmets for older children, ages 10 and up are the greatest need for Colby's Ride, but any bicycle helmet will be greatly appreciated. If you would like to donate a bicycle, you can either purchase a bike or donate money towards a bike that Colby's Ride will purchase. If you have any questions about Colby's Ride, please contact Keri Farley, Colby's mom at 571-229-6274.

Any questions, please contact Jodi Norman at 703-656-6999 or e-mail: bleachermom2000@aol.com

There is a meeting for everyone! Join us at one of these meetings!

Caring and Sharing Support Meetings:

2nd Sunday @ 3 p.m.
First United Presbyterian Church
14391 Minnieville Road
Dale City, VA

For more information contact:
Jodi Norman, Chapter Leader
703-656-6999 (cell)
bleachermom2000@aol.com

AMORe

(All Murdered Offspring Remembered)

3rd Wednesday @ 6 p.m.
3182 Golansky Blvd, Suite 101
Woodbridge, VA

For more info contact:
Beverly Ruane
540-628-4758 (h) or 703-395-9546 (c)
ruane.beverly@yahoo.com

Support Meeting in Annandale VA

1st Thursday of Every Month
7 p.m.

Annandale United Methodist Church
6935 Columbia Pike
Annandale, VA 22003

For more information about this meeting please contact
Emily Slough at emilygps@verizon.net.

Or Jodi Norman at 703-656-6999
bleachermom2000@aol.com

Overdose and Substance Abuse Support Group

First Sunday of Every Month
2:00 p.m.

American Legion Post 28
17934 Liming Lane, Triangle, VA 22172

A support group meeting for parents
whose children have died from Drug
Overdose or Substance Abuse.

For more information please contact:
Jodi Norman at bleachermom2000@aol.com

or call 703-656-6999

Or

Kathie Kelly at tcffred@yahoo.com or 540-220-4325



DAVID J COBB
FOUNDATION

Life After Loss Support Group For Suicide Survivors

"Shining A Light For Those In Darkness"

Last Wednesday of Each Month

Central Public Library
Community Room
8601 Mathis Avenue
Manassas, VA 20110

For more information contact: Kimberly Fleming
Office: 571-377-8134 or Cell: 703-349-9184
email: kimberly.fleming@djcfoundation.org
website: www.djcfoundation.org

Support Group for Parents with No Surviving Children

2nd Saturday of each month at 2:00 p.m.
North County Government Bldg.
Reston Police Station
12000 Bowman Towne Drive
Reston, VA

For more info contact: Nancy Vollmer 703-860-8587

Please Check E-mails & Facebook

Almost all of our Chapter Communication is done via email. Please check your emails at least once a week. Everything from the newsletter to Chapter Announcements are sent through email. It would also be helpful to respond to all emails sent regarding the Chapter. That lets me know that you did see the email and that I have a correct email address – a simple “got it” would be better than no response at all!

It would also be helpful if you would join our private facebook page. Please check this page on a regular basis. A facebook page has been set up for our chapter. Members can join our group at Bereaved Parents of the USA/Northern VA Chapter. This is a closed group for privacy purposes, so nothing posted here will go into your regular News Feed for your regular FB friends to see. Request to join the group and approval will be sent to you.



There are dozens of tasks that go into running our chapter and our special events. If you feel you are now in a place in your grief journey where you can help and give back to the chapter in any little way, we would love your help. Most of us find that when we reach a point of giving back to those who come after us, we gain far more than we give.

I could really use volunteers to plan our special events (Picnic/Balloon Release and Service of Remembrance). Other areas of need are in Fundraising, Publicity, Outreach, and helping at the Memorial Garden.

If you would like to volunteer to help our chapter, please contact Jodi at bleachermom2000@aol.com or 703-656-6999.

Check Out Our Website

<http://www.bpusanova.com>

I need everyone's help in updating our website. If you have not already done so, please write a bio of your child and include a photo or a collage of pictures to include in "Our Children Remembered" Section.

Beginning in January 2019, for a \$20 donation, we will feature your child during his or her birth month. Please provide a photo of your child. Your child will be featured for the full month. Please send submissions, by the 15th of the month prior to the month your child will be featured, to Jodi at bleachermom2000@aol.com.

NATIONAL GATHERING 2019



Bereaved Parents USA

August 2-4 ♥ St. Louis, Missouri

When doing your Holiday shopping this year, shop Amazon.com, remember that



AmazonSmile will give back to our chapter.

On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you need to select BPUSA NOVA Chapter to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon Smile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation to BPUSA NOVA Chapter.



We Remember Our Children Who have Birthdays and Death Dates in November and December

Charles (CJ) Angelos, Jr.	5/28/85 ~ 11/18/06	Leslie Ann Kramer	4/20/71 ~ 12/17/06
Mielen Garlit Arquines	12/01/68 ~ 6/04/08	Glen Irvin Leonard II	4/13/71 ~ 12/07/09
Scott R. Barley	12/07/81 ~ 9/29/11	Jacob Glenn Lewis	8/06/92 ~ 11/12/13
Stephanie Sue Webber Bartley	9/29/87 ~ 12/20/16	Sara Lott	11/01/95 ~ 7/23/08
Jennifer Lynn Becker	12/30/67 ~ 7/26/70	Brian Alan Mature	11/23/83 ~ 11/23/12
Clayton Kendall Breeding	10/23/77 ~ 12/12/01	Darren McKeever	12/07/80 ~ 11/19/98
Brian Brumbaugh	11/09/83 ~ 5/02/07	Michael Sean O'Berry	9/13/94 ~ 12/15/97
Erika Danyelle (Brummett) Lott	4/06/77 ~ 11/05/13	Angela Oliver	11/07/67 ~ 1/06/11
Amy R. Buckley	3/13/86 ~ 11/17/16	Christina Lianne Panzo-Bowers	1/08/94 ~ 11/01/14
Claire Rebecca Buckley	7/27/11 ~ 11/17/16	Michael Joseph Pennefather	12/09/95 ~ 2/04/08
Abigail Jane Buckley	4/25/15 ~ 11/17/16	Kylene Marie Privett	12/14/83 ~ 8/13/07
David John Butts	10/18/80 ~ 12/16/05	Ronald Douglas Ralph, Jr.	7/27/66 ~ 11/04/02
Autumn Marie Coffie	4/16/88 ~ 12/29/14	Marcus Daniel Robinson	12/29/07 ~ 10/04/17
David Justin Combs	11/22/79 ~ 11/23/01	Courtney Sharee Shelby	11/23/93 ~ 5/14/01
Ryan Michael Conde	12/02/04 ~ 02/02/17	Jacqueline Simoes	11/05/66 ~ 3/15/06
Christina Lynn Curtis	3/01/74 ~ 12/25/07	Ben Smith	12/22/70 ~ 1/26/03
Barbara Dawn (Dotson) Cleary	12/3/66 ~ 1/21/18	Karl Dewan Smith	11/20/83 ~ 4/25/04
K.J. Edwards	12/03/85 ~ 10/31/03	Ananth Vignesh Sridhar	11/12/94 ~ 3/20/18
Brian Patrick Elero	12/30/80 ~ 10/29/01	Jerry Damon Taybron	11/21/75 ~ 8/18/07
Rhonda Lynn Flannery	7/31/63 ~ 11/10/01	Shawn Terrill	2/23/82 ~ 12/03/06
Ahmad Givon Glenn	3/06/83 ~ 12/04/06	Christopher Andre' Waters Jr	5/31/97 ~ 12/23/07
Christian Green	11/12/91 ~ 11/01/08	Melinda "Mindy" Lee Weakley	12/20/83 ~ 9/02/09
William Clayton Holt	9/10/84 ~ 12/23/17	Keith Alan West	9/22/66 ~ 11/25/10
Philip Reid Hottle	2/16/85 ~ 12/03/08	Brenden Michael Wilson	1/10/98 ~ 11/10/14
Olivia Jean Howard	12/31/91 ~ 9/03/09	Kevin Woods	12/08/93 ~ 8/06/14
Adrienne Leigh Ingram	6/25/79 ~ 12/02/07	Stephen Wesley Wright	6/06/89 ~ 11/21/13

We apologize if there are any mistakes in the "We Remember Our Children" section. If we spelled any names incorrectly, have any dates wrong, or your child's name is not listed but have a birthdate or death date during the months of November and December, please provide us with your child's information so they can be included correctly in future newsletters. Email bleachermom2000@aol.com with any corrections or additions.

Christmas Without You

by Angela Miller



This is what Christmas without you feels like seven years later.

I miss you. I *always* miss you, even when I don't say it, I'm always thinking it. It's an ache that perpetually aches— in my heart, my head, my soul— deep within my bones. The you-shaped hole in my heart will always remain.

There are few people left in my life who knew you when you were here. Few people who know or say your name. I'm not sure why that is. Honestly, I've stopped wondering about most of life's whys. The whys and what ifs, they all end the same— a dizzying clusterfuck of senselessness that will never make sense to me, no matter how long I ruminate. It all ends in one big, giant headache. That and a whole lot of suffering mixed with endless tears. With no consolation prize, and with no more answers than when I first started asking *why*, seven, long years ago.

Like that song says, "It's just a different kind of Christmas this year." Different, is certainly one way to put it. I could also fill-in-the-blank with a number of other descriptive words, that would all be equally accurate. The thing is, Christmas without you isn't just one emotion. It's a jumble of emotions, that still leave me spinning. You'd think after seven years of living without you, I'd be getting the hang of it. But honestly? I'm not. There's no "getting the hang" of living a life sentence without you. Grief still has a way of sneaking up on me without notice, grinchingly lurking around corners, and ruining otherwise "good" moments. Especially during the holidays. Grief is a bitch like that.

But here's the other thing. There are so many incredible, beautiful, amazing moments I ache to share with you. Every good, "happy" moment always has one thing missing: *you*. And without you, it really knocks the goodness/happiness/joy o'meter down more than a few notches, you know? At best, life is bittersweet. Never again will it be purely happy and joyful like it once was. When you were here, and we were together. I had everything I'd ever dreamed of and then some. You, were a dream come true.

When I look at old pictures of me from "before," I sob. It's painful to look into her eyes. *That* sparkle. *That* mom. The *normal* one. The non-bereaved one. The one not perpetually weighed down emotionally, pinned between a rock and a hard place, by this incessant boulder of grief. The one that was all kinds of happy and joyful and mom to the *nth* degree. I'm not that mom anymore, sweet boy. I wish I was, I wish that mom was still in me somewhere. But she died the day you did. With you, she went. Together, we soar.

Yet, I'm still a mom. To you, and to the rest of your siblings. And I wonder? Do they know? Do they know how different of a mom they have now from the mom I was before? And if I could meet both of us, side by side, the mom I am now, and the mom I was then— would I really like the old one better? Or is it just that I wish everything could go back to the way it *was*? — before the nightmare took over? Or is it, I wish with everything within in me, that I could rewrite the ending. That I could edit this story to my heart's content.

Because this story? This life? It's not the one I wanted, dreamed of, planned for— and the holidays emphasize that fact loud and clear, like wretched nails on a chalkboard. This is not anything close to the life I had planned for us. Yet no matter what I do, I can't go back. I can't change the ending. There are no rewrites. No revisions. No do-overs. Unfortunately, we weren't given that choice.

This. is. it.

Learning how to live with *it*, this life I didn't want, this life without you, is painfully hard. And painfully lonely. And painfully beautiful.

All the ways you've changed me, leave me speechless. You, sweet boy, are my everything. And death will never change that.

The truth is, this year I can actually smile at the Christmas cards. The cookies even taste a little bit sweeter than they did in years past. I can laugh with your brothers, and not feel guilty about it. And yet? There is still an undercurrent of sadness beneath it all. Our table will always have one empty chair, no matter how full it appears to be. Something that only others who have walked this path can understand.

No matter how "good" life seems at times, I always wonder how much better it could be, if you were here with us. No matter what, you are always missing. No matter what, my heart will always ache for you. No matter what, life will only be as good as it can possibly be, minus you.

To me, that's just not good enough. Yet, somehow, I have to accept that's as good as it's gonna get.

In the grief world, there is a lot of talk of "acceptance," and I wonder if I have reached the so-called promise land? If I'm honest, I accept that you're gone. I accept that you're never coming back. I accept that I'm a bereaved mom. I live in that reality. But, if acceptance means liking those facts, or coming to peace with your absence, I'm not sure I'll ever get there. And really, should that even be *the* goal?

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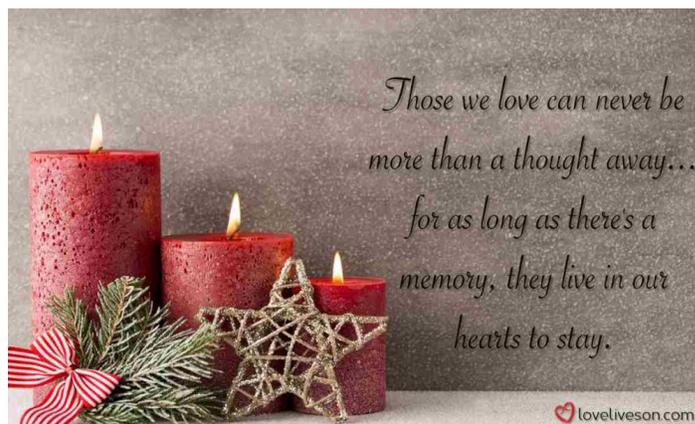
Christmas Without You Continued

I think being a bereaved parent is a whole lot of holding all the shit, and all the joy together in a broken open heart. It's messy. It's complicated. I'm still learning how to do it.

This I know: I love more— deeper— than I ever dreamed possible. And, I cry more than I ever dreamed possible too. The tears don't seem to be running out any time soon. That's just real life post-losing you.

Being honest about it— this thing called grief— is really all I can do. I can't pretend it's not this way. I can't pretend I'm "ok," that I'm "over" you or "healed," or that I miss you any less now that it's been seven years. None of that is true. I can't pretend I like being a bereaved mom, or that I don't miss my old self, my old life, my precious, one and only you. I can't pretend I'm wiser, more enlightened, or more of anything, really. I can't pretend that any of this is *easy*. I can't pretend I even know how to do this.

What I can say is— I'm better for knowing you, loving you, and missing you. You make me the best me. Our love does that. Your love sustains me. When I think I can't do it anymore, our love reminds me I can do anything. I've already done the hardest thing there is. And no matter how much my heart aches for you— during the holidays, or any day of the year— I am thankful for you, eternally grateful, that out of all the moms in the sea, you chose me.



Six ways to help you handle the difficult holiday season:

1. Communicate your wishes clearly.

Don't be afraid to let people know what you are willing and able to accept. Don't assume that people know what you are going through or will know what you believe you can endure.

2. Make a new tradition.

Many of the painful memories and feelings of loneliness are tied to events and traditions from the past. Relieve some of the sadness from the loss of those traditions by creating new ones.

3. Find a confidant.

The holidays are sure to stir deep emotions. Even though you may have been successful keeping the feelings inside thus far, find someone with whom you can confide. You may also find strength in support groups. Many form specifically during the holidays to deal with the difficult times. Check with hospitals or religious organizations to find groups that meet near you.

4. Have an exit strategy.

Parties and family gatherings may seem to be a safe setting, only to find that something triggers some strong feelings of abandonment or grief. Plan for a way that you can graciously leave without drawing attention to yourself or causing others to disrupt their celebration.

5. Carry out a ritual that your loved one performed.

If he or she enjoyed sending holiday greeting cards, send the cards out remembering the joy that it brought your loved one. If volunteering for service organizations was done each year, make sure that you continue the legacy. These activities will give you meaning and purpose and will keep the memories of the joy and dedication of your loved one alive.

6. Dedicate a gift in memorial.

You can give a gift to your family or friends in the name of your loved one, or you can give a gift to a charity or organization in their honor. Either is a concrete way that you can keep memories alive and meaningful.



Bereaved Parents of the USA Welcome

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren.

We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a safe space where grieving families can connect, share our stories, and learn to rebuild our lives.

We attend meetings whenever we can and for as long as we find helpful. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness, and feelings of hopelessness, knowing these emotions will be met with compassion and understanding. As we support, comfort and encourage one another, we offer hope and healing. As we confront the deaths of our loved ones, our shared grief brings us to a common ground that transcends differences, building mutual understanding across the boundaries of culture, race, faith, values, abilities, and lifestyle.

Together we celebrate the lives of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, sharing the joys and the heartbreaks as well as the love that will never fade. Together, strengthened by the bonds we create, we offer what we have learned from one another to every bereaved family, no matter how recent or long ago the death.

We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA. We welcome you.

Chapter Contact Information

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P.O. Box 7675
Woodbridge, VA 22195
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Bleachermom2000@aol.com



Bereaved Parents of the USA
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Someone Cares About You

If you are receiving this newsletter and have never attended one of our meetings, it is because someone who cares about you feels that our newsletter may help you on your journey through grief. We're sorry for the reason you are receiving this newsletter but invite you to attend our monthly meetings. We cannot take away your pain but we can offer friendship and support.



Attention: If you do not wish to continue to receive this newsletter or be on our mailing list, please let us know by mailing back the address label from this newsletter, by emailing bleachermom2000@aol.com or calling Jodi at 703-656-6999.

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