



May/June 2018

caring & sharing news

Helping rebuild lives following the death of a child

Volume 15, No. 3



SoulCollage®
www.soulcollage.com

**Saturday, June 23, 2018
12:30 p.m.
Valerie Larson's Home
6900 Cole Timothy Court
Manassas, VA**

Bring a photo of your child printed on plain white paper.
You can also bring magazines.

For more information, contact Valerie Larson
rlarson900@verizon.net or call her at 703-217-7994

Sue Ann Hastings is a SoulCollage® facilitator and contract art therapist. She found art after her four children began to leave the nest and it gave her a freedom that she had never before experienced. Her goal is to share what she has learned through art therapy with as many as possible, so they too may experience arts ability to free the soul. Her work involves many diverse populations, from children to aging adults with varying levels of ability. There are no limitations when it comes to doing art therapy, you need not have any art experience or talent, only a willingness to explore and express yourself. Sue Ann is a joyful soul that loves sharing her passion for self-care through self-expression.

Please allow Sue Ann to support you through this difficult journey using SoulCollage® as a tool to express yourself. The major benefit of this art process is that it allows you to gently connect with yourself on a deeper level. The process is noninvasive, fun, and can be **deeply satisfying**. Come join a group of likeminded individuals to share the experience of inner connection and community. You do not need to bring anything with you but a willingness to participate in a fun afternoon; your soul will thank you.



“Messages to Heaven” Annual Picnic, Balloon Release, And Memory Walk Sunday, May 20, 2018

2:00 p.m.

Locust Shade Park ~ Marigold Shelter

Pot Luck Picnic - Chicken and Drinks will be provided by the chapter.
Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share.



RSVP by May 15th at Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/annual-picnic-balloon-release-memory-walk-tickets-45223715350?utm>

For more information contact Jodi Norman at bleachermom2000@aol.com or 703-656-6999

2018 Programs

New for 2018 is adding guest speakers to some of our monthly Sunday meetings in addition to our yearly events. Below is a schedule for the year (subject to change):

May 13 – Mother's Day (No Meeting)

May 20 – Annual Picnic and Balloon Release at Locust Shade Park

June 10 – “Heading for the Light: Striving for a Positive, Purposeful Life” with Valerie Larson

June 23 – Art Therapy with Sue Anne Hastings

July 8 – “True Colors” with Sue Cerrone

August 3-5 – National Gathering in Memphis, TN

August 12 – Butterfly Release at Memorial Garden – No Support Group Meeting

September 9 – “Introduce Your Child”

September 22 – ComedySportz in Richmond

October 14 – Program to Be Announced

November 11 – Program to Be Announced

December 2 – Service of Remembrance

December 9 – Program to Be Announced



*Sunday, August 12, 2018
5:30 p.m.
BPUSA Memorial Garden
St. Benedict Monastery
9535 Linton Hall Road
Bristow, VA*

The highlight of the Butterfly Release will be the individual and mass release of the butterflies accompanied by music, inspirational readings and remembering our children.

We are requesting a \$5 donation per butterfly. Orders for the butterflies must be received by July 25th to Bev Ruane at ruane.beverly@yahoo.com or call her at 540-628-4758.

Refreshments will be provided after the program and release of the butterflies. If you would like to help provide refreshments, finger foods that can withstand the heat, would be appreciated.

Check out our Chapter Website
<http://www.bpusanova.com>

Also, please check your email and Facebook for Chapter Announcements. The easiest way to get the word out about Chapter happenings is via the internet. If we do not have an email address for you, please email bleachermom2000@aol.com with your email address.

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

Overdose and Substance Abuse Support

We are looking at the possibility of starting a support group meeting for parents whose children died from Drug Overdose or Substance Abuse. If you are interested in attending a meeting with others who are in your same situation, please let me know. Send me an email at bleachermom2000@aol.com or call me at 703-656-6999.

Additional Chapter Meeting

Anyone interested in attending BPUSA support meetings in Northern Virginia (Springfield, Annandale, Alexandria, South Arlington) please contact Emily Slough for more information at emilygps@verizon.net. Monthly meetings (probably pot-luck format) would start in July or August.



Save The Date!!
Saturday, Sept. 22nd
ComedySportz
8906-H W Broad Street
Richmond, VA

IMPORTANT: With our website and publishing our newsletter on the website, your child's name, birthdate and death date may be on the website. If you have any objection to your child's name and information being on the website please let Jodi know as soon as possible at bleachermom2000@aol.com.



Early Bird
Discount Deadline
is June 1st

whispers of
hope

Bereaved Parents of the USA
NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE
AUGUST 3-5, 2018 MEMPHIS, TN



Mitch Carmody



Pam Vredevelt



Stephane Gerson



Ann Irv Dagle

walk towards
hope and
healing

Fundraiser for
Memory Walk at
BPUSA National
Gathering

Go to the following link to set up your fundraising page:
<https://www.classy.org/campaign/walk-towards-hope-and-healing/c162565>

Click on "Become a Fundraiser" and then "Join a Team":
Northern Virginia Chapter.

Set your goal and personalize your page with your story and
your child's picture.

Picture needs to be in jpg format to add to the page.

You do not have to attend the Gathering to participate in the
fundraising for National BPUSA.

Our chapter's goal is to raise \$1,000.

Any questions in setting up your personal website, contact Jodi
at bleachermom2000@aol.com or call 703-656-6999.

Our sincere sympathy to
The Colson Family on the
death of Ron Colson, Jason's
dad, on April 29, 2018 at the age of 73.



I am looking for submissions for a
booklet to give to newly bereaved
parents. If you would be willing to
write about how BPUSA has helped
you on your grief journey, it would
be greatly appreciated. Please email submissions to
bleachermom2000@aol.com.



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,
Butterfly 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.

Garden News ~ A Message from Beverly:

Happy Spring, everyone! I think Spring or
maybe Summer finally arrived! We had our
work day on April 21 and got lots done!
We had a total of 6 people to work in the garden.
Thank you all! Weeds were pulled and the garden mulched. The garden
looks so much better! A few more weeds in the pathway but not bad. Of
course, weeds are an on-going thing!



We will plan to have another work day to plant some annuals and
perennials, spruce up and trim as needed and of course, the weeding!
You will be notified when a date is decided so check your email!

Our next event at the garden will be the Butterfly Release on Sunday,
August 12th, at 5:30 p.m. We must continue to make the garden more
beautiful in preparation. Please, at any time, if you can, go to the
garden and visit; and while you are there, pull a few weeds and/or
water. Watering is essential to keeping the garden green and
establishing any new plants.

Please contact me if you are willing to help in any capacity. I will do my
best to keep you posted. Thank you in advance for your help. I look
forward to seeing you at the Memorial Garden for our beloved children!

Hugs, Beverly

International Bereaved Mother's Day: An Open Letter to my Fellow Sisters in Loss

From Melanie DeSimone, Heartache and Hope: Life After Losing a Child

Dear Mama,

I know that you never-in your wildest imagination-thought that you would need a day set aside for your broken heart and your empty arms.

Who thinks when they learn a new life is growing inside that this same life might be cut short? What heart is brave enough to consider the possibility?

Yet here you are. I'm so, so sorry.

But there are a few things I want you to know. There are some important truths to remember on this broken road-truths that can help you hold onto hope and finish strong.

You are not a failure. I don't care about those silly social media memes that are tossed around like candy from a Mardi Gras float. *You kept your baby or your child as safe as you knew how.* **You are not omnipotent nor omniscient.** You did the best you could. That's all **ANYONE** can do.

You are a mother even if you don't have a single child to hold on earth. You have a child-just not one that others can see. When people ask how many children you have, answer boldly and count the one (or more!) that wait for you in eternity.

Your love is valid and worthy of expression. Love for your missing child may look different than love for a child still walking the earth with you. That's OK. Grief is love with no place to go. Tears are fine. Laughter is fine. Speaking his name is your privilege. Carrying her legacy is your honor. No one gets to tell you how or when to express your heart.

You are brave. Bereaved mothers are not the only brave ones on this planet but they are some of the bravest ones I know. You have received the heaviest blow a mama's heart can know and you are still standing. You get up every day and carry on. You continue to love the people in your life and serve your family. You have not given up although giving up would be the easiest thing to do. Don't discount your own courage.

You are strong-not because you want to be but because you have to be. Other people depend on you and you are trying your best not to let them down. It's no compliment when someone says, *"I just wouldn't be able to survive."* Because, really-what choice do we have? We bear up under the burden because the alternative is to further burden our families.

You are beautiful. Every time you look in the mirror and notice the circles under your eyes or the lines around your mouth, don't think that makes you ugly. They are scars-scars of love and sacrifice. They bear witness to the fact that you choose to carry on and carry your child's legacy even though it costs every ounce of energy and will you can muster. You may not like the way you look in pictures, but trust me, you are beautiful.

You are a living legacy for your missing child. You carry his light. You honor her memory. You keep it fresh and alive and present and refuse to let others forget or ignore it.

You have a story to tell so tell it. Your story may be the key to unlock another mom's prison. We cannot do this alone. We need one another. Don't let fear of being dismissed or misunderstood silence you. Speak up. Stand out. Shout your truth for others to hear.

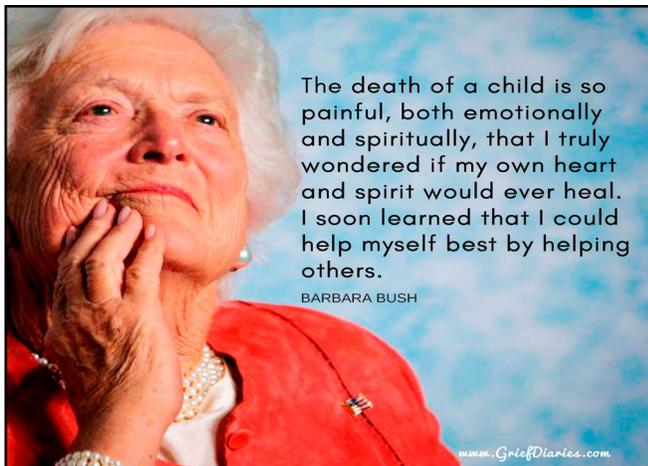
This day is for YOU.

It is set aside for all the mothers who love a child they can no longer hold. Observe it however is meaningful and healing for YOU. There's no right way or wrong way to grieve.

Bereaved Mother's Day
May 6, 2018

The carnation honors mothers.

"The carnation does not drop its petals, but hugs them to its heart as it dies, and so, too, mothers hug their children to their hearts, their mother love never dying." Anna Jarvis



The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal. I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others.

BARBARA BUSH

For Those Who Hurt on Mother's Day

By John Pavlovitz

Mother's Day.

For many people that means flowers and handmade cards and Sunday brunches and waves of laughter. It means celebration and gratitude and warm embraces and great rejoicing. It means resting fully in all that is good about loving and being loved.

But not for some people. But for some it only means tears. For some it just hurts.

In the hearts of many, this day is a bitter, unsolicited reminder of what was but no longer is—or a heavy holiday of mourning what never was at all.

Maybe it is such a day for you.

It might bring with it the scalding sting of grief for the empty chair around a table.

It might come with choking regret for a relationship that has been severed.

It might be a day of looking around at other mothers and other children, and feeling the unwelcome intrusion of jealousy that comes with comparison.

It might be yet another occasion to lament the mistakes you made or the words you didn't say or the kindness you never knew.

It might be an annual injury you sustain.

Consider this a personal love letter to you who are struggling today; you whose Mother's Day experience might be rather bittersweet— or perhaps only bitter.

This is consent to feel fully the contents of your own heart without censorship or guilt or alteration.

If you are hurting, then hurt.

May you feel permission to cry, to grieve, to be not alright.

May you relieve yourself of the burden of pretending everything is fine or faking stability or concealing the damage.

May you feel not a trace of guilt for any twinge of pain or anger that seizes you today, because it is your right to feel.

Above all though, may you find encouragement even in your profound anguish.

May you find in your very sadness, the proof that your heart though badly broken, still works.

Let the pain you are enduring reassure you that you still have the capacity to care deeply, despite how difficult it has been.

See your grief as the terrible tax on loving people well, and see your unquenched longing for something better as a reminder of the goodness within you that desires a soft place to land.

If on this Mother's Day you are struggling, know that you are not alone.

May these words be the flowers that you wait for or the call that won't come or the conversation that you can't have or the reunion that has not yet arrived.

Let them be hope packaged and personally delivered to the center of your heart, and may they sustain you.

In this time of great pain, know that you are seen and heard, and that you are more loved than you realize.

Be greatly encouraged today.

Dear Mr. Hallmark,

I am writing to you from heaven,
and though it must appear
A rather strange idea,
I see everything from here.

I just popped in to visit,
your stores to find a card
A card of love for my mother,
as this day for her is hard.

There must be some mistake I thought,
every card you could imagine
Except I could not find a card,
from a child who lives in heaven.

She is still a mother too,
no matter where I reside
I had to leave, she understands,
but oh the tears she's cried.

I thought that if I wrote you,
that you would come to know
That though I live in heaven now,
I still love my mother so.

She talks with me, and dreams with me;
we still share laughter too,
Memories our way of speaking now,
would you see what you could do?

My mother carries me in her heart,
her tears she hides from sight.
She writes poems to honor me,
sometimes far into the night.

She plants flowers in my garden,
there my living memory dwells
She writes to other grieving parents,
trying to ease their pain as well.

So, you see Mr. Hallmark,
though I no longer live on earth
I must find a way,
to remind her of her wondrous worth

She needs to be honored,
and remembered too
Just as the children of earth will do.

Thank you, Mr. Hallmark,
I know you'll do your best
I have done all I can do;
to you I'll leave the rest.

Find a way to tell her,
how much she means to me
Until I can do it for myself,
when she joins me in eternity.

~Jody Seilheimer

"There will come a day, I promise you, when the thought of your son or daughter brings a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eye." ~ Joe Biden

Dad makes it his mission to show other fathers it's OK to grieve

Rebecca Dube ~TODAY ~ June 15, 2017

Kelly Farley dreamed of being a dad. But after his dreams of fatherhood ended in two agonizing pregnancy losses, he buried his grief deep down and tried to be strong for his wife.

That worked – until it all came crashing down.

“I found myself not being able to get out of bed,” Farley says, his voice deep and scratchy over the phone. “I kind of went into a tailspin. I was not able to run from it anymore.”

Since then, for more than 10 years, Farley has dedicated himself to letting other dads know that it’s OK to grieve. In fact, it just might save your life.

“I thought I needed to be a pillar of strength, to help my wife. ‘Don’t cry, that’s a sign of weakness.’ You’re taught that as a kid and you believe it,” Farley said. “The loss of a child is the most profound thing. People will say, ‘How’s your wife doing?’ No one asks your wife how you are doing.”

“It can eat you alive,” he added. Farley created a website called GrievingDads.com, where he’s created a safe space for men to pour out their hearts and get support. He also wrote a book, “Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back.”

What brought Farley back from the brink was a casual remark from a lay leader at his church. Farley spoke to the man about his grief after losing both his son and his daughter in pregnancy, and the man replied, “That’s a heavy load, brother.”

Those five words meant the world to Farley. It was the first time someone he really respected acknowledged his pain and loss, and indicated to him that it was OK to mourn. As Farley notes, men often feel like they need permission to show emotion and vulnerability.

“I know that sounds so simple, but for me it was confirmation that it was OK for a guy to tell another guy about the pain he was feeling,” Farley said. He started going to support groups. He started talking about his pain. And only then did he start to feel better.

“I made a commitment to myself that I was going to do something to help other guys,” Farley said. He publishes his personal phone number on his website, and he still gets calls in the middle of the night from anguished fathers – sometimes, he can only hear sobs on the other end of the line. He tells them it’s OK to cry.

“I don’t say things like, ‘Things will get better,’” Farley said. “I say, ‘Things CAN get better.’”

Farley notes that there’s not much difference in the way moms and dads feel when they lose a child – for any parent, the grief is a black hole. But there’s a big difference in the way men and women are expected to handle that emotion. “We’re taught to be the protectors of the family. So, you feel, ‘I let them down.’ There’s this shame and guilt.”

Father’s Day is hard, just like any significant anniversary or holiday. For Farley, who has no surviving children, seeing happy posts from friends on social media can hurt. It’s a challenging day, and he just tries to get through it.

Yet, over time and through his work to help other fathers, Farley has seen a glimmer of hope. Ten years ago, he says, he might have felt only pain on Father’s Day. But now when he thinks of his children – daughter Katie and son Noah – it also brings him joy, along with the pain.

“The darkness is so profound. Everything I do every single day is to make sure my children are proud of me,” Farley said. “Now, when I think of them, I smile.”



We Remember Our Children

Who have Birthdays and Death Dates
in May and June

Charles (CJ) Angelos, Jr	5/28/85 ~ 11/18/06	Adrienne Leigh Ingram	6/25/79 ~ 12/2/07
Zachary William Arnold	9/23/84 ~ 5/11/14	Derrick V. James	6/01/74 ~ 5/28/05
Mielen Garlit Arquines	12/01/68 ~ 6/04/08	Rasheem Kuwan Jenkins	5/04/82 ~ 9/09/09
Brandon Scott Bailey	6/21/79 ~ 5/31/99	Kashif Johnson	3/15/87 ~ 5/01/07
James “Jimmy” Barnette	7/11/98 ~ 6/03/06	Robert Andrew Larson	3/14/94 ~ 6/30/10
Donald “Donnie” Barrett	5/14/76 ~ 5/03/02	Nicole Michelle Lee	6/22/89 ~ 1/26/08
Kimberly Ann Barrett	9/08/86 ~ 5/04/02	Robert Loiseau	8/22/72 ~ 5/27/93
Parker Evan Boyd	9/15/98 ~ 6/04/08	Christian Paul Norman	2/04/85 ~ 6/03/01
Brian Brumbaugh	11/09/83 ~ 5/02/07	Josephine Pennefather	6/21/03 ~ 6/21/03
Brandon Bundy	5/19/84 ~ 8/24/08	Timothy Michael John Peyton	6/13/68 ~ 2/09/17
Cole James Clark	5/11/13 ~ 5/15/17	Vernon Santmyer, Jr.	8/24/79 ~ 5/17/11
Brandon DeWulf	6/20/85 ~ 6/29/09	Courtney Sharee Shelby	11/23/93 ~ 5/14/01
Corey Martin Dill	7/25/90 ~ 5/03/07	Mark Alexander Slough	6/26/96 ~ 10/08/15
David John Drumheller	8/30/89 ~ 6/20/16	Colby Thomas Smith	5/25/04 ~ 10/11/15
Raven Gileau	6/23/90 ~ 4/23/10	Adam Charles Sorge	5/12/94 ~ 1/04/14
Jacob Charles Glushefski	5/23/77 ~ 2/21/11	Kevin Michael Stanphill	3/12/80 ~ 5/09/09
Dwayne Eddie Gonsorcik	5/26/74 ~ 4/26/13	Michael “Ryan” Stevens	7/07/87 ~ 5/30/07
Christina Gordon	5/08/13 ~ 5/08/13	Beckett Josef TePaske	4/04/12 ~ 5/12/15
John Gregory	9/21/73 ~ 6/03/13	Josh Weaver	6/17/82 ~ 9/09/09
Kourtney Michelle Hale	5/29/80 ~ 3/14/10	Christopher Andre’ Waters Jr	5/31/97 ~ 12/23/07
Gabrielle Nicole Henderson	5/28/86 ~ 6/17/99	Kyle Robert Wilson	5/25/82 ~ 4/16/07
Olivia Rose Cecilia Henry	5/27/02 ~ 5/26/12	Tommie J. Wonnum III	6/14/84 ~ 6/30/03
Desmend Holmes	6/16/06 ~ 7/21/15	Franklin Conner Woodward	5/15/08 ~ 5/17/08
Quincy Holmes	5/18/05 ~ 7/20/15	Stephen Wesley Wright	6/06/89 ~ 11/21/13
Daniel Franklin Houston	8/10/68 ~ 6/13/16		

We apologize if there are any mistakes in the “We Remember Our Children” section. If we spelled any names incorrectly, have any dates incorrect or your child’s name is not listed and has a birthday or death date during the months of May and June, please provide us with your child’s information so they can be included correctly in future newsletters

Bereaved Parents of the USA Credo

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:

Jodi Norman, Leader
P.O. Box 7675
Woodbridge, VA 22195
Phone: 703-656-6999
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.

Bereaved Parents of the USA
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