



caring & sharing news

Helping rebuild lives following the death of a child

We as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives after the death of a child.
The mission of Bereaved Parents of the USA



A Garden of Love

*A memorial garden for our treasured children,
Has come to life and fruition,
It's beautiful and filled with love,
Dedicated to our children in heaven above.*

*There are butterfly bushes that sway in the breeze,
And colorful flowers for all to see,
Memorial stones with our children's names,
To honor the love that forever remains.*

*The soothing sounds of chimes softly play,
Adding gentleness to our day,
Our children's presence surrounds us here,
A circle of love warm and dear.*

*A tranquil garden of comfort and peace,
The perfect place for a butterfly release,
Symbols of transformation flying with grace,
Signs of encouragement for us all to embrace.*

*Fly butterflies, spread your wings,
Your beauty makes our hearts sing,
Fly to our children up into the sky,
Because love never ever says goodbye.*





We Remember Our Children Who have Birthdays and Death Dates in July, August and September

Jason Duane Alexander	7/02/74 ~ 7/24/13	Jacob Glenn Lewis	8/06/92 ~ 11/12/13
Emily Andrews	8/02/97 ~ 3/14/16	Robert Loiseau	8/22/72 ~ 5/27/93
Zachary William Arnold	9/23/84 ~ 5/11/14	Sara Lott	11/01/95 ~ 7/23/08
Liam Kody Bailey-Edmundson	9/22/15 ~ 9/22/15	Kyle Ludeman	4/12/93 ~ 8/27/13
Scott R. Barley	12/07/81 ~ 9/29/11	Kevin McGuinn	2/08/88 ~ 8/26/08
James "Jimmy" Barnette	7/11/98 ~ 6/03/06	Emily "Tabor" McMullen	1/26/84 ~ 8/31/12
Kimberly Ann Barrett	9/08/86 ~ 5/04/02	John Earl Medley	2/21/59 ~ 9/09/08
Stephanie Webber Bartley	9/29/87 ~ 12/20/16	Derek Meffert	4/21/95 ~ 8/15/10
Jayden Lee Beale	9/29/08 ~ 9/29/08	Ella Miller	4/27/02 ~ 7/23/10
Jennifer Lynn Becker	12/30/67 ~ 7/26/70	Michael Joseph Moore	7/13/71 ~ 1/09/09
Trevor Austin Blake	10/30/01 ~ 8/11/13	Christina Morgan	7/30/80 ~ 3/13/02
Parker Evan Boyd	9/15/98 ~ 6/04/08	Johnny Ray Mullins	7/11/61 ~ 1/22/02
Baron "Deuce" Braswell II	9/29/89 ~ 1/20/06	Michael Sean O'Berry	9/13/94 ~ 12/15/97
Kenny Brooks Jr	8/13/82 ~ 1/14/06	Zane J Pitzvada	8/22/92 ~ 9/14/11
Brandon Bundy	5/19/84 ~ 8/24/08	Linda Thompson Plewes	7/16/51 ~ 3/21/02
Lisa Marie Champlin	10/16 ~ 9/2	Kylene Marie Privett	12/14/83 ~ 8/13/07
Christopher Chapman	8/01/88 ~ 1/13/07	Ronald Douglas Ralph, Jr	7/27/66 ~ 11/04/02
Eduardo P "Eddy" Chavez	2/07/06 ~ 9/20/10	Matthew Allan Ruane	9/07/83 ~ 4/29/02
Jason A. Clover	7/30/84 ~ 9/28/03	Vernon Santmyer, Jr.	8/24/79 ~ 5/17/11
Todd Coder	7/23/84 ~ 9/24/10	Gene "Tony" Sergent	8/10/87 ~ 9/14/07
Sarah Beth Cole	8/06/80 ~ 4/23/11	Brandon Simms	10/10/80 ~ 7/14/95
David John Drumheller	8/30/89 ~ 6/20/16	Adelacia Smalley	8/06/94 ~ 10/19/02
Robert Alan Finch	7/27/70 ~ 1/02/01	Tyler Smith	9/20/92 ~ 8/01/06
Rhonda Lynn Flannery	7/31/63 ~ 11/10/01	Michael "Ryan" Stevens	7/07/87 ~ 5/30/07
Bruce Lee Foxworthy	8/29/75 ~ 2/11/12	Graham Thomson Stevenson	3/30/85 ~ 9/22/07
Erin Gaston	9/27/80 ~ 10/31/08	Jerry Damon Taybron	11/21/75 ~ 8/18/07
John Gregory	9/21/73 ~ 6/3/13	Bill Thompson	9/14/51 ~ 4/19/17
Olivia Jean Howard	12/31/91 ~ 9/03/09	Dana Thrall	8/02/75 ~ 1/02/01
Rasheem Kuwan Jenkins	5/04/82 ~ 9/09/09	Austin Trenum	3/26/93 ~ 9/27/10
Cody Darrin Johnson	9/11/02 ~ 3/06/09	Anthony Joseph Turchiano	8/04/79 ~ 4/29/17
Kwadwo Amoako Kusi	3/20/06 ~ 7/26/08	Melinda "Mindy" Weakley	12/20/83 ~ 9/02/09
Ashley Hoefling	8/22/85 ~ 2/08/17	Josh Weaver	6/17/82 ~ 9/09/09
Desmend Holmes	6/16/06 ~ 7/21/15	Kevin Woods	12/08/93 ~ 8/06/14
Quincy Holmes	5/18/05 ~ 7/20/15		

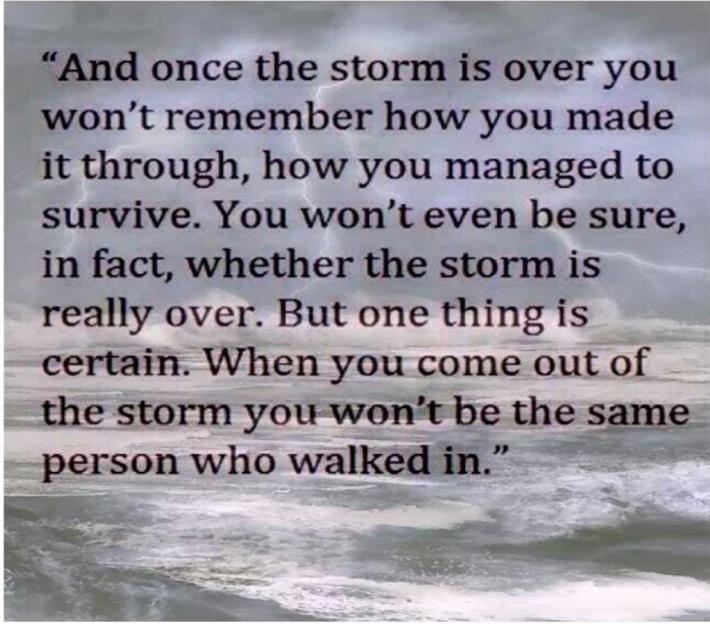
My 10 Rules of Grief

1. There are no rules. Period.
2. I will grieve my way. Not your way. My way may not make sense to you, but it doesn't make sense to me either.
3. The grief timeline is long. If I begin to move on in two months, something is wrong. If I begin to move on in two years, be impressed.
4. Hugs are, and always will be, better than words.
5. When you ask me how I am, I will always answer politely. The truth is not pretty.
6. If I question my faith, do not condemn me. It is normal.
7. Yes, I am blessed to have other children. But the pain from losing one is worse than agony.
8. Consider me a patient of Grief United General. The first part of my healing begins with a lengthy stay in the ICU. Treat me accordingly.
9. Do not try to understand my overwhelming emotions. It will exhaust us both.
10. Honor my pain by walking with me, not directing me.
11. I am not a victim, I am grieving. Treat my journey with respect and compassion, for your turn will come.
12. I know this is more than 10 rules. That's because grief doesn't ever make sense.

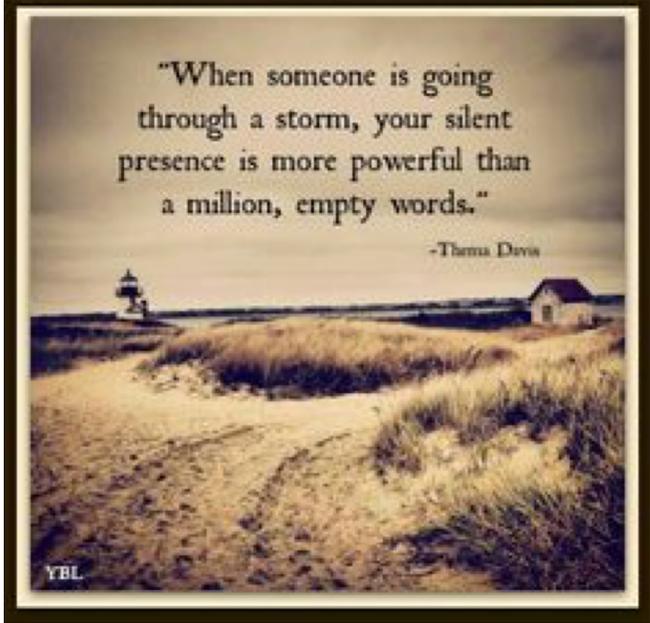


By Lynda Cheldelin Fell

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“And once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in.”



“When someone is going through a storm, your silent presence is more powerful than a million, empty words.”

-Theresa Davis

YBL

2017 National Gathering

I would like to thank everyone who helped to make this year's National Gathering a great success! I've heard comments that it was the best Gathering ever! It could only be that good thanks to the members of our chapter who went above and beyond to make it the great success that it was! Whether you helped before, during and/or after or you attended the Gathering, thank you so much! If I forgot anyone, I apologize!

Special thanks to:

- Linda Harkness for scheduling and finding all the volunteers, without them we could not have had a successful Gathering!
- Thank you to Jessica Harkness and Tom Harkness for helping to make registration run smoothly. Kelly Norman for being the MC and making sure that the Boutique was open and Jake Norman for being my "Go-fer".
- Valerie Larson for all the time put into the Program Book, Sponsorship Posters and designing our logo!
- All the bakers and those that provided goodies for the Hospitality Room.
- Tony Turchiano and Mary Alice Combs for coming to the storage unit to load the truck to get everything to the hotel.
- Mark Stevens for building our lattice wall to hang all the beautiful butterflies in memory of our children.
- Clair Anne Stevenson for planning a beautiful closing ceremony! A huge thank you to her friend and daughter who provided beautiful music for our closing ceremony!
- Bev Ruane for planning and setting up a beautiful, quiet and peaceful Reflection Room.
- Mary Mozingo for putting together all the centerpieces. They were beautiful and we had a lot of positive comments on them.
- Julianne and Dwain McMullen for taking care of ordering the t-shirts.
- Vernon and Karol Santmyer for providing entertainment for Thursday evening's "Meet and Greet."
- To everyone who stayed around on Sunday to help clean up! Couldn't have done it without all of you!
- To everyone in our chapter who attended the Gathering! Without attendees, we would not have had a successful Gathering!

A huge thank you for the generous monetary donations, for without your generosity, many of our chapter members would not have been able to attend the gathering.

- Tom and Linda Harkness in memory of Kristin Marie Harkness
- Valerie and Rich Larson in memory of Robert Larson
- Mike Holupka (Friends of the Harkness Family)
- Rev. Bob Becker
- St. Victoria's Woman's Guild, Hurt, VA

And thank you to everyone who participated in the restaurant fundraisers.



Jodi Norman Presented 2017 Chapter Leader Award

This award is to honor a local chapter leader who has demonstrated outstanding leadership to their local chapter. The nominations can be submitted by anyone within the BPUSA organization and nominees will be chosen by the Board of Directors and announced at the National Gathering. Jodi was nominated by Gay Shelby from our chapter.

In nominating Jodi for the Chapter Leader Award, Gay wrote: Jodi founded and continues to run our Northern Virginia Chapter. She reaches out to newly bereaved families in our community. She oversees our memorial balloon and butterfly releases and organizes fundraisers, memory walks, yard sales and many other events to benefit our chapter. Jodi has been the chair of the BPUSA National Gathering in 2011 and is the chair of this year's Gathering as well. Jodi's pure love and selflessness, her creativity, and her caring and tireless commitment is an inspiration to us all! She is absolutely deserving of this Chapter Leader Award.



A Message from Linda Harkness

I am often asked, "Doesn't surrounding yourself with others who are bereaved make you even more sad?" Honestly, I don't know how I could ever be any sadder following the loss of my beautiful 18-year-old daughter Kristin. So, if that's the case, why shouldn't I put myself out there to try my best to convince others who may not be as far along as I am in my grief that they too will truly be **okay**? So, for the past 9.5 years, that is what I have done...immersed myself into bereavement groups (BP), mom's groups (MAMAS - **M**others **A**gainst the **M**isuse of **A**lcohol and **S**ubstances), and every Gathering and Conference I could possibly attend - 10 National (BP and TCF), as well as numerous regional and local events held across four states.

This summer was no different as I attended my ninth National Bereaved Parent Gathering held right here in Northern Virginia, so yes, I surrounded myself yet again with more of *those* individuals who have had the misfortune of being forced into a "club" they had never imagined they would belong in a million years. I am always amazed, year after year, at the courage of so many who make the trek to the Gathering for the first time. They are identified by a ribbon that hangs from their nametags, *First Time Attendee*, to be embraced by those of us who know what it took to even walk through those doors for the first time, afraid to willingly admit that they were now one of *us*. We were all so pleased that there were approximately 250 in attendance this year, including at least 20 siblings of various ages, who crossed that threshold toward further healing.

The BP Gatherings and TCF Conferences are held in different states each year and this was the second-time BP was held in Northern Virginia (2011 and 2017). Each year, a committee does its best to make sure all of those who attend feel welcomed, and return to their homes at the conclusion feeling inspired, and filled with a sense of hope and healing. This year's Gathering began Thursday evening with heartfelt music shared by our own Vernon Santmyer, a bereaved father, and concluded Sunday with a beautiful program that included the releasing of doves into the blue morning sky.

Throughout the weekend, our hearts were touched by each personal story shared by our speakers as they "introduced" their child or sibling to us, and shared how they continue to keep their memories alive. We were also treated to 56 amazing workshops presented by fantastic presenters which made the decision difficult as to which workshop to attend. You would think that someone like me who has attended a number of these would have seen them all, but that is far from true as each year, new workshops are offered.

During any "downtime," the hospitality room was great for a quick drink or snack, the reflection room offered a quiet place for your thoughts, the creative table allowed you to decorate a votive in your child's memory to be used during the Candlelight Ceremony, the boutique provided "shopping time" and the opportunity to admire the fantastic items included in the raffle and silent auction, and it was a perfect time to get reacquainted with friends you'd met at previous Gatherings, or to connect with new ones as you made plans to not only keep in touch, but to reconnect each year at the Gatherings. As a people-person, one of the many draws for me each year is the mini-reunion with the dear friends I have made throughout the years, and making plans to reconnect again the following year.

One of the big standouts, and most talked about moments at our Gathering were the performances by a signing choir from San Diego, CA, perfectly named *Love in Motion*, led by Doug and BJ Jensen whose son died by suicide 22 years ago. Many of those attending expressed that this was truly a highlight and their performance alone would have made it well worth attending the Gathering, although it only added to an already "wonderful, uplifting weekend." We have been honored by their presence before, and I am happy to share that they will again join us next year! They offer the perfect combination of hope, faith, love, laughter, tenderness and the promise of survival, even when times look hopeless.

These are only a few of the reasons why I choose each year to surround myself with the "sadness" surrounding bereaved parents and siblings, and why you will find me in attendance next year when the BP Gathering is held in Memphis, Tennessee. To those who may still fail to "get it," that is okay. What matters is the *First-Time Attendee* who no longer feels alone, but embraced by at least one person who expresses genuinely, "*I understand, and **we** will get through this, I promise...*"

In wrapping up my sentiments of the 2017 National Bereaved Parent Gathering, personally, and especially for all those who continue to be active members of the Northern Virginia BP chapter, we were so thrilled with the very well-deserved award presented to our chapter leader, Jodi Norman, this year! She continues, for many years now, to work tirelessly to keep the chapter alive in order to be there when we are unfortunate enough to have a "new attendee" walk in the door. She does so in memory of her precious son Christian, and while being very humble about all of her efforts, she should know that we notice and we are grateful that she was there when each of us walked through that door... She has also put in a tremendous amount of time and effort on the National BP Board for the past few years, and we are so proud, as is Christian, I'm sure... From all of us, Thank You Jodi...

Hope to see you, my friends, in Memphis next year!

Hugs, Linda Harkness (Kristin's Mom)

Caring and Sharing Support Meetings:

4th 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



**whispers of
hope**

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

Whispering Woods Conference Center

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

IMPORTANT: With our new 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.

Check out our Chapter Website

<http://www.bpusanova.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 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.

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Don Hakenson

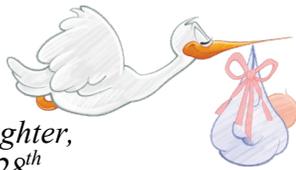
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Congratulations to:

*Linda and Tom Harkness on
the birth of their new granddaughter,
Reese Elizabeth, born on June 28th.*



*Nancy and Paul Rosengarth on the birth of their new
grandson, Kane Patrick, born on July 15th.*

*Our sincere sympathy to
Debbie Lott on the recent
death of her mother,
Carolyn Pigg on August 24, 2017*



From the Sibling Coordinator

Greetings,

The sibling program at the 2017 Gathering Conference brought an amazing group of bereaved siblings together and opened up new lines of communication between bereaved siblings and bereaved parents. I deeply appreciate the support and participation from so many members, especially the families from the Northern Virginia chapter.

I have set up a Facebook Group for BPUSA siblings, and it is called "Bereaved Siblings of BPUSA." It is set up as a Closed Group, meaning anyone can ask to join or be added or invited by a member. Please let your chapter members know that bereaved siblings are welcome to find this group and request to join.

Also, if any of your chapter members or their children are interested in starting a sibling-only chapter and would like to talk to me about it, I'm happy to help however I can. You can write to me at bpusasiblingcoordinator@gmail.com about this or about any other question or thought related to support for bereaved siblings.

Very best regards, Sarah Kravits

Save the Date

*Annual Service of Remembrance
Sunday, December 3, 2017
First United Presbyterian Church
14391 Minnieville Rd
Woodbridge, VA 22193*



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 journey. We attend month 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 the 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 from each other to every more recently bereaved family.

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

Chapter Contact Information

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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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