



Vol. 17, No. 6

November/December 2020

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

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

***Annual Service of Remembrance  
Sunday, December 13, 2020  
Via Zoom at 6:00 p.m.***

**Program will consist of readings, music, slideshow of our  
children and lighting candles in their memory**

Register in advance for this event:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEvf--uqj0jGtW2Rt-7tCB4yyYgRM2lv-zo>

If you would like to participate in the program by doing a reading, provide music, read the names or anything else you would like to do, please let Jodi know as soon as possible at [bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com)



If we do not already have your child's photo to be used in our slideshow, please send a photo to Jodi at [bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com). We want to include all the children of members of our chapter whether you are attending the service or not. Deadline to submit photos is Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.

After our Annual Service of Remembrance, go to Facebook for Alan Pedersen's Worldwide Candle Lighting program on Facebook Live. Log onto Angels Across the USA Facebook page to see Alan's event. Alan's program will start on the half hour.

## The Angels Across the USA Presents

**Join Alan Pedersen Live**

**Worldwide Candle Lighting**

December 13th @ 6:30 PM - Facebook Live

Alan will perform and speak  
Live 6:30 – 7:00 PM  
In 4 US time zones  
Candles will be lit at 7 PM

Free Admission  
Donations Greatly Appreciated



## Annual Picnic & Lotus Flower Lantern Release

Rescheduled for  
May 16, 2021

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](https://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](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation to BPUSA NOVA Chapter.

## Caring and Sharing Support Meetings:

**\*NOTE DATE CHANGE\***

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.  
ZOOM Meetings until  
further notice**

For more information contact:  
Jodi Norman, Chapter Leader  
703-656-6999 (cell)  
[bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com)

## Overdose and Substance Abuse Support Group

**No Meetings until further notice**

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

For more information please contact:

Jodi Norman at [bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com)  
or call 703-656-6999

or

Kathie Kelly at [tcffred@gmail.com](mailto:tcffred@gmail.com)  
or 540-220-4325

## Garden Work Day Saturday, November 14 10 a.m.

Come help clean up the garden for the winter.  
Bring gloves and garden tools.

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



## AMORe

(All Murdered Offspring Remembered)

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

**A support group meeting for parents  
whose children have been murdered.**

For more info contact:

Beverly Ruane  
540-628-4758 (h) or 703-395-9546 (c)  
[ruane.beverly@yahoo.com](mailto:ruane.beverly@yahoo.com)

## Life After Loss Support Group for Suicide Survivors

“Shining A Light for Those in Darkness”  
Last Wednesday of Each Month  
7:00-8:00 p.m.

## Parents of Suicide Loss Support Group

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month  
1:00-2:30 p.m.

Meetings held at ACTS  
9317 Grant Ave, Manassas, VA

For more information contact:  
Kimberly Fleming  
Office: 571-377-8134 or Cell: 703-349-9184  
email: [kimberly.fleming@djcfoundation.org](mailto:kimberly.fleming@djcfoundation.org)  
website: [www.djcfoundation.org](http://www.djcfoundation.org)



## Support Group for Parents with No Surviving Children

2<sup>nd</sup> 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

# Surviving Christmas Without Your Child

*Jennifer Noonan, Until I Hold You Again*

I will need to survive Christmas without my child. Again. I'm trying not to dread the holidays. Trying to embrace them though is like trying to embrace a dark and unpredictable 'being'. You might find a safe spot to hug, but most likely it's going to hurt like hell. Last year without our son was everything you would imagine the first Christmas without your child to be and then some. I have learned that every day after losing a child you must make a decision to want to continue to live or wanting to die. And by "die", I don't necessarily mean leaving this earth. There are many ways to die and still be among the living. The braver and stronger among us choose to live and that is by far, the more difficult choice. Ask anyone who has chosen it. The holidays absolutely make the latter option more appealing and there are many days this time of year the idea of medicating myself into a blissful stupor sounds appealing. I just have chosen not to.

For parents of loss, what has likely been the most beautiful, joy-filled time of family, tradition and extraordinary love, is now cloaked in heartache, physical pain and missing their child worse than ever. I'm struggling right now with whether I can get his stocking down from the attic and look at it daily until Christmas. Is it worth seeing it hang there flat and empty of gifts on Christmas morning while everyone else's is full? So, I must choose what I can do. Always weighing and choosing what we can do...I doubt any of us could ever imagine putting away boxes of Christmas decor thinking it would be the last Christmas we would spend with our child. The last time they scratched out their wish list on a piece of scrap paper, the last time they glued together Christmas ornaments for the tree. The last time watching his careful hands place Jesus in the manger. No. No one could ever imagine that.

Children never die under normal or expected circumstances. It is never *not* tragic. So, every bereaved parent enters this time of year with a bloodied wound in their heart, already coping with an impossible trauma. Now the very things that once brought the most joy are what inflict the most pain. Wanting and needing so desperately to experience that supernatural joy and excitement that comes with having children at Christmas but being unable to feel anything but emptiness and sorrow. Wanting so terribly to hum along with Christmas carols while you *all* decorate cookies, but you can't even bear to hear the music, let alone make cookies. So, you wander your silent, scantily decorated house trying to shut out the memories. They are just too painful to face.

It's time to send out Christmas cards. How you loved getting everyone dressed and posed for the picture, your heart bursting with joy and pride for your beautiful family that adorned the front of your card. But how can you take a family photo when the family is now tragically incomplete? The pain is so great that now the simple pleasure of creating a Christmas card may be one of the many things you go without this holiday.

Think of *never again* seeing your child's sweet sleepy face light up as he comes down the stairs Christmas morning. What some only have to imagine is reality for parents of child loss. There is no easy way to muddle through this time of year. By nature, the holidays are in-your-face, so regardless of how hard you try to minimize the blow, it will be thrust upon you just like your new station in life has been. The world has become a very unfamiliar and hostile place and this is one of the reasons why. Everything feels different, because everything *is* different, including and especially Christmas.

What little I have to offer are only my observations and advice after having gone through this for the first-time last year. I'd like to say this year has been easier, but other than some occasional softening, it mostly hasn't. I heard that would be the case and did not want to believe it, but it's true so I will be following much of this advice this year as well.

## **MY ADVICE:**

**Say NO a lot.** You are in a world of pain at the same time the everyone else is on an emotional and materialistic high. The two do not mix well. Materialism is likely repulsive to you and so is the fact that from your dark and lonely place, you have to observe a world that is merry and bright when you've lost the only thing that *actually* matters. It's OK to stay home when you feel you need to stay home. Don't push it and don't feel guilty about it.

**Do what you can and nothing more.** It took me days and several attempts at opening the first box of Christmas ornaments before I actually did. Every time I approached the box, I got sick to my stomach. Looking back, I'm glad I had the sense to back away. Merely existing at this crazy time of year takes so much out of you, it's OK to wait until your tank has a little reserve. It will need it. I got to my tree eventually, and it was a wonderful thing to do.

Continued on next page

**Continued from previous page:**

**Don't feel you must open Christmas cards** you know will have family photos of the intact families in your life- especially if they have kids your deceased child's age. I'm here to tell you it sucks. The long "letters" of what the kids did all year-long and the family vacation photos-even worse. (Why anyone would send a 2-page account of their family's super fabulous year to a family who just lost a child is beyond me, but they do. Be grateful for the thought and set them aside for another time

**Leave time for active grieving.** To think we will not need our moments of ugly, messy grieving over the next several weeks is unreasonable. We will and it literally drains the life out of you. Leave some buffer time in your schedule for this. Packing your days with constant activity only allows the pressure cooker to build up. I need to take my advice on this one. I'm afraid to stop doing and moving and it is not healthy, it just *looks* healthy from the outside. There's a difference.

**Don't try to please anyone but God, your family and yourself.** Even God and family may have to wait their turn and that is OK too! God certainly understands and likely, so does your family because they are grieving as well. No one, and I mean NO. ONE. needs to be taken care of but you and your family now. Do not feel pressured to entertain, take part, volunteer or even get out of bed if it's more than you can handle on any given day. Remember- just getting through the onslaught of what is involuntarily thrust upon you as you drive down the street, turn on the radio or walk through the grocery store is way more than enough right now. It's heart breaking. Don't put more on yourself or allow others to. No one can possibly understand what you are trying to manage at this time. Just survive. That's it.

**Pray and read His word.** I have no right to preach this but I will because I've gone through periods where I was in The Word and periods where I had no desire whatsoever. I understand how different this walk is with and without Jesus. His word is power, strength and life to a grieving heart. "...*he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*" You are walking in the shadow of death. Let Him comfort and hold you. Hold fast to your promise of eternal life with Him and our saved loved ones. As the apostle Paul said 'we are saved by hope.' That is what gets me from one day to the next- waiting until I hold him again.

**Stay close to your immediate family and love each other with particular gentleness.** Great sorrow is physically and emotionally exhausting. This is when families need to treat each other like the broken pieces of porcelain they are. This is when, in your most un-lovable state, you need to be physically and emotionally close and kind to one another. You are ALL raw and hurting, doing something nobody knows how to do and never *should* have to do – surviving an out-of-order death of a most beloved child. Love each other enough to stop and breathe, ask, talk, touch and be gentle. Keep people and situations that cause further angst and pain out of your life for a while.

**Speak the name of your child who is gone.** I belong to an on-line community of hundreds of grieving mothers and by far one of the most excruciating symptom of child loss is *not* having their child's name spoken or the child remembered by others. If others are too uncomfortable to say his/her name, you do it! Talk about a holiday memory. Make their favorite cookie. Just say their name. Hearing your child's name crossing your lips will be a familiar comfort to your broken heart and will let others know it's OK to talk about them.

**Lastly, remember CHRISTmas.** Keeping Christ at the center of the season, helped me to do some things I may not have wanted or been able to do otherwise, such as trimming the tree and putting up a manger. I wanted to be strong enough not to give pain precedence over honoring Jesus- to try to worship him even in the midst of this agonizing pain. I wanted *His strength* to be made perfect in my weakness and it was! It was the best thing I did. Sitting before the tree in the dark of early morning or late at night brought me much comfort. Being able to do something other than hurt made me feel stronger and grateful. Make room for Jesus in your Christmas this year, as difficult as that may seem. He will show up as He always does.

I won't say "Merry Christmas!!" like so many others will do to you this year. I know how insensitive that phrase will seem for a while.

I *will* say- I understand your Christmas and stand with you in your sorrow.

I *will* say- you will get through it like so many of us have had to.

And lastly, I will say, I'm so sorry you have to do this.



# 8 Holiday Rules for Surviving the Holidays

Written By: Alan Pedersen

- 1. Do it your way ...** For some grievors keeping old traditions brings comfort, for others doing things “as usual” is painful. We are all different and what works for you may not work for somebody else. So, be true to yourself.
- 2. Rules are meant to be bent or broken ...** Others in your life may try to “guilt” you into participating in an event or custom that you’ve always been a part of. While it may be important to them that you do not break tradition, let them know that it will take time for you to resolve what traditions you are able to keep, alter or do away with completely and that old rules DO NOT apply to new grief.
- 3. Pencils work better than pens...** anticipation of Holidays and special events can often be more stressful than the events themselves. When considering accepting an invitation to a Holiday event, ask the host to “pencil” you in and let them know that your participation will depend on how well you are doing the day of the event. If you are pressed to give a definitive answer, trust your instincts when choosing to say yes or no. Pencils are best; just make sure you have an eraser close at hand.
- 4. Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone...** Many people will try to cheer you up and try to find a silver lining to your grief. Expect cheesy clichés and well intentioned, bad advice from others who see your grief and tears as rain on their Holiday parade. Once again, be true to yourself, because masks are for Halloween and Halloween has passed.
- 5. Let people know you aren’t “expecting” ...** Expectations begin with you, so don’t put big expectations about how well you will handle the Holidays or how much you will be able to participate in the Holidays. But on the flip side don’t over estimate how difficult it may be. Grief during the Holidays can fluctuate wildly, you will have some good days... when you feel like you can function and you will have some bad days... when you feel the pain is unbearable. Expect the unexpected.
- 6. It’s my “pity” and I’ll cry if I want to...** Tears are our tribute to our beautiful loved ones and nothing is more healing or makes us feel closer to them than when we cry. The Holiday season will surely touch every emotion and flood you with memories of happy times in the past. Throw yourself a pity party whenever you feel like it... a time to just sit with your memories and cry if you want to.
- 7. Take care of yourself ...** When in doubt, choose to nurture yourself and be kind to you. Take ample time to do what you enjoy or what brings you peace. If it’s exercise, reading, meditation, shopping or simply sitting alone with your thoughts. The Holiday season is the most stressful time of year for most grieving people, take extra care of YOU and YOUR needs.
- 8. Giving is the gift that keeps on giving...** Healing begins when we help others. Many grievors find that reaching out and helping the lonely and those less fortunate can be a great source of comfort during this season. Some will buy gifts for complete strangers or fulfill a needy child’s Christmas Wish List. We know from experience that serving others during the Holidays gives us more healing than anything else we’ve ever tried. So, if you’re up to it, start new traditions of volunteerism or helping to make somebody else’s Holiday a little brighter. It just might lighten your load and brighten your Holidays, just a little bit.



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

Charles (CJ) Angelos, Jr.	5/28/85 ~ <b>11/18/06</b>	Leslie Ann Kramer	4/20/71 ~ <b>12/17/06</b>
Mielen Garlit Arquines	<b>12/01/68</b> ~ 6/04/08	Glen Irvin Leonard II	4/13/71 ~ <b>12/07/09</b>
Scott R. Barley	<b>12/07/81</b> ~ 9/29/11	David Lesser	<b>11/20/56</b> ~ <b>11/07/18</b>
Stephanie Sue Webber Bartley	9/29/87 ~ <b>12/20/16</b>	Jacob Glenn Lewis	8/06/92 ~ <b>11/12/13</b>
Jennifer Lynn Becker	<b>12/30/67</b> ~ 7/26/70	Sara Kelsey Lott	<b>11/01/95</b> ~ 7/23/08
Ashley Nicole Blue	<b>11/23/05</b> ~ 10/11/19	Brian Alan Mature	<b>11/23/83</b> ~ <b>11/23/12</b>
Clayton Kendall Breeding	10/23/77 ~ <b>12/12/01</b>	Darren McKeever	<b>12/07/80</b> ~ <b>11/19/98</b>
Brian Brumbaugh	<b>11/09/83</b> ~ 5/02/07	Michael Sean O'Berry	9/13/94 ~ <b>12/15/97</b>
Erika Danyelle (Brummett) Lott	4/06/77 ~ <b>11/05/13</b>	Brian Scott Ogden	7/04/87 ~ <b>12/24/17</b>
Amy R. Buckley	3/13/86 ~ <b>11/17/16</b>	Angela Oliver	<b>11/07/67</b> ~ 1/06/11
Claire Rebecca Buckley	7/27/11 ~ <b>11/17/16</b>	Christina Lianne Panzo-Bowers	1/08/94 ~ <b>11/01/14</b>
Abigail Jane Buckley	4/25/15 ~ <b>11/17/16</b>	Michael Joseph Pennefather	<b>12/09/95</b> ~ 2/04/08
David John Butts	10/18/80 ~ <b>12/16/05</b>	Catzby James Pitzvada	8/07/88 ~ <b>12/17/19</b>
Autumn Marie Coffie	4/16/88 ~ <b>12/29/14</b>	Carie Ann Polizzi	<b>11/23/78</b> ~ <b>11/11/18</b>
David Justin Combs	<b>11/22/79</b> ~ <b>11/23/01</b>	Kylene Marie Privett	<b>12/14/83</b> ~ 8/13/07
Ryan Michael Conde	<b>12/02/04</b> ~ 02/02/17	Ronald Douglas Ralph, Jr.	7/27/66 ~ <b>11/04/02</b>
Christina Lynn Curtis	3/01/74 ~ <b>12/25/07</b>	Marcus Daniel Robinson	<b>12/29/07</b> ~ 10/04/17
Barbara Dawn (Dotson) Cleary	<b>12/3/66</b> ~ 1/21/18	Courtney Sharee Shelby	<b>11/23/93</b> ~ 5/14/01
K.J. Edwards	<b>12/03/85</b> ~ 10/31/03	Jacqueline Simoes	<b>11/05/66</b> ~ 3/15/06
Brian Patrick Elero	<b>12/30/80</b> ~ 10/29/01	Ben Smith	<b>12/22/70</b> ~ 1/26/03
Rhonda Lynn Flannery	7/31/63 ~ <b>11/10/01</b>	Karl Dewan Smith	<b>11/20/83</b> ~ 4/25/04
Dillon Adam Foley	<b>11/16/98</b> ~ 04/02/20	Ananth Vignesh Sridhar	<b>11/12/94</b> ~ 3/20/18
Ahmad Givon Glenn	3/06/83 ~ <b>12/04/06</b>	Jerry Damon Taybron	<b>11/21/75</b> ~ 8/18/07
Christian Green	<b>11/12/91</b> ~ <b>11/01/08</b>	Shawn Terrill	2/23/82 ~ <b>12/03/06</b>
Adon Gerald Grey	<b>11/05/81</b> ~ 1/20/18	Christopher Andre' Waters Jr	5/31/97 ~ <b>12/23/07</b>
Clay Matthew Haga	<b>12/09/88</b> ~ 8/26/19	Melinda "Mindy" Lee Weakley	<b>12/20/83</b> ~ 9/02/09
Kimberley Hellandbrand	<b>11/03/69</b> ~ 4/27/19	Keith Alan West	9/22/66 ~ <b>11/25/10</b>
William Clayton Holt	9/10/84 ~ <b>12/23/17</b>	Jessica Dove Williams	9/18/89 ~ <b>12/05/19</b>
Philip Reid Hottle	2/16/85 ~ <b>12/03/08</b>	Brenden Michael Wilson	1/10/98 ~ <b>11/10/14</b>
Olivia Jean Howard	<b>12/31/91</b> ~ 9/03/09	Kevin Woods	<b>12/08/93</b> ~ 8/06/14
Adrienne Leigh Ingram	6/25/79 ~ <b>12/02/07</b>	Stephen Wesley Wright	6/06/89 ~ <b>11/21/13</b>

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 [bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com) with any corrections or additions.

## 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

Jodi Norman, Leader  
P.O. Box 7675  
Woodbridge, VA 22195  
Phone: 703-656-6999  
[bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com)



Bereaved Parents of the USA  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://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 [bpusanova@gmail.com](mailto:bpusanova@gmail.com) or calling Jodi at 703-656-6999.

Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Northern Virginia Chapter  
P.O. Box 7675  
Woodbridge, VA 22195