



JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario
Toronto
Founded in 1978



WHAT'S INSIDE

02

A Bereaved Father
Responds

03

Poems

04

Spring Volunteer Training
Donation of Infant Loss
Literature

05

A Special Invitation to
Bereaved Parents
Adult Grief Drop-Ins

06

We're On the Lookout
Acknowledgment
In Memoriam

07

Comfort Food
Donation Form

08

Congratulations
BFO-Toronto News

Please Note our Email
address & Website:
info@bfotoronto.ca
bfotoronto.ca
soul2soul.ca

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June/July 2008

Submission Deadline:

June 20, 2008

Mailing:

July 2, 2008

Labour of Love for a Grieving Mother

by Jane Gardner

Photos evoke memories of happy times, family times, celebrations, holidays...

I like to take photos. It's one of the talents and gifts passed down by my mother and father and their parents before them. As the eldest of my siblings, and the one with the most time, I have taken on the responsibility of making copies of our family photos so that all of the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can have a record of our family life in years gone by.

When my children were born, I took a lot of photos of them. I took photos using regular print film, as well as black and white slides and colour slides. Since my son Bruce was killed in a traffic accident in January 2001, I have been trying to put together all the photos that I have taken of him, so that I can give them to his daughters. Now, seven years later, I am finally starting to work on this project.

This past winter I have been learning the technical skills needed for this project. I am scanning the slides into my computer as digital photos, and then I will be able to burn them onto a DVD for the girls to keep. Each step of the process is very emotional, as I have to see the images several times, and then I add the dates to the photos after they are in my computer. Usually I can only work on the project for an hour at a time, and I find I am quite tired at the end of each session.

I remember (with awe) the group facilitator for our Mother's Daytime group, who brought in a beautiful album of photos of her daughter. How did she ever get that project completed? The task ahead of me seems like a huge mountain that I must climb. It's something that I really want to do for my granddaughters, but emotionally I feel that each step of the process is only a small step on my path to the top.

Will the task ever get easier? I doubt it. I'm grateful that there are so many photos – many people don't have "shutterbugs" in their families – and probably wish that they had more photos of their loved ones. But on the other hand, I sometimes feel that this project will never be finished. It's overwhelming at times, and I frequently make excuses to myself to avoid working on the photos. As a weekly volunteer at the BFO-Toronto office, I am grateful for the hugs and support that help me to keep my emotions in perspective. I am also grateful for the ability to look at the photos and to see Bruce's good qualities, and to see them reflected in his daughters. This will give me the strength to eventually complete a beautiful photographic tribute to my son's life.

A Bereaved Father Responds

After receiving the last issue of Journeys, Dieter, a bereaved father, exchanged emails with Betty Ann about his thoughts on the article "What Follows Loss". Following are some excerpts:

I recently came across the lyrics of a song composed by George Harrison that I thought is so true! And yet it is easy, so easy to allow ourselves to become bogged down, literally trapped within our constant and on-going grief and grieving. Mainly I think we grieve for the pain of not being in a position to have done something - anything that might have stopped the terrible fate our children were (now we know) locked into.

Let me share it with you:

*"Beware of sadness, it can hit you, it can hurt you
Make you sore and what is more
That is not what we are here for."*

It's a true and nice thought I agree, but on the other hand, I feel I cannot shake myself totally from the bounds of grief and ongoing grieving. Sure the pain is not as acute as in the beginning but, the pain of the wound and the remaining scar will always continue to fester in some way.

A terrible thing we all have to come to grips with, to live with, and to accept. Sharing helps to some extent, if only to acknowledge that we are not alone with our individual grief and grieving.

Had we not met this way we most likely never would have met...birds of a feather flock together is and can be a good thing and within that context, offers each of us some morale support and comfort in dealing with the horror of our losses. Mind you, sometimes it is appropriate to break from this "flock" if it seems that the tendency is to down from releasing the bonds of our individual grief constructively.

The sharp gravel of grief that cuts into the souls of our feet as we walk this path will gradually turn to sand, I think. It will always be there, but also, our loved ones would want us to move on down our own life path...

One of the main reasons that I felt motivated to write and contact you is that your article did indeed resonate with me. I'm trying to rationalize my progress in dealing with my grief over Andrew's loss and I was thinking one of the key things that helped me on an ongoing basis is to keep active. The key is to literally tear yourself out of your despondency by doing something, anything

(in my case creativity) to decoy your mind.

I realize the danger of allowing oneself to become so despondent with profound grief to the point where the griever, if they absolutely cannot deal with their pain, can literally allow themselves to roll up in a ball and want to die as well - and indeed, sadly, some do.

I felt motivated and I felt I had to share part of my story. I do this for two main reasons: I feel my experience can offer hope and some comfort to those going through a similar situation - walking the path of grief so to speak. I do this also for personal reasons, because writing about it and talking about it ultimately helps me cope with the terrible horror of it all and realize there is a sun that continues to shine on afterwards - however bad the storm was!

On July 20, 2008 it will be exactly two years since Andrew left us. He was 27. I read somewhere that it takes about a year and a half to two years (on average) to achieve some sort of acceptance of a loss. Really, I do not think that I will ever totally accept it until it is my turn to leave. I still find the thought, the fact of it all, so incomprehensible, so unreal. Yet we learn and know that within our individual lives some things were perhaps meant to happen and/or that they were just beyond our control.

Maybe we could not have done anything to prevent it. We look back and ponder (should have, could have, would have, why?) These exercises are ultimately for naught and just serve to give us more anguish, more torment. Then you ask yourself "to what purpose?" Gosh, if it would bring our loved ones back, it makes sense. However in a way we do bring our loved ones back, within the "peace" of our internal thoughts, our beings, our souls.

Some overwhelming coincidences have suddenly come to light for me and my family. Things that we were not aware of before. Sometimes these coincidences are freaky and sometimes they amaze and comfort. One of them was fact that when my wife Henny was 27 years old and arrived from the Netherlands as a landed immigrant in this country, the date was July 20, 1976. On July 20, 2006 our son Andrew left us followed by the coincidence that he was located on the day that would have been his 28th birthday: September 4, 2006. Other days bring new coincidences and experiences, some good, some bad. We learn to deal with both extremes.

continued on next page

In my life so far I have experienced amazing euphoria. Marriage to an attractive girl from Holland, the birth of our two children Andrew and Annemarie, representing Canada by winning the “Jewellery Oscar” with 28 other international winners and receiving the award in Paris, France in 2000 together with my wife. And I have also experienced the other end of the spectrum, the ultimate pain of losing our son. If I could have traded winning such a major award/recognition for the life of my son or if fate deemed I would win the lottery and I could trade that for the life of my son, I would have done that in a second. Heck I would have traded my life for my son, had that opportunity presented itself to me, but you know it wasn’t and that also is something we just cannot change.

Sometimes we “heal” slowly. Nevertheless the bottom line is eventually we do heal!

BFO-Toronto welcomes submissions to Journeys from our members. Please contact Betty Ann Rutledge at barutledge@bfotoronto.ca if you have something you would like to share with the community.

When I’m Missing You

I said my goodbyes,
And had one last cry,
But it was all supposed to be over then,
Buried and forgotten about.
But there’s a hollow feeling in my heart where you used to be

My soul is starving; it hasn’t been fed,
It’s the feeling of a hunger pain.
Your love is all it craves,
It refuses all else and rants and raves.
You’re gone now but your love still continues to haunt me

I want to do everything to make you mine.
I can still feel your arms wrapped around me,
Then I wake up and it’s all just a memory.
I want to travel back in time,

When I was yours and you were mine.
Why are you still the one that occupies my every thought?
My every emotion?
I see you everywhere.
How do I move on when you are embedded within my soul and still very much alive inside of me?
I just can’t seem to forget the way in which we kissed,
And I can’t help but reminisce,
You are the one that I continually miss.

Now, when all I want to do is be with you,
Those times when I long for your touch,
The one that I love oh so much,
All I have to do is just close my eyes and I am with you.

Written by Natasha Bachoo and Submitted by her friend (and a student working here at BFO) Alaa Khalaf

Funerals Are Easy

When someone you love dies.
The doctor is there to tell you its over.
That’s easy.

When it’s time for the funeral home and the viewing. A funeral director is there to tell you how it’s done. Friends and family are there to help. Food is taken care of and people are supportive.
That’s easy.

When it’s time for the cemetery. Someone is there to put the coffin in the ground and the headstone in place.
That’s easy.

When the sympathy cards are all read. The flowers that were received are wilted. When all of the family and friends have gone and their lives move on.

This is not easy.

This is the hard part.

When there is no one there to tell you how to go on living without the one you love.

Rye Asuro lost his beloved wife June to cancer at the tragically young age of 34. Rye and his 6-year old daughter participated in BFO mutual support groups and now Rye is training to become a peer support volunteer.

Spring 2008 Volunteer Training

We began our training program in the deep freeze of relentless winter and are ending in the warmth of spring sunshine! Talk about a metaphor for the transformative power of mutual support. 23 bereaved people who are deeply committed to becoming peer support volunteers, along with a team of nine “seasoned” BFO volunteers and staff, traveled a journey of learning together: about our relationship to grief, to ourselves and to each other.

BFO-Toronto is blessed to welcome these new volunteers to the team: Dawn T., Rena A., Ellen C., Julie H., Monique V., Sabri E., Maria V., Elissa K., Sky S., Rebecca J., Roberta B., Paula T., Sue M., Elliette P., Paul H., Vilma B., Stefanie H., Yael S., Jennifer L., Sondra M., Rye A. and Marlisa B.

Thank you for the gift of your time, compassion, sensitivity and wisdom. Our members will be fortunate to have your caring and dedicated support.



Donation of Infant Loss Literature to the BFO-Toronto Library

Our Adult Programs and Volunteer Coordinator Betty Ann Rutledge had the pleasure of meeting a wonderful man named Randy Kalpin who recently made a significant donation of books related to infant loss to the BFO library collection.

When asked how Randy would like the donation acknowledged in the newsletter, this was his response:

“When we spoke the other day, you asked me why I chose to donate the collection of books. I feel so personally attached to stories of loss, not only of my dear beloved son Spencer Marlon Kalpin nearly 10 years ago, but also of the so many tragedies that have been shared through my readership at www.babysteps.com. There are so many grieving parents, children and families that struggle to understand their bereavement and try and reestablish their lives in aftermath of loss. Out of the tragedy of our loss of our son Spencer, Lesley and I founded The BabySteps Children’s Fund that through www.babysteps.com provides information, guidance and support for parents and families suffering the loss of a child. It is our sincere hope that our collection of books from the BabySteps’ library continues to help provide help to families struggling with loss. Thank you BFO-Toronto for the great work that you do for the bereavement community.”

***A Special Invitation to Bereaved Parents
Mutual Support Evening
Monday, June 16
6:30pm to 9:00pm***

Following on our April mutual support evening for bereaved parents, we are once again inviting you to come and be with others who are grieving the loss of a child.

We know that one of the things that helps us in “learning to live with our grief” is the chance to share our stories with others who are walking a similar path.

We invite you to come and spend some time with other bereaved parents. You can bring a photo or memento of your child and tell us their story. You can celebrate their life or share your struggles of coping in the day to day. Whatever you need, we are here.

Trained, peer support volunteers, who are also bereaved parents, will facilitate the group. This evening is suited for parents who have already participated in a mutual support group at BFO. If you have not participated in a group yet, and would like more information, please contact the office.

To RSVP or for more information, contact Betty Ann Rutledge, Adult Programs & Volunteer Coordinator at 416-440-0290 ext. 11 or barutledge@bfotoronto.ca

Please let us know by June 13th if you are planning to attend.

Adult Grief Drop Ins

A drop-in group for any adult, over 30 years of age, who has experienced the death of a parent, sibling, spouse or partner.

Facilitated by BFO-Toronto peer volunteers who have experienced similar losses

Attend as many drop ins as you wish

Open discussion format – no set topics

Share your story or simply be present with other bereaved people who are learning to live with their grief

PLEASE NOTE: we ask that people arrive NO LATER than 7:15 p.m. for each evening session & no later than 2:15 p.m. for the afternoon sessions

Monday May 12th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm
Monday May 26th evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm
Monday June 9th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm
Monday June 23rd evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm
Monday July 7th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm
Monday July 21st evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm
Monday August 11th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm
Monday August 25th evening 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Where: BFO-Toronto offices at 28 Madison Ave. (one block east of Spadina, ½ block north of Bloor)

RSVP: 416-440-0290 ext. 12

Note: Our current series of 10-week groups is full. A new series of 10-week closed groups for all BFO programs will begin in mid September 2008.

We're on the lookout for...

Our newly formed bowl-a-thon committee has now met twice and we are looking for:

- Someone who could do a creative piece for promotional materials e.g. a sponsorship package, a flyer, pledge forms etc
- People who would like to lead a bowling team of four. They could be family members, group members, people from your workplace, your church, your school.....get your thinking caps on to Bowl For Others – supporting those who need our services.

Contact Janet Wilson at jwilson@bfotoronto.ca or 416-440-0290 ext 19

WE WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF:

In February 2008, BFO sent a letter to all the funeral homes in the Toronto area requesting a financial gift to support our bereavement programs. To date the following funeral homes have responded with a generous donation:

**The Simple Alternative
Ogden Funeral Home
Scott Funeral Home**

Please note that Cardinal Funeral Homes, MacKinnon & Bowes and Turner & Porter Funeral Homes have given on an annual basis for many years. We greatly appreciate their ongoing support.

IN MEMORIAM

Aleisha & Monique Benaicha

Colin Stuart Krivy

Donnie Page

Patrick Britt

David Macedo

Alison Parrott

Lonnie Clemens

Jason Harold Marklew

Paul Norman John Reddick

Evan Fastofsky

Nadia Navazesh

Kerstin Schnickwald

Lyla Emma Geist

W. Bruce Nightingale

Ricky Sulker

Monte Himel

Ogiewwonyi Omonuwa

Nicola Anne Tullio

Spencer Marlon Kalpin

Patricia Ostler

Comfort Food

It's not too late to pick up your BFO – Toronto “Comfort Food’ Cookbook!



This cookbook features introductions by both James Chatto of Toronto Life Magazine and Lucy Waverman of The Globe and Mail, as well as, recipes from well-known chefs across the city, including Jamie Kennedy (Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar, Jamie Kennedy at The Gardiner) and Anna Olsen (of FoodTV’s “Sugar”).

This cookbook would make a wonderful gift for your family and friends.

Cookbooks are \$25 (taxes included) with all proceeds going directly BFO – Toronto to allow us to continue to offer our programs and services free of charge to individuals, families and communities.

Cookbooks are available for pick up at BFO-Toronto, located at 28 Madison Avenue, just east of Spadina station. Please drop by or give us a call at (416) 440-0290 extension 26 or email your order to sshin@bfotoronto.ca.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

In Memory Wristbands

BFO-Toronto is pleased to offer wristbands in memory of your loved one who died. The wristbands are white with the words “In Memory” engraved on them. They can be purchased at our office for a small donation. If you would like to order a number of wristbands and have them mailed right to your door please contact our Office Manager, Larry Konyu at 416 440 0290 extension 10 or via email at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca to place an order.

A SECOND URGENT CALL FOR HELP!

PLEASE GIVE A GIFT TO OTHERS - SUPPORT BFO-TORONTO

I wish to support the work of **Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto**.

- Donation (general) Donation in Honour of (anniversary, birthday etc.)
 Memorial Donation (would you like this mentioned in the newsletter?)

In Memory of: _____

Person making donation: _____

Please accept my donation of \$_____ to help the organization provide free services to bereaved families in the Greater Toronto Area.

Payment Type: Cheque VISA M/C Amex Cash

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Signature: _____

Please mail your donation to: Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto, 28 Madison Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1S1
or call the BFO-Toronto Office at 416.440.0290 to make a donation over the phone or go to our website www.bfotoronto.ca where you can make a donation online.

CONGRATULATIONS

Our very best wishes go out to volunteer Kate McGowan and husband Tim on the birth their son Duncan Ronald Thomas McGowan (7lbs14oz) on Sunday March 2nd, 2008.

Congratulations to Young Adult Volunteer Cheryl Alward and husband Josh on the birth of their son Dylan Cole Royon who made an early appearance on March 23rd, 2008 weighing in at 5 lbs.4 oz.

WAY TO GO – Janet & Sarah!

On April 17, 2008 Janet Wilson was presented with the field supervisor of the year award at Ryerson University. Janet was nominated by her students Florette Bacchus-Haynes, Alaa Khalaf and Rebecca Weintraub. A luncheon was held in her honour. Congratulations go out to Janet and Sarah for excellent supervision!

BFO -Toronto News

I am always amazed at what we have come to call the BFO ‘magic’. It’s that special moment in a group when a story is shared and everyone feels at one with everyone else. This togetherness or oneness transcends difference and individuality. Remarkable things happen in these precious moments and we wish that this ‘felt sense’ of connection could always be present, in every moment of our life. As Deepak Chopra said “giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging”. Through mutual support BFO creates connection, and in connecting there is healing.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we have recently been holding focus groups with BFO members and members of the Jane/Finch community, to share each of our ways of healing after a death. There were many moments of ‘togetherness’, as people from different cultures, different faiths, different backgrounds and different grief experiences came together and shared their grief story. There was connection again, when the BFO members met a couple of weeks ago, to discuss the strengths that BFO had to offer. New members, long-standing members, men, women, young members, ‘older’ members, members whose child(ren) had died, members whose spouse had died, members whose father, mother, sister, brother had died and members whose loved one had died as a result of accident, illness, suicide or murder, all felt that ‘special something’, as we cried and shared together.

I believe we, as human beings, all yearn for connection. As someone once said “isolation is a killer” and they meant this quite literally. Although the circumstance that brought you, our members, to BFO is tragic, having suffered the death of a loved one, you may have left our program having had the experience of the ‘magic of connection’. It is this connection - knowing that we are not alone, even in our grief - that we have the strength to move on with our lives as we learn to live with our loss. It is this connection that keeps BFO going year after year despite its challenges. It is this connection that we want to share with others, as we know it has the potential to perform miracles.

Take care everyone,

Janet Wilson
Executive Director

BFO-Toronto gratefully acknowledges the support of The Trillium Foundation, The City of Toronto, and The Ministry of the Attorney General – Ontario Victim Services Secretariat.

This newsletter is produced by our members and supporters and is available by mail and on our website. We welcome submissions, please forward to info@bfotoronto.ca We reserve the right to edit items submitted for publication.

The opinions and ideas expressed by our members and other authors in this newsletter, represent their own unique experiences of grief and do not necessarily reflect the views of BFO-Toronto.

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