



JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario
Toronto
Founded in 1978



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bfotoronto.ca
soul2soul.ca

Next Issue:

Jan/Feb 2008

Submission Deadline:

December 21, 2007

Mailing:

January 7, 2008

*"A man must partly give up being a man
With women-folk . . .*

.....

*Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
Unlike other folks as your standing there
Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.
I do think, though, you overdo it a little."*

Robert Frost, "Home Burial" (The Mourner's Dance by Katherine Ashenburg)

HEAR THE SILENCE

By: Larry Konyu

Being a man is somehow inconsistent, to me, with the outward expression of emotion in grief. And yet, as I age, the discrepancy is not quite so harsh. I find it rather peculiar to be walking to work along the wonderful tree lined streets of central Toronto listening to IL DIVO on my IPOD-like device and spontaneously bursting into tears hearing a particular word or verse that reminds me of loved ones lost. My shades cover the evidence as I pass students and business people in a hurry to get somewhere. I have not been discovered! My secret is safe.

It is just past Thanksgiving and on this day the weather has taken a cooler turn. Refreshing to be out and about; and all the while knowing that the warmth and comfort awaits me at my destination at BFO. I begin to think about all those people I have passed along the way and wonder about their individual losses and grief. How do they cope? What would they think of my exhibition?

Although in different years, the fall brings back memories of the deaths of my father and my grandmother. The imitative harmony of nature is synchronous with these two events in my life. As the leaves fall, I am forced, yet again to reflect on my pain. My father's demise left many questions. My grandmother's death answered some of them. In a nutshell, my grandmother, who I loved so dearly, departed peacefully. Her gift to me was that I could be a man and still show emotion and tenderness.

My grandmother came to Canada as a poor immigrant from a tiny village in the Ukraine. She had nothing. She expected nothing. My most memorable days with her were working in the tobacco fields on a farm, near London, Ontario, that was so pre-

Continued on pg. 2

scious to her. “The universe is bountiful,” she would say in her bare feet amongst the rows. “Look at the gifts it gives us!” Yes, we worked hard but we laughed and cried at jokes and stories told. I was not ashamed. I didn’t wear shades.

In the book, *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, he says that “beauty arises in the stillness of your presence.” Those moments with my grandmother, and now as I walk to work, are, Tolle continues, “something that I occasionally experience for brief moments when I am alone and surrounded by nature. When you experienced those moments of presence, you likely didn’t realize that you were briefly in a state of no-mind. This is because the gap between that state and the influx of thought was too narrow . . . Mind can neither recognise nor create beauty. Only for a few seconds, while you were completely present, was that beauty or that sacredness there. . . . The wider the time gap between perception and thought, the more depth there is to you as a human being, which is to say the more conscious you are.”

My grandmother had no education but her wisdom was unparalleled in any system of higher learning. She taught me to laugh and to cry openly and without shame. She taught me the joys of being in silence with nature and seeing the beauty of the universe – even if it is only for a moment. Oh but how that moment is cherished!

As the leaves disappear and the holiday season approaches, take a moment to enjoy what we have been given. Hear the silence and cherish each moment of presence. The memories will be life lasting!

Condolences for Betty Ann

Our condolences are extended to BFO – Toronto’s Adult Programs and Volunteer Coordinator, Betty Ann Rutledge and her sister Jane Ann Mintenko on the death of their beloved father, Arnold Rutledge. Arnold was a great supporter of BFO – Toronto and asked that memorial donations be made to continue to support the good work of our agency. To view the obituary or sign the online guest book, visit www.cardinalfuneralhomes.com.

In Memory of Ed Gray

Ed came to BFO by attending a bereavement group in 1984. He then continued to volunteer by helping out with many fundraising events and singing in the Barbershop choir. Friends met at the University Women’s Club on October 13th to remember him and celebrate his life.

In Memory of Margaret Hodson

BFO – Toronto would like to acknowledge the wonderful volunteer work of Margaret Hodson. After suffering the multiple losses her son (aged 23) and mother in close proximity, Margaret was able to help out with the mailing of Lifeline newsletters over the past few years.

In Memory of Jean Smart

BFO – Toronto offers their condolences to Jane Smart on the passing of her mother, Jean Smart on October 3, 2007 at age 83. Jane is currently, and has been for many years, involved in volunteer activities with us by facilitating many bereavement groups among other things. Jane’s mother’s legacy is “a life well loved.”

In Memory of Jeanne Gershater

It is with great sadness that BFO – Toronto announces the death of Jeanne Gershater on October 22, 2007. She was the facilitator with Jean Bickley for our Mother’s group in 2001 after her son, David’s tragic death (aged 31) in 1999. Her husband passed away a year ago. A warm, generous and loving person, deeply committed to her family and friends.

FALL 2007 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

NOVEMBER

Monday November 5th 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
 Monday November 19th 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm
 Wednesday November 28th 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

WHERE:

BFO-Toronto offices 28 Madison Ave.
 (One block east of Spadina, ½ block north of Bloor)

RSVP:

416 440 0290

IN MEMORIAM

*Louise McDermott
 Stephen McDermott
 Ricky Sulker
 Lily Bell*

*James & Vera Hutcheson
 Helen Rudderham
 Malcolm Marshall
 Ed Gray*

*Murray Klein
 Margaret Hodson
 Marion & Ralph Downing
 Arnold Rutledge*

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.



I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT BFO-TORONTO

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

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.

Miller declares Sunday ‘break silence’ day

Mayor wants Toronto residents to make noise and break silence that often surrounds senseless slayings

Oct 19, 2007 02:53 PM

TEENAZ JAVAT
STAFF REPORTER
TORONTO STAR

Toronto Mayor David Miller has declared Sunday the UMOVE Day of Non-Violence and wants city residents to observe a “minute of noise” at 3 p.m.

“Stop, shout and break your silence” was the message that came forth from Miller’s office today as he was joined by Toronto police chief Bill Blair and several mothers who have each lost a child to gun violence.

“I never knew that I would lose my son,” said Audette Shephard, chair of United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere (UMOVE).

“Tomorrow, it can be you so if people do not co-operate with the police then society is the loser,” she said. “Do the right thing. Come forward and tell the police as tomorrow it can be your turn. We want society to end the silence. The dead cannot speak so society must speak up for them.”

Said Miller: “These mothers have taken the pain of their grief to make the change so that other mothers will not grieve. They have put a face on these senseless acts of violence by coming forward and it is an obligation on the part of society to act. This message of hope and courage must not be lost.”

UMOVE is a non-profit organization made up of mothers who have lost a child to violence. Shephard decided to do something about the silence around the unresolved death of her 19-year old son, Justin. He was a victim of gun violence in Toronto almost six years ago.

For Marilyn Ortega, a consultant at the Black Bereavement Program, it has been 10 years of living without closure. Her son, Ruddin Greaves, 22, was shot dead in Toronto on July 22, 1997.

“I do not know who killed him as nobody is talking. It is 10 years now and nothing has changed.”

Once the yellow police tap comes down from around a crime scene, Ortega said, people seem to forget and move on. The absence of witnesses delays justice. For Ortega, every day that passes is justice denied for her son.

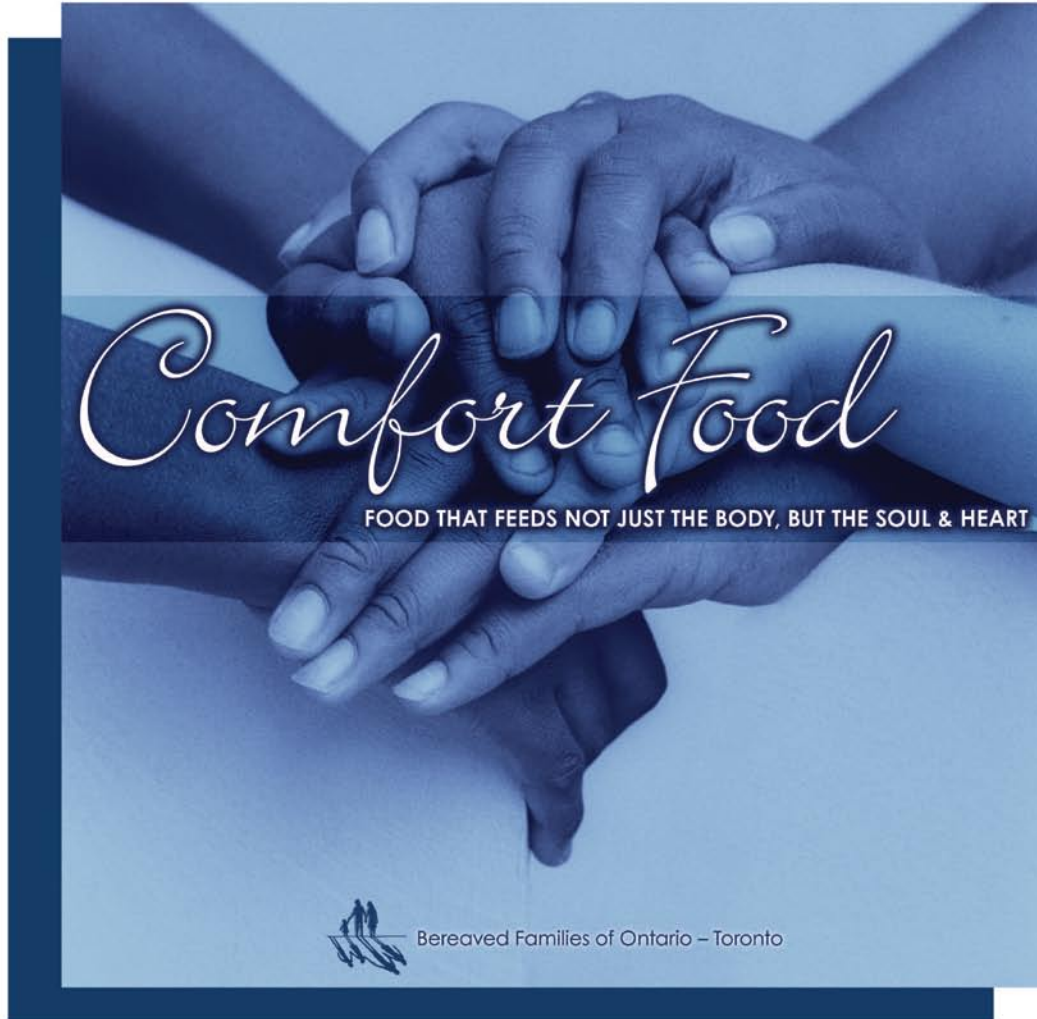
The same can be said for Nancy Logan, whose son Jonathan Chambers was shot dead in March.

“ All I can hear are gunshots as there is silence in the city when this happens,” said Logan. “Why people won’t talk is hard for me to understand and harder still for me to go on living knowing that my son’s killers are at large.”

Said to Shephard: “The more things change the more they remain the same. We must have more witnesses coming forward to do the right thing as too many in our society are waiting for justice.”

She ended by quoting Mahatma Gandhi: “I can find a thousand causes to die for, but I have never found a single cause that I can kill for.”

*Just in time
for the holidays...*



Comfort Food: *Food that feeds not
just the body, but the soul & heart*

A fundraiser in support of
Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto

Please register to pre-order your copy

Contact Sue Shin at 416 440 0290 x15
or sshin@bfotoronto.ca to order a copy

AN ODE TO JARSTE BARBARA MSYK

Submitted by Hildeburg Scheu - mother

The day I stood in the coldly austere vestibule by
 By the creation oven, noting just the edge of the
 Pine coffin holding my child in a sideroom, was one
 Of the hardest days of my life . . .
 And the most important, February the 21st, 2000.
 Jarste Barbara had been dead since early evening
 Of February the 17th.

It felt, when the coffin was rolled out on its
 Folded trolley, and I laid the flowers upon it and
 quickly slid the envelope with our names under the
 stems, like a horrible nightmare; I knew the next to
 come, of course, as I briefly touched the top left
 corner of the coffin lid, not being allowed to see
 Barbie, aware of the four men near me, cemetery
 Staff, David, and Stephen from London Cremation
 Services, watching me, the coffin, the oven door.

The final cut
 The trolley unfolded itself like a giant insect and
 Lifted its light burden up to the suddenly gaping
 Hole . . .
 The door screeched shut. Red lights turned green

 That’s when David reached out and held my head tight
 Against his chest, muffling the silent scream.

If one has one’s heart torn out and while alive, this
 Is what it must feel like

David drove me straight home to Dundas, and put me
 To bed with a drink, which I remember spilling; a
 Red stain upon the counterpane.

The rest is silence . . .

“Good night, sweet princess,
 And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!”

REMEMBER GOING GREEN

You can read the newsletter on our website www.bfotoronto.ca instead of getting a printed copy – saves paper, envelopes, stamps, etc. Let us know your preference by calling Larry Konyu, Office Manager at (416) 440-0290 extension 10 or by emailing us at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca.

**“Weave the Web of Peace”
 in this holiday season!**

Re-member us,
 You who are living,
 Restore us, renew us,
 Speak for our silence.
 Continue our work.
 Bless the breath of life.
 Sing of the hidden patterns.
 Weave the web of peace.

-Judith Anderson

**GIVING BACK TO
 THE COMMUNITY –
 COME VOLUNTEER
 WITH US**

You can be trained as a group facilitator – next training starts in February 2008 – sign up soon – **DON’T MISS OUT** – spaces are limited. **OR** you can work in our office, answering phones, arranging appointments, cleaning the office, etc. As we continue to serve the community and the needs of the community continue to grow, we look to you for assistance.

Journal Entry 2007-08-07 by: Varun Vig

My name is Varun Vig and I'm just a child from the ghetto who's been blessed with the opportunity to be amongst youth who grieve and understand the same pain that I have been enduring these past few years. Up until joining this program I was completely lost, in a world of my own searching for myself, for some piece of mind and somewhere or something to exert my energy towards since so much of it had been lost with me witnessing my best friend getting shot and killed on my birthday of 2005 in the Jane and Finch (Driftwood) community.

Bereaved Families of Toronto has become my home away from home. I automatically connected with the youth and staff members of this organization primarily because of the open and welcome arms I received. This group is special to me because I have been able to share my life and everything in it weather good or bad without being judged or looked upon negatively. This is just one of the reasons why I will forever be "In Love" with this program. I primarily wanted to be a part of this program because of the experience and opportunities available within the video and film directing, something I really enjoy and wanted to take in university. Not only am I learning and actually making short movies, something I love doing, more importantly this program helps me stay off the streets where nothing but negativity exists.

I actually look forward to waking up early in the morning to discuss how I'm feeling and what's on my mind. I strive to be on time for our early morning check in and to just be with the people I have learned to know and call my friends. Actually, everyone in this group is considered family to me and it's too bad that the program is only two months. I know everyone wishes it wasn't over so quickly because everyone is having fun. I don't want it to be over because I am having too much fun and I feel like a kid again just being surrounded by these youth who are exactly like me who struggle and strive to make better of their lives even though we are surrounded by drugs, violence and crooked cops. This is the only place I feel comfortable crying and talking about my losses and how I lost more than half my crew before I reached the age of 22. This is the only place I want to be when I wake up in the morning.

Even though I'm still searching for myself in this world realizing it's a constant fight between good and evil the Bereaved Families of Toronto group has helped me put a smile on my face every day since I first step foot into the program and was welcomed by the beautiful Janina Joseph Walker and wonderful Marilyn Ortega. I'm always smiling either because of the supporting staff members that better relate to me or because of the fun that I have filming, acting, eating with and talking to the youth from the program that I can call family or just the fact that this is the handful of places I feel safe and feel loved and understood with all my problems specifically my losses and fear of death. I know that when I cry everyone else cries because we cry together knowing that there is a shoulder to lean on. The ever so friendly environment allows me to control my frustrations with life and keeps my mind of problems and stresses that I'm going through.

This program has also boosted my confidence and self esteem about life, something that had disappeared after witnessing my best friend get murdered on my birthday. The excitement, jokes and skills that we all learned are unforgettable from receiving special treatment by Universal Studio's and The Toronto International Film Festival or the time we ordered Chinese food and it tasted horrible. This program is ideal for all at risk youth who live in communities like mine because a lot of youth don't want to grieve and thus bottle their feelings inside or resort to smoking and drinking constantly or just being in the streets not knowing of the wonderful opportunities like this one where you learn to direct movies and get paid for it at the same time. This group has occupied my time to the utmost positive surroundings and environment possible to a once troubled, hurt, distorted and lost youth.

Every time we meet up we do nothing but laugh, talk and share everything and anything that we encounter in our lives. I am having so much fun directing and filming my movie even though it is an 8 minute segment I get the opportunity to show the world what really happened to my friend when he had been shot by the police in my neighbourhood. I never worked so hard for something that I love doing in my life. Even with Alzheimer's I won't forget the laughs, debates, films we made, and family I have learned to love to come and see each and every morning. The only thing us youth shoot here is movies!

BFO-TORONTO NEWS



By the time you read this newsletter, Big Night Out (BNO) will have taken place and we're keeping our fingers crossed that, it will have been a huge success. It definitely started off a little rocky, as one week prior to this important fundraising event, Up Country, the planned venue for BNO, went bankrupt! Luck must have been with us, as we found another appropriate venue, the Courthouse, without too much trouble and with only one week to go!

Our Volunteer Training, the second one in 2007, is going exceptionally well. As many of you already know we heard some sad news just one day before the first day of training.....Betty Ann's father had died after a long illness. As we stepped into Betty Ann's shoes it became obvious that we were again blessed. Betty Ann had everything so well organized that we found it easy to lead the training in her place. Thank you Betty Ann for being so incredibly organized down to the smallest detail!

We continue to provide emotional support to the bereaved families in Toronto's communities. In September we went to an information session at a school in the Jane-Finch area, where several organizations met to exchange program information with each other and with parents. There was a lot of interest in the work that we do at BFO and there is definitely a growing awareness of the relevance and need for BFO's programs and services. In November we will be holding another community-based training workshop for youth workers and others working in the social service field. Part of this workshop will not only include education on issues related to grief and bereavement but also how the 'supporters/workers' can take care of themselves.

On the staffing side.....Janina Joseph-Walker has resigned from her position as Black Community Program Coordinator. We are grateful for all the work that Janina did to support the healing of individuals and families within the Black Community and we wish her well. With Janina's resignation and Betty Ann on bereavement leave we have been rather short staffed. However all remaining staff plus some wonderful volunteers, have worked even harder than usual to keep our programs going, to provide excellent training for 25 potential volunteers, to train and orient 4 new student placements (Alaa, Kathy, Ira and Rebecca) and to organize and coordinate our annual fundraising auction Big Night Out – all within the last month! A special thank you goes out to Larry Konyu (Office Manager), Sue Shin (Fund Developer), Marlisa Budiharjo (Special Event Coordinator) Sarah Henderson (Program Coordinator – Child and Youth program), Julia Farquharson (Community Outreach Consultant) Diane McIntyre (Volunteer), Heather Lindsey (Volunteer), Jane Gardner (Volunteer) and Marilyn Ortega (Volunteer). Everyone worked as a team, doing whatever they could to help BFO and the people we serve. If you had to wait a little longer than usual to get a response from us, or if we 'slipped up' in some way please forgive us...we have really had our 'hands full'!

Take care everyone, *Janet Wilson, Executive Director*

This newsletter is produced for 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

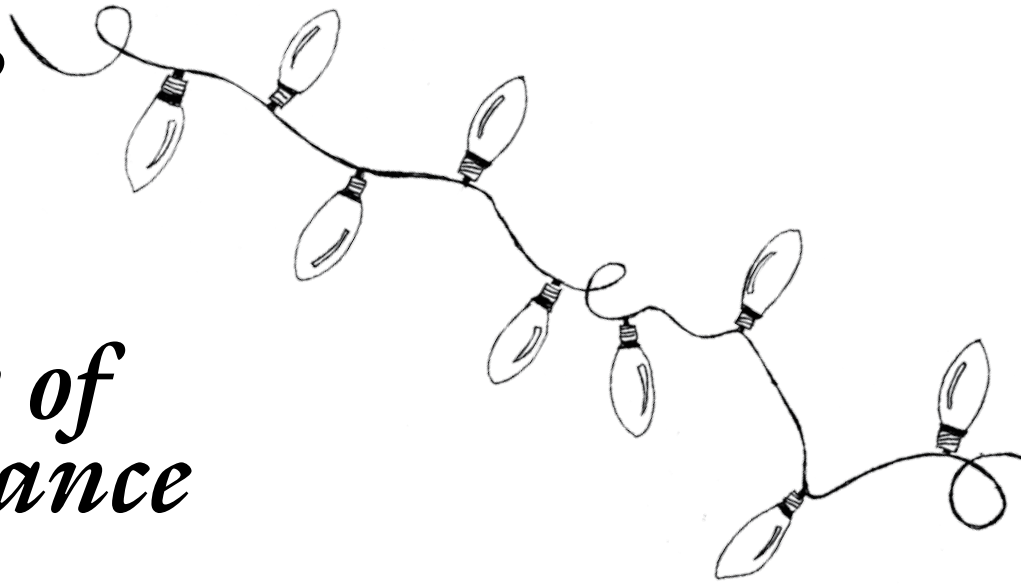
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BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO-TORONTO

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Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto's 15th Annual

Tree of Light Ceremony of Remembrance



WHAT IS THE TREE OF LIGHT?

For 15 years, this memorial event has offered individuals and families in the City of Toronto a touching and visible way to remember their loved ones who have died. The Tree is decorated with clear lights and doves, as well as the names of those we wish to remember. It is kept on display throughout the month of December and the first week of January. Light is a symbol of hope in many faiths, cultures and traditions. All are welcome to participate in this special event.

WHERE: Toronto City Hall Rotunda, 100 Queen Street West

WHEN: Thursday, December 6, 2007 – 7:00pm

CEREMONIAL LIGHTING OF TREE:

A short, half-hour dedication and lighting ceremony acknowledges the memories of our loved ones who have died.

Following the ceremony, a time of quiet reflection is provided and you are invited to stay and look for your loved one's name on the Tree.

Approximately 500 people attend the event and many more visit the Tree throughout the rest of the month as a way of coping with the difficult holiday season.

AT THE EVENT:

Please note that very limited seating is available for the elderly, people with disabilities and others who may require it.

Volunteers will be available to assist you in locating your loved one's name on the Tree. Please note that the doves, with names, are hung in alphabetical order, in rows from top to bottom. You will be sent your nametag, along with your tax receipt, in the New Year.

Light refreshments will be available following the ceremony.

If you wish to remember a loved one at this time by having their name appear on the tree, please fill out and return the form on the reverse of this flyer. You are welcome to submit a name even if you are unable to come to the ceremony and/or to make a donation.

To ensure that your loved one's name is included in the dedication, please return this form to the BFO-Toronto office by Friday, November 16th. You can also submit a name and make a donation online at www.bfotoronto.ca or by calling the office at 416 440 0290.

