



January – February – March 2015
A Journey Together:
Chicagoland Chapter - Bereaved Parents of the USA
www.bpusachicagoland.org

Bereaved Parents of the USA Mission:

We, as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives following the death of a child.

*Meetings are generally held the first Tuesday of every month, 7:00 – 8:30 PM. Doors open at 6:30 PM for greeting and fellowship.
First Congregational Church of Western Springs, 1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs, Illinois
Eleanor Byrne (708-485-6160) and Sally Yarberry (708-560-0393), Chapter Co-Leaders*

Cold

by Keith Swett, Matt's dad

For me the 25th of January is always cold, bitter cold, 20 below cold. It means leaving a warm bed while it is still dark, dressing in layers, opening the school, loading the bus and heading to Sheybogan. It is so cold that the slush from last night freezes solid and never thaws during the hour ride to the tournament. It is so cold that my hands and face hurt.

I can hardly move forward but one little step at a time I move. I have to stop and rest. I am almost as frozen as the slush. I want to lie down and quit. I want to never get up. I hurt. Even after twelve years I hurt. Matt's body was so cold, so cold.

The thing is Matt's body was cold not Matt. I have never known a warmer man than Matt. His hugs thawed hearts and started friendships. His life brought joy and love to everyone close to him. Matt is my sun. He brings me out of the cold, nourishing my hopes and dreams. He thaws my despair and demands an end to this pity party. Love does not die. Love nourishes the mind and the body. In love all things are possible. I hear him clearly "Come on Dad. It is time to skate and sled. You can lie around in bed when you get old." Matt will never get old and as long as we play in the snow neither will I.

Here I thought it was cold. Really it was brisk, maybe even invigorating. ❄️

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Tuesday, January 6 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - "Holiday Detox"

Tuesday, February 3 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - topic to be determined

Tuesday, March 3 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - topic to be determined

~ Candlelighting ~ A Sincere Thank You

Sunday, December 7th was our annual Candle Light Program. It was a beautiful evening of remembrance for our children.

A sincere thank you to all who made this evening possible including Donna Corrigan, Sally Yarberry, Jerry Schulman, Bob & Carol Gordon, Rose Martino-Krueger, Marilyn Cocogliatto, Maureen Anderson and Linda Dore. Many thanks to everyone who helped with set-up and/or clean-up!

Monetary Contributors:

Bill & Marge Adams, In Memory of **Thomas (Tommy John) Adams** and **Martin K. Adams**
Irene Anderson, In Memory of **Jeffrey Anderson**
Philip & Kay Barrett, In Memory of **Elizabeth Anne Barrett**
Trish DeBauche, In Memory of **Bryce Stack**
Joan & John Schroder, In Memory of **Alan Schroeder**
Jasna Sreckovic, In Memory of **Stevie Puhar**

Many, many thanks!

BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter

Bereaved Parents of the USA is a self-help support group which is run entirely by volunteers who are also bereaved parents. The volunteers are a little further down the road in their grief and can give back to the chapter by helping with the many jobs it takes to keep the chapter running.

If you feel that you are ready to give back to the Chapter and would like to volunteer your time and talent, please contact the Chapter Co-Leaders Eleanor or Sally.

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Eleanor Byrne (708) 485-6160
Sally Yarberry (708) 560-0393



Do We Have Your Current Email Address?

It is important that we have current email addresses so that we can send chapter news to everyone. If you have not been receiving our chapter emails, please send your email address to Sally at psyrbrry@hotmail.com.

Meeting Day and Location Reminder:

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at First Congregational Church of Western Springs, 1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs, IL, on the second floor in the youth room. Please enter the building through the north doors by the playground.
†††

2015 BP/USA
National Gathering
Hartford, CT



Bereaved Parents of the USA
2015 NATIONAL GATHERING
HARTFORD, CT • JULY 24 - 26

♥ ♥ ♥ Love Gifts ♥ ♥ ♥

A Love Gift is a donation to the chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. A financial contribution in any amount is appreciated. All Love Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in the newsletter accompanied by wording exactly as the donor submits. BP/USA is a national non-profit organization; therefore all donations to the chapter are tax deductible as allowed by law.

When mailing in a love gift, **please include your child's name, your address** and any other info you would like in your love gift message. Make your check payable to: **BP/USA Chicagoland** and mail it to arrive **by the 10th** of the month prior to the upcoming newsletter. **The newsletter is published quarterly.**

Mail your check to:

Bereaved Parents of the USA
Chicagoland Chapter
P.O. Box 320
Western Springs, IL 60558

It is also recommended that you email your love gift message to the newsletter editor,
celeste_hardy@hotmail.com.

Thank You!



In loving memory of
Jeffrey Anderson
January 28, 1981 until May 25, 1998

Dearest Jeff,
Happy 34th Birthday.
Thinking of you and missing you every day. I thank God for all the great memories I carry with me in my heart all the time.

Love always and forever,
Mom
Irene Anderson



Love Gifts Continued on the Next Page

♥ ♥ ♥ Love Gifts ♥ ♥ ♥



*In loving memory of
Heather Runge*

November 21, 1989 until January 4, 1990

Oh how I miss having the beautiful daughter you would be at 25! I stop and wonder so many times the many joys we would be experiencing with you as a family and the sweet relationship you'd have with your older sister, Lauryn. Though I know you are experiencing unimaginable JOY in your heavenly home, I wish often to have you here on earth! Please know my love for you never diminishes and your loving spirit lives strong in my heart today and always!

Love always,
Mom (Sandy Runge-Sand)
& Sis (Lauryn Runge)



*In loving memory of
Joseph James Craig*

December 5, 1974 until December 15, 2009

"You Loved Everyone and
Everyone Loved You"

Love,
Dad
Joseph R. Craig



Dear Child of Mine

By Betty Stevens, BP/USA, Baltimore, MD

Dear child of mine, who died before your time
I am grateful for your life.

Though death brought the end of hopes and dreams
Still I am grateful for your life.

Through you I have known joy and sorrow, laughter and tears.
Through you my life has been enriched, my compassion heightened and I am more keenly aware of the grief of others,
I am grateful for your life.

Now I draw upon my memories of you, some happy and some sad.
They keep me close in so many ways.
They are priceless, precious memories that help me bear the pain.
Through them I will learn to live again.
I am grateful for your life.

I have been blessed by your life and left with your love.
I will share that love and strive to live to be a blessing to others.
Dear Child of mine, though you died before your time, you are never far away from me.
I have locked you in my secret heart of hearts and there I will love you through eternity.
I am grateful for your life - dear child of mine.



Permission to laugh again.....

by Donna Corrigan, Matthew's mom, BP/USA Chicagoland

Winter in Chicago is dreary; that is a fact of life. The sun peaks thru every once in a while... we just went thru 13 days with no sunshine at all! At our last meeting, one of the Dads told us about having to commute to another Midwestern city every week on his job. It's not at all to his liking; being away from his family and living in a hotel. But he has found a bright spot in the whole experience, the plane flies above the clouds and there is sunshine there!

Often, we as bereaved parents, have to fly above the clouds too. The grief journey is often very long and dark. Sometimes we have to make a decision to look for that which will bring us hope, bring us joy!

Don't be afraid to laugh again; it doesn't mean you have forgotten your child or the pain of losing them. It means you are still alive! As much as we loved our children, they loved us. Wouldn't they want us to smile again?

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Breanne Conterio - 21
Feb 27, 1990 - Jan 09, 2012
P.E.
Teri & Steve Conterio

Bryce Stack - 30
Jan 26, 1979 - Jul 24, 2009
Accidental Overdose
Trish DeBauche

Dana Samuel - 32
Apr 07, 1970 - Jan 23, 2003
Asphyxiation
Lana Samuel

Denise Dubois - 38
Feb 12, 1960 - Jan 02, 1999
Cancer/Suicide
Janet & Bernie Finnigan

Gerrick Davies - 18
Jan 21, 1986 - Feb 09, 2004
Murdered
Diane Davies

Heather Runge - 6 Wks.
Nov 21, 1989 - Jan 04, 1990
Neuroblastoma
Sandy Sand

Jeffrey Anderson - 17
Jan 28, 1981 - May 25, 1998
Asphyxiation
John & Irene Anderson

Jeffrey Scott Caccavari - 34
Jan 16, 1967 - May 10, 2001
Unknown
Dominic & Karen Caccavari

Jennifer Roley - 22
Nov 26, 1989 - Jan 15, 2012
Drug Overdose
Lynn Gantner

Josiah Weiberg - 10 Months
Jan 16, 2009 - Dec 03, 2009
SMA Type 1
Alesha & Jim Weiberg

Martin K. Adams - 42
Dec 11, 1960 - Jan 06, 2003
Marge & Bill Adams

Matthew - 32
Jan 22, 1981 - May 17, 2013
Cancer
Mary Ellen & Glenn Gavin

Matthew Swett - 25
Jan 07, 1979 - Jan 25, 2003
Accident
Keith & Jean Swett

Patrick Vincent DeMauro - 19
Jan 28, 1982 - Aug 29, 2001
Car Accident
Vincent & Debbie DeMauro

Ryan James Moravcik - 21
Jan 07, 1980 - Dec 31, 2001
Suicide
James & Lucille Moravcik

Ryan Vesely - 17
Oct 03, 1974 - Jan 18, 1992
Auto Accident
Stan & Val Vesely



Tony Jurkas Jr. - 23
Feb 26, 1983 - Apr 16, 2006
Suicide
Laurie Jurkas

Alyssa Dabrowski - 22
May 20, 1979 - Feb 03, 2002
Car Accident - Hit & Run
Allen & Rosemary Dabrowski

Timmy Ciametti - 5
Feb 12, 1985 - Mar 18, 1990
Adult Respiratory Distress Syndrome
Vince & Gloria Ciametti

Casey Cox - 27
Dec 17, 1985 - Feb 14, 2013
Asthma
Cynthia Cox

Colt Grabowski - 20
Feb 21, 1993 - May 16, 2013
Car Accident
Meg Iorfida

Dan Parmenter - 20
Oct 15, 1987 - Feb 14, 2008
NIU Classroom Shooting
Gary Parmenter

Daniel Meyer - 7
Feb 21, 1977 - Sep 21, 1984
Hit by Car
Kenneth & Olivia Meyer

Deborah Gilligan Main - 35
Mar 18, 1965 - Feb 13, 2001
Melanoma
Margaret Gilligan

Tim Schiefelbein - 18
Dec 07, 1989 - Feb 24, 2007
Car Accident
Diane Grabowski

Dennis Rich - 37
Feb 11, 1971 - Apr 01, 2008
Cancer
Karen Rich

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued) - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Donna Hark - 48
Oct 28, 1961 - Feb 08, 2010
Pulmonary Hypertension
Geraldine Ploskonka

Douglas McCallum - 19
Sep 23, 1980 - Feb 21, 2000
Accident
Reg & Marcia McCallum

**Emily Rose Ford -
Henry J Ford -**
Feb 23, 2010 - Feb 24, 2010
Prematurity
Jeremy & Jaime Ford

Eric - 22
Jun 28, 1970 - Feb 08, 1993
Sue and Lou Robisch

Evan Holmes - 20
Feb 09, 1990 - Apr 02, 2010
Unknown
Irene Gangemi

Evan Holmes - 20
Feb 09, 1990 - Apr 02, 2010
Unknown
Mason Holmes

Foly Phillips - 26
Feb 18, 1982 - Feb 26, 2008
Sickness
Yinka & Grace Phillips



Glenn Patrick Beach - 31
Nov 07, 1960 - Feb 16, 1992
Murdered
John & Grace Beach

Thomas (Tommy John) Adams - 35
Feb 01, 1966 - Nov 01, 2001
Marge & Bill Adams

Ian McDonald-Shumaker - 17
Feb 06, 1989 - May 11, 2006
Suicide
Stacia McDonald-Shumaker

Jacob Kowalik - 10
Feb 26, 2004 - Apr 15, 2014
Heart Attack
Mike & Jennifer Kowalik

Jamie Mitchell - 31
Feb 28, 1978 - Sep 19, 2009
Suicide
Lance & Kristie Mitchell

Joseph Ross - 23
Jun 09, 1985 - Feb 05, 2009
Asthma
Pat Ross

Kate Pranno - 24
May 19, 1977 - Feb 22, 2002
Liver Failure from Drugs & Alcohol
Suzi Scott

Katherine Lacewell - 41
Feb 27, 1969 - Oct 16, 2011
Alcoholism
Allen Lacewell

Kimberly Ann Olson - 15
Feb 14, 1983 - Aug 20, 1998
Histicytic Disorder
Larry & Danita Olson

Mark Susong - 21
Jun 05, 1990 - Feb 10, 2012
Drug Overdose
Jill Susong

Steven Glosky - 23
Feb 16, 1972 - Nov 13, 1995
Suicide
Judy & Danny Glosky

Melissa Juergensen - 19
Feb 24, 1989 - May 03, 2008
Auto Accident
Ruth Juergensen

Michael Patrick Gordon - 30
Feb 20, 1974 - Aug 08, 2004
Killed by Drunk Driver
Robert & Carol Gordon

Mike Seaney - 44
Feb 24, 1951 - Sep 23, 1995
Medical Misdiagnosis
Vernadene Tolman

Nadia Chowdhury - 20
May 14, 1983 - Feb 21, 2004
Hit & Killed by Drunk Driver
Nasrin & Shamsul Chowdhury

Nancy R. Lyell (Sue's Sister) - 35
Feb 14, 1961 - Sep 10, 1996
Cancer
Sue & Garry Fink

Our Children Continued on the Next Page

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued) - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Roseanne Strick - 22
Feb 27, 1969 - Oct 14, 1991
Brain Aneurysm/Heart Attack/Car
Accident
Ilse Strick

Sean Howard Anderson - 17
Feb 22, 1983 - Dec 05, 2000
Suicide
Maureen Anderson

Timothy Kuzmicki - 16
Mar 07, 1986 - Nov 13, 2002
Motorcycle/Auto Collision
Kathy Kuzmicki

Amanda Coughlin - 10
May 11, 1991 - Mar 15, 2002
Cathy Coughlin

Amy Elizabeth Gales - 19
Jul 18, 1975 - Mar 08, 1995
Auto Accident
Ron & Sandy Gales

Brendon Anderson - 22
Jul 18, 1976 - Mar 16, 1998
Murdered
Rob Anderson

Carl Alan Vuillaume - 16
Mar 14, 1989 - Jul 21, 2005
Accidental Drowning
Rob & Charleen Vuillaume

Dan Woods - 29
Mar 12, 1978 - Aug 22, 2007
Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy
Mary Woods

Daryle J. "DJ" Hall - 22
Mar 10, 1984 - Sep 11, 2006
Accidental Drug Overdose
Bob and Sherry Hall

Natalie Anne Ragusa - 27
Oct 24, 1975 - Mar 04, 2003
Car Accident
George Ragusa

Eric-Alan Gottung - 24
Oct 10, 1986 - Mar 04, 2011
Suicide
Nancy & Eric Gottung

Frank Knapczyk, Jr. - 25
Mar 28, 1967 - Oct 24, 1992
Electrocution
Barbara & Frank Knapczyk

Garrett Joel Zaagman - 7
Mar 04, 1976 - Dec 09, 1983
Spinal Meningitis
Dirk & Florence Zaagman

Gina -
Mar 07, 1968 -
Fred & Carol Renzetti

Jennifer Lynn Kirwan - 17
Mar 10, 1981 - Sep 20, 1998
Auto Accident
Linda Kelley

Jessica Louise Lang - 23
Mar 03, 1980 - Dec 12, 2003
Heroin Overdose
Kristine Lang

Katie Evans - 35
Mar 24, 1978 - Jul 16, 2013
Heroin Overdose
Anne & Ed Evans

Kevin Jon Ryeczyk - 8
Mar 29, 1972 - Apr 15, 1980
Lung Ailment
Jack & Karen Ryeczyk

Matthew Lane - 27
Mar 08, 1978 - Oct 10, 2005
Car Accident
Joylin Lane

Michael Werth - 24
Mar 18, 1978 - Mar 22, 2002
Janey Reed



Nicholas Palumbo - 21
Jul 10, 1981 - Mar 05, 2003
Snowmobile Accident
Debbie Palumbo

Robert Joseph Gentilini, Jr. - 25
Mar 20, 1964 - May 18, 1989
Brain Infection
Bob & Mary Gentilini

Ron Buccieri - 42
Mar 22, 1961 - Aug 31, 2003
Unknown
Carol Polich

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued) - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Russel Witek - 14

Jun 16, 1994 - Mar 29, 2009
Leukemia/Brain Tumor
Dan & Helen Dennett

Ryan Paul - 15 1/2

Jul 06, 1988 - Mar 09, 2004
Hit by Car
Roy & Melody Paul

Sara Jane Melton - 27

Mar 19, 1969 - Jul 09, 1996
Anaplastic Thyroid Carcinoma
Jack & Jane Larson

Sarah Lynn Moore - 5

Dec 18, 1998 - Mar 31, 2004
Surgical Complications
Susan Moore

Scott Saville - 42

Mar 29, 1969 - Jul 30, 2011
Brain Aneurysm
Mary Saville

Vincenza - 47

Jul 30, 1966 - Mar 08, 2014
Cancer
Margherita Arrowsmith



The New Year

The New Year offers opportunities for progress, reinvestment, understanding, forgiveness, growth and all things positive. Be kind to yourself and pick one. Better still, choose all. If you make New Year's Resolutions, I hope they include:

- Try to take it one day at a time.
- Forgive yourself for whatever it is you feel you did wrong.
- Figure out ways to resolve your anger so you can let go of it.
- Risk reinvestment in life.
- Concentrate on and value what you have left, as much as what you have lost.
- Let those you value know how important they are to you.

These are important steps forward. Try to be good to yourself in the New Year.

—Mary Cleckley
Jack's Mother
Lawrenceville, GA

WHY DO I COME TO BEREAVED PARENTS MEETINGS?

*by Charlotte Miller
BP/USA Central Arkansas Chapter
Lovingly lifted from the
BP/USA Mid Hudson New York Chapter*

A family member recently asked me why I continue to come to Bereaved Parents meetings. She said, "After all, it's been 5 years since your son died. Don't you find it depressing to go to those meetings?"

I stopped and thought for just a minute... It is incredibly sad to hear the stories of loss and pain, but it does not depress me. I ache for those families whose loss is more recent, where the pain is a heart savagely torn into raw pieces and where the pain seems relentless and like it will last forever. But had I not had the support of this group, I wonder if I would have made it, and kept my sanity, through the past 5 years. I know for certain that my grief journey, as hard as it has been, was made easier, and my burden lighter, because it was shared by those who truly understood my loss and who constantly reassured me that I was not losing my mind... I was just grieving.

I have personally been blessed by a supportive family and by loyal friends at church and at work who, even after 5 years, send me cards or flowers or call or e-mail to see how I am doing. And I am grateful for their support. But somehow there is nothing quite like the hug of another bereaved parent and the tears that mingle with mine as we grieve together the death of our own child and our friend's child. I can't explain it. I can only be grateful to have experienced this amazing support that has made this unending grief journey bearable. I can share laughter and tears at the same time with parents who understand the guilt that accompanies those first moments of laughter. It seems like a betrayal of our children... even though we know that they would want us to go on and they would not want us to be miserable. A friend who was recently widowed told me just today that she was so sorry that I had the grief experience to be able to comfort her and yet she was inexplicably comforted by the fact that

she was not alone in her grief... that there were others who understood even a portion of what she was feeling. I know what she means. I felt that way the first time I came to a Bereaved Parents meeting and every time I have come since then.

I would not have chosen the pain of this loss and yet I would not want those whose children have recently died to not have the loving support that others gave to me when I thought I could not stand another day, another minute of the pain of our loss. And so we continue to come monthly... to meet, to hug, to cry, to laugh, to listen and to try to understand another's story. And we come to love each other's children that we never got to meet. Their faces become almost as familiar as our own children's countenance and so incredibly dear because they were so special to our friends. In sharing our children's lives and their deaths, they continue to live on through our stories and our pictures and we are comforted as we grieve together. 🌱

GRASP: Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing

There is a new grief support group in the area for families who have experienced loss due to alcohol/drug use. The group is open to anyone who has lost a loved one to substance abuse or addiction. There is no charge, and anyone is welcome.

The name of the group is GRASP: Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing.

They meet the 3rd Monday of each month from 7:00pm to 8:00pm at:

Adventist Hinsdale Hospital
New Day Center (south entrance)
740 Pasquinelli Drive, Suite 104
Westmont, IL
630-413-4636

Thank You for the Toy Donations

This year, Thumbuddy Special received generous, fabulous toy donations from the **Bereaved Parents of Chicagoland**. We understand that your heart is aching, and you feel an urge to shop for your child when you witness Christmas shopping going on all around you. If giving to underprivileged children can somehow bring a little bit of joy to you, we are so thrilled to be the recipients of your generosity. (Note from Sue Scott, teacher and supporter of Thumbuddy Special)

“On December 15th, 14 Social Workers came to our Wrapping Party with names of children from their needy families. It is a very powerful day, knowing you are making over 80 families Christmas wishes come true. We are so very grateful to all who assist with making this day possible.” (Note from the hostesses of the wrapping party.)

“We would like to thank you for the gifts you provide for our family this Holiday. We are so grateful to have people like you in this world to help many families that need help. Also thank you for your spare time you had to purchase these gifts for our families.” (Note from a mom of a handicapped child)

I just wanted to send a little information to you about the group Thumbuddy Special. Thumbuddy Special is a non-profit organization that was started over 16 years ago by a group of special education teachers and therapists who had a vision to fill a void in our field. We needed to raise money to provide adaptive equipment for children with special needs. Our children required equipment to access their environment, and live a life where they could reach their maximum potential. Often our children were either denied the equipment they needed by the insurance company or public aid. Most of these families lack resources to purchase the equipment that their child needs.

Thumbuddy Special supplies equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, bath chairs, adapted bikes, and ramps and computers. In addition, we offer scholarships to children to attend local special recreation camps in the summer. Every Christmas season, Thumbuddy Special also sponsors needy families in low income communities. In recent years this program has grown considerably due to the nature of the economy. Our only source for revenue has been fundraising throughout the year, where family and friends continue to be our biggest supporters. We have ten active members on our volunteer board and over 95% of the money we raise goes directly to the children and families.

I am a mother of four healthy children, and a physical therapist working for over twenty-five years with children who are not as fortunate. I happen to believe that all kids deserve an equal chance at life and the right to interact with their peers. Thank you for considering our organization.

God Bless!
Mary Ellen Connelly
President of Thumbuddy Special
630-212-3419
P.O. Box 145
Downers Grove, IL 60515
Thumbuddyspecial.org for more information

Polar Express ride with Santa



The Grief of Older Parents

By Mary Cleckley, *Jack's Mom*
Atlanta, GA

It is difficult for society to understand the complexity of the loss of a child, no matter the age. Probably the two least understood losses are those at either end of the spectrum: the unsuccessful pregnancy, stillbirth or death shortly after birth, and the loss of an adult child.

In the first case, they wonder why you grieve for someone they feel you didn't know, and in the second case they think that because the son or daughter no longer lives at home and was no longer a part of your everyday life, with a family of his or her own, perhaps, that the pain of the death shouldn't be so bad. They seem not to understand that your children are a part of your life, for all of your life, no matter how far away they may be.

Someone has reminded us that we do not love our children any more because they have lived long enough for the parents to watch them grow and develop. It is also important to realize that the older children aren't loved any less. You continue to love them and to develop new relationships with them. It is frustrating for older parents to have poured all that time, effort and love into rearing and shaping a child, to have done a good job and had the time to see the end result; to have been able to love and enjoy the decent, worthwhile adult who has emerged, and who is now a part of two relationships, that of parent/child and friend/friend, and now to have lost both of those relationships.

Even if the older child had turned out to be not all the parents had hoped for, who has caused unhappiness with, for example, his alcoholism, the parents are still very much involved in this child's problems and escapades. Worrying about him and being a part of his support system becomes a way of life, and if this child dies, suddenly they are at a loss for a center in their life. They love him, no matter what his shortcomings are, and they grieve for his loss as well.

As parents age, role reversals often develop between them and their children. After years of being responsible, in-charge people, as they go from "What will happen to my children if something happens to me?" to "What will happen to me if something happens to my children?" The child becomes a large part of the older parents'

security blanket, and they rely on them for comfort. The parents are reassured, thinking that when either of them dies, a child will be there to care for the one who is left.

Imagine a situation where the mother, who is widowed and in her 60's or 70's, and who now relies on her son, in his 40's or 50's, to help with her financial decisions, the upkeep of her home, any problems she may have with her car, among other things. If she has health problems, he will see that she gets the proper medical care and financial assistance if he is able. He may have assured her of a place in his home should the need arise. Suddenly this child dies. Fear and insecurity become a real part of the mother's life, as though she were a helpless, young child who parents have died.

Some adult children never leave home. Older, retired parents now find their daily life revolves around the routine comings and goings of this adult child. When she dies, the parents are cast adrift with no anchor, just as surely as parents of younger terminally ill children, after the death. What do you do with all of your time now that the hub of your universe is no longer there? All reasons for functioning seem to disappear.

If there are grandchildren left from this adult child who dies, the grandparents now have to try to maintain a good relationship with the surviving in-law, with the hope that efforts on the part of the son-in-law or daughter-in-law to begin a new life won't include cutting off all relationship with the old life. Keeping in touch, but not intruding, can be tricky, particularly if there was not an especially good relationship between the grandparents and the in-law before the death. If the grandparents are denied access to their grandchildren, that is another great loss for them.

Most parents, no matter what age, will tell you they would have gladly taken their child's place in death, but older parents have inordinate amounts of "survivor guilt" to deal with. "What right do they, who have lived a long, full life, have to be alive when their child is dead? It should be me," they will tell you with great sadness.

A large part of survival after the death of a child is being able to motivate yourself to reinvest in life. If you aren't able to accomplish this after an appropriate length of time, you don't fare as

The Grief of Older Parents - continued from previous page

well as those who can.

If most of your life is behind you, as is the case of older parents, they have other losses of family and friends staring them in the face, as well as having to deal with their own mortality. Some of these parents, with age, aren't as mobile as they once were, so it is difficult for them to take advantage of any new interests that are available to them in their effort to survive. Motivation, then, though not impossible, certainly becomes more difficult. Older parents, like younger parents, are told that time will heal. The older parents answer, "But I don't have that much time." Therein lies the larger part of the problem of adjustment and reinvestment.

As you begin to understand the enormity of the loss of older parents, it is once again brought home that there is no good way or age to lose a child—just different ways and different ages and all of them are hard. ❧

REMEMBRANCE TEDDY BEARS

A parent recently suggested we include this information in the newsletter again:

WHEATLAND SALEM CHURCH - TREASURE BEARS

Treasure Bears provide an opportunity for people who have been traveling the journey of grief to make a memorial teddy bear out of clothing or a blanket that belonged to their loved one.

We all know the comfort a teddy bear brings to a child, but to someone who has lost a loved one a Treasure Bear is a lasting reminder that promotes healing, comfort and ultimately, a celebration of life. The mission of the Treasure Bear Ministry is to promote healing during the later stages of grieving by making a Treasure Bear as a memorial to a loved one.

Familiar questions:

Q. How long is the event?

A. You'll design, create and fill your bear over two consecutive Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at either the Naperville or Oswego campus.

Q. Do I need to know how to sew?

A. No. We have a slew of Mama Bears who are expert sewers, designers and care givers. However, we have had people who know how to sew and are welcome to participate. What's memorable is that every person has the opportunity to sew up the final openings after they fill their bear.

Q. Is there a cost?

A. No, there is no cost as we have a number of financial backers who support us. Some guests have gifted us financially but that is not expected.

Q. Do I need to call ahead?

Due to the preparation and planning, we cannot accept walk-ins. Reservations are required prior to the event. For information and/or to make a reservation please call Barbara Hoyle at 630.674.9341.

It is recommended that you bring a couple of items that coordinate to use for the construction of your Treasure Bear. Suggested items include shirts or blouses, a jumper or skirt, sweatshirt or t-shirts, pajamas or robe. Suggested items for children or infants include blankets or other linens, or 5-10 outfits. The church provides all the necessary sewing supplies including the stuffing and materials for the nose and eyes.

The church usually offers treasure bear workshop sessions in the spring and fall. 2015 dates have not been determined yet, but the schedule will be available in February. ❧

Bereaved Parents of the USA
 Chicagoland Chapter
 P.O. Box 320
 Western Springs, IL 60558



January - February - March 2015

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
January	
January 6	Monthly Meeting: 7:00 PM - "Holiday Detox"
February	
February 3	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM - Topic to be determined
March	
March 3	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM - Topic to be determined



A New Year

*by Shirley Ottman
 Teri's Mother
 North Texas BP/USA*

A new year....a time for looking ahead and not behind; a time for faith and not despair; a time for long great gulps of hopeful expectations.

Drink deeply, my friend, so that fortified with the promises it brings this year will keep you near fresh springs of healing love where you may come to weave old and loving memories with new understanding and acceptance.....and find peace.

This Newsletter is compiled in loving memory of all our precious children.

BP/USA Chicagoland on the Web:
<http://www.bpusachicagoland.org/index.html>