Bereaved Parents USA
northern virginia chapter

Volume 20, No. 2 March/April 2023

caring & sharing news

Helping rebuild lives following the death of a child

Twenty Years of Hope & Healing

In Loving Memory of Kristin Marie Harkness
By her mom, Linda Harkness

Some years, the anticipation of the anniversary, or angel date, of the day Kristin died is almost worse than the day itself. I find myself reliving all of the "lasts" with her. Our last time together as a family was Christmas 2007. The last movie we all saw together was "Charlie Wilson's War" at the Regal Theater in Manassas during that same Christmas holiday. The last time Tom and I saw her was January 6th, 2008 as we put her on a plane to return to Florida State. Then of course, the last time she and I spoke on the phone. Three times on Thursday, February 21st, the last call around 9 hours before she made the worst choice possible and unintentionally ended her life. We know this because she was found with her nails "embedded in her throat" as she struggled to remove herself.

I can't begin to tell you how often I relive all of these moments, and hundreds more on a daily basis, but especially this time of year, and especially this particular year... the 15th Angel Date of our beautiful, hilarious, irreverent, smart, talented, resilient daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, niece, and loyal friend. I wonder if she knows how much she is missed, and by so many people whose lives she touched.

The other day, a person I know told me she didn't understand how her sister still grieved over the loss of her child so many years ago. I asked her if she missed her own daughter whenever she hadn't seen her for a long time, maybe even many months. She said that of course she does, but they talked on the phone at least every other day. I asked her if for a moment she could just try to imagine not seeing, speaking, or holding her daughter for 15 YEARS?! Or 25? Or 40? She said she probably hadn't stopped to think about it. I told her that she really should have more patience and compassion for her sister, and that she should be thankful every day that she did not have to live the life of her sister because it isn't an easy one.

Personally, do I feel blessed? Of course. Jessica and Eric continue to make both Tom and me incredibly proud. They are successful in their careers and have great characters. They have more friends than anyone would hope to have themselves. Eric has his beautiful, extremely successful wife of almost 10 years, Lauren. Besides them, my three greatest joys have been our three grandchildren, Camden, Reese, and Kit. How could I not feel grateful with these blessings in my life? Whether any of you have personally been brave enough to ask me that question, or had that thought but kept it to yourself, it is possible to feel both... joy for the blessings that have been bestowed upon me, but also the continuing unbearable pain of the greatest loss one could imagine... my child... my Forever 18-year-old, beautiful Kristin. She would have celebrated her 34th birthday in 25 days. Another time of year to ponder the "What if's?"

There is a quote I read the other day that was made several years ago that expresses the thoughts of ALL of us who have lost a child. 49 years after the death of two of Dwight Eisenhower's sons, he wrote, "I have never known such a blow. The keenness of my loss comes back to me as fresh and terrible as it was on that long dark day so many years ago. There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child, things never get back to the way they were."

He too moved ahead with his life and most assuredly felt joy again, but he never "got over it," and neither will I, or my friend's sister mentioned above, or anyone else who has lost a child... Kristin should be here now, sharing all of my joys and the joys of her family. Her two nieces and nephew would have absolutely loved their Aunt Kristin. I make sure they know her name, and I sometimes share stories about her, but they will never really know what they are missing.

Kristin Harkness was truly one of a kind and I can't believe that it has been 15 years ago today, 2/22, that she physically left this earth. I know she remains with me, but it is the absence of her physical presence that I miss so very much.

Still loving her as BIG as the SKY, and even BIGGER,
Linda Harkness (Tom, Jessica and Eric)

CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER

JODI NORMAN, CHAPTER LEADER

The Northern Virginia Chapter was started on Feb. 1, 2003. After the death of my 16-year-old son, Christian, on June 3, 2001 I started attending monthly meetings of the Compassionate Friends. When the TCF chapter folded in January 2002 we decided to continue to meet as an unaffiliated chapter. I went on-line and found the Bereaved Parents of the USA and our group was welcomed with open arms with myself and Gay Shelby as the chapter leaders. We were the first chapter in the state of Virginia.

During 2023, we are celebrating 20 years of offering hope and healing to bereaved parents in the Northern Virginia Area. We are hoping to have a number of special activities for this special anniversary of our chapter, starting with a Celebration Dinner on February 1st and hosting Alan Pedersen in March.

We have numerous activities throughout the year with a Butterfly Release in August, Picnic with a Lotus Flower Release in October, and a Service of Remembrance Candle Lighting Service in December. We have 2 support meetings each month, in-person and on Zoom. We started doing Zoom meetings during Covid and plan to continue as we have participants that attend these meetings that live too far away to attend meetings in-person. In the past, we have had Laura Diehl, Anna Whiston-Donaldson, Ron Kelly, Paul Balasic and members of our chapter present programs at our chapter meetings.

This past year we started a Book Club and meet monthly both on Zoom and in-person, inviting the authors of our chosen book to attend our meetings via Zoom. It is fun to have the author's perspective. We are hoping to publish a book of the stories of our children, Sue Cerrone is taking the lead on this project.

We are currently having dinners in restaurants every other month to provide a more relaxed get-together for our bereaved parents to get to know each other better.

I publish a newsletter every other month and we have a website, bpusanova.com and also a closed face book page. We send out 265 emails to bereaved parents with our chapter announcements and newsletters.

Ten years ago we started our Memorial Garden in memory of our beloved children. In the garden we have large river rocks engraved with the names of our children. With the help of a handful of our parents, under the leadership of Beverly Ruane, the garden gets weeded, mulched and planted – not a small or easy task. It is a beautiful peaceful place to go, sit and remember our children amongst the flowers, butterflies, birds, deer, rabbits and other wild critters – you never know who will pay us a visit!

Christian Paul Norman

At our Service of Remembrance in December, which is the event that we have the most participation, we have our parents sponsor poinsettias in memory of their child which we use as a fundraiser and also use the poinsettias to decorate the church with.

Our chapter has been the host chapter for National Gatherings in 2011 and 2017 which were held in the Washington, DC area and are looking forward to helping with the 2023 Gathering this coming July.

It has been an honor to be the leader of our chapter for the past 20 years in memory of my son, Christian and to be a part of this great organization.

Published in the 1st Quarter 2023 Chapter Chat (newsletter for Chapter Leaders)

NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE 2023

forever in my heart

Bereaved Parents of the USA

July 21-23 ♥ Hilton Washington Dulles Hotel ♥ Herndon, VA

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Enjoy a very special hotel rate of only $94 per night!

- Outstanding & Dynamic Speakers
- Comprehensive Workshops and Events
- Well-appointed guest rooms and event functioning space
- Complimentary shuttle to and from Dulles Airport
- Pet friendly rooms
- Indoor/Outdoor Swimming Pools, Jacuzzi, Fitness Center

BPUSA NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE 2023 ♥ KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Laura Diehl

Judy Lipson

forever in my heart

Phil Cohen

Sadija Smiley

Speaker biographies can be found on our website: *www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

There is a meeting for everyone! Join us at one of these meetings!

Caring & Sharing Meetings

In-Person Meetings

4th Sunday @ 3:00 p.m.
First United Presbyterian Church
14391 Minnieville Road
Dale City, VA

Zoom Meetings

2nd Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

I will send out an email with password and log in information prior to the meeting date.

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

AMORe

(All Murdered Offspring Remembered)

2nd Sunday @ 3 p.m.
(note change in meeting day)
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

Tell Us Your Story

Interested in sharing your child's story for a book designed to give other Bereaved Parents hope?
We are looking for parents who would be willing to be interviewed and have their story written (with your approval) OR write your own story for submission.

Contact Sue Cerrone for more info at 703-819-8604 or Suebcerrone@gmail.com

Support Group for Parents with No Surviving Children

2nd 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
703-217-8560 (c) or 703-390-0589 (h)

*Call Nancy to find out if they are meeting in person.

Life After Loss Support Group for Suicide Survivors

DAVID J COBB FOUNDATION

"Shining A Light for Those in Darkness"

1st Sunday of Each 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
website: www.djcfoundation.org

Sibling Support Group

Our National BPUSA Sibling Coordinator, Katie Alger, will be facilitating a Zoom Support Meeting for any bereaved sibling over the age of 18.

Zoom Meetings will be held on the last Thursday of each month @ 8 p.m.

If you or your surviving children are interested in participating in the Sibling Support Group, the link to join the zoom email list is:
https://virtual-bereaved-sibling-chapter-meeting.mailchimpsites.com/

Hello everyone!

The weather this Winter has been crazy! It's hard to tell whether it's Winter or Spring! Even with the roller coaster temperatures, Spring is officially around the corner and there will be more warm days than not. With the warmer days the flowers, bushes, grasses, and WEEDS begin to grow. My lawn is almost ready to be mowed!

In late February or early March, the Butterfly Bushes need pruning. Fortunately, that has been done so it's one less thing to do this year. There are some weeds that need to be pulled, dead plants pulled (not too many of those, fortunately), other bushes that need trimming, flowers planted, and once the garden is cleaned up, mulch needs spreading.

For those that don't have a stone for their child in the Memorial Garden and would like one, we suggest purchasing one from Rock-It Creations. The stones are river rocks that withstand the test of time and continue to hold their beauty.

The care of the garden is an ongoing process, not just in the Spring. Throughout Spring, Summer, and Fall it needs care. Once the garden is readied for the season, there will be a continuous need for weeding and watering. There are pumps for well watering and we have two rain water collection containers that are gray in color and located on each side of the walkway. We need volunteers to help with garden maintenance. Jodi and I will be happy to show you where the water sources are and which are weeds if you're not sure. If you come to visit the garden, please pull a few weeds and tidy an area of the garden; especially, around your child's stone if you have one. Even if you are not sure what to do, there are always weeds in the gravel pathway. I always keep a small shovel, pruners, knee pad, bucket and bags in the back of my car in case of a spur of the moment trip. Just a suggestion for you. Jodi and I, both, are almost an hour away so we can't always get to the garden as often as we would like. Anything you do helps. We plan workdays periodically and you will be notified by email so please be sure to check it.

If you would be interested in helping, please contact me or Jodi. You can reach me by cell (text is better) 703-395-9546; home 540-628-4758; or email ruane.beverly@yahoo.com. You can reach Jodi cell 703-656-6999 or email bleachermom2000@aol.com.

We look forward to hearing from you and working together. Happy gardening!

Hugs, Beverly

Help Needed to Update Website
http://www.bpusanova.com

Our website has a "We Remember Our Children" section and we need your help to update this page. Please write a bio for your child and submit a photo or a collage of photos. We would like to have all the children of our chapter included on this page. Please send submissions to Jodi at bpusanova@gmail.com.

There are dozens of tasks that go into running our chapter and our special events. If you feel you are now in a place in your grief journey where you can help and give back to the chapter in any little way, we would love your help. Most of us find that when we reach a point of giving back to those who come after us, we gain far more then we give.

We could really use volunteers to plan our special events (Picnic, Butterfly Release and Service of Remembrance). Other areas of need are in Fundraising, Publicity, Outreach, and helping at the Memorial Garden.

This year we are helping with the National Gathering to be held at the Hilton Dulles Airport Hotel, July 21-23 and we will need volunteers to help at the Gathering and also before the Gathering to obtain donations.

If you would like to volunteer to help our chapter, please contact Jodi at bpusanova@gmail.com or 703-656-6999.

Social Events

Saturday, March 18, 11:00 a.m. – Brunch at Ashton Avenue Family Restaurant, 9920 Cockrell Road, Manassas, VA 20110. RSVP at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACAE22A4F8CF8-brunch

Wednesday, April 12, 7:00 p.m. - Pot Luck Dinner at Valerie & Rich Larson's home, 6900 Cole Timothy Court, Manassas, VA 20112

Monday, May 15, 6:00 p.m. – Mother's Day Dinner, Place to be Determined

Chapter Book Club

Join us as we read books on bereavement and grief, authored by Bereaved Parents who know what we are going through and understand our pain.

We will meet both on Zoom and in person at Sue Cerrone's home, 9564 Basilwood Drive, Manassas, VA on the last Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

The Zoom log-in will be emailed a couple days before the Book Club meets. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please let me know by sending an email to bpusanova@gmail.com. I will only send an email to those who have expressed an interest.

For more information contact Sue at suebcerrone@gmail.com or call 703-819-8604. Please RSVP if you are attending in person or on Zoom.

Please Check E-mails & Facebook

Almost all of our Chapter Communication is done via email. Please check your emails at least once a week. Everything from the newsletter to Chapter Announcements are sent through email. It would also be helpful to respond to all emails sent regarding the Chapter. That lets me know that you did see the email and that I have a correct email address – a simple "got it" would be better than no response at all!

It would also be helpful if you would join our private Facebook page. Please check this page on a regular basis. A Facebook page has been set up for our chapter. Members can join our group at Bereaved Parents of the USA/Northern VA Chapter. This is a closed group for privacy purposes, so nothing posted here will go into your regular News Feed for your regular FB friends to see. Request to join the group and approval will be sent to you.

Our dearest Matthew. April 29th marks 21 years without your physical presence with us. I will never understand why an evil man decided you didn't deserve to live and grow up and spend your life with your family and friends. It feels like forever ago, yet it feels like yesterday that we saw your handsome face and beautiful smile. You are and will forever be loved and missed. Forever 18. Love, your family

In Loving Memory of
Matthew Allan Ruane

We Remember Our Loved Ones

Who have Birthdays and Death Dates in March and April

Simi Abrol 9/12/84 ~ **4/01/18**

Joseph Michael Atalla **3/19/85** ~ 1/24/22

Emily Andrews 8/02/97 ~ **3/14/16**

Tyrone Trone Ashford **3/30/98** ~ 06/20/21

William Bruce Austin II 5/11/84 ~ **4/10/18**

Pouneh Bahri 10/25/88 ~ **3/04/14**

Chad Michael Bailey 9/14/77 ~ **3/25/20**

Bryan Christopher Bingel 1/08/80 ~ **3/04/08**

Matthew Bingel **4/23/87 ~ 4/23/87**

Christopher Wesley Blok **3/21/80** ~ 2/25/09

Samantha Margaret Brown 6/05/90 ~ **4/24/21**

Abigail Jane Buckley **4/25/15** ~ 11/17/16

Amy R. Buckley **3/13/86** ~11/17/16

Danielle Mae Burmeister **3/26/11 ~ 3/26/11**

Justine Noel Carlton **3/30/98** ~ 5/11/20

Jaiden Malik Carter **3/26/03** ~ 9/04/22

Jawann Edward Carter **3/19/87 – 3/25/22**

Autumn Marie Coffie **4/16/88** ~ 12/29/14

Sarah Beth Cole 8/06/80 ~ **4/23/11**

Jason Michael Colson **3/09/84** ~ 10/01/08

Christina Lynn Curtis **3/01/74** ~ 12/25/07

Forrest Grant Dotson 8/25/79 ~ **4/19/17**

Michael A. Doyle 9/17/81 ~ **3/12/18**

Bryan Eastes 8/18/80 ~ **4/18/17**

Baja Flagg 1/07/91 ~ **3/15/20**

Antonio Ford-Flores 2/25/89 ~ **4/15/10**

Dillon Adam Foley 11/16/98 ~ **4/02/20**

Jacob Thomas Fulton **4/15/03** ~ 1/11/15

John Alexis Giandoni **3/21/77 ~ 3/15/18**

Raven Gileau 6/23/90 ~ **4/23/10**

Ahmad Givon Glenn **3/06/83** ~ 12/04/06

Dwayne Eddie Gonsorcik 5/26/74 ~ **4/26/13**

Justin Green **3/28/94 ~ 3/28/94**

Daniel Patrick Grimsley **3/2/88** ~ 11/17/21

Kourtney Michelle Hale 5/29/80 ~ **3/14/10**

Kristin Marie Harkness **3/19/89** ~ 2/22/08

Kimberley Hellandbrand 11/03/69 ~ **4/27/19**

Kyle Irwin 07/27/92 ~ **4/21/20**

Cody Darrin Johnson 9/11/02 ~ **3/06/09**

Kashif Johnson **3/15/87** ~ 5/01/07

Leslie Ann Kramer **4/20/71** ~ 12/17/06

Kwadwo Amoako Kusi **3/20/06** ~ 7/26/08

Adriana Therese Ladino 10/31/02 ~ **3/23/19**

Thomas Langston **4/05/92** ~ 8/04/18

Robert Andrew Larson **3/14/94** ~ 6/30/10

Glen Irvin Leonard II **4/13/71** ~ 12/07/09

Henry Lewis III 2/16/74 ~ **4/15/02**

Erika (Brummett) Lott **4/6/77** ~ 11/05/13

Kyle Ludeman **4/12/93** ~ 8/27/13

Derek Meffert **4/21/95** ~ 8/15/10

Christina Morgan 7/30/80 ~ **3/13/02**

Nicholas James Nelson 7/16/90 ~ **4/19/18**

Michael Dennis Page **4/20/90** ~ 12/06/21

Thomas Parker 8/26/92 ~ **4/15/19**

Aaron Keith Payne **3/28/80 ~ 4/05/18**

Jaid'n Thomas Ian Payne **3/14/00** ~ 11/19/21

Stephen P. Ramos **4/24/87** ~ 11/11/19

Kira Marie Nicklas Rippy 10/23/82 ~ **3/22/18**

Eric Noah Rivers 5/15/95 ~ **3/19/20**

Christian Jamar Roberts **4/21/99** ~ 5/15/22

Matthew Allan Ruane 9/07/83 ~ **4/29/02**

Lionel Andres Salvador **3/30/13 ~ 3/30/13**

Ronald Mark "Bud" Shirt **4/05/57** ~ 1/06/99

Klee Solomon Orion Simmons **3/27/89** ~ 8/09/15

Jacqueline Simoes 11/05/66 ~ **3/15/06**

Karl Dewan Smith 11/20/83 ~ **4/25/04**

Mary Anna "Missie" Smoot **3/31/84** ~ 1/17/22

Ananth Vignesh Sridhar 11/12/94 ~ **3/20/18**

Kevin Michael Stanphill **3/12/80** ~ 5/09/09

Daniel "Cody" Starr **4/13/88** ~ 7/30/20

Graham Thomson Stevenson **3/30/85** ~ 9/22/07

Margaret Jane Suliga **4/23/87** ~ 9/02/19

Beckett Josef TePaske **4/04/12** ~ 5/12/15

Bill Thompson 9/14/51 ~ **4/19/17**

Linda Thompson Plewes 7/16/51 ~ **3/21/02**

Neale Thompson **4/07/71 ~ 4/09/93**

Austin Trenum **3/26/93** ~ 9/27/10

Anthony Joseph Turchiano 8/04/79 ~ **4/29/17**

Ruben Chavira Urbina **4/22/02** ~ 9/15/17

Brian Floyd Weakley 1/20/80 ~ **4/19/07**

Kyle Robert Wilson 5/25/82 ~ **4/16/07**

Baby Woods **3/15/16 ~ 3/15/16**

Noah Woods **4/19/16 ~ 4/19/16**

Jakari D. Wright **3/31/97 ~ 8/18/18**

Neil York **4/29/93 ~ 4/25/15**

We apologize if there are any mistakes in the "We Remember Our Loved One" section. If we spelled any names incorrectly, have any dates incorrect or your loved one's name is not listed and has a birthday or death date during the months of March and April, please provide us with your loved one's information so

Welcome,
You are not alone...

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

Bereaved Parents of the USA
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Someone Cares About You

If you are receiving this newsletter and have never attended one of our meetings, it is because someone who cares about you feels that our newsletter may help you on your journey through grief. We're sorry for the reason you are receiving this newsletter but invite you to attend our monthly meetings. We cannot take away your pain but we can offer friendship and support.

Attention: If you do not wish to continue to receive this newsletter or be on our mailing list, please let us know by mailing back the address label from this newsletter, by emailing bpusanova@gmail.com or calling Jodi at 703-656-6999.

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