

Volume 21, No. 2

March/April 2024

caring & sharing news

Helping rebuild lives following the death of a child

Twenty-One Years of Hope & Healing

Fly and Remember Kite Festival

Saturday, June 8th

1-4 p.m.

Field behind
Manassas Church of
the Brethren
10047 Nokesville Rd
Manassas, VA 20110



Attendees will have the opportunity to personalize a kite in memory of their beloved child, grandchild or sibling and then fly the kite in their loved one's honor. "Fly & Remember" offers families an opportunity to celebrate the lives of our loved ones gone way too soon.

Donation of \$5 per kite.

Please RSVP on the link below by May 25th so kites can be ordered.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACAE22A4F8CF8-48305795-flyand>

Grief is Like Flying a Kite

Author unknown

Grief is like flying a kite. At first, the kite lay lifeless with the ball of string on the ground. After a while the kite gets lifted up with a gust of wind and little by little, we let the string out so we can start to fly. Sometimes when we let out the string, we suddenly come crashing down to the ground. The next time we try to raise the kite we gain a little altitude and we hang on as tight as we can and maneuver it just enough to keep the kite in flight. Each time we try to fly our kite, we let the string out just a little further. With each small brief flight, we become stronger and are able to let the string out further and further. Finally, we come to a time in our grief when we are able to let out all the string. Our hearts become fuller and our sorrow is lifted again. Like the kite we soar on the wind and dance with the sun on our face.



In Loving Memory of Kristin Marie Harkness

As much as I try to avoid it, the calendar rolls around each year to the months of February, then March. Like clockwork. March was once our family's busiest, most happy times because all three of our children were born in March - Eric on March 2nd, Kristin on March 19th, and Jessica on March 24th. Each year, besides their parties, we celebrated as a family with a meal at The Outback. This worked well because we were all steak lovers, and Kristin could also order a favorite, the 'Mac-A-Roo 'N Cheese'.

The month of March has been different for us, however, for the past 16 years since the loss of Kristin on February 22, 2008 following a night of binge-drinking as a freshman at Florida State University. We continue to celebrate the births of Jessica (almost 43) and Eric (40, plus two days at the writing of this), but Kristin is, and forever will be, 18. This month we would have been celebrating her 35th birthday. I still wonder how and why this had to become my life, as well as that of my family's. It is inevitable that you, me, us, would find ourselves often pondering over the "What ifs?"

Last month I was happy to attend the baby shower of Kristin's best friend since kindergarten, Jennifer. It was just one of many that I have attended. At one point, I was sitting with a group of Kristin's friends as they all started updating one another on their children, husbands, careers, and travel. I did my best to hold it together, but the tears started streaming down my face as I excused myself and headed to the ladies 'room. I know I don't need to explain myself to any of you reading this that my heart was shattered thinking that Kristin should have been sharing her own stories of her life. I returned to the table, explained myself, and apologized to Jennifer because her baby shower should have been nothing less than joyful. She and her friends surrounded me with hugs, love, and the assurance that they continue to miss their hilarious friend and wish more than anything that she was still here sharing in all of their joys and accomplishments. You may wonder why I even bother to attend such celebrations, and it's simply that I love all of these girls and want to share these moments, not only for myself, but for Kristin as well. Life has been filled with bittersweet moments over the past 16 years.

We continue to honor and celebrate Kristin each March 19th with our family tradition of adding 'Mac-A-Roo 'N Cheese' to our menus. When we have been fortunate enough to be together on her birthday, we have had dinner at The Outback. Besides our main dishes, we order a side of the 'Mac-A-Roo 'N Cheese'. We then pass it around the table and everyone scoops up a spoonful. Together we raise our spoons and wish Kristin a "Happy Heavenly Birthday." If we're unable to be together, we independently have macaroni and cheese, whether homemade, purchased at the Outback, or with help from Kraft. We send pictures to one another and I have to smile at the thought of all those visits to The Outback over the years, the laughter, and the astonishing amount all of us could manage to eat there! Those smiles tend to turn into a few tears, of course, as I again ponder, as I have so many times before, "What if????"



Happy 35th Birthday in Heaven, Kristin! I Love and Miss You as BIG as the SKY, and even more... Birthday Hugs and Kisses, Mom (aka, Linda Harkness)

Living with a Broken Heart

Remember what the Tin Man said in the “Wizard of Oz” after he finally got a heart....



“Now I know I've got a heart because it's breaking.”

If someone you love died, your heart is probably broken. So how do you live with a broken heart? The answer isn't how you fix it or move beyond it. The skill is learning to live with your grief as an ongoing way of being in the world. It's the way you honor that which you love.

What I'm proposing is that, with enough healing, living with heartbreak can become natural, and very normal.

From my personal and professional experience, I can tell you that as you embark on your healing journey, you'll start crying a whole lot more. Not just to clear pain, but for the simplest of everyday reasons, and out of nowhere. You'll cry when you see a bird, a can of paint, an apple, or even the shape of a cloud.

Random things will make you cry.

The heart is designed to grieve, it wants to grieve.....it has to grieve!

Especially when it's broken.

This is the price you pay for love. The loss of the life you thought you had, the life you once knew and held so dear. Loss of a dream you believed was true.

But you can also find and feel grief in opening your heart. Opening it to love and to new possibilities. Opening it to what the future holds.

Isn't that what life is all about? Endings and beginnings, closings and openings? The heart was designed to navigate you through this forever winding adventure called life. But you have to be willing to feel.....and to live with a broken heart.

Here's the thing.....you can learn to live with your broken heart by befriending your grief.

You can discover the love that still exists around you.....and share that love with others who are also living with a broken heart.

Gary Sturgis - “Surviving Grief”

Dearest Son Matthew,

Another year has passed making 22 years without your physical presence on earth. I always feel your spirit with me but it's just not the same. You should be here celebrating birthdays, holidays, weddings, births, and even comforting others in the loss of their loved ones. You were taken away from us at such a young age.

You always had a kind heart and thought of others. You weren't perfect because no one is and you had your problems as we all do. No matter what, though, you had a heart of gold. I miss your hugs, your “hey mom, come here, I wanna show you something,” sitting up late with me, your gentle nature, and your quirky smile. There is so much more I could say! There is not a day, minute, or second that goes by that you are not missed. We love and miss you and will forever. Forever 18.

Mom, Dad, and all of the Family



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

Caring & Sharing Meetings

In-Person Meetings

First United Presbyterian Church

14391 Minnieville Road
Dale City, VA

4th Sunday @ 3:00 p.m.

No Meeting in May due to Memorial Day Holiday

Manassas Church of the Brethren

10047 Nokesville Road, Room 207
Manassas, VA 20110

1st Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

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

Sibling Support Group

Virtual Support Meetings for
any bereaved sibling over the age of 18
will be held on the
last Thursday of each month.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84851846327?pwd=dIJiM3VPdkFkVzFvWWtxbm80RkdWdz09>

Meeting ID: 848 [5184 6327](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84851846327?pwd=dIJiM3VPdkFkVzFvWWtxbm80RkdWdz09)

Passcode: 3EDn58

Support Group for Parents with No Surviving Children

For more information contact:

Nancy Vollmer

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

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

Life After Loss Support Group for Suicide Survivors

“Shining A Light for Those in Darkness”

Last Wednesday of Each Month

7:00-8:00 p.m.

Parents of Suicide Loss
Support Group

1st Sunday of the Month

1:00-2:30 p.m.



DAVID J COBB
FOUNDATION

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

SAAD

(Support After Addiction Death)

3rd Friday of the Month @ 6 p.m.

First United Presbyterian Church

14391 Minnieville Road

Dale City, VA

For more information contact:

Jodi Norman, Chapter Leader

703-656-6999 (cell)

bpusanova@gmail.com





Garden News

Hello Friends!

The Winter used to seem long but lately it seems to pass quickly and Spring arrives. It's hard to believe it's March already. As Spring arrives, so does the new growth of leaves, flowers, and WEEDS! The garden looks so bare in the Winter but after everything blossoms it is a beautiful, welcoming, and peaceful place for all to enjoy.

With that beauty comes work. The weeds are always the first thing to grow and take over quickly. Pulling the weeds and getting them under control is one of the first things that needs to be done, and is an on-going process. There are, also, dead plants to pull (hopefully not many) some of which appear dead but just haven't sprouted yet. The areas that are mulched just need to be tidied; such as, removing weeds, branches, leaves, etc. This is done to hopefully deter some weeds because of additional layers even if some of the mulch has broken down. Some deadheading, removal of dead branches (this may need to wait until buds are visible), and trimming. As the Spring and Summer progress we will need volunteers to water.

The prediction for the weather on the weekends this month is rain. If anyone is available Friday, March 22 at 10 a.m., I want to have a workday. Please let me know if you are available to help. If there are other days this month of March that someone can go, please contact me and I will try my best to go, too.

I want to thank all those who have helped maintain the Memorial Garden last year and the past. There are those that made the time to go and work without any scheduled day. I'm so very grateful. That is helpful because it's very difficult to coordinate a date with everyone and have the weather cooperate. If you're interested in helping with the garden, please contact me via text, call, email, or Facebook. My cell is 703-395-9546, home 540-628-4758, e-mail ruane.beverly@yahoo. You may also contact Jodi at (703) 656-6999 or email bpusanova@gmail.com.

This Memorial Garden was created for all of our children gone too soon. It's a beautiful gift for all our beautiful children. To maintain the beauty and welcoming atmosphere of the garden takes work and dedication.

Once again, thank you all that have helped in the past. I look forward to working with you again and all those that want to help. Until then, may you be blessed.

Love and hugs, Beverly

Rock-It Creations

If you would like to have a rock in the Memorial Garden in memory of your child, sibling or grandchild, we highly recommend that you order through "Rock-It Creations." The rocks are river rocks and will last a life-time! Your rock can be personalized and customized. Please order the large size rocks, either the custom or standard rocks, for our Memorial Garden. There is no shipping charges or taxes on the rocks.

Go to Rock-It Creations' website to order a rock in memory of your loved one,

<https://www.rockitcreations.com/>

If you have any questions, contact Jodi Norman at 703-656-6999 or bpusanova@gmail.com



March Pot Luck Dinner

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Valerie & Rich Larson Home

6900 Cole Timothy Court

Manassas, VA



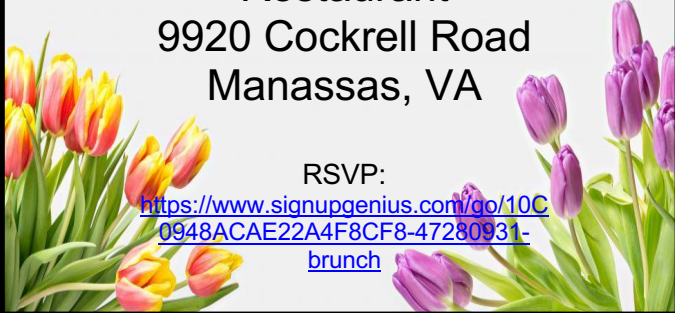
RSVP:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094>

[8ACAE22A4F8CF8-47294966-march](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACAE22A4F8CF8-47294966-march)

April Brunch
Saturday, April 13th
11 a.m.

Ashton Ave Family
Restaurant
9920 Cockrell Road
Manassas, VA



RSVP:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACAE22A4F8CF8-47280931-brunch>

Mother's Day Dinner
Tuesday, May 14th
6:00 p.m.

United Buffet
2942 Prince William Pkwy
Woodbridge, VA

RSVP:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0948ACAE22A4F8CF8-48373507-mothers>

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.

Our book for March 25th is *Start It Up*; a phenomenal true story of eternal life & love by Rachel Pearson

Our book for April 29th is *Billy's Story: Every Parent's Nightmare - The Loss of a Child* by Judith Golightly

No meeting in May due to the Memorial Day Holiday

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.



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 than we give.

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

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



We Remember Our Loved Ones

Who have Birthdays and Death Dates in March and April

Simi Abrol	9/12/84 ~ 4/01/18	Robert Andrew Larson	3/14/94 ~ 6/30/10
Joseph Michael Atalla	3/19/85 ~ 1/24/22	Glen Irvin Leonard II	4/13/71 ~ 12/07/09
Emily Andrews	8/02/97 ~ 3/14/16	Henry Lewis III	2/16/74 ~ 4/15/02
Tyrone Trone Ashford	3/30/98 ~ 06/20/21	Erika (Brummett) Lott	4/6/77 ~ 11/05/13
William Bruce Austin II	5/11/84 ~ 4/10/18	Kyle Ludeman	4/12/93 ~ 8/27/13
Samuel W. Aylesworth, Jr.	9/22/63 ~ 3/07/22	Derek Meffert	4/21/95 ~ 8/15/10
Pounch Bahri	10/25/88 ~ 3/04/14	Christina Morgan	7/30/80 ~ 3/13/02
Chad Michael Bailey	9/14/77 ~ 3/25/20	Nicholas James Nelson	7/16/90 ~ 4/19/18
Bryan Christopher Bingel	1/08/80 ~ 3/04/08	Michael Dennis Page	4/20/90 ~ 12/06/21
Matthew Bingel	4/23/87 ~ 4/23/87	Thomas Parker	8/26/92 ~ 4/15/19
Christopher Wesley Blok	3/21/80 ~ 2/25/09	Aaron Keith Payne	3/28/80 ~ 4/05/18
Samantha Margaret Brown	6/05/90 ~ 4/24/21	Jaid'n Thomas Ian Payne	3/14/00 ~ 11/19/21
Abigail Jane Buckley	4/25/15 ~ 11/17/16	Evan David Peugh	8/3/90 ~ 4/26/14
Amy R. Buckley	3/13/86 ~ 11/17/16	Stephen P. Ramos	4/24/87 ~ 11/11/19
Danielle Mae Burmeister	3/26/11 ~ 3/26/11	Kira Marie Nicklas Rippy	10/23/82 ~ 3/22/18
Justine Noel Carlton	3/30/98 ~ 5/11/20	Eric Noah Rivers	5/15/95 ~ 3/19/20
Jaiden Malik Carter	3/26/03 ~ 9/04/22	Christian Jamar Roberts	4/21/99 ~ 5/15/22
Jawann Edward Carter	3/19/87 ~ 3/25/22	Obadiah Eli Roberts	3/29/96 ~ 6/18/21
Autumn Marie Coffie	4/16/88 ~ 12/29/14	Matthew Allan Ruane	9/07/83 ~ 4/29/02
Sarah Beth Cole	8/06/80 ~ 4/23/11	Lionel Andres Salvador	3/30/13 ~ 3/30/13
Jason Michael Colson	3/09/84 ~ 10/01/08	Ronald Mark "Bud" Shirt	4/05/57 ~ 1/06/99
Christina Lynn Curtis	3/01/74 ~ 12/25/07	Klee Solomon Orion Simmons	3/27/89 ~ 8/09/15
Forrest Grant Dotson	8/25/79 ~ 4/19/17	Jacqueline Simoes	11/05/66 ~ 3/15/06
Michael A. Doyle	9/17/81 ~ 3/12/18	Karl Dewan Smith	11/20/83 ~ 4/25/04
Bryan Eastes	8/18/80 ~ 4/18/17	Kevin Smith	8/24/79 ~ 3/28/16
Baja Flagg	1/07/91 ~ 3/15/20	Mary Anna "Missie" Smoot	3/31/84 ~ 1/17/22
Antonio Ford-Flores	2/25/89 ~ 4/15/10	Ananth Vignesh Sridhar	11/12/94 ~ 3/20/18
Dillon Adam Foley	11/16/98 ~ 4/02/20	Kevin Michael Stanphill	3/12/80 ~ 5/09/09
Jacob Thomas Fulton	4/15/03 ~ 1/11/15	Daniel "Cody" Starr	4/13/88 ~ 7/30/20
John Alexis Giandoni	3/21/77 ~ 3/15/18	Graham Thomson Stevenson	3/30/85 ~ 9/22/07
Raven Gileau	6/23/90 ~ 4/23/10	Margaret Jane Suliga	4/23/87 ~ 9/02/19
Ahmad Givon Glenn	3/06/83 ~ 12/04/06	Beckett Josef TePaske	4/04/12 ~ 5/12/15
Dwayne Eddie Gonsorcik	5/26/74 ~ 4/26/13	Bill Thompson	9/14/51 ~ 4/19/17
Justin Green	3/28/94 ~ 3/28/94	Linda Thompson Plewes	7/16/51 ~ 3/21/02
Daniel Patrick Grimsley	3/2/88 ~ 11/17/21	Neale Thompson	4/07/71 ~ 4/09/93
Kourtney Michelle Hale	5/29/80 ~ 3/14/10	Austin Trenum	3/26/93 ~ 9/27/10
Melvin Eugene Hakenson, Jr.	4/25/76 ~ 6/13/23	Anthony Joseph Turchiano	8/04/79 ~ 4/29/17
Kristin Marie Harkness	3/19/89 ~ 2/22/08	Ruben Chavira Urbina	4/22/02 ~ 9/15/17
Kimberley Hellandbrand	11/03/69 ~ 4/27/19	Brian Floyd Weakley	1/20/80 ~ 4/19/07
Kyle Irwin	07/27/92 ~ 4/21/20	Kyle Robert Wilson	5/25/82 ~ 4/16/07
Cody Darrin Johnson	9/11/02 ~ 3/06/09	Baby Woods	3/15/16 ~ 3/15/16
Kashif Johnson	3/15/87 ~ 5/01/07	Noah Woods	4/19/16 ~ 4/19/16
Leslie Ann Kramer	4/20/71 ~ 12/17/06	Jakari D. Wright	3/31/97 ~ 8/18/18
Kwadwo Amoako Kusi	3/20/06 ~ 7/26/08	Neil York	4/29/93 ~ 4/25/15
Adriana Therese Ladino	10/31/02 ~ 3/23/19		
Thomas Langston	4/05/92 ~ 8/04/18		

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 they can be included correctly in future newsletters.

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 contacting bpusanova@gmail.com. Thank you!

2024 Events

Wednesday, March 20th – Pot Luck Dinner at Larson Home

Saturday, April 13th - Brunch at Ashton Ave Family Restaurant

Tuesday, May 14th – Mother's Day Dinner at United Buffet

Saturday, June 8th – Fly and Remember Kite Festival

July TBD– Pot Luck Dinner at Larson Home

July 25 – Chapter Leadership Training, Herndon, VA

July 26-28 – National Gathering, Herndon, VA

Sunday, August 18th - Butterfly Release

September TBD– Luncheon & Birthday Cake Kits for Area Food Pantries

Sunday, October 6th – Picnic and Lotus Flower Release at Locust Shade Park

November TBD– Pot Luck Dinner at Larson Home

Sunday, December 8th – Service of Remembrance Candle Lighting Service

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.