

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE (S.O.S.) NEWSLETTER



January 2009



MARY VANHAUTE, EDITOR

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? WANT TO CONTRIBUTE? CONTACT ME AT
920-680-4710 OR BY E-MAIL, MVH11@GBONLINE.COM



Last week I had the opportunity to chat with a friend of mine from Chicago. He heads up the Chicago area chapter of Compassionate Friends, dedicating countless hours and endless resources to support those who lost a child on their unique, complicated road of grief. He does it all in memory of his beautiful daughter, Lisa, who died by suicide in 1997. As we closed our conversation, he reiterated how he doesn't use the phrase Merry Christmas or Happy New Year. I know that he wishes me well, but he said he just can't find much merriment or happiness this time of the year and would rather just wish me well with the hope that I **survive** the holiday season.

I thought of him when I put in the headline above. It's quite the conundrum to wish you a happy new year when I know you have a new found meaning of the word happy. You might even be wondering if you'll ever experience a few minutes of happiness much less an entire year. You might feel guilt whenever you smile or experience a tingle of joy or the urge to laugh. You have a right to those feelings as they bump up against your grief. Yet, you also deserve happiness and to be free of guilt.

In this newsletter, you'll find a reprint of an article that elaborates on all the reasons why you deserve to be happy and offers suggestions to move toward that feeling comfortably without guilt. You've heard it said, "Your loved one wouldn't want you to be sad." Unfortunately, that is not always well received by the bereaved and might be a way for others to say they want us to **move on** and go back to being our old self. Yet the intention is good, and there is truth to the sentiment.

Another truth is you'll never be the person you were before this tremendous loss. Grief alters you and reforms you in ways you never imagined. It redefines your life, your friends, your values, your priorities, and your idea of happiness. There is your life before the death and now your life after the death. Assimilating the two lives takes work, and the transition can wear you out.

Even though you'll never be the same, you have not lost your right to be happy. Even though your loved one made you happy, they are not the only person/thing that made you happy. The challenge is returning to those things that make you happy or discovering what makes the **new you** happy.

Facing a new year is difficult. It puts more time between the present day and the date of your loved one's death. On the other hand, it is a time of renewal and recommitting to taking care of ourselves. In your care plan for this year, make room for a good dose of happiness. You deserve it.

News You Can Use

Information from the SPRC (Suicide Prevention Resource Center) www.sprc.org

A recent publication by the SPRC listed talking points for discussions about the economic downturn and its relationship to suicide. Here are a few of the central themes of that publication.

Unemployment is bad for your health overall.

Along with losing their jobs, people are losing health insurance coverage. This could be a deterrent for seeking help or identifying how physical ailments correlate with depression.

Unemployment contributes to suicide risk, but it does not cause suicides on its own.

Care should be taken when drawing conclusions about the correlation between losing a job and becoming suicidal. There may be other risk factors present regardless of an individual's employment status that put them at risk.

Unemployment contributes to financial strains and can lead to a perceived loss of control.

Financial strain is associated with other stressors such as strained relationships, a sense of shame, humiliation, or despair. These factors alone can be linked to suicide risk. Working-aged adults and older adults whose retirement may be at risk are particularly vulnerable to these compounding issues.

What can we do?

Send helpful and hopeful messages whenever these issues are discussed. Temper sensational bad news with realism. We don't honestly know how long this economic condition will last. Seek help—it is not a sign of weakness but rather a life-saving, courageous step. Encourage others to seek help, and support community-based organizations that provide help. Lastly, we can engage in activities that relieve stress in proactive, positive ways. Focus on the areas of your life where you have control and nurture the hope within you.

Community Programming in the Appleton Area

Childhood Anxiety and Depression: Understanding and Supporting Our Children

February 5, 2009

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Roosevelt Middle School, Commons

318 E. Brewster Street, Appleton

ThedaCare Behavioral Health Child and Family Therapists will provide information on Childhood Anxiety and Depression. Come and learn about symptoms, treatment options, community resources, and support for both children and parents. The presentation will conclude with a demonstration of Biofeedback, one of many successful treatment options.

Internet Safety and Social Networking: Keeping Our Children Safe Online

January 8, 2009

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Madison Middle School, Cafeteria

2020 S. Carpenter Street, Appleton

This program will be presented by members of the Appleton Police Department. The presentation will give parents a real look into the world of social networking on internet sites such as myspace.com and facebook.com. The presenters will also demonstrate IM-Instant Messaging and ways to protect our children from online bullying and sexual predators.

Several people sent this to me after the December newsletter was printed. The wishes and sentiments are timeless.

During the month of December, two of the three prophetic religious traditions celebrate significant holidays. Both holidays have gift giving as a major part of the celebration. There is a lot of merriment involved in the celebrations. There is a lot of preparation and scurrying around in preparing for these holidays. Last month I wrote about my being thankful for the opportunity to journey with the members of the LOSS family. It has been a very unique journey with far reaching results which have changed how I perceive life and how my belief system has been altered and enriched. This has been my gift from you and I am eternally grateful to all of you for this very rich opportunity. During this holiday season know how truly grateful I am to each and every one of you for this gift.

Oftentimes survivors feel unworthy of anything that is positive in their lives such as having a good time or experiencing some pleasure or happiness. Survivors erroneously are under the impression that because a loved one has taken their life, they (the survivors) should be punished and forego any pleasure or happiness. Naturally, during the initial part of the journey, pleasure and happiness are very difficult to experience due to the intensity of the grief. This is all part of the initial stage of grief. There is no real time frame for how long this aspect of the journey will last. It could very well be weeks or months as survivors traverse this very perilous journey. The danger is that this void of happiness or pleasure could very well become a part of a survivor's life. Survivors feel that because this loved one died from suicide they (the survivors) are at fault because they failed to see the suicide coming or were negligent in detecting how much pain their loved one was in. Due to this seeming negligence, survivors beat themselves up unmercifully and heap all sorts of punishing thoughts and accusations on themselves. We refer to this as self flagellation. From my experience in working with survivors for almost thirty years nothing could be further from the truth. Survivors did not miss anything. Their loved ones never shared the depth of their hopelessness or despair. For whatever reason, their mental illness prevented them from sharing this despairing moment in their lives. They are not to blame for not sharing because their illness was so virulent and paralyzing. They saw suicide as the only

answer. For them it was the only way out of this endless cycle of unbearable pain.

During this holiday season I am suggesting that survivors treat themselves to some type of a pleasurable experience as a gift from their dearly departed loved one. The gift should be something that will allow survivors to experience pleasure and happiness. Think of something that in the past brought much joy and happiness such as a visit to a spa or dining at a favorite restaurant or going to see an uplifting play or concert. Experience this pleasure and happiness and let this loved one know that this is a gift from them and is done in their memory to remember the good times that were shared in the past. It is permissible to experience joy and happiness in your life. Very often survivors feel unworthy of pleasure or happiness because a loved one took their life. A loved one died, not the survivors, and survivors have a right to experience happiness and pleasure and joy.

Don't be surprised if you feel some guilt in having a good time and experiencing pleasure and joy. That is a very normal response in the grieving process. Suffer through this guilt knowing that the more you experience these pleasures and joys the guilt will eventually dissipate. The alternative is to continue to punish oneself needlessly due to the pain of a loved one that led to their suicide.

Use the gift from a loved one to break out of the pattern of self flagellation and re-enter the life of pleasure and joy. What a great gift from a loved one during this holiday season and throughout the year.

During this holiday season I want to assure each and every member of the LOSS family of my thoughts and prayers and encourage you to do the same for each other-especially for those who have recently joined our family.

Keep On Keepin' On, Fr. Rubey (courtesy of: Carol Loehr, author of *My Uncle Keith Died*)

Did you know? Recent data reveals that the suicide hotline for veterans receives approximately 6 calls an hour. This is a valuable prevention resource for our vets!

1-800-273-TALK (Veterans Press Option #1)

Spread the Word—New support group at Marian in Fond du Lac.

Peer support group for the bereaved because of suicide meets every second Tuesday of the month from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Campus Ministry Building at Marian University. This group is free and open to the public ages 18 and older.

Have you seen this?

The Book of Bunny Suicides by Andy Riley

Here is how this is described on Amazon.com.
Bunny Suicides (Postcard Book): Little Fluffy Rabbits Who Just Don't Want to Live Anymore.

This is a series of books with cartoon illustrations of various ways that “bunny” chooses to die. When I first learned of the book a couple years ago, I visited local book stores and filed a personal complaint with the managers requesting that they not be showcased or promoted in any manner. The stores have a right to sell what they choose; however, we also have a right to express our thoughts about the way this book pokes fun at a most serious subject. You might also want to be sure this book is not in any public or school libraries. We can make an impact and social statement that will help erase the stigma of suicide.

Area Support Groups

PROGRAM: **A Time To Mourn Support Group - Oshkosh**

Service: **Six-week grief group offering support for adults who have experienced the death of an adult loved one. Co-led by professionals trained in grief support. Offered three times per year. This is a closed group which means adult members must make a 6 week commitment to this course and the group does not allow new members in for the duration of the 6 weeks. You must call to sign up prior to first session.**

Held: Lutheran Homes of Oshkosh, 225 N. Eagle Street, Oshkosh, WI 54902

Contact: Lutheran Homes of Oshkosh Chaplain Cathie VanderVelden, 920 232 5274

Cost: Free

PROGRAM: **General Bereavement Support Group - Oshkosh**

Service: **General grief support group where attendees are accepted at any time regardless of age or religious denomination. Grief discussions focus on events of the death, related feelings, coping skills, validation, and support for group members.**

Held: St. Jude Parish, 1025 W. 5th Ave, Oshkosh, WI 54902 (enter through parish office doors)

Contact: Linda Hilary, MS 920 233 8044

Cost: Free

How often: First and third Thursdays of every month

Time: 7:00-8:30 PM

PROGRAM: **Grief Support--Drop-In Groups- Appleton and Oshkosh**

Service: **Open to any adult grieving the death of a loved one. Refreshments and handouts are provided.**

Contact: Deb Kosmer, Affinity Visiting Nurses 866-236-8500

Email: kosmerd@ministryhomecare.org

Oshkosh: 1st Thursday of each month
St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church
1100 E. Murdock Avenue, Oshkosh
Groups at 2:30 PM and 6:30 PM

Appleton: 1st Tuesday of each month
Thompson Community Center
820 W. College Avenue, Appleton
Groups at 2:30 PM and 6:30 PM

Fee: None

PROGRAM: **Living with Loss-Appleton**

Service: **Six-week grief group offering support to adults who have experienced the loss of a loved one. Offered in Fall, Winter and Spring at ThedaCare Home Hospice.**

Where: Heritage Community Room
2600 S. Heritage Woods Drive
Appleton, WI

Contact: Rachel Seppi

Phone: 920 716-1006 or 800 984 5554 to register

Email: rachel.seppi@thedacare.org

Fee: None

GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PROGRAM: Center for Grieving Children-Appleton
Service: Monthly peer-to-peer support group for grieving children ages 3 to 18 and their families. Led by trained facilitators and volunteers. Includes supper.

Where: Boys and Girls Club of the Fox Valley
117 S. Locust Street, Appleton

Time: 6-8 PM (includes supper)

Fee: None

Contact: Irene Hans at 920 731 0555 x 24 for more information and to pre-register.
Fax 920 968 2716

Email: ihans@bgclubfoxvalley.org

Website: www.bgclubfoxvalley.org

PROGRAM: Grief Relief
Service: Grief Relief offers ongoing peer support groups for children and teens ages 5-17 in the Fond du Lac area. Groups are ongoing, meeting once a month. Also offered are groups for adult caregivers.

Fee: None

Contact: Terri at 920 926 4960

PROGRAM: Men Journeying Through Grief
Service: A gathering of men who have experienced the death of a loved one, recent or past. Gatherings include supper, discussion, grief information, and resources

Fee: None

Contact: Deb at 920-727-2000 or Pete at 920-831- 9905 for meeting time and place.

For more info, visit the Fox Valley Grief Network via www.wichmannfuneralhomes.com.

You will carry your
grief forever. You
will find a way to make
peace with it and make
it work for you.
Jack Jordan

Hopefully you had a chance to attend a holiday remembrance ceremony or grief workshop related to

the holidays. The Oshkosh SOS group held their remembrance event on December 18. At that time, I read this poem, and I was asked by one of the attendees to include it in the newsletter. This is something I clipped from a newsletter years ago, and, unfortunately, do not have the author's name to give him/her credit.

When I come to the end of the
day
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom-
filled room.
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little, but not too
long
And not with your head bowed
low.
Remember the love we once
shared—
Miss me, but let me go.
For this is a journey we all
must take
And each must go alone.
It's all a part of the Maker's
plan
A step on the road to home.
When you are lonely and sick
at heart,
Go to the friends we know
And bury your sorrows in doing
good deeds. —
Miss me, but let me go.

"Go to the friends we know . . ." is symbolic of our time together in the SOS meetings. Always remember that no matter how long it has been, you are always welcome to return to any SOS meeting at any time. Grief has no timeline; we'll always be here when you need us.

Telephone Friends

You're not alone. A sympathetic ear is just a phone call away.

These S.O.S. attendees have survived the death by suicide of a loved one and have agreed to be available to you as a telephone friend.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Home Phone</u>	<u>Who died?</u>
Patti Ahrens	920 688 2678	14 year old son
Jennifer Beschta	920 853 3508	Father
Doug and Amanda Biggar	920 740 6194	Father
Jake Biggar	920 379 1841	Father (Greg) and best friend (Marshal)
Kim & Mark Biggar	920 729 5971	Brother
Mary Biggar	920 585 3834	Husband
Jane Daugherty	920 233 9811	Friend
Gregory Casperson	920 361 4985	Brother
Gloria Ganther	920 233 2739	College age daughter
Beth Geffers	920 279 6749	Father
Dawn Hammes	920 685 0256	Son & fiance
Gretchen Hantel	920 954 8320	Nephew
Pam & Andy Hendriks	920 722 6833	Adult brother/friend
Mike & Joann Hopfensperger	920 733 1095	Adult son
Lee Howe	920 734 8227	Son
Natasha Howe	920 993 0016	Brother
Sandee Keppler	920 235 1360	Adult son
Rita Kraemer	920 418 0722	Father
Rich Logan	920 205-6809	Teenage son
Debbie Logan	920-277-5205	Teenage son
Debra and Joseph Lutter	920 734 0432	Adult son
Kay Martin	920 727 0051	Two sisters
Christina Miller	920 209 3960	Husband
Kim Nissen	920 739 7483	19 year old son
Tim & Sandy Page	920 229 6432	16 year old son
Shirley Rank	920 748 6581	26 year old daughter & husband
John & Pam Reilly	920 757 7191	Daughter
Linda Schabloski	920 303 0302	Teenage daughter
Judy Sharpless	920 739 4841	Adult son; adult daughter
Carol Sitzberger	920 426 2269	Teenage son
Kelly Schermerhorn	920 252 1956	Brother
Mary VanHaute	920 499 0048	Adult brother
Julie Wendt	920 864 2873	Brother
Andy and Jenny Wesner	920 235 2212	18 year old son
Lisa Wians	920 739 8629	Older brother
Sandy Winkler	920 233 1391	Friend
Wendy and Warren Zimmer	920 725 5159	Teenage son
Nancy Zimmerman	920 729 1904	Nephew
Laurie Zoran	920 997 9503	Brother

Gone from our sight, but not from our hearts

Casey Abrahamson
May 6, 1995

Nick Ahrens
May 15, 2001

David John Anger
June 5, 2003

John Augsburg
April 23, 2002

Michael Bauer
April 1988

Kevin Beach
September 3, 2007

Gregory John Biggar "Biggs"
August 21, 2007

Phillip T. Bixby, Jr. "Skip"
September 17, 2006

Steven David Brice
September 19, 2004

Ryan Buchanan
April 2004

Brian Butz
February 21, 2001

Brian L. Casperson
January 14, 2005
Roxanne, wife
Amber & Ashley, daughters
44 Lawndale Avenue
Ripon, WI 54971
Gregory Casperson, brother
N1433 37th Ave
Berlin, WI 54923

Kathy Chovanec
April 23, 2003

Justin John Conradt
August 6, 2007

Michael Davis
September 15, 2004

Daniel Dirks
August 10, 2005

Adrian Karsten
September 2, 2005

Richard Craig Kelley
February 21, 2004

Steven Alan Keppler
May 8, 2007

Nathaniel Kikkert
September 25, 2001

Michael F. King
December 3, 2006

Michael Kirschner
March 29, 1998

David Langdon, Sr.
January 3, 2005

Jacob David Lenz
July 3, 2006

Tanner Logan
September 14, 2004

Richard J. Manning
February 4, 2008

Tom Menacher
October 30, 2000

Andrew Michalski
June 18, 1999

Bonnie Michalkiewicz
April 5, 1999

Michael Mueller
February 25, 2005

Ronald K. Munsey
June 27, 2004

Molli Munz & Child
July 18, 2004

Andrew O'Shea
June 20, 1984

Michael Sekey
April 8, 2006

Kathy Siedler
October 18, 1998

Ashley Silbaugh
May 26, 2002

Greg Silverthorn
April 23, 2004

Roberta Sischo
March 23, 2001

Steve Smith
August 17, 2005

David H. Steger
November 10, 2003

James Stevens
January 9, 1997

Todd Taphorn
June 9, 2003

Robert Taylor
June 2, 1998

Sean Terry
September 21, 2007

Jon W. Thompson
November 19, 2005

Markus Thompson
July 19, 2004

Marshall R. Thompson
January 14, 2006
Holly Thompson, sister
1120 Central Street
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Craig Tonagel
December 3, 2002

Mike Trudell
June 27, 2004

Mark F. Vermeern
April 25, 2006

Alfredo Diaz
June 10, 2000

Daniel Evans
September 27, 2005

Larry Flood
January 1, 1980

Perry John Fromm
May 23, 2005

Mark Galloway
January 3, 1973
Pat and Dick Galloway, parents
650 Lakecrest Drive
Menasha, WI 54952

Matthew Galloway
December 16, 2003

Julie Ganther
January 2, 1992
Gloria Ganther, mom
4860 Hwy 45 South
Oshkosh, WI 54902

Jo Gear
November 27, 2006

Douglas F. Gafner, Sr.
November 17, 2007

Phil Giese
June 10, 2006

Sean Haywood
March 11, 2007

Shane Hopfensperger
February 28, 2004

Christopher Howe
February 22, 2000

Joshua Dalton Overton
April 5, 2007

James Page
December 4, 2004

Marcus C. Peralta
July 15, 2006

Christopher M. Pidgeon
August 15, 2006

Paul Pietkivitch
October 30, 2004

Linda Plante
January 1, 2001

Jodi Lyn Rank
July 20, 1998

Shawn Rech
December 23, 2004

Richard William Reffke
March 3, 2008

Amanda Reilly
October 15, 2007

Ann Mae Sadowski
October 28, 2007

Andrea Schabloski
August 31, 1999

Eric Schermerhorn
January 2, 2007
Kelly Schermerhorn, sister
229 E Irving Ave
Oshkosh WI 54901

Robert Schmidt
May 5, 1989

Robert Schoenberger
June 21, 2002

Tod Frank Schweitzer
March 3, 2008

Salvatore Vitale
September 14, 1999

Rodney Ray Vorhis
August 25, 2003

Anthony F. Waelchli
September 3, 2007

Ronald E. Walsh
September 11, 2003

Douglas Webb
May 23, 2004

Bobby Weber
April 17, 2001

Jason Weldon
November 16, 2000

Alex Wesner
July 31, 2007

Chad Wheaton
December 16, 2003

Dianne Winski Orbison
April 12, 2007

Sara Michelle Woulf
October 13, 2006

Justin Zimmer
January 15, 2006
Warren & Wendy Zimmer,
Parents
1509 Driftwood Way
Menasha, WI 54952

Community for Hope of Greater Oshkosh

PO Box 2744

Oshkosh, WI 54903-2744

Supporting Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Response

www.communityforhope.org



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OF GREATER OSHKOSH, INC.