



## Bereaved Families of Ontario — Ottawa Region

*The bereaved helping the bereaved learn to live with grief.*

### **Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region (BFO–OR)**

#### **Resources**

Monthly Support and Share Nights  
One-on-ones Support  
Closed Groups  
Handouts, Lending Library  
Quarterly Newsletter  
Facilitator Training  
Educational Speakers

BFO-OR Charitable Donation  
Number: 85343 2730 RR0001

Welcome to your New Newsletter!

It is new because it has new purpose, a new, not-so-fancy look, and a new frequency - monthly.

As you might imagine, organizations that depend on volunteers go through cycles – sometimes there are nearly enough volunteers to make things work, and at other times, we hit the skids and everything becomes a huge effort, foisted off on the shoulders of those volunteers who haven't burned out or burned up.

BFO is at a low ebb in this cycle, in terms of both human and financial resources. Therefore we want to do more communicating, to see if we can learn how we can make things better, more attractive for volunteers, and to learn how we can connect with more volunteers.

We begin with a huge thank you to everyone who ever volunteered a minute or a dime to our cause, which is helping others to begin, however slowly and painfully, the healing process, to start figuring out how to live in a world that's had its centre removed. As you know the death of a loved one brings about some of the most profound changes we ever experience.

The need for BFO is not in question. What is in question is how do we get ourselves up and running in good order, with consistent funding (the government helps us with children's groups only) and enough volunteers to meet the needs of everything from Support and Share Nights and Special events such as our golf tournament to our ability to offer training in a timely fashion to those rare, good folk who are willing and able to leverage their own pain in the service of others. Right now we have people who have been waiting for as long as two years to get training. Sometimes we must postpone our closed groups even though they are surely among the most effective of our programs.

The New Newsletter's first request is for feedback. Doris Audet, who soldiered on through thick and mostly thin to keep the newsletters coming, is about to reduce her newsletter involvement, something she has earned many times over. She'll still act as consultant, and will help us with the process of getting from word processor to newsletter-in-your-hand. But a major challenge for her and for BFO has been the lack of feed-back about this form of communication.

You can voice your opinion at 567-4278 or email us at [bfo-otrg@cyberus.ca](mailto:bfo-otrg@cyberus.ca).

Christmas programs include:

Candle lighting Ceremony,

Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> Support and Share Night, 7pm, lower hall of St Timothy's Presbyterian Church,  
Speaker is Dr Phillip Cheifetz, Remembering and Forgetting Grief, in Children

Remembrance Tree Ceremony

Sunday December 12, 2 pm,

Speaker: Martha Attridge Bufton

Andy Haydon Hall in City Hall, 111 Lisgar

The event is sponsored by Cole Funeral Services and Pinecrest Remembrance Services

Tree sitters will be present in the foyer of City Hall from 11 am to 5 pm Friday and Saturday December 10 and 11, and from 12 noon to prior to the ceremony on Sunday if people wish to put a card on the tree. Donations to help continue our programs will be accepted at that time.

### Open Yourself to a Closed Group

A closed group is made up of approximately 10 people who have suffered similar losses (i.e., loss of spouse or loss of parent, sibling, child, etc.) and who meet every week for 8 to 10 weeks. Trained facilitators gently guide the discussions, pass out the tissues, and in every way possible, help people navigate these dark and dangerous waters.

How do you get into a closed group?

At each Support & Share night, a sign up sheet is available. The information you provide helps us put you in the right group. If you are already signed up you can expect a phone-call from Hilda telling you when and where your group meets. You can also just call Hilda at 567-4278.

Currently we are running groups for loss of spouse and for loss of child. In one unusual case, a parent is attending the loss of spouse group and also attending, with a young son, a combined children and parent group. The parents and children have a pizza supper social and then 2 children's groups ages 4 to 6 and 7 to 10 meet with child counsellors and the parents of the children meet together. By all accounts the two groups complement each other, multiplying the help being received. From this you can begin to see there are many healing possibilities offered by a healthy BFO. A teen group begins Monday evening starting November 8<sup>th</sup>.

### A Mostly New Board of Directors

One change that will surely help us get where we need to be to help you, is our newly-strengthened Board of Directors. Our heart felt thanks to all who have served in the past. In this newsletter we'll be introducing the current and new board members. We've included their names and telephone numbers in the event that you want to get something off your chest. Theirs is no simple task. But they are devoted to our cause and they bring a wealth of talent and experience to us, the very things we so urgently need. Their bios are on the web site.

Gail Christy 733-5227

Michelle Desrosiers 567-4278

Jim Elliott 820-5269

Bob Hughes 567-4278

Jim McCulloch 567-4278

Wayne McIntyre 727-4723 x 5207

Sam Zemplak 567-4278

The Board of Directors is seeking people with interest in fundraising, event planning, newsletter formatting, communication and accounting. Interested persons need a good command of English and able to attend monthly meetings. Contact person is Hilda at 567-4278

We are also going to offer some support via this news letter and we welcome your input. What worked for you? What works now? What do you do with weekends? Holidays? We'll offer specific thoughts on each of those topics but for now let's consider--

### Road Blocks on the Grief Highway

First of all, the Highway is taking you from where you were, alone and hurting and in the dark, to where you are going, which is your new life, populated by new friends, maybe, eventually, a new mate, and certainly a new you. It is one of the most important journeys you will take in your life. Oddly enough part of what prevents you from stepping out on the road and getting "well" is the fear of losing your pain. While you are hurting, the pain is something concrete to hold on to, something to nurture and keep always at your side. It is familiar and therefore safe, safer than all the frightening changes that loom on the horizon.

There is also the feeling many of us have that getting well somehow means putting even more distance between us and our loved ones. To hurt less is to be disloyal to our spouse's memory, to hurt less is to start to commence to begin forgetting our spouses altogether. This is faulty logic.

We justify everything from early dating to taking up tango dancing to cowering at home, in the dark, by saying to ourselves and anyone who will listen - it's what he/she would have wanted. You may actually believe whatever you're

doing is what your spouse would have wanted but the cold fact of the matter is, your spouse is no longer physically in the game. You are on your own, far more than when you left home for the first time to conquer the world.

Unless you are burdened with a death-bed promise, you can only generalize about what your dearly departed wishes for you. And surely the most general thing he or she could have wanted is this - that you once again find happiness, however you choose to define it and live it and that's about the most rational thing you can conclude. After all, in life your spouse wanted your happiness. It's part of why he or she said yes to your proposal, so why wouldn't he or she wish the same in death?

Yet, we really do develop at least a temporary sense of owning our big mountain of grief. It's ours and no one is going to take it away, especially not anyone who starts a conversation with, "you really should get over this and get on with your life." There's a clue – as long as you keep your grief front and centre, you don't have to work at getting over it, at building your new life, at becoming the new you. With your eyes fixed firmly on the pain, you can indulge yourself, pamper yourself to the extent that your worldly responsibilities, work, surviving family members and so on, allow.

When is the right time to start letting go of your grief? The good news is, you've already started. It's not necessarily anything you can detect, but it is going on, sometimes with a light, quick step, at other times with a slow, plodding, are-we-there-yet pace. No one I've talked to believes you can hurry the process. Grieving surely takes as long as it takes.

Again - you're the expert. After three years I began to entertain at least the idea of selling our home and getting something smaller. Prior to that time, just the thought of leaving all our memories and turning "our" home over to strangers gave me that wrench of the heart that let me know that I was not there yet.

So how are you doing?

### **Program Coordinator's Report**

The office has been busy with volunteers that help keep this organization running. Some people phone us seeking peer support and others want to offer peer support. And there are some who help with all the office work required to keep the public aware of our great programs. June Wilson is not bereaved but just wants to help. On her days off she comes into the office and knows what needs to be done without even asking. Her son Rusty, in grade nine and requiring 40 hours of volunteer time came to the office in the summer months and surprised us with his much appreciated talent at computer art and designing brochures. He designed a picture for our children's pamphlet and helped put this newsletter together. Rusty and his parents June and Tony helped out with the Walk to Remember. Thank you Rusty, June and Tony for offering your talents to Bereaved Families in Ottawa.

Other office volunteers are Gail Barker, Sandra Dietrich, Guiliane Ferro and our office administrator assistant Jan Casselman.

The provincial Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Success by Six program is funding groups for 4 to 6 year old children and their parent(s)/guardian. Families meet together for a pizza supper and then children meet with a child specialist to do activities such as reading stories and drawings and the parents meet together with a leader to share and support each other. The evaluations from this group are very positive.

In partnership with the Catholic Family Services and Community Foundation of Ottawa, a similar program is running for children 7 to 10 and their parent/guardian. The group continues until November 30.

I want to thank the Smiling over Sickness volunteers who helped the leaders with the children's groups. Suzanna Talarico and Anita Villani helped Norita Trottier with the children ages 4 to 6 and Melissa Graham and Pia Pace-Asciak helped Anne Marie Bourgeois from the Catholic Family Services. All children's group facilitators are reporting to and debriefing with Jeanette Rooney-Ozols, their professional consultant.

The Board wants to thank Shirley Warren and Bill Drake for co facilitating the Loss of Spouse Group this fall. We want to thank Hulse, Playfair and McGarry Funeral Homes for donating their space at the Reception House, 328 McLeod. Barbra

Hills-Labonte and Cheryl Brule are co facilitating a full and successful Loss of Child group. Thank you to them and McEvoy Shields Funeral Home on Hunt Club Road for donating space. Gail Christy is the Professional Consultant for all adult groups. Gail volunteers as Chair of the PAC Committee and Chair of the Board of Directors. Thank you Gail for being an effective leader for Bereaved Families.

Another dedicated volunteer is Terry Moxness and her team of family and friends who helped make the Golf Tournament a success for the last three years. Thank you all for your support. Terry is resigning from this volunteer position so we are looking for golfers to help organize this event. Terry has said she will guide but not lead the new team to another successful tournament and the date has been set for June 6, 2005 at Pineview.

Bereaved Families offers our sympathy to Jenny Pilkington, one of our facilitators. Jenny's husband Ed died in July and she requested that memorial donations be sent to two agencies, one being Bereaved Families. Thank you Jenny for thinking of Bereaved Families in your time of sorrow. The financial assistance, which can be less in the summer months, helped Bereaved Families in a time of need.

We thank Support and Share Night speakers Christine Jannasch and Dr. Michelle Simmonds for offering their comfort and expertise twice each year.

*Submitted by Hilda Sabadash*

Let's make 2005 "Return of the BFO library book year" We recently had 4 books and videos returned that had been on loan for years. If you remember borrowing a book and cannot find it, perhaps returning it or a note explaining your situation and maybe a donation to cover the replacement cost if possible. We have all six books called Empty Arms by Sherokee Ilse "out there" on loan for more than 3 years. This is the best book for loss of a new baby. BFO would like them returned to offer support to others.

### **Support for the Holidays**

Emotions may begin to spin out of control as holidays approach. Here are a few hints to help slow down the spinning.

Planning ahead helps but sometimes is too painful to do.

Think about chunks of time at Christmas rather than the whole day or days. Plan your morning time and maybe a family member can plan your afternoon time or evening time. If young children are involved, plan it together. Find out their expectations of gift opening and dinner time.

If going on a trip to see family, having your own private place such as a motel room instead of everyone under the one roof, can allow you time to break away from the celebrations when it becomes too overwhelming. Fatigue during bereavement can set in very strong and quickly and we need to have an escape route from all the activity if this happens.

Your loss does not have to be all sad. Remembering happy times can cause laughter and things he/she did when alive can become funny when told by another person. There may be things we ourselves did or say while in shock that can be shared. For example, I thought Paul Bearer was a family friend I did not know until my sister-in-law set me straight.

Keeping your bereavement "present" is important. Include the name of the person(s) who died in your conversation. Not talking about the person makes his/her absence feel as the poem says "Like an elephant in the room." Other things to do are to have your own service in your home, attend churches "Blue service", light his/her candle, stuff the deceased's stocking and have it visible or not visible. Whatever brings comfort is acceptable.

Watch the basics. Eating and sleeping are important. If isolated due to the changes, basic nutrition can help the days go by easier. The stomach may never feel hungry while the rest of our body can be starving. Timing meals when the news comes on at noon and 6 pm can be reminders to eat. A walk around the block can give you a change of scenery. Riding the bus is usually free on Christmas Day if you need to get out and want the time to go by. If you are alone, people are out there to help you get through it. Call the Distress Centre at 238-3311 if becoming overwhelmed.

Whatever happened to change your holidays, others have gone through it and you can too. Most celebratory events are open to the public, so plan to take one in. Of the 24 hours on Christmas Day, 8 of the 24 hours you may be sleeping and that leaves 16 hours left to live. Funny movies or cartoons can cut that time in half or more. Take care of yourself. I hope to see you at Support and Share Night on January 4<sup>th</sup> to share with others.

*Hilda Sabadash*  
Program Coordinator

### **Doris Audet**

The Board of Directors of Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region is pleased to nominate Doris Audet as Volunteer of the Year 2004 for BFO – OR. Doris has been active and involved in BFO – OR for many years, first as a participant in a Loss of Spouse group and later as a committed volunteer in a number of capacities.



She has been our capable newsletter editor for a number of issues, being always both patient and flexible as she waits for submissions, juggles requests for format changes again and again, and meets publication deadlines. Doris is also a faithful attender of all BFO –OR’s fund raising events – she’s sure to know about them since she usually produces the required flyers! While not a member of the Board of Directors, Doris readily participates in general meetings and lends support during times of crisis.

As if there were not enough, as part of her commitment to BFO – OR, Doris took facilitator training and has co-facilitated several Loss of Spouse groups over the years. In this role, she is very conscientious and keen to do her best for each of the group participants. The Board of Directors truly believes that Doris’s commitment and achievements in BFO –OR makes her a worthy nominee.

### **Walk To Remember**

Our annual Walk to Remember was held Saturday, September 25, 2004 in the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm. As usual, there was sunshine, prizes and food. We were a small group but there was lots of enthusiasm and we raised well over \$2,000. We thank Notre Dame Cemetery and Hope Cemetery for their donations along with all the people who collected pledges. We especially thank Stephanie Christy for her efforts at co-ordinating this year’s Walk. Well done Stephanie. We want to begin planning next year’s Walk (September 2005) in January and we’ll be looking for volunteers.

### **Co-op Practicum After Bereavement**

When I was 15 years old my older half brother Danny passed away in a car accident. I was devastated when that call came in. He was my best friend, my hero, and my strength to pull through when I needed a lift. My mom didn’t know how to help me so she and I arranged to talk to Hilda at the office of BFO. I don’t remember much of the session besides a lot of tears from myself but I know it helped just talking. The handouts helped a lot as well especially the poem called “The Butterfly.” I went to a Support and Share Night after that session. The poem, the session in the office and the Support and Share Night got me thinking instead of crying. It made me realize my brother was gone from this world, not me. I wanted my life back! I knew some changes needed to be made.

I am 18 years old now and the poem is the motto of my bereavement. Even though I miss him, as the poem says, I “feel luck to have seen it.” The experience of working with Bereaved Families Ontario-Ottawa Region (BFO) made me understand grief was a hard thing to experience. However, I knew I could make it through with a little help. The poem touched me so

much I plan to have a butterfly tattooed on my back to remind me of the poem and the fact that wherever my brother goes he will always have "my back."

Currently, I am doing my high school co-operative education (co-op) at BFO. Co-op is a class that gives me an opportunity to look into careers I may want to procure. I have already decided I want to take the Child and Youth Worker program. Basically I want a job where I can help others through hard times and Bereaved Families was the first place I thought of. I could not remember the organizations name or Hilda's. It took me a while to find the Bereaved Families number. When I came for an interview at BFO, my reasoning behind it was I want to give back. I have been here at BFO October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and I love it. Even putting the Support and Share night box of hand outs together makes me feel good because I think maybe a little girl like I was may read the literature and realize her life is just "begun" and she may get through grief knowing in the end she'll be OK..

*Submitted by Jessica Smith*

Note: Jessica Smith will be working in the office and answering phones from noon to 3 pm each work day except Tuesday until mid January.

### Sponsorship

Many wonderful individuals and corporations have helped Bereaved Families in our community by supporting the programs of Bereaved Families of Ontario—Ottawa Region.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the corporations; foundations and other charitable organizations that have also helped us help the healing begin.

Cole Funeral services  
2586 Carp Road  
(613) 831-7122

Notre Dame Cemetery Ottawa (613)  
746-4175

Province of Ontario  
Ministry of Community, Family and  
Children Services  
Early Years Challenge Fund

Mail Boxes ETC  
1769 St. Laurent Blvd. & Innes Rd.  
(613) 526-4898  
MBE112@travel-net.com

Hulse Playfair & McGarry  
315 McLeod,  
(613) 233-1143

McEvoy-Shields Funeral homes and  
Chapels  
737-7900

Lundy M P Construction (Ontario)  
Limited  
375 Metcalfe, Ottawa, Ontario  
(613) 233-8484

Pinecrest Remembrance Services  
2500 Baseline Road  
(613) 829-3600

Hope Cemetery  
(613) 822-1212

### Newsletter and Donations: Please take a moment to revise your information with the selections listed below.\*

Mail this slip, with your donation, to Bereaved Families of Ontario—Ottawa Region 308-211 Bronson Ave., Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5 or E-mail us at BFO-otrg@cyberus.ca

To reduce overhead cost to BFO—OR, please add my name to the e-mail-out listing.

My e-mail address is: \_\_\_\_\_

Continue receiving a mailing of the BFO-OR Newsletter through regular postal service.

Donation in the amount of: \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_.

BFO-OR Charitable Donation Number: 85343 2730 RR0001. Donations over \$15.00 will receive a Charitable Donation Receipt.

Name	Mailing Address	City	Postal code
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\* Names are removed from mailing list following a period of 3 years of inactivity.