



# SURVIVORS

after suicide A Program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center

APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2006 • VOLUME 19, NO. 2 • PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

## Suicide Prevention Center's 24-7 Crisis Line Is Now Toll-Free In Orange County

People struggling in suicidal crisis can now get help free of charge in Orange County! Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center now offers its Suicide Prevention Center's Crisis Line toll-free in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Call night or day at:

**1-877-7-CRISIS (1-877-727-4747)**

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Saturday, August 5, 2006**

SAS Summer Potluck  
11:30 - 2:00 p.m.

**Sunday, October 8, 2006**

Alive & Running for  
Suicide Prevention 5K/10K



## Beloved SAS Newsletter Editor Steps Down

*Survivors Gratefully Thank Debbie Pikul,  
Volunteer SAS Newsletter Editor for the  
Last Four Years!*

From January 2002 until January 2006, **Debbie Pikul** edited the Survivors After Suicide quarterly newsletter. During those four years she contributed hundreds of hours entirely without pay, added photographs to the newsletter's prior text-only format, and regularly published articles written by survivors as well as mental health experts.

Debbie said she "loved being so involved in the community of survivors [and] loved knowing what was going on with the national and international foundations, the books people were writing, the music...." Having lost two brothers to suicide, Debbie brought a survivor's compassion to the articles she edited. She comforted new survivors and referred them to SAS groups. She shared the unique ways people heal: for example, the newsletter described one survivor who created a museum exhibit to honor her loved one. "I liked being able to help survivors find their individual paths to healing." This newsletter and countless survivors owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude.

## SAS Groups Will Try Fixed Schedule

The most frequent complaint from new survivors regarding Survivors After Suicide's eight-week support groups has been that the variable start dates cause frustration and anxiety. Historically, SAS has waited until there are enough people on a particular group's waiting list, at which point a group would begin. The advantage of this approach was that whenever a group started, it contained an appropriate number of group members (typically six to ten).

However, this approach caused scheduling difficulties for survivors and therapists alike. Therefore, this year SAS is experimenting with a fixed schedule for its groups. This will enable survivors to look forward to a definite date at which their group will begin.

*See page 8 for a comprehensive list of start and end dates of SAS's eight-week support groups in 2006.*

## Rachel Zients Schinderman Is New SAS Newsletter Editor

*See page 5  
for Rachel's article  
introducing herself*





## Tom's Column

Tom Rankin, J.D., M.A.

This is an exciting time of transition for the Survivors After Suicide program. We are in the midst of discussions with Our House, a well-known agency that offers general bereavement groups on the Westside and in the Valley, to create the first survivors groups for teenagers. By blending Our House's expertise with support groups for teenagers and SAS's expertise with suicide-specific groups, we should be able to better serve Los Angeles County teens who have lost a loved one to suicide.

The newsletter layout has moved in-house now that Debbie Pikul has retired. We will be experimenting with various layouts in the next several newsletter issues. If you would like to give us suggestions or feedback, please feel free to e-mail me at [trankin@didihirsch.org](mailto:trankin@didihirsch.org).

I am now responsible for creating the content of the Calendar of Upcoming Events. Please let me know about any survivor-related events in California or nationwide.

By the time this newsletter goes to print we will have hired a new administrative assistant for SAS. As before, the administrative assistant will support both SAS and our Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line, but we anticipate that the new person will focus more of his or her attention on the SAS program. This should be

invaluable. The administrative assistant's telephone number will remain the same: (310) 751-5373.

The San Gabriel Valley group location changed from the San Gabriel Medical Center to the San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ. Geographically, the two are within a couple of miles of each other, but the space at the church is much more friendly, accessible and affordable. They were able to accommodate us on short notice because of their relatively free summer schedule. Since we may or may not be able to use the church for next quarter's group, please let me know if you have suggestions for other San Gabriel Valley group locations.

Finally, we should have enough survivors in the San Gabriel Valley to begin monthly drop-in meetings in that area. However, we need a survivor or therapist willing to donate his or her time to run the monthly drop-in meetings. This is a wonderful opportunity to give back! Please contact me if you are interested.

~ Tom

---

Tom Rankin serves as the Coordinator of the Survivors After Suicide Program and as Suicide Prevention Educator. He can be reached at (310) 751-5370 or [trankin@didihirsch.org](mailto:trankin@didihirsch.org).

## Remembering My Fiancé

Kathleen Wheatley  
Santa Monica, CA

It's been over two years since his suicide. Thomas Edward Alderson came into this world briefly before he went out. The people he left behind have all gone on with their lives. Very few contact me now and the ones I do talk to still see the love and confusion he left behind. The "Sorry how could he do that to you?" pops up every now and then. His up moods and his down moods are missed still. I dream of his sideward smile.

Why does life continue to go on when it seems to have slowed down for me? I remember him as a diamond in the rough cut short by the nightmares he saw. They haunted him until he did the deed he chose.

I smell his scent and feel his presence more than ever at times. Holidays and his birthday – May 27, 1950 – still hold mixed feelings for me. When life's downs are too much for me, I need him to tell me all will be well. Just ride it out. I remember him as a person with a big heart. I could always count on him to be standing in the midst of good and bad times.

He did leave positive awareness behind. Life is too short. Talk to people. Be brave and smile. These make life a tiny bit better. To all who knew Tom, bless you for knowing him with me.

~ Kat

## Lifekeepers Memory Quilt

Our quilts are displayed at national meetings, suicide-related conferences and other events. All 50 states have come together in this joint effort to educate the world about the need to reduce the incidence of suicide. You can share your pictures and sentiments by dedicating a square in the Lifekeepers Memory Quilt, offering the image of your loved one. A \$20 fee covers the cost of material, labor and postage necessary to create your visual tribute. You will receive a cotton square and instructions on how to proceed.

Yes, I want to create a quilt square to honor:

---

Send the material and instructions to me:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my \$20 check or money order made out to Mary Halligan to cover the cost of material, labor and postage.

Mail to:  
Mary Halligan, 21422 Grant Ave., Torrance, CA 90503  
or call Mary at (310) 316-4392 for information

# My Brother and Assisted Suicide

Judy Gutierrez  
Sylmar, CA

I read obituaries now. I think I may have read them before my brother killed himself last year, but when I read them before I was looking for celebrities or others I might know. Now I immediately look for the age and cause of death. I've been astounded by how many suicides I've seen listed in the obituaries. I even look in newspapers when we are out of town. It's not exactly organized research, but I've been drawn into thoughts about aging, death, suicide and the ownership of one's life.

There was an obituary not long ago for an eighty-five-year-old man. It said that he had taken a plastic bag and asphyxiated himself with it. I was stunned at the thought of it, first that the newspaper would actually print this explanation for his death, and then I found myself thinking about the family of this man. Were they as distraught as those in our monthly survivors meetings? Or were they relieved, both for the end of this man's suffering and for the end of having to watch him suffer? Did they have fewer "Why?" questions because of his age? Did they feel guilty because they were relieved he was gone? The obituary said that he had a prolonged illness before his death.

This made me think about an issue for our upcoming election. An initiative legalizing "Assisted Suicide" will be on the next ballot. Probably this summer, there will be people collecting signatures to place it on the ballot. As soon as I realized this would happen, I thought of our survivors' group and how they would react to this sensitive issue.

A similar law in Oregon was surprisingly upheld recently by the U.S. Supreme Court. This will clear the way for other states to make it law. To "qualify" for access to the lethal medication under Oregon law, a doctor must confirm that the individual has a terminal illness and will die within a given period. The purpose is to allow people the option of relief from pain and suffering. It seems that several hundred individuals have gone through the arduous task of qualifying for the drugs. Surprisingly, fewer than twenty-five people have actually used it. When interviewed, those who had the drugs in their possession repeatedly stated, "It gave me such a sense of peace that I always have the option of choice." It is much like a door they always know they can choose to open.

All of this information has made me think about my brother. Now, I think I see all of what he saw ahead in his life and understand

completely why he did it. He was fiercely private and independent, but was reaching a point in his life where he would be dependent on others. This would have been totally unacceptable to him. Rather than subject himself to that, he chose to just stop before it got any worse. Early in my grief process, I actually made a pros and cons list of all the things he was facing in his life; it made the WHY of his choice pretty clear to me.

In this past year, I've begun to write letters to a group of six women. The youngest is sixty-eight and the oldest is ninety-five. They have told me that they're surprised and sometimes disappointed when they wake up each morning. The struggle to stay alive sometimes seems not worth the effort, but only one has passed away during this year. Death is of course inevitable for all of us even though we do not like to think about it.

So all of these thoughts have been churning around in my head. The eighty-five-year-old man with the plastic bag, my brother's choice to be in control of his own future, my elderly friends who struggle with life daily, and the knowledge that California may eventually have a compassionate choice to exit life. If I were terminal or in tremendous pain and my family had to watch, would I see this as a viable option? I hope I will never be in a position to have to make that choice. In our monthly SAS meetings, we take the emotional pulse of the participants to determine if anyone is on the edge of following their loved one. At no point during my grief have I felt that I might want to follow my brother. Somehow, this seems very different than the quality of life choice I might have to make one day.

I'm very clear about how wrong I feel suicide is for a young person who's barely begun to live their life and doesn't understand what all their options might be. I feel most strongly for the loss of survivors whose loved ones killed themselves at a young age. My brother was sixty-one years old and had lived a long and wonderful life; in fact, he stated that in the letters he left. He was not married and had no children, so I was the person most affected by his suicide; he was my big brother and I loved him. His death has left a huge hole in my life. That said, I have reached this place where I understand that it was truly HIS LIFE and his choice. But, where does the line get drawn, at what age or what quantity of pain? What quality of life makes suicide okay? That's where it gets blurry and no one truly knows the answer for anyone but themselves.

I attend the SAS monthly survivors meeting in the San Fernando Valley. I sometimes find the meetings uncomfortable because they draw me back into the pain that I manage to keep separate from my ordinary life. The meetings pull my grief up into the light of day and I inspect new aspects of it. The meetings have been a very loving, supportive place to deal with my pain, but sometimes I find that I hesitate about wanting to attend the meetings. It's just easier somehow to avoid the pain.

Recently, I spoke to our survivors group leader Susan about assisted suicide. She knew only a little about the Oregon law, and I explained that it's only for those patients who are terminal. She quickly said, "What about psychic pain?" She gave a thought provoking example: "If someone has taken several rounds of chemotherapy and reached a point where it will not work anymore and they are allowed the lethal option, how is that so different from someone who has tried several different rounds of medications for mental issues and they've reached the end of the road and nothing else will work? ... They are in tremendous psychic pain, but this assisted suicide will not be an option available for them right?" I nodded my head and now my mind was racing with this new aspect. From a purely medical standpoint, I guess the situation of giving the lethal drugs to someone who is dying anyway is considered compassionate. Yet, giving the drugs to someone who is experiencing mental pain and suffering would be murder?

I am reminded that as a society we seem to agree that the pain and suffering of animals is not acceptable. Why would we as a society allow this peaceful solution for pets, but not the humane release for humans?

It's all very messy. I don't begin to have answers, and even the thought of bringing this up for discussion is unsettling. I don't like the idea of making people angry or defensive about their loss. I guess I just wanted to share that I've come to a place in the road where it's less bumpy, but I still can't see what may lie ahead. I once said that I would never, ever consider suicide but the longer I live and learn the more I take the attitude, "Never say never." I just don't know what might lie ahead.

~ Judy

## Volunteer Highlight

*Rick Mogil lost his brother, Ed, to suicide in 2003 and has honored him by volunteering for SAS*



Rick Mogil has been well-known to readers of this publication for his series of insightful and emotional articles concerning his brother's suicide. However, this is merely the tip of the iceberg of his volunteerism.

Rick consistently attends SAS Advisory committee meetings despite the harrowing drive down the 405. He is a Suicide Response Team member, going to the scene of a death by suicide. He regularly co-facilitates SAS support groups in the San Fernando Valley. Three times a year, he comes to Didi Hirsch on a Saturday to tell his story of suicide loss in order to help train new Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line Counselors.

Finally, and most impressive to me, he kept calling me in order to volunteer his time to provide administrative support for SAS. Despite working full-time, he revolutionized the SAS supply closet and filing system during his "free" time.

Thank you so much, Rick!

Please enjoy his article below.

~ Tom

## How To Volunteer

We always need people to share their energy and talents!

- Volunteers for SAS may co-facilitate support groups, offer telephone support counseling, help with filing, plan events, etc.! Call Tom Rankin at (310) 751-5370.

- Volunteering as a counselor for the Suicide Prevention Center's Crisis Line involves seven Saturdays of training and a minimum commitment of one year (one weekly four-hour shift). Call Dave Smith at (310) 751-5330.

## Why?

**Rick Mogil  
Studio City, CA**

"What else are our lives finally but a story we tell ourselves to find some sense in the pain of living?"  
*Mark Frost, The List of Seven, 1993*

In the search for the "Why?" of my brother's suicide, I have been sidetracked by another "Why?" Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives? We are just one small subclass of the class of mammals in the animal kingdom. What makes our lives that more precious than, say, weasels or goats? Do squirrels get depressed if they don't put away enough acorns for the winter? Do they stand in the middle of the field and wait for the hawk to pluck them out of the grass because they feel they have let their family down?

We are born, we eat, we crap, we have sex and we die, just like any other animal. What makes us so special? Why do we strive to leave our imprint on society, create monuments to our greatness or to our lack of humanity, and why should we care?

Why would I want to continue to put one foot in front of the other every day when it would be so much easier to follow my brother's example?

Just think! No more suffering! No more bills! No more mistakes! No more depression! No more feeling like I have screwed up everyone else's lives like I did mine! No more pain! No more...

And what do I really have to look forward to? Increasing pain in my knees and back due to arthritis? Losing control of my bodily functions

with the onset of dementia or, possibly Alzheimer's? Loss of limbs from diabetes? Open-heart surgery? Prostate cancer? Hemorrhoids the size of footballs? Being bedridden the last seven years of my life like Uncle Butch? Suffering the deaths of my parents or other loved ones?

Not a cheery outlook for my "golden years" is it?

Is this what my brother perceived his life to be? Overburdened with the crap between the beginning of life and the end? Was the space filled with the dread of making too many mistakes and feeling like a pariah within his own family? Or the paranoia of thinking everyone is looking at you as if you were the progeny of Joseph Merrick, the elephant man?

Sometimes the ugliness we feel inside becomes the only TRUTH, and we are blinded from seeing what could transpire if we were no longer here.

But what would I leave behind? What would I miss?

Deep, lingering kisses from Maggie. My grandson, Russell, climbing into my lap for me to read him a story. Sharing family events and growth with my son Adam and daughter-in-law Debbie. Watching my nieces and nephews develop and succeed.

Again, why didn't Ed see this? Well, maybe not the Maggie part. But he had Elda, the kids and grandkids and all the rest.

Where is that line drawn in the sand, one side, the one we are on, is life with all of its pressures, joys and foibles, and the other, the darkness,

the Eternity, the release? Would I cross it? I know it would be easier to end the procession towards my inevitable end. It was for Ed, or so it seemed. But would it be the right choice for me?

So many questions, never enough answers.

Now I am back at examining my feelings.

Envy. I don't know why envy always occurs to me first. Am I envious...no, strike that. I am envious of Ed's freedom and my continued enslavement to my life.

Sad. Is it sadness for the loss of his sweet, gentle nature? Was he really all that sweet and gentle? It seems that the only memories I have of Ed are of his sweetness and sense of humor (for which, I am grateful). But what about all of the in between times? If he was truly bipolar then he wouldn't necessarily be so sweet all of the time. Or is it the sadness of realizing how tortured his soul was and probably there was nothing I could do about it?

Anger. Anger is another one of those emotions I have a hard time dealing with. Who or what am I really angry with? Me? Ed? Emperor Ming?

Come on, really! Whose fault is this? Where can I lay the blame for Ed taking a gun and surgically removing his pain with a bullet? Was it God, mom and dad, me, Elda, the kids, the milkman?

Here's one of those Duh moments. Like, Duh, Ed put the gun in his own hand. Ed pulled the trigger. But Duh doesn't cut it when you are racked with guilt and remorse. If only...

*continued on page 5*

Like most of you reading this, I am a survivor of suicide. My father hung himself in 1975 when I was four years old. It is something I expect people to know about me as a given. Often I felt they couldn't even hold a conversation with me, understand who I was completely, or process my existence without this information. I announced it to anyone who would listen. My mother even wrote a children's book about me and his death that is used in the grief community called "Rachel and The Upside Down Heart." It didn't actually say my father died of suicide but did present me, in my mind, as the poster child for grief. To me, I was a daughter of death. Now, I am a wife, about to be a mother, no longer that little four-year-old girl. I am less dependent on this being my defining quality, but that took a lot of work. I thought I had been successful working through my issues on my own.

I didn't realize how much more work there was to do until I stumbled upon Didi Hirsch and the SAS program last year, some thirty years after his death. I am very grateful for those meetings. I continue to work this through and I am happy to apply my professional skills as a writer to being the new editor of this newsletter. I find expressing myself through writing to be very helpful. I now understand why my mother wrote a book and I am working on my own. So, if you have something to say or to write, please send it to me for the newsletter. We would like to hear from you about what you're thinking, dealing with, a book or piece of music that has helped, or even a happy announcement - like a new job or a wedding. For we should celebrate ourselves as well. To me I find that to be a great help to survival. I can be reached at [rachelschinderman@yahoo.com](mailto:rachelschinderman@yahoo.com).

~ Rachel

---

## Why?

*continued from page 4*

Do you want to feel real guilt? Use the word relief when talking about the suicide of your loved one. Aren't you just a little bit relieved you don't have to worry any more if they are going to do it? Isn't it a relief that you won't have those phone calls where the words are so slurred from alcohol or drugs that you can't understand any of them? That you won't have to spend half the night searching for them in the gutters or dark, dank alleyways? That you won't have to face their tirades, accusations or physical abuse? Or watch them, helplessly, as they destroy their lives and yours? Relief is just a gunshot away.

Well, friends. I see by the shadows on the wall that the sun is setting on this day in my life without Ed.

No, really. It's not a metaphor for the end of my life. It's eight o'clock and the sun has really set.

Besides, I have so much more to do, words to say and people to love.

Life: "It can only be as meaningful as our own ability to make it so." Mark Frost, List of Seven, 1993

~ Rick

## 2006 Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards

On May 12, 2006, Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center held its tenth annual *Erasing the Stigma Leadership Awards* at the Regent Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills, honoring activist and author Bebe Moore Campbell and *Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez.

This very special celebration paid homage to ten years of achievement while recognizing the work of today's advocates in combating the stigma surrounding mental illness. Lopez's journey began when he met Nathaniel, a musician struggling with mental illness and homelessness on Skid Row. Recounting how much he learned about mental health while getting to know Nathaniel, Lopez ended his message with optimism: Nathaniel is currently off the streets and sleeping in his own bed every night of the week. With continued mental health treatment, Nathaniel may resume the musical education he once pursued before mental illness took hold of him. Though unable to accept her *Leadership Award* in person, Campbell's message was also full of hope. Doris Moore, Campbell's mother, and the co-founders of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Inglewood Chapter, Nancy Carter, Benita Council, and Judyann Elder, accepted Campbell's *Leadership Award* and reminded everyone about the importance of providing support for those with mentally ill family members in addition to quality mental health care.

Record executive and performer Shawn Amos served as Master of Ceremonies and Musical Guest, singing two ballads about his mother, whom he lost to suicide in 2003. Satirist Sandra Tsing Loh presented *Leadership Awards* to Campbell and Lopez, infusing wit and humor into the program.

The event was a tremendous success, raising much needed funds to help provide services for our community. For more information about *Erasing the Stigma*, please contact Didi Hirsch's Development Department at (310) 751-5425.

---

---

**Editorial Note: While occasional thoughts of suicide may be a normal grief reaction, please call the Crisis Line at 1-877-7CRISIS if you seriously consider suicide or make a plan to kill yourself. Hopelessness is usually a symptom of treatable depression.**

## Contributions

10/8/05 - 4/30/06: *A million thanks for your generosity!*

### IN MEMORY OF

**Billy Malloy Barron, III** from Hilary Jacobs  
**Donna Lee Carpenter** from Sabina Dewan, Catherine and John Estey  
**Douglas Clune Ciccolo** from Pasadena-Foothills Assn. of Realtors  
**Estella Tibay Cuyagan** from Arthur Cuyagan  
**Philip Fixler** from April Pologar  
**Harry Fujita** from Dorothy M. Fujita  
**Beth Gallamore** from Nancy Walsh  
**Wyatt Halikas** from Marissa Greenberg  
**Doug Johnston** from Karen Judson Kennedy  
**Tina Rachel Kaminsky** from Ellen and Marvin Kaminsky  
**Stephen Kapelon** from Barbi Sue Appelquist  
**Rebecca Suzanne Lemmon** from Ann and Robert Lemmon  
**Mary Margaret MacKinnon** from Connie Dunn Roderick  
**Tanya Madden** from Kathleen Boschee, Mike Devine, Lloyd Flowers, Melanie Harrison and Joe Hathcock  
**Lanny McCommon** from V. M. Chavez, Francine Davey and Karen and Chip Smith  
**Aiko Nobori** from Miriam Almeida, Judy M. Asazawa, Cesar Espinoza, Peter Hasegawa, Marcy Hiratzka, Kay and Hideko Ino, Paul King, Kevin Kwon, Mayumi and Wilson Morishita, Michelle Nagata, Pam and Mark Nakagawa, Gail Nishinaka, Robert Nishinaka, Di Okazaki, Julieta Quiano, Louise Rovner, Carole and Akira Sasaki, Todd Sasaki, Pagiel Shecter, M.D., Margaret Shimizu, Ethel and Eric Takahashi, Grace Terauchi, Teresita Tipon, Lorena Tirado, Myra Uyemura, Pauline and Vincent Wong, Warren Woo and William Yancey  
**Deborah Purmort** from Marilyn Peppin  
**Brian Franklin Rose** from Dale K. Rose, M.F.T.  
**Phyllis Schlatter** from Rosslyn Block  
**Casey Smith** from Phyllis Horning, Stephen D. Koffman, Sandra Matsuura and Penny McDonell  
**Stephen Stokes** from Christine and Steve Stokes  
**Doug Sweet** from Margaret Ann and Harvey Allen, Shanna Christoffersen, Kym and Bradford Colton, Tracy and Tim Crutchfield, Jacqueline and Steve Dontcho, Rebar Fabricators, Michelle M. Stevenson, Stover Studio Service and Lynn Marie Watkins  
**Jeff Zients** from Johanna Duprey

### IN HONOR OF

**Norman Farberow** from Carmel and Rudolph Winkler  
**Michelle Hirschman** from Harriet Weiner  
**Stan Lelewer, Lorraine Lyou and Joanne Uy** from anonymous  
**Beverly Smith** from Patricia Rasmussen

*Survivors After Suicide is privately funded by generous contributions from individual donors, proceeds from the Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K, and grants from private foundations and corporations such as the B.C. McCabe Foundation and the Employees Community Fund of Boeing California.*

## Submit an Article for the Newsletter!

We invite all readers of this newsletter to submit ideas for articles or to actually write an article or articles for upcoming newsletter issues. A short article would be 500 words or less, while a feature article would be about 1000 words. Poetry might also be appropriate. You do not have to be a suicide survivor to submit an article, but the article should be about some issue related to surviving suicide loss or general bereavement. Please be as creative as you like! Also, if you have seen good articles in other publications that might be appropriate for reprinting in our newsletter, please e-mail a link to the article online (or send the full text) to [rachelschinderman@yahoo.com](mailto:rachelschinderman@yahoo.com). If you would rather send a hard copy, mail it to Tom Rankin, Didi Hirsch CMHC, 4760 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230.

## Submit Poems or Prose for the Potluck!

This year's Summer Potluck will focus on the healing power of writing (see Calendar of Upcoming Events, page 7). In addition to speakers, we are soliciting writing, whether poetry or prose, that survivors created in response to losing their loved one. Examples might include a short story regarding finding a suicide victim's body, a biographical narrative about a deceased loved one, or a free verse poem on the subject of grief. Fiction or nonfiction writing is acceptable. We will publish a collection of survivors' writings and distribute them to attendees of the Potluck. The length of your piece(s) might range from half a page to several pages; however, due to printing costs please make certain your piece is shorter than 5000 words. We prefer e-mail submission: e-mail an attachment in Word to [rachelschinderman@yahoo.com](mailto:rachelschinderman@yahoo.com). With each submission, please include at least a one-paragraph explanation preceding the piece which details how the process of writing it affected your healing. For professional writers or therapists, feel free to submit articles about how writing affects the grieving process. In that case, include a short description of your professional background. We look forward to reading your writing! Submission deadline: Friday, July 28, 2006.

## Music for a Grieving Heart

Soon after our son Sammy's suicide I found meditation/relaxation music helped me to relax and get some much needed sleep. I wondered if music could help me in other ways, so I began listening to a variety of music. It wasn't long before I found that music did help me in various ways. Some music comforted me; some provided spiritual support; some brought back special memories; some had meaningful lyrics while others reminded me that we may unite somewhere in the future; and then there was the music that helped me to relax and fall asleep.

The comforting music was a mixture of classical pieces and popular songs. I found listening to classical music serene and peaceful. But both the classical and popular songs in this category helped to calm my over-active mind that was full of questions. The spiritual music helped me feel closer to God and renewed my strong religious beliefs. The music that I shared with my son was difficult for me to listen to at first, but in time I felt more comfortable with it and surprisingly it did make me feel closer to him. The music with meaningful lyrics helped me to process my grief by isolating the various

feelings I had, e.g., sadness, guilt, anger, relief and acceptance. Furthermore, through the words, it provided a way for me to express my deep love for my son. The music that reminds me we may meet in the future brought to light hope, which comforted me. The relaxation/meditation music freed my mind from anxiety and worry allowing me to relax and fall asleep.

Most of us listen to music and sometimes we sing or hum along. What I'm suggesting is much different inasmuch as one needs to concentrate and focus on what you're listening to.

*continued on next page*

**Lois Bloom  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA**

tening to. The reason for doing this is to discover how the music is affecting you. While listening, ask yourselves questions like, "Is this music making me feel happy or sad, calm or anxious?"; "Is it providing me some relief or not?"; "Are the words meaningful or not?"; and "Does it remind me of the love we share or other feelings?" After listening, write down the name of the music and how it made you feel. Be patient with yourself and know that this process will take some time and effort. I believe if you're open to working at it, you will reap some benefit. Also understand that over time your feelings could change; music that may have affected you in a negative way when you first listened to it could become helpful, so consider giving it another chance.

Because each of us has their own tastes in music, there's the possibility the music and categories I've listed may not appeal or be helpful to you. Don't let that stop you from working on your own personal music bibliography. Due to space this article only includes two of the categories I've discussed: 1) comforting music and 2) music that reminds me we may meet in the future. Please remember this is not a complete list of music that could help you; this is just the music that I found helped me. I sincerely hope that by concentrating on the music you listen to and then sorting out exactly how you feel about it, music will become another resource that assists you with your grieving.

#### **Comforting Music**

Various classical pieces from Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Mozart, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn and Wagner

"Love Changes Everything" sung by Sarah Brightman and Michael Crawford

"On Eagle's Wings" sung by Michael Crawford

"Memory of the Trees" sung by Enya

"Memory" sung by Sarah Brightman; Betty Buckley; and Barbra Streisand

"Candle In the Wind" sung by Elton John

"The Circle of Life" and "He Lives in You" both sung by Elton John, from the album *The Lion King*

"The Gift of Love" sung by Bette Midler

"In the Arms of the Angel" sung by Sara McLachlan, from her album *Surfacing*

"You'll Never Walk Alone" sung by Barbara Streisand

"Bright Day" sung by Terri Allard and Tim Anderson, from the album *Before Their Time, Vol. III*

"As Time Goes By" sung by Rod Stewart, album *Stardust*

"Always" sung by Kenny Rogers, album *Love Collection*

"Bridge Over Troubled Water" sung by Anne Murray; Linda Eder; and Eva Cassidy

"Wishing You Were Somewhere Here Again" sung by Michael Crawford

#### **Reminders That We May Meet in the Future**

"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" sung by Eva Cassidy; Ray Charles; and Judy Garland

"Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth" sung by Cindy Bullens, album *Before Their Time, Vol. II*

"A New Life" sung by Linda Eder, from her album *Linda Eder, Broadway My Way*

"I'll Be Seeing You" sung by Rod Stewart; Tony Bennett; and Linda Eder

"I Saw You There" sung by Connie Kaldor, from the album *Before Their Time, Vol. II*

"To Where You Are" sung by Josh Groban

"A New Day" sung by Celine Dion

For a more comprehensive bibliography of music that may help survivors, see my compilation on the SAS website at [www.suicidepreventioncenter.org](http://www.suicidepreventioncenter.org). Click on "Lost A Loved One?" at the top, then click "Recommended Resources" on the left. Finally, select "Music Bibliography for a Grieving Heart"

~ Lois, written April 10, 2006, in memory of my son, Sammy Bloom

## **CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **JULY 22-23, 2006, SAN FRANCISCO** **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** **Out of the Darkness Overnight**

Take a trip for the weekend to beautiful San Francisco to support suicide awareness and depression education. Survivors will walk 20 miles from dusk until dawn. AFSP sponsors this San Francisco event as well as a similar one in Chicago on August 12-13, 2006. Register at [www.theovernight.org](http://www.theovernight.org) or see [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) for details.

### **AUGUST 5, 2006, 11:30 - 2:00** **SAS Summer Potluck**

Join the community of survivors for a Saturday potluck luncheon at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center, 4760 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City 90230. This summer's theme will be "Healing Through Writing." Survivors are invited to speak for about five minutes each about how writing helped them to heal, whether via a particular project or the writing process in general. We would also like to put together a selection of survivor-written poetry or prose to hand out at the potluck. Please contact Tom Rankin at [trankin@didihirsch.org](mailto:trankin@didihirsch.org) or (310) 751-5370 if you are interested in speaking or contributing your writing.

### **SEPTEMBER 7-9, 2006, WASHINGTON, D.C.** **SPAN USA's National Awareness Event**

Visit our nation's capital to join the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) in three days of suicide prevention advocacy, education and remembrance. The event is entitled, "Suicide Prevention: Right Here, Right Now." See [www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org) for details and registration.

### **OCTOBER 8, 2006, 8:00 A.M. - NOON** **Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K**

More than 3,000 participants from all over Los Angeles will join together on Sunday morning at Westchester Parkway (just north of LAX) to raise awareness and funding for suicide prevention services. Adults and children alike will enjoy our health and fitness expo and finish line festivities. Proceeds from *Alive & Running* will directly benefit Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center's Crisis Line and the Survivors After Suicide program. See [www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org) for details.

### **FIND EVENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY** **See these websites for details:**

[www.mentalhealth.org/calendar/suicide.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.org/calendar/suicide.asp)

[www.sprc.org/calendar/index.asp](http://www.sprc.org/calendar/index.asp)

[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org); also [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

## SAS Group Meetings

Everyone who has completed an eight-week Survivors After Suicide Support Group is invited to attend monthly meetings at any of the locations listed below. There is no charge. The schedule is below.

### Monthly Drop-In Groups

San Fernando Valley: Sherman Oaks Hospital, 4929 Van Nuys Blvd., Sherman Oaks. Meetings are held in the doctor's dining room on the 1st floor on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
*Meeting dates: July 8, Aug. 12, Sep. 9, Oct. 14, Nov. 11, Dec. 9*

South Bay: Little Company of Mary Hospital, 4101 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, in the Center for Health Education Bldg. (located behind the hospital). Meets on the 3rd Monday of each month from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. *Meeting dates: July 17, Aug. 21, Sep. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18.*

West LA: Didi Hirsch Culver-Palms Ctr., 11133 Washington Blvd., Culver City. Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.  
*Meeting dates: July 19, Aug 16, Sep 20, Oct 18, Nov. 15, Dec. 20.*

### Eight-Week Groups

For the remainder of 2006, our quarterly eight-week support groups for those who have lost loved ones to suicide will take place on the following schedule.

Group 3: Begins the week of Aug. 13-20, ends the week of Oct. 1-8.

Group 4: Begins the week of Oct. 22-29, ends the week of Dec. 10-17.

Groups meet once a week for an hour-and-a-half for eight consecutive weeks, with locations in Sherman Oaks, Culver City, Redondo Beach, San Gabriel and Montrose. To be placed into a group, please call Tom Rankin at (310) 751-5370.

### **SURVIVORS AFTER SUICIDE NEWSLETTER**

A quarterly publication of Survivors After Suicide (providing support groups for those who have lost a loved one to suicide), a program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

SAS Program Number: (310) 751-5370

Crisis Line Number: (877) 7-CRISIS (Toll-free in LA and Orange Counties), or (310) 391-1253 anywhere.

Editor: Rachel Zients Schinderman  
rachelschinderman@yahoo.com

Editorial Board: Lois Bloom; Samuel C. Bloom; David Davis; Norman Farberow, Ph.D.; Lyn Morris, L.M.F.T.; Tom Rankin, J.D., M.A. Special thanks to Didi Hirsch's Development Department (Joanne Uy and Lorraine Lyou).

### **REPRINT POLICY**

You are welcome to reprint material from our newsletter if you are a nonprofit support organization that produces periodicals. We do require the item include the author's name and title and the following:

***Reprinted with permission from the Survivors After Suicide newsletter, a publication of the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center: Suicide Prevention Center, 4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230.***

Also include the issue date and year the article appeared. Kindly send us a copy of any reprints for our authors to Editor Rachel Zients Schinderman at her e-mail address above.

Thank you.

View this newsletter online at [www.suicidepreventioncenter.org](http://www.suicidepreventioncenter.org).  
Click on "Lost a Loved One?" then "Newsletters" for pdf files



Didi Hirsch  
Community Mental Health Center  
SAS-SPC  
4760 S. SEPULVEDA BLVD.  
CULVER CITY, CA 90230

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Los Angeles, CA  
Permit # 509