



SURVIVORS

after suicide

A Program of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center

JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2006 • VOLUME 19, NO. 1 • PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

The Apology

Rick Mogil
Studio City, CA

I really have to apologize to everyone who has read my articles for the past year and a half. I haven't been totally honest with you.

Every article starts out with accurate depictions of the situations and my emotions are genuine, but then I feed you a load of pabulum to soften the previous paragraphs. It's a bunch of whooey and I am sorry I took such a Pollyanna approach to my endings.

The truth of the matter is I reach a point in my writing where I am not sure where I want to go or I'm afraid to follow beyond that point. So I bring on the platitudes, soft sell, clichés, and hopeful endings so everyone will like me, think I have the answers, and won't see me as another somber, self-serving, depressing-voice-in-this-otherness-we-all-live-in survivor.

continued on page 2

Nine Years of Remembering My Father

Rev. Dr. Diane L. Williams
Torrance, CA

September 7, 2005, was the ninth anniversary of my father's suicide. It came the day after I began a new job as a resident chaplain at UCLA Medical Center—a job that is a direct result of my father's death.

A few months after my father's death, a friend took me to a new church. I cried through the whole service as I missed my father so much and felt I could not go on without him. I spoke to the minister afterwards and told my story through tears and sniffles. I said that I needed to know *why*. Most of us who have lost a loved one to suicide can relate to this. The minister looked me in the eyes and said something that changed my life. "You are asking the wrong question," he said. "The question is not *why* but *what is the gift in this*." He told me that I have a purpose in life and that I need to find out what it is and then make it happen.

That is exactly what I did. I finished graduate school and became an ordained minister specializing in supporting people in the death and dying process.

continued on page 4

Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K Draws Record Crowd

More than 3,500 people participated in the seventh annual *Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K*, breaking all past records of attendance.

Held on a cool and breezy Sunday morning on October 2, this year's race not only continued the tradition of remembering loved ones lost to suicide while raising awareness about suicide prevention, but also welcomed participation of Students Run L.A. (SRLA). An innovative and exciting after-school intervention program for at-risk middle and high school students, SRLA provides training and mentoring to prepare more than 2,000 young people to complete the Los Angeles Marathon.

continued on page 5



Ester Ybarra Bryant, David Davis, Rick Mogil, and Orly on race day. SRLA became interested in suicide prevention as a result of Ester's community outreach.

SAVE THE DATE

If You Get to Bethlehem, You've Gone Too Far

JANUARY 6 – FEBRUARY 26, 2006

Starring and written by Mariette Hartley.
See Calendar of Upcoming Events, page 6.

SAS exists to help people resolve their grief and pain in their own personal way, and to help them move forward in their lives, positively and productively.



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

Tom's Column

The *Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K* raised more than \$58,500 this year for Survivors After Suicide and the Suicide Prevention Center at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center.

Through the event's website, survivors were able to create individualized pages honoring the memory of their loved one. Not only was this a fantastic fundraising tool, it also encouraged survivors to try to summarize what their loved one's life and death meant to them.

Five survivors, **Beverly Smith, Rachel Zients Schinderman, Rick Mogil, Mary Halligan**, and I raised a combined total of nearly \$10,000. I created the webpage honoring my mother out of a sense of professional obligation: I thought it would be embarrassing if the coordinator of SAS didn't at least make an effort to raise money.

Initially, I did not really want to ask friends and family for money. I had never tried to raise money before. What if I discovered that no one cared? I took the risk of finding out whether people were moved by my mother's life and death.

I sent an e-mail to all the friends who had mattered in my life, whether I was currently close to them or not. I got back in touch with four previously good friends as a result. One of these was a young woman who had attempted suicide herself several years ago, and I had been worried that she might not still be alive. In fact, she graduated from UCLA and is pursuing a career in nursing.

The outpouring of support from my friends and family made me feel even more committed to the cause of suicide prevention. It can be bittersweet for survivors to try to stop future suicide, given that we were unable to prevent our own loved one's death. However, it can also make meaning out of our tragedy. In my own case, by sending out one e-mail, seventeen people gave a total of \$2,535 over the next week. More importantly, I learned that the work that I do matters to many people I care about.

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.

The Apology continued from page 1

And that's how I have survived everything in my life. I took the negative and held it in where I thought it deserved to be (in me) and presented the *Don't worry, Everything will be alright, There is a brighter day ahead, Tomorrow it won't look so bad* façade so I could be the great Healer, Fixer of Things Emotional, friend to all, lover of none, The Grand Pooh-Bah of bull.

My shoulders ache from the number of heads that have rested wearily on them and my heart breaks from all of the *would haves, could haves, should haves*.

My back is bent from the weight of the tarnished, dented armor I have been wearing while pretending to be everyone's knight.

But what has this brought me?

Am I any richer, wiser or happier?

Where would I be if I had been honest all of these years with my emotions and faced my fears?

Would I have been able to keep the depression at bay or at least deal with it in a straightforward fashion?

The answers are:

1. Understanding
2. Yes
3. Somewhere and someone else
4. No

So, what has this brought me? Understanding. Not a brilliant flash of "Aha!," just a gradual awareness of where I fit in the cosmos as I envision it.

2001 was the year of my spirit's demise due to my depression taking charge of my life and grinding me into pulp. I was at the bottom of the pit and could not look up or see any light. I very nearly destroyed my career and betrayed the trust of my most cherished loved one, Maggie, and I held no hope for my future. It was her strength and love that moved me to seek understanding and direction, so I started the latest in a long line of therapy. And I cried. For the first time in all of my on-again off-again therapy, I cried and I allowed someone to see beyond the first walls I had erected around my mind.

2003 was the year of my soul's demise when my brother completed his suicide. I was just beginning to accept the new me when all of a sudden I was spinning around blaming myself, saying it was all my fault, it's because I'm a loser, I screwed up, I didn't call him often enough, I, I, I...

Understanding. That and a mental slap in the face made me catch my breath for the one second it took to realize that he was responsible and I was going to have to find a way to deal with it. That's probably the first time I made a conscious effort to take care of myself.

Am I any richer, wiser or happier? Yes. My enrichment has come in a most wonderful

continued on next page

Why Walk 20 Miles?

Bobbie Mathers
Valencia, CA

Why did I walk 20 miles? To honor my wonderful son Eric Spencer who died by suicide Nov. 2, 2001. **Why did I walk 20 miles?** To honor my special nephew Michael Roberts who died by suicide March, 2005. **Why did I walk 20 miles?**

To provide hope to others who may be going through the pain of losing a loved one to suicide. **Why did I walk 20 miles?** To provide hope to those who are suffering from depression or other forms of mental illness. **Why did I walk 20 miles?** To do away with the stigma that comes with suicide and to educate.



These are only a few of the reasons I walked 20 miles through the night. I walked with 2,100 others who have been touched by this tragedy. We began at sundown July 16, 2005, and finished at sunup, July 17, along beautiful Lake Michigan in Chicago. I felt so much support and understanding from all that were involved with this event, and I could not have done this walk without the support of my best friend, who is also my sister, Stephanie. We laughed and we cried throughout the night. My sister has been my biggest support since losing my son Eric, and I am forever grateful for her love and strength. Thanks Stephanie, I love you!

There were others I did this walk for. On my mind throughout the night were Nicholas, son of Renee; Tanya, daughter of Andi; Casey, son of Virginia and Bill; Tom, son of Rumi and John; and Laura, partner of Susan.

The most touching part of the walk was toward the end when we were each given a bag to write a message to our loved one. Candles were placed inside, and these bags lined the way at the end of the walk. Passing by each luminary with names, dates, and messages was an experience I will never forget. You could see these luminaries for an astounding 2 1/2 miles. Hopefully, with events such as these we will eventually do away with the stigma of mental illness and suicide. The wristbands we wore that night provided this message of hope:

There will be no darkness tonight

Even as you sleep

There will be no darkness tonight

For this world that longs to see

I hope to do this walk again in 2006. ♡

The Apology *continued from page 2*

denomination, self-love. Four years ago, I would never have even thought the words much less have said them. My brother Ed's death has shown me where my self-loathing was headed and I don't want that to be my destination. So that must make me wiser. And being able to share my feelings with others, not just my family and friends but through my writing, is an openness I would never have allowed before. But happier is harder to define. I am happier that I can share openly with Maggie. I am ecstatic that I can share with my grandson. I am gratified if my words touch one other person. I am not happy surviving Ed's suicide, but I am learning to incorporate it in my life.

Where would I be if I had been honest all of these years with my emotions and faced my fears? Somewhere and someone else. Dr. Phil or Phil Jackson. We all could be someone else if only...

Would I have been able to keep the depression at bay or at least deal with it in a straightforward fashion? No. I would have preceded my brother in suicide. As weird as it sounds, I think that my being the friend to all and expending all of that energy taking care of everyone kept me too busy to dwell on my own problems.

And as for that tarnished, dented armor, let me tell you a story. Several years ago I was driving to work and spotted a good friend of ours parked at the side of the road, and it looked like she was exchanging info with a male motorist. She didn't look happy. I quickly pulled to the side and ran back to where they were and asked her if everything was all right. She said she was fine, that they'd had a little fender bender, and were just finishing up the exchange of info. I waited a little bit more and then went on my way to work. She likes to tell this story and describes me as her "knight in shining armor rushing to her rescue." After my plunge into the darkness in 2001, she was one of the few people who knew what had happened and I was afraid she and her family would shun me. We had a long conversation about this and she said she knew that I was a good person and that I would always be her knight in shining armor.

Tears well up just thinking about those words. No matter how bad, evil, unworthy I may think I am, there are some who think and know otherwise.

I try real hard every day to believe that. ♡

It is often the strongest who don't survive; they are lead to believe that they should be able to 'grin and bear it.' Try 'treating' cancer by just grinning and bearing it.

—unknown

Remembering My Father *continued from page 1*

Each year my father's anniversary is a time that I approach with mixed emotions. I simultaneously dread and welcome it. I never know how I will feel or how the day will unfold for me. Some years are better than others. All bring forth powerful memories of a beloved man.

Year One was a biggie. Following my father's death, I kept dreaming of a very specific image, and a voice in my head would say, "Today my heart broke open and an angel took flight." I felt like I was forgetting my father's voice and if I forgot his voice, what would I forget next? I decided I wanted a permanent reminder of the permanent act that ended a wonderful life, so I had a tattoo of this image (my first and only) inked onto my left shoulder. The image was the visual that accompanied those words: A heart breaking open with an angel coming out of it. The date of his death was listed beneath.

Year Two I cried all day.

Year Three began with the process of removing the tattoo from Year One. I no longer wanted to look at it each morning in the mirror and feel sad. I did not need ink on my skin to remind me of my father. I would never forget. Now there is a faint white outline where red, yellow and black ink used to be. My skin tone will probably not return, so I still see this every day. However, like the tattoo, my pain and grief has faded.

Years Four through Eight moved by with a mild mix of sadness and profound love for the man who left this earth way too soon. Because I never know how I will react on this day, I usually do not plan anything and prepare myself (giving myself the space) for whatever may come up. People around me know the significance of the day and are supportive or just give me my space.

Now we are in Year Nine. This year fell on day two of my new job. No one knew the significance of the day. No one knew how to support me. Part of me was a little scared. I wanted to make a good first impression, but I also wanted to be authentic.

Over the years I have had a panel placed on the Lifekeepers Memory Quilt (I highly recommend this; it was a powerful experience), spoken about memorializing my father, and tried to honor his memory in various ways. This year I felt compelled to do something different. I came across a website called HYPERLINK at <http://www.donorschoose.com>. It is a great site that matches teachers in need of project funding with donors. I looked through all the proposals in my price range and found the perfect one.

My father loved birds. He would watch them for hours from the picture window in the living room. He would feed them all year and take extra care in the winter months. He

would even chase the squirrels away when they were eating out of the bird feeders. In his memory I funded a project for a third grade class in Ashville, NC. These forty students will join Cornell University's Classroom FeederWatch program to study birds, build bird houses, and perform avian service projects in their community.

I felt this was a wonderful way to remember my father on Year Nine. Just the thought of young children getting excited about something that my father loved so much makes me smile. So now on September 7, 2005, I was able to remember my father with joy and love. Yes, the tears came, but the prospect of enlightening children in my father's name was my focus on that day and will be in the coming year. I am looking forward to finding a new project to honor my father next year. He was a passionate man, and there is much that I can choose from. I know that wherever he is, he is smiling at these children and guiding their efforts as they move through this project. ♡

Surviving a Suicide Loss: A Financial Guide

Even as survivors try to cope with their grief, they must often make important financial decisions and try to plan for the future. A new resource addressing the financial aspects of surviving suicide loss is now available from AFSP. A complimentary copy of the guide is available from <http://www.afsp.org/finguide/> (or view it online at <http://www.afsp.org/survivor/financial/index.html>).

Lifekeepers Memory Quilt

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.



Alive & Running for Suicide Prevention 5K/10K

The 48 members of Team Sweetwater along with 3,100 other participants helped raise money for the Suicide Prevention Center of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center on Sunday, October 2, 2005.



left: Team Sweetwater.

above: Randi and Laurie Woodrow walked and ran in memory of their father, Paul. Bailey was the first dog to cross the finish line.

continued from page 1

"Their participation was especially meaningful because suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds," says Kita S. Curry, Ph.D., President/CEO of Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center. "We hope SRLA participants finished the race with a greater sense of their own strength and a greater awareness of how suicide prevention services could help them and their friends in times of crisis."

In addition to Students Run L.A., people from all walks of life participated in the race, including those who walked or ran as members of a team. Such teams included the Boeing Team Family and Friends, Aiko's Team, Team Sweetwater and Team Zients. Many of the teams were led by survivors, who saw this not only as an opportunity for friends and family to collectively remember a loved one lost to suicide, but also as a way to help raise funds for the Suicide Prevention Center.

"Being a survivor myself," said event chair and Didi Hirsch Board Member Stan Lelewer, "I was especially gratified to see so many survivors participating as part of a team or individually and that so many had printed the names of their loved ones on the back of their t-shirts or race bibs."

The morning also included other special remembrances of those lost to suicide. Memorial quilts, hand-made by friends or family members honoring the memory of loved ones, were prominently displayed around the venue. Banners were displayed as well, offering people the opportunity to memorialize a loved one or to list their own names as a Friend of the Suicide Prevention Center.

Dan Butler, who has been a part of the event since its inception in 1998, was on hand to sound the start of the race. Dan, whose acting career includes appearances in the films *Silence of the Lambs* and *Enemy of the State* and his portrayal of Bulldog on the television show "Frasier," is also a volunteer on Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Crisis Line.

Lyn Morris, the new Division Director of Emergency Services and the Suicide Prevention Center, was clearly moved by the number of people who participated in this year's event.

"This was my first race as Director of the Suicide Prevention Center. I was thrilled and inspired by the wonderful energy and enthusiasm of all of our participants who came out to support suicide prevention."

The day also included an acoustic performance by critically acclaimed singer-songwriter Shawn Amos, a Kiddie K, and a raffle drawing. Fresh coffee, courtesy of Don Francisco's Gourmet Coffee, and energy drink samples from XS Energy were just two of many products on display in the expo area.

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center thanks the following race sponsors for their support for this event: BET, Beacon Capital, Canyon Ranch, Don Francisco's Gourmet Coffee, Holy Cross Mortuary, Flanigan Farms, Four Seasons Hotel, L.A. Leggers, Laugh Factory, Means Knaus Partners, Ralphs/Food 4 Less, and the Rasmussen Foundation. Most importantly, we would especially like to thank all of the volunteers and runners who helped with and participated in the race. We could not have done it without you. ♡

Contributions 8/1/05 - 10/7/05:

A million thanks for your generosity!

IN MEMORY OF

A. Leighton from Angela Leighton
Abraham Leighton from Angela Leighton
Aiko Nobori from Ann and Paul Abe, Dave Baker, Gina Blanck, Regena Booze, Margaret Briggs, Craig Bronstein, Janet Brown, Roger Brown, Chikara Daiko, Helen and David Chun, Allison Cook, Judy Cook, Melissa Cook, Aimee Deslauriers, Delicia Fabre, Sharon Froyd, Gloria Garcia, Cat Gordon, Nonvive Harris-Duckworth, Jeanne Hayashi, Amy C. Johnson, Mitsuko Kawaguchi, Debbie Kawamura, Jean Kitamura, Sylvia Klein, Barbara and Mark Komoto, Harry Kuruma, Brian Kurushima, Mary and Eddy Kurushima, Ann Kusumoto, Erica Lee, Kira Lee, Victoria Leon, Cynthia Lew, Clea Litewka, Marilyn Marks, Darren Masuda, Eugene Masuda, Joanne Masuda, Ken Matsuura, Colleen and Frank Mattoon, Roberta and Frank Mattoon, Janet Nippell, Shari and Kenneth Nishi, Cynthia and Mark Nishinaka, Joyce Nishioka, Marilyn and Alan Nobori, Denise and Mike Okamura, Jessica Oldendorph, Candace and Thomas Oshita, Phyllis Oyama, Nancy Palmer, Joanie Park, Sherrill Paulus, Jeanne Pettet, Aura Pimental, Betty Quon, Ernie Rivera, Jane Rivera, Lori Ann and Gregory Robinson, Lisa K. Rowlett, Marsha Rubenhold, Kelly Sadamitsu, Mitzi Sadamitsu, Candice Saito, Akira Sasaki, Kuniko Sato, Roberta Seligman, Miriam and Dale Smith, Ann Stalcup, Kaye Talamantes, Asao Tokunaga, Leslie Uehara, Roger Uehara, Catherine Villagran, Kathleen and Thomas Wheeler, Cheryl Williams, Adrienne Winters, Lillian Yamaka, Shelley Yamane, Margaret Yoshina, Jessea Young

Beth A. Gallamore from Sharon Froyd
Bobby Bagby from Kita S. and Peter Curry
Brent Rasmussen from Maria Montag

Casey Smith from Rebecca Abbott, Bruce Arnheim, Bruce Ballard, Cindy Balzer, Martha and Brittany Bettis, Evelyn Bixler, Dennis Cajili, Roberto Campos, Janice Citron, Mara and Alan Cohen, Claudette Cooper, Steve Croft, Diane and Bill Csellak, Christopher Davis, Randy DeRonde, Edward DiMilia, Diane Dupere, Verlahna Fraker, Sheri Gaeta, Teri and David Gelbmann, Sheila and Julia Gibbons, Martha and Chris Gini, Stacy Golowen-Armstrong, Sherry Green, Derek Greene, Les Greene, Kent Hamilton, Chris Hartzog, Lorinda Hohenbrink, Louise and Howard Kawamoto, Gregory Kulon, Stephen Long, John Love, Brian Manning, Dale Ken Matsubara, Katherine and Robert McKinney, Eleanor Miranda, Aileen and Michael Miyagi, Jennifer and Norman Moentmann, Maria Montag, Kellie Mullins, Javier Munoz, Anne Pagliarulo, James Peterka, George Poppe, Maria and Richard Portnoy, Patricia Rasmussen, Laura and Robert Reyes, Michele and David Rogalski, Maggie Rose-Van Dyke, Gary Rummelsburg, Neil Sherman, Ben Smith, Beverly Smith, Sandra Storie, Rickey Story, Janice and Edward Tobias, Acel Troutman, Ramachandran Viswanathan, Chuck Wallau, Jennifer and Christopher Warner, Brian Wright

Dana Markusen from Ruthann Markusen
David Rocha from Terri and Gary Bricker
Deborah Holland from Thomas Holland
Dick Bantz from Diana Gillespie
Dion Harkness from Angela Leighton
Donna Lee Carpenter from Alexis Adams, J.D. Atlas, Ph.D., Wendell Berg, Nicki Bonzon, Tom Carpenter, Mary Kate Denny-Ziesmer, Jim Goodall, Rebecca Mann, Jonathan McCumber, Michaela Murphy, JoAnne and Jim Rankin, Tom Rankin, Paul Rosenberg, Christopher Ross, Monica Taylor

Doug Sweet from Roy Beals, Dee Carter Berger, Elaine and Robert Bramen, Doris Carter, Doug Carter, David W. Fortner, Carol and Ron Harris, Tamara Kidd, Kristy

Lewis, Pauline and Jack Maxwell, Christine and Lee Merry, Judie and Richard Sarquiz

Ed Mogil from Nancy and Pete Betancourt, Maggie and David Bright, An Brunelle and Ron Mansfield, Kelli and Rick Delaney, Terri and Aran Dokovna, Mary Lynn Frein, Barbara and R. Michael Frobenius, Diane Goldman, Bobbie and Marvin Hornstein, Rona and Bruce Hornstein, Mark Ivener, Eva Ivener, Stefanie and Jason Ivener, Arlen Markus, Joyce and James McClure, Scott Mogil, Deborah and Adam Mogil, Denise Mogil, Patricia Mogil, Rick Mogil, Mike Mogil, Maggie O'Donnell-Mogil, Kimberley and Michael Richardson, Judith and Ronald Rieder, Debbie Rodriguez, Beverly and Leonard Rosen, Alan Rosen, Jeff Rosen, Mark Rosenbaum, Sara Ruben, Philip Simmons, William Strauss, Patty Tracy, Marla Yukelson

Edouard Botwick from Barbara Minkoff

Elizabeth Mitchell from Beverly Atkins

Frederic de Braconier from Jilliene F.

Schenkel

Greg Schwinghammer from Kate Lyon

Hyman Weitzman from Barbara W. Ravitz

Janie Gage Phear from Brad Barrett, Kate Jackson, David Malo, Fred Munch, Lela Ostrander, Nancy Phear, Sarah Shepard, Mark Strandberg

Jason Chris Pickett from Peggy and Tom Alamo, Rene Delacueva, Joan Evans, Akira Fukuda, Cecile and Chris McNulty, Mildred McNulty, Mary and Robert Pickett, Heather Slack

Jeff Zients from Iris Abrons, Jessica and Larry Aronoff, Grant Axton, David Bernstein, Linda, Richard, and Larry Bloomstein, Matthew Corman, Matthew Elefant, Bonnie and Thomas Forgash, Alaine and Matthew Grossman, Stanley Israel, Jennifer Komitee, Jennifer Leitzes, Sondra Lender, Jonathan Lesser, Ally Lieberman, Polly Lieberman, Alberto Minujin, Christopher Ord, Adam Rodin, Jaxi Rothman, Alex Ruttenberg, Andrew Schinderman, Ivan Schinderman, Janet Schinderman, Andrew and Lauren Schlossberg, Linnea and Todd Schwartz, Ellen and Ed Silverstone, Mark St. John, Jonathan Steinberg, Ronald Steinman, Anita Storm, Casey Storm, Howard Storm, Diana Tauder, Dounia and Michael Turrill, Alan B. Zients

Jeff and Chris Pikul from Kirsten Hertz, Darin Hornbaker, Richard Lefkowitz, Loretta Uriarte

Jeffrey Gutin from Carol J. Baker, Juanita and Sammy Banks, Elizabeth Gamboa, Irving Gutin, Nina Gutin, Ph.D., Carolyn Kezele, Sandy Liaw, Karen L. Spinelli, Nancy Vogt, Alice Zuli

Jimmy Bagby from Kita S. and Peter Curry
John Carpenter from Joan Bacon, Cynthia

Bryan, Thomas Bryan, Elaine Porzucki, Eileen Rivet, Erika and Brian Robinson, Patricia Rymssa

John DeMott from Dolores A. DeMott

John G. Price from Gloria and Arthur Price

Jon Osher from Kate Lyon

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.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

JANUARY 6 - FEBRUARY 26, 2006

If You Get to Bethlehem, You've Gone Too Far

Starring and written by Mariette Hartley. Previews January 6-20, opens January 21. Friday and Saturday 8 p.m., Sunday 3 p.m. Whitefire Theatre, 13500 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. General admission \$25, previews \$20. For group sales, call 818.986.2908, for dinner/show packages, call 818.990.2324. All other tickets: 866.811.4111 or order online at www.theatermania.com.

APRIL 28 - MAY 1, 2006

American Association of Suicidology 39th Annual Conference

Seattle, Washington
See www.suicidology.org or call 1.202.237.2280.

Help SAS reduce postage—receive potluck invitations and other announcements via email. Please send an email with your full name and SAS Newsletter in the subject to jbaas@didihirsch.org

REMEMBERING LAURA



LAURA VIERRA

It's been two years, seven months, and eighteen days since Laura died. It's hard to imagine that so much time has passed. In reality it seems like only a year or so. Or maybe a lifetime ago.

I thought by now that I would be over all the firsts. I've survived the first holidays and anniversary of her death. I've even survived the second.

Since Laura died, I've lost family members and have been to their funerals. Were they hard to go to? I'm not sure. I felt relief I guess. It's never good to see people suffer (cancer has killed a lot of my family). Death seems easier to accept when we see it as a peaceful end.

This weekend was supposed to be a happy occasion. I traveled to Las Vegas and attended the wedding of good friends. I never expected to be sitting there during the ceremony softly crying to myself. This was definitely a new first that I hadn't expected. As I listened to the vows and watched the scene unfold, I couldn't help but think back on my own experiences. Maybe this was the first wedding I had been to since Laura and I were married on 12/31/98. I don't remember. I know I miss her. I also think I have a little better understanding of how all those parents in our group feel when they talk about seeing their children's friends grow up, go to school, have families, and keep moving forward with life.

*We carry with us lives that are forever frozen in time and in our memories.
Laura Vierra, forever 52. ♡*

—Mark Vierra

Kate Edwards from Allegra Fulton
Katrina Schibig from Raymond Boyer, Jeffrey Hayes, Kristine Kelly, Jeanne Nakano, Lisa Provost, Amy Witten
Lanny McCommon from Dawn Bozulich, Chai and Ock Byun, Barbara Cannon, Nancy Chenowith, Jeffrey Choi, Malini Das, Darrick Davis, Valerie and Victor Diaz, Susan Flaming, Verhlonia Froker, Susan Halligan, Sherry Hunt, Sheila Lightsy, Michelle Machado, Beatrice Mantico, Nancy Mateyka, Patrice Mitchell, Susan Ono, William Palmer, Robin Patel, John Peckham, Martha Reese, Nancy Robertson, David Root, Mustapha Sesay, Lisa Soncotski, Julie Stanny, Roberta Takahama, Virginia and David Tong, Alex Wiercigroch, Linda Yousefivand
Larry "Sunny" Spzila from Francine and Guy Righter
Laura Roanne Cole from Barbara and Melvin Cole
Laura Vierra from Mark A. Vierra
M. Jaconi from Vera Jashni, Ed.D.
Mahmoud Eslaminia from Barbara Collins, Mina Hakimi
Mary Kay Bergman from Dino Andrade
Mary Margaret Mackinnon from Susan and Walter Bazant, Ronald Bopp, Charlie Costello, Amy Disparte, Anjanette Disparte, Darlene Elkins, Brandi Floberg, Forrest Heistermann, Jan Heistermann, Kathy Luccaro, Kristen Lum, Ronald Mackinnon, Shirley Rauter, Danny Venable
Matthew Werber from Katharine Werber
My cousin from Karen Rhodes
Patrick Laden from Marilyn Laden
Paul Sharples from Madeline and Robert Sharples
Pete Lusky from Dave Arbogast, Harold Ball, Jennifer and Ted Ball, Jack Ball, Jeff Blumenfeld, Michelle Garside, Jan and Jim Kuckle, Elaine Monroy, Jerry Overah
Peter Murillo from Mel Tuaniga
Ray Jacobs from Tanya Jacobs
Reza Niknaffs from Rose Batac, Carmen Gordon, Edith Matsumoto, Laurel Modarres-Khiabani, Darwin Richardson, Edward White
Robert Curry from Kita S. and Peter Curry
Robert D. Shuffer from Robin Polito Shuffer
Robert Hennes from Marci and Peter Vogel
Robert James McNeil from Frances and Robert McNeil
Samantha Sampson from Cynthia Sampson
Sammy Bloom from Lois and Sam Bloom
Sonja Johnson from Robert Johnson
Stephen Le Roy from Gloria Le Roy
Stephen Lelewer from Andrea Auerbach, Mary and Stanley D. Lelewer
Susie Shore from Harvey Shore
Suzu Henmi from Peggy Henmi, Russell Henmi, Gwendolyn Smith
Tanya Madden from Dennis Beechler, Tanisha Bernard, Brenda Berryhill, Erlinda Borja, Marcia Bradford, David Carlson, Allison Collins, Robert David, Ginny Gasparre, Christine Geller, Charles Gillikin, Karen Haskins, Ken Honaker,

Linda Kaidin, Cindy Landau, Karen Lara, Walter Levich, Shawn Madden, Andi Madden, Charlene Mares, Carol Jean Marshak, Bonnie Michaud, Karen Moore, Steve Nguyen, Mike North, Elizabeth Padilla, Robert Patterson, Steve Pucci, Ana Ramirez, Suzanne Richards, James Schaffer, Frida Tan, Lissa Tegelman, Daniel Van Dalsem, Linda Vrana, Gregory Wicks, James Wilson, Franklin Yeager
Tony Montoya from Colleen Bateman, Chris Berry, Patricia Costales Fleming, Emilie Coulter, Greg Fleming, Mark Hardy, Jeff Jutras, Michel Lavallee, Freddie Peters and Anne Steele
Wes Robinson from Lori and Gregory Robinson

Contribution by Susan Celentano from the Suicide in Film Workshop

As strong as we felt their presence in life, so we feel their absence in death. In recognition of those we love.

Billy Barron III, Sammy Bloom, Rita Borgquist, David Borgquist, Sheryll Borgquist, Ed Carberry, Neil Currie, Margot Davis, Bill Dearth, Andrew Eaton Langdon, Sarah Loring, Lanny McCommon, Ed Mogil, Peggy Palmer, Jeffery Pikul, Christopher Pikul, Laura Wilson, Paul Woodrow

SAS Newsletter Editor Needed

After many years of service, Debbie Pikul will no longer be able to edit our newsletter. There will be an article honoring her in our next issue. In the meantime, we need a new editor! If you are interested (or know someone who is), please call Tom Rankin at (310) 751-5370, or e-mail him at trankin@didi-hirsch.org. This would be a volunteer position, most suitable for a survivor of suicide loss. Duties are flexible, but might include layout, article solicitation, proofreading, and content editing. The position has typically required 10 hours of work once every three months. This is a rewarding opportunity to give back to other survivors!

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 the attention of Deborah Pikul, Editor. Thank you.

View this newsletter online at www.suicidepreventioncenter.org.
Click on *Lost a Loved One?*

SURVIVORS AFTER SUICIDE NEWSLETTER

A quarterly publication of Survivors After Suicide (a support group for those who have lost a loved one to suicide), a program of **Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center**
4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90230
(310) 751-5324

SAS Program Number:
(310) 751-5370

Crisis Line Number:
(310) 391-1253

Editor: Deborah Pikul
(sasnews@earthlink.net)

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 Tom Rankin and Joanne Uy for proofreading, and to all others who have assisted in producing the *SAS Newsletter*.

Mailing list changes cannot be made unless corrected or duplicate labels are mailed to SAS at the address above.



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