

Haven Herald

HAVEN -
MORE THAN A HOUSE
By Joni Greene

The dream of Haven's founder, Dorothy Garrett, to offer emotional support became a reality thirty-five years ago on September 16, 1976.

In 1974, Dorothy was with a much-loved aunt who was dying of cancer. Dorothy's sense of inadequacy in communicating with her relative and her awareness of the need for support to move through her grief implanted an idea in her that grew. It was nurtured through her reading about the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and a trip to Rome. She spoke to a fellow traveler about her vision of an organization in Northern Virginia that would offer emotional support to the seriously ill, to their families and friends and to those grieving the death of someone they loved.

The community's response to Haven was immediate. On the very first day Haven opened, it received its first client, a widow. Since then, many clients have found our volunteers willing to help them work through their grief either by participating in one of our support groups or talking with someone on a one-to-one basis.

Haven is unique in many ways. First, we are an all-volunteer organization. We have a Board that helps with fund-raising and community volunteers who help with maintenance, computers, the Web site, etc. But our trained volunteers are the ones who answer the telephones, facilitate our support groups, educate the community, help clients cope with their losses and take care of the day-to-day operations of Haven.

Dorothy once said that Haven will be here as long as we are needed. As a volunteer with Haven for 23 years, I am happy that we are still here. Like all organizations, Haven has experienced some bumps and bruises over the years, but the volunteers still have the same vision that Dorothy had. People say to me that it must be difficult doing what you do, but most of us focus on hearing our clients say, "Thank you, I think I can make it on my own now." That is what keeps me here.



Haven remains the same organization today that Dorothy Garrett and the first nucleus of twelve volunteers strove to create, "filled with people of tremendous generosity of spirit."

Happy 35th Anniversary!

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The leaves are changing color and the days are growing shorter, yet life, for the most part, seems to get busier. Nature is slowing down, but we are gearing up.

This fall Haven finds itself in transition. There has been a shift in positions on our staff and additions to the Board of Directors, and five new volunteers completed their training class this spring.

I'm still amazed when I think about how resilient Haven has been to survive for thirty-five years as an all-volunteer organization. This sounds so simple, but Haven will be here as long as it is meant to be here. After thirty-five years, Haven continues to evolve as we strive to serve our community the best way we can with the resources we have. The vision of our founder, Dorothy Garrett, is still clear even as we adapt to the changing needs of the community.

When I came to Haven over seven years ago, I learned quickly that change is often necessary, but the heart of what we do could never change. We are a work in progress, but we essentially do what we have always done, which is to help people who are grieving the loss of a loved one. We listen, comfort and educate, and we never judge. The faces and roles may change, but I truly believe that our mission is intact. We must always keep in mind the balance, respect, and empathy that are so important in our work.

What we do requires constancy of purpose, but it also demands a willingness to be open to changes that help Haven's mission. So as the fall begins and we move forward, I can only be grateful for this time of change and the beauty of this season.

- Jill Bellacicco

INDIVIDUAL GRIEF SUPPORT

By Eileen Thompson

Haven's support groups and workshops are well-known in the community, but individual grief support is perhaps the most significant offering among our services.

Our exceptionally skilled case assigner, Millie, identifies a volunteer suited to each caller who requests one to one meetings. The specific situation of each client and the background, personality, and skill set of the volunteer are carefully matched.

The volunteer and the client talk and find a mutually agreeable time to meet, and the volunteer reserves one of our comfortable and private rooms. Sometimes circumstances require a different meeting place, but most clients enjoy the serene and safe atmosphere at Haven.

The number of meetings between a given client and volunteer is open. Everything at Haven is geared to the unique needs of the individual. It is our goal to "walk with" the grieving person. Neither therapist nor friend, the volunteer is a friendly and compassionate listener and a companion on the journey.

The client is free to express any thought and emotion without the self-censoring that often occurs with friends and relatives. The trained volunteer understands the intensity of grief and does not inhibit the client, but rather welcomes and accepts all that the client needs to express.

When we experience the death of a loved one, the fabric of our lives is rent. Sometimes the tear is sudden, even violent, and sometimes it is the result of a long illness. We may have lost our parent, our child, our friend, a partner, or a spouse. In any case, death creates an emptiness where that person once existed and was woven into our lives. Given time, and the patience, acceptance, and compassion Haven offers, the griever may find the tear in life's fabric has been mended.

In our individual sessions, we accompany a client through mourning and toward a new life because the work of Haven is about death *and* life.

WHAT WORKED FOR ME

By Ron McNally

Shortly after my wife Sarah died, I went to see my primary care physician. After some discussion and questions, he referred me to a psychiatrist, saying, "It is not that you need one, you will do fine without one, but you can be helped by one."

The first thing my psychiatrist told me was, "What you are going through is normal; you are not going crazy." I knew that intellectually, but it was comforting to hear him say it. He also said, "The thing that helps grieving people the most is to talk about it. You need a safe place to talk." He then referred me to Haven.

At Haven, I signed up for one-on-one support and joined a walk-in group. After the first meeting of the group, I said to myself, "How can anything that hurts so badly be helpful?" However, my psychiatrist assured

me that a grief support group would help, and gradually it did. Ultimately, I attended two groups, a Widows and Widowers Group and a General Bereavement Group. The groups helped in many ways – the facilitators' suggestions, the participants' examples, knowing that I was not alone, the reassurance that things would get better and seeing that people did get better – all of these helped. After about two years, I again asked for a one-on-one support person to talk to. Years later, after I was a volunteer, she told me, "You needed only a few more sessions to wrap things up."

And that, all of it, is what worked for me.

Ron came to Haven as a client early in 1999 and became a volunteer in the fall 2002.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS****Frank Aukofer**

Frank is the retired Washington bureau chief of The Milwaukee Journal and its successor, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. He now writes a weekly automobile review column, "DriveWays", for Scripps Howard News Service, and is a former president of the National Press Club. His autobiography/memoir, "Never a Slow Day," was published in 2009. He assists his wife, Sharlene, the Deputy Director of Haven, in the annual Haven Memorial Service.

Jill Bellacicco

Now the Executive Director, Jill has been a Haven volunteer since 2004. She became involved in the Suicide Loss Support Group and continues to facilitate this group. Jill came on staff in 2006 as Associate Director for Recruitment & Training and in 2008 as Associate Director of Client & Volunteer Services. Jill enjoys being involved in all aspects of Haven's work and strives to keep Haven's mission and philosophy as a priority.

Dotty Fuchsman

As a teenager, Dotty moved here from Boston, Mass. A graduate of Strayer College, she worked for the Army as an administrative assistant at the Pentagon. She and her husband, Al, have three children and eight teenage grandchildren. Dotty has volunteered for many organizations, including Hadassah, AARP and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia. She is also a long-time volunteer usher at Signature Theater, Wolf Trap and Ford Theater.

Joni Greene

Joni has been with Haven since April 1989. She has held many staff positions, including that of Executive Director. She is currently Associate Director of Planning and Development and is Haven's Historian. Her love of helping clients through grief is what keeps Joni with Haven.

David Hess

Now retired, Dave worked 40 years as a newsman in Washington, covering the White House, Congress and national politics for the Knight-Ridder Newspapers' bureau and the National Journal's Internet news service. He currently serves as a board member on the Society of Professional Journalism's SDX scholarship awards committee and has guest-lectured in journalism classes. He is a former National Press Club president and a retired Naval Reserve commander. He holds BA and MA degrees in political science from Ohio State University and was a professional journalism fellow at Stanford University.

Frankie Smith

Frankie has been a Haven volunteer for 13 years and on the staff for almost 12 years. She was Associate Director of Public Relations, of Training and Education and of Client and Volunteer services. In June she completed four years as Executive Director. Working with clients, she says, is the most rewarding part of being a Haven volunteer. "You know you can't fix their grief but you can listen to them, assure them they aren't going crazy and help them work through their grief to establish a 'new normal,'" she says.

Nanette Wiese

Nanette, a retired magazine editor, is a native of Texas who holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Sam Houston State University. She worked for newspapers and a travel magazine in Texas and Illinois before moving to Northern Virginia in 1973. She then served 30-plus years as a managing editor of international transportation and higher education magazines. Nanette also has been a free-lance book editor and taught magazine journalism at George Washington University. A long-time volunteer, she has served as a patient advocate for those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. She became interested in Haven because of its role in supporting people struggling with loss.

Melanie Yost

Melanie is a speaker, author and business mentor for professionals. A psychotherapist for 20 years, she received a master's degree in social work from The Ohio State University. She has worked with a wide variety of people in child protective services, community mental health and private practice. Over the last six years, Melanie has trained Haven volunteers on boundaries in the helping relationship. She and her husband of 20 years dote on their daughter and an exuberant Golden doodle, both of whom offer daily lessons about the joy of being alive.

**HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED**

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net

Fall Schedule

Support Groups

Six Week General Bereavement Support Group
Tuesday, October 11 - November 15, 2011
7:30 - 9:00 pm

Six Week Suicide Loss Support Group
Thursday, October 13 – November 17, 2011
7:30 – 9:00 pm

Six Week Widow/ Widower Support Group
Saturday, October 15 – November 19, 2011
2:00 - 4:00 pm

Space is limited, and reservations are required. Please contact Haven for more information.

Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Contact Information

Haven of Northern Virginia
4606 Ravensworth Road
Annandale, Virginia 22003
Phone: (703) 941-7000
Fax: (703) 941-7003
E-mail: havenofnova@verizon.net

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia 22003

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