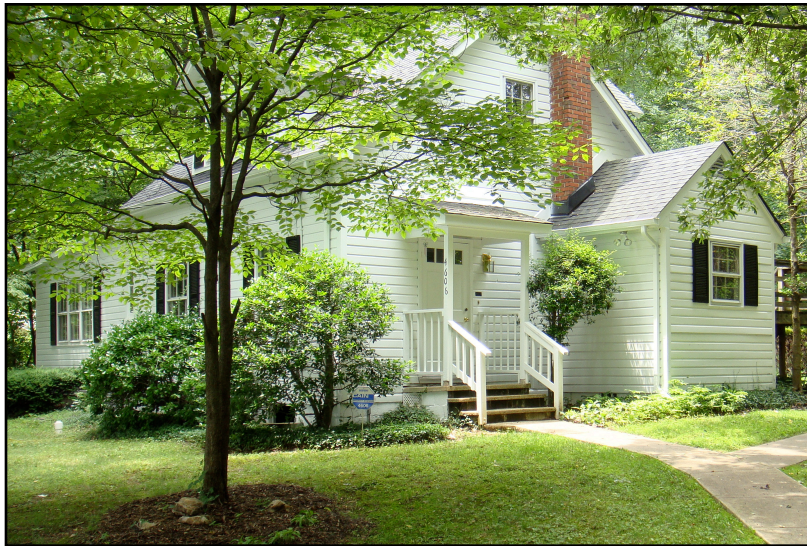




Haven Herald

The Little White House

Celebrating 32 years 1976-2008



HOW HAVEN BEGAN...

by Sandy McCauley updated by Nancy Ragsdale

The original concept for Haven came from a woman named Dorothy Garrett. After the death of her aunt in 1976, Dorothy wrote a one-paragraph article for a local newspaper mentioning her interest in forming a volunteer organization to provide support, emotional and physical, to the seriously ill and their families. Seventy people responded. A group of ten began meeting in February 1976. The organization began to take shape as the group read books, previewed films, and attended courses on death and dying. A name was chosen and a house on McWhorter Place was obtained.

During the first three years, over 200 people took Haven's training. It soon became apparent that to offer the kind of help needed by Haven's clients, a hospice was needed, and Dorothy Garrett eventually became instrumental in establishing Hospice of Northern Virginia, and she gave up her position as coordinator of Haven.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first reissue of the Haven Herald! We decided to take a short break to re-imagine our newsletter, and I would like to thank all of our team members, and contributors who have worked so hard. Having provided grief support for almost 33 years now, we have seen firsthand, that some of the challenges of moving through the grief process change with each new season. Therefore we have decided to publish our newsletter seasonally (4 times a year), with each issue touching on topics that are relevant to the time of year. The goal of our newsletter is to make the public aware that Haven is here to help when they are in need. We are a non-profit, non-sectarian group of trained volunteers that offer support to the bereaved, and seriously ill, and to their families and friends. We are proud to be serving our community and look forward to any thoughts or feedback, about our newsletter

-Frankie Smith



HOW HAVEN BEGAN... (Continued from page 1)

In the early 1980s, the house on McWhorter Place was being sold and a search began for a new location for Haven. A dilapidated building, soon to be razed, was found behind Hope Lutheran Church. The Church agreed to allow Haven to use the building if the volunteers would take responsibility for its renovation and upkeep.

Sue Keegan, Director of Haven at the time (1984), took on the arduous renovation process. Almost everything needed to be replaced: the windows, walls, doors, the stairway, and the roof. In addition the plumbing, heating, and electricity all needed work. Then there was the crack in the basement wall, endless county codes, irritating building permits, and the discovery that the property was not properly zoned for Haven's purposes. Throughout the renovations, John Woolson, a long-time friend to Haven, was there to oversee the changes.

Sue found many kind and generous people who helped with contributions of materials or labor, and by personally approaching local business people,

she managed to raise the money needed to cover expenses for things that were not donated. The obstacles were overcome, and Haven moved into its new home on Ravensworth Road on August 24, 1985.

Today the spirit of Haven remains true to Dorothy Garrett's original idea that "...although nonsectarian, our philosophy encompasses the feelings of people from a wide spectrum of beliefs, whose only desire is to help fellow human beings at a time in their lives when fear, anger, and grief make it difficult for them to reach out to one another."



WHAT'S WORKED FOR ME

by Casey Griffith

As you move through your grief process you may get a lot of creative suggestions as to how to deal with difficult days when they inevitably come up. Some suggestions will help, and some won't. Grief is a very personal movement, and there are as many different types of grief as there are people.

Recently I've noticed that I have a difficult time on special days that I associate with loved ones who have died. I began to look for ways in which I could channel that energy into something that felt positive. A friend of mine suggested that I write a letter to the 'soul' of the person that I miss. It wasn't a new

idea for me, but I hadn't tried it yet, so I figured why not give it a chance.

I sat down to write and...nothing! I was shocked. Writing to someone's soul was harder than I expected. After dueling with a blank page for longer than I'd like to admit, I had to get up from my computer, and get out of the house. I left with no particular destination in mind, but where I ended up was no accident.

As I was wandering through an outdoor shopping area I found myself walking into a store full of stationery. That's when the idea hit me...I needed to handwrite these letters. I purchased some heavyweight paper and envelopes, a green ink pen, a wax seal, and a special box to keep my letters in. I came

home, sat down in front of a window, and started to write. I didn't worry about editing, or punctuation, or even neatness or legibility, and the words came. I was surprised at how much I had to say. My letter wasn't perfectly edited, and didn't even look very nice, but it was heartfelt, and real. I sealed it closed with wax and placed it in the box. The process worked so well, that now I find myself writing anytime I feel the need.

Without realizing it, I had created a special ritual. Handwriting letters on special paper, closing them with a seal, and keeping them in a letterbox is what's worked for me. It may not be what works for everybody else, but the important thing is to keep trying. You will find something that works for you.



VACATION TIME

by Peggy Cauley

Contemplating summer vacation after the death of someone you love is no fun, particularly if that person was someone with whom you traditionally vacationed. Summertime is supposed to be fun—a time to get away, forget your troubles and renew your spirit. Where is that place of respite when you are grieving? The hole in your heart goes with you everywhere; the black cloud follows you unrelentingly. Should you simply ignore summertime vacation traditions, or plunge ahead hoping to find the energy to endure the painful memories? A difficult question. The answer can only be found within each individual person.

I have known several people who have vacation homes. Unfortunately, the spouses of three of these couples have died. One sold the house after remarrying, the other two spouses (both women) have continued to vacation in the same place. I have tried to put myself in their skins and imagine what it was like the first time they returned to their vacation homes without their spouse. However, perhaps because I am not widowed, no matter how I try, my imagination will not stretch that far. I think it must have been very painful—but maybe not. The fact that they

have maintained their vacation traditions may indicate that happy memories can sometimes counteract painful ones. Maybe being there is healing.

I remember talking with a friend about a waterfront home her father had built. Every year the whole family gathered there for a vacation—parents, siblings, and kids. After the death of her father, the family continued the tradition, but it was bittersweet for them. They loved being in a place that reminded them so much of him, yet were saddened for the same reason. A few years ago the house was destroyed by a hurricane. That was a terrible blow for the family. It was like losing their father twice. I recall her telling me how difficult it was to see the devastation of the home—to see her father's handiwork simply gone. Whatever healing powers that house held were stolen by the hurricane. But perhaps others could be found in the rebuilding, something the family was seriously considering. Not everyone is lucky enough to have a vacation home which may (or may not) be helpful to revisit when we are grieving. Many years ago a friend

of mine whose husband had recently died told me with great pride that she had driven herself to Virginia Beach. She so badly wanted to be near the ocean that despite her grief and her reluctance to venture out on her own, she took the bold step and just went. I couldn't tell weather it was the walk on the beach or the self-esteem from the decision to drive to the beach simply because she wanted to that was so renewing to her. And, of course, it didn't matter.



We all grieve differently and individually. Whatever works for you may not work for someone else and vice versa. Bereavement is not easy and summertime can be challenging. Do not beat yourself up; simply do what feels right to you.



HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified as a 501(c)(3) community organization, and 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 may be tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation please contact Haven at (703)941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net



Summer Schedule

◆Widow/Widower Workshop

Sunday, July 19th 2:00-4:00pm

◆Suicide Survivor Workshop

Tuesday, August 18th 7:00-9:30pm

*Space is limited and reservations are required to attend all workshops and groups. Please contact Haven for more information.

Haven also offers support on a one-to-one basis, please call to schedule an appointment. Support is also available on and a walk-in basis. A Haven Volunteer is available between the hours of 10:30am-1:00pm Monday through Friday.

Contact Information

Haven of Northern Virginia

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia, 22003

Phone: (703)941-7000

Fax: (703)941-7003

Email: havenofnova@verizon.net

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday

9:30am-2:30pm

www.havenofnova.org

*Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.
4606 Ravensworth Road
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Please include the name and address to be removed.