

Haven Herald

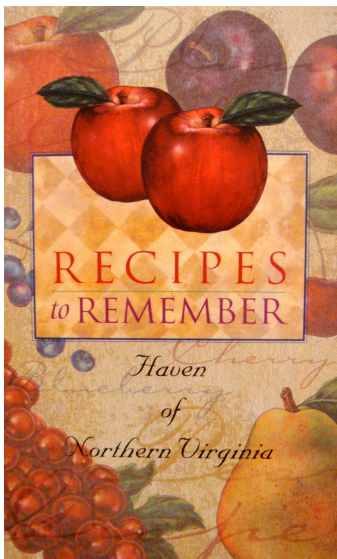
Letter from the Executive Director

The next few months can be a particularly busy time of year, and it can be easy for people in grief to feel overwhelmed. The winter blues can happen to anyone whether they are in grief or not. Doing things like taking a walk, calling a friend, or even enjoying a moment's rest can help one feel better during this stressful time of year.

At Haven we have always promoted healing through the arts. In September we offered a community in-service about music therapy. We have seen firsthand that activities like writing, journaling, music, painting, and dance have helped people who are struggling through loss. To expand our understanding and ability to help our clients, more than a dozen Haven volunteers attended the seminar, "The Journey Through Grief and Loss" given by Robert Zucker, MA, LCSW. One of the speaker's points was that poetry can help those in grief to find their voice. On page 3 is a poem used in one of our support groups and a response by a member of the group. I'd like to thank the author of the response for allowing us to share it in the newsletter.

In October several members of our Haven team helped to raise awareness of suicide prevention at the Out of Darkness Walk by providing participants with Haven information and literature. Lately, our volunteers have noticed an increase in the number of calls from people who have lost a loved one to suicide. For many people, this time of year can be especially difficult, so if you or someone you know is unable to cope please call Haven.

While the holiday season can be busy and demanding, it can also be a time of strength and healing. From everyone here at Haven, we wish you peace this holiday season and throughout the year.
-Frankie Smith



RECIPES TO REMEMBER- A great gift for the holidays!

You may order as many copies of our cookbook as you wish using the form below, or you may call Haven and place your order directly. Please make checks payable to Haven of Northern Virginia.

Mail to: Haven of Northern Virginia
4606 Ravensworth Road
Annandale, VA 22003

Please mail ____ copies of your cookbook @ \$10.00 each, plus \$2.00 postage and packing per book ordered.

Mail books to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

BREAKING THE NEWS

by Peggy Cauley

How do you inform friends about the death of a member of your family? Should you call each person individually? Is it best to just tell a few friends and rely on them to spread the word? What about those living away? Is it okay to disclose such sad news in a Christmas card? Unfortunately, there is no protocol. We're left to figure it out on our own.

It's not easy to tell people about a death, and it's not easy to hear about it either. I remember an incident that happened to me more than 30 years ago, on the day after our son, Kevin, died. Walking into church, I was approached by a neighbor who was aware that he had been in the

hospital, and she asked, "How is Kevin?" As I hugged her, I whispered in her ear that he had died the day before. Although I did not hesitate to tell her about his death, I didn't want to tell her because I knew it would be hard for her to hear. I could think of no words to couch her shock. I still cannot.



Most of us spend the first few days after death confused, busy, and drained. We are forced to make decisions about wakes, funerals, and cemeteries, not to mention informing family members and making arrangements for out-of-town guests. We are most likely dealing

with a situation completely foreign to us while we barely have energy to get out of bed. Other than informing family and a few friends, we rely on mutual friends to spread the word. Deciding how and when to tell friends living away is not of immediate concern to the family, and it may be more than they can cope with at the moment.

If sometimes you fall into the "living away" category and learn about the death some weeks or months later (or maybe in a Christmas card), and you wish you had been informed earlier and/or differently, be forgiving and try to remember that the family is doing the best it can during a very difficult time.

WHAT WORKED FOR ME

by Judi Taibl

"The Holidays": Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah -- whatever name you give them--are our annual milestones, shared with family and friends. We dust off old traditions and establish new ones--all in the company of those we love.

One of the startling revelations we often experience following the death of a loved one is the inexplicable manner in which the world continues to revolve--as if this catastrophic event had not occurred -- and that is never more evident than during the holiday season. Decorations abound, carols are sung, parties are planned, seemingly in the face of our loss and pain.

It is easy to become overwhelmed--by the tremendous pain, by the void in our life, by our efforts to meet the expectations of others.

This is the time to honor YOUR needs. Give serious consideration to those activities/events/traditions on the horizon and formulate a plan: determine which occasions will have meaning for you this year and respectfully decline others. It is critical to remember that the holidays need not be an "all or nothing" season! Attending one function need not obligate you to others. You have the right to choose.

Most important: take the time during the holidays to sift through your memories--neither

denying nor honoring those that are painful--focusing on those that bring a smile and taking great comfort in those most precious memories that become a benediction.

That's what worked for me.



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.

There's an elephant in the room.
 It is so large and squatting,
 so it is hard to get around it.
 Yet we squeeze by with,
 "How are you" and "I'm fine."
 And a thousand other forms
 of trivial chatter.
 We talk about the weather.
 We talk about work.
 We talk about everything --
 except the elephant in the
 room.
 There's an elephant in the
 room.
 We all know it is there.
 We are thinking about the
 elephant as we talk together.
 It is constantly on our minds.
 For you see, it is a very big
 elephant.
 It has hurt us all.
 But we do not talk about the
 elephant in the room.

Oh please, say her name.
 Oh please, say "Barbara" again.
 Oh please, lets talk about the
 elephant in the room.
 For if we talk about her death,
 perhaps we can talk about her life?
 Can I say Barbara to you and not
 have you look away?



For me if I cannot, then you
 are leaving
 Me
 Alone...
 In a room...
 With an elephant...

--Terry Kettering

Will the elephant please enter the room? All 13,000 lbs. of you. There, hidden in plain sight. Waiting for someone to crash into you. I go about my daily life, and there you are, my loyal pet. Sitting where I sit. People do not see you as they approach. But I do. And I pray and hope that they will not expose you. Sometimes they talk innocently and the conversation ends and you remain hidden. However, sometimes their innocent talk stumbles down a dangerous path where butterflies have ended. I can feel the anxiety build as they ask about Sean. Curious as to what he is up to these days. And there you appear, elephant. Like a magic trick. And conversation stops. And they are shocked. Like you are juggling dear auntie's precious glass vase while on one foot. And they are scared like you might crush them. But you don't. It's their own insecurities. Now when we see each other, it will be me, them, and the elephant. And they will either accept, or they will run away. They aren't used to being around something so life changing. Something so huge, and scary, and frustrating. They aren't used to you elephant! I'm not either! Sometimes I just want you to leave me alone in public. I want you to go back to your home. But you won't. You are my elephant.

-Written by Amanda DuPrey

Amanda is 23 years old and was a member of the March 26, 2009, 6-week suicide survivors support group. Her brother Sean graduated from West Point. He died by suicide October 2008 after returning from serving in Iraq.



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

Winter Schedule

Coping with the Holidays After the Death of a Loved One

Thursday, December 3, 2009

7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Haven will offer a General Bereavement Support Group and a Widow/Widower Support Group in February 2010. Both of these groups will meet for six weeks. Exact dates are pending.

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 a walk-in basis between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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.
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Annandale, VA 22003

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