

# Haven Herald

## Haven – More Than a House

by Joni Greene



The dream of Haven's founder, Dorothy Garrett, to offer emotional support to the bereaved became a reality forty 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 the awareness of her own need for support with 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 an individual basis.

Haven is unique in many ways. First, we are an all-volunteer organization. We have a board of directors that helps with fund-raising and community volunteers who help with maintenance, computers, and the web site. 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 29 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, one "filled with people of tremendous generosity of spirit."

## Letter from The Executive Director

There is irony in the idea of a 40th anniversary celebration to commemorate Haven's work with the bereaved and the seriously ill. Haven is a unique community and yet it has survived for forty years as a place of comfort and hope for those who are coping with the loss of a loved one.

Haven began as an idea by our founder, Dorothy Garrett. It was a simple idea that took hold and grew. We listen and care about others who are suffering. We give our time and we have no timeline. Grief has its own time and place. We don't interfere with that.

Haven opened its doors on September 16, 1976 and our first client was a widow. Forty years and thousands of clients later, we are still here. Our doors are still open and our mission is intact. Haven, like any long-standing organization, has had its struggles, but we have managed to find our way. There is a balance and life to Haven that requires love and nurturing.

Somehow the people and the donations show up and we keep going.

So, we will gather this September to celebrate Haven's 40th. It is a milestone and a reassurance that what we do continues to be of value and make a difference for many people. I am humbled to be a small part of this incredible organization, and I feel privileged to be a witness to the good things that can happen when we open our hearts to others and just listen.

**Happy 40th Anniversary, Haven!**

Jill Bellacicco

**Haven is committed to the emotional support of the bereaved,  
and to the seriously ill, the dying, and their families and friends.**



This was painted by Anne Geer, a longtime Haven volunteer, and hangs in the living room of our quaint house. The farmhouse, which dates to the late 1890s, is a haven for many who seek our help.

## I Walked a Mile with Pleasure

I walked a mile with Pleasure;  
She chatted all the way;  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow;  
And ne'er a word said she;  
But oh! The things I learned from her,  
When Sorrow walked with me.

-Robert Browning Hamilton

## What Worked for Me by Sarah Raison

I came to Haven as a client four months after my young husband died suddenly of a heart attack. I was thirty-five years old, had two children under two, no family in town and friends who tried to understand but sometimes couldn't. I was unequivocally flattened by his death but also under extreme pressure to parent effectively every day. I had been to grief therapists that I didn't really gel with and needed all the extra help I could get. When I called Haven, I remember feeling exhausted, depleted, scared, and primarily, alone. But a calm voice answered the phone, took my information, and I was quickly set up with individual grief support. Unlike seeing a therapist, I didn't have to wait for an appointment, sort things out with insurance, or worry about co-pays. I remember feeling extreme relief that getting support from Haven was so very simple, at a time in my life when I desperately *needed* things to be simple.

The volunteer I was paired with was wonderful. She listened patiently and I felt very safe with her. I knew she was a person who wouldn't judge my situation or what I was feeling from week to week. Going to Haven was a tremendous comfort for me. It made me realize there were people out there who truly understood all I was going through.

A few years later, I felt very motivated to become a Haven volunteer. I remembered what a valuable, hassle-free support it had been. As a volunteer, I try to do what my volunteer did for me: listen, listen, listen, and meet clients exactly where they are in the grief process. My own grief experience serves as a sort of reference book for me--something I can mentally flip back through if I need to. I will also never forget the gravity of acute grief, and I believe the memory of that allows me to crawl down into that figurative hole and sit and emotionally "be" with a person who is experiencing the initial brutal blows of bereavement. To me, volunteering is a chance to give the same gift to others that I was so generously given -- a sensitive ear, an accepting mind and a compassionate soul.

## WHY I BECAME A HAVEN VOLUNTEER

- I came to Haven in 1994 with the hope of offering some comfort to the bereaved. I never expected to be the recipient, but the people I've met and the countless joy I've derived from my association with Haven have been one of the great blessings in my life! - Judy Taibl
- In 1996 I saw Haven's sign, as I was leaving St. Michael's church across the street, and thought I could do this. It's become part of who I am, helping people be better in a time of hopelessness and despair. - Sharlene Aukofer
- When I retired from the government in 2001, I promised my creator that I would dedicate my life to volunteer work through service to others. In 2006 the Lord taught me what it is like to lose someone you love and not know how to say good-bye. Haven provides me a continuing opportunity to guide others through their good-byes and to share in their journey. - Steve Springer
- My father killed himself when I was five years old. For more than 40 years I did not know how much the loss of my father had hurt me or how it had shaped who I was and how I interacted with the world. I had no idea how much suffering I endured because it was locked up, deep inside of me. Luckily, and quite serendipitously, I was invited to participate in a workshop that changed my life. (At the time I was stationed in Quito, Ecuador on a UNDP secondment from the World Bank). The initial pain, extreme agony and incredible release that followed were almost magical to me. Upon return to DC, another lucky event happened: Sharlene, a Haven volunteer, came to the Lake Barcroft Women's Club management team to request funding for Haven for the first time. I heard her and was hooked. - Ilona Szemzo
- I came to Haven for the reason many of our clients come to Haven because I was grieving the loss of a loved one (my 4-month old grandson), and I was looking for a solution to the pain I was feeling. I started by attending the summer workshop "Journey through Grief" and ended up joining the General Bereavement Group in the fall. The philosophy of journeying through your grief and all the manifestations from it was a big eye opener for me and helped me through my journey. During the 6-week Group, I began to feel an easing of the gut-wrenching pain and to fill the dull ache of missing my grandson with acceptance along the way. I decided to volunteer at Haven because I want to help others through their journey. - Sandee Mervis
- I came to Haven a few years ago, after serving over 25 years as a grief support telephone volunteer for what's now Capital Caring. I volunteer at Haven because I have more to learn from those I try to help -- assisting them with their grief as they try to achieve a "new normal" in their own lives, and, in the process, probably helping ease my own evitable fear of pain and of letting go. - Jerry Kamens
- My father died very suddenly from a horrible disease and I thought I would never love life again. In time, with the support of my family, friends, and my faith, I realized that there was life after grief. I came to Haven aspiring to offer those grieving the hope that a joyous life is attainable after the loss of a loved one. - Stephanie James
- After 9/11, a friend, a retired psychotherapist, encouraged me to join in training to become a volunteer for the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing in the District. While a volunteer at the Wendt Center, I heard about Haven and decided to take Haven's training. My volunteering overlapped at both organizations for a number of years, but eventually Haven won my heart and I left the Wendt Center to focus on Haven. - Mary Smith



### HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

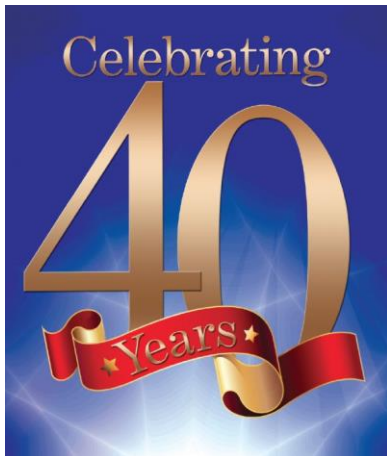
Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a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

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia 22003

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## **Fall Schedule**

Six-week General Bereavement Support Group  
Wednesday, September 28 – November 2, 2016  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Suicide Loss Support Group  
Tuesday, September 6 – October 11, 2016  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Widow/Widower Support Group  
Saturday, September 24 – October 29, 2016  
Time(s) to be determined

Call or email Haven to register for the groups.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group  
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month  
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*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](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)

### **Hours of Operation**

Monday through Friday  
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
[www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org)

Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours.