



Jan-Feb 2026

## Chapter Newsletter

VOLUME 49 - NUMBER 1

Eric Tognozzi shared memories and legacy of his and Amy's son, **Justin**, at the BPUSAStl candlelight ceremony.



Justin was loved by all who knew him - his wit, charm and smile would light up a room. Justin enjoyed spending time with his friends, had a passion for golf and hockey and was an entrepreneur at heart. He thrived academically, graduating from Marquette High School in conjunction with obtaining an associate degree from St. Louis Community College. He attended the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa in pursuit of a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry.

### When the Day turns into Night

When the day turns into night  
And you're way beyond my sight,  
I'll think of you, I'll think of you.

When the night turns into day  
And you still are far away,  
I'll think of you, I'll think of you.

Even when I am not here  
We still can be so very near  
I want you to know my dear  
I'll think of you.

— Fred Rogers

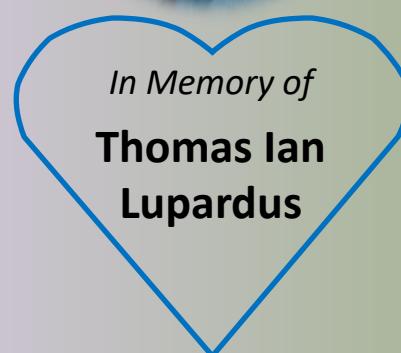
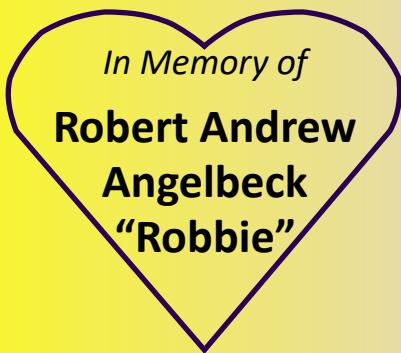
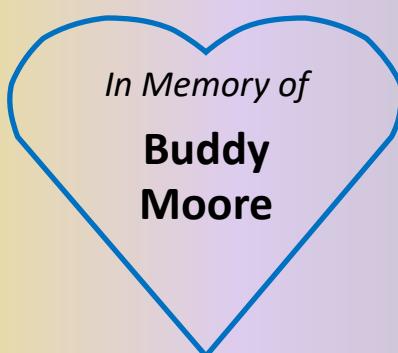
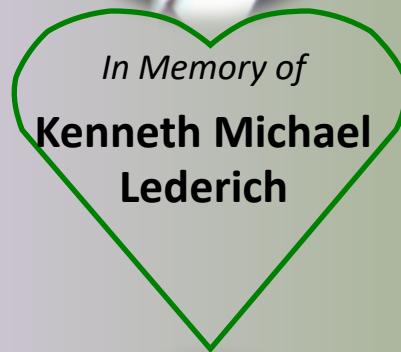
**NOTE:** The Thursday, January 8, 2026  
St. Peters Group meeting will be held  
at:  
Life Gate International Church  
7575 Veterans Memorial Parkway  
St. Peters, MO 63376

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE GIFTS

**“It’s your grief.  
Do it your way.”**

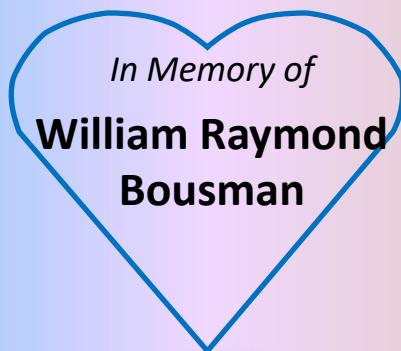
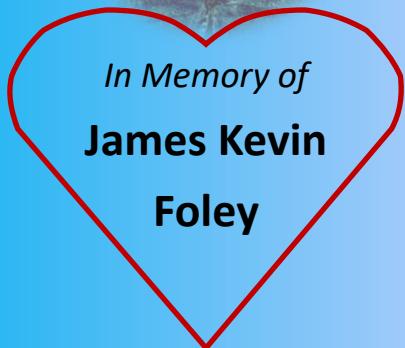
***Gary Sturgis,  
Surviving Grief***



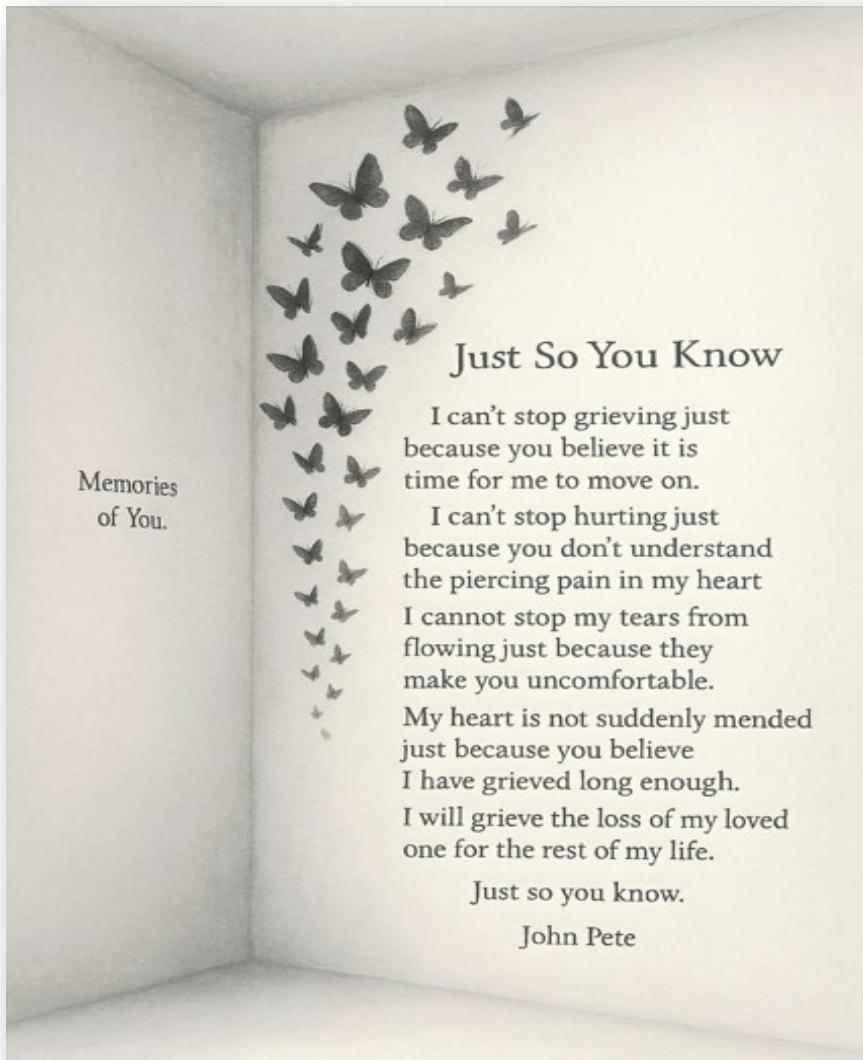
# THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE GIFTS

**“May there be comfort in  
knowing that someone so  
special will never be forgotten.”**

*Julie Hebert*



# THANK YOU to the Bronder Family for the wonderful boxes of cookies.



From The Bronder Family: "Knowing You Ministries began in honor of our daughter Kylene who inspired us to open our eyes to those hurting hearts around us."

The Bronders also accept help in cookie donations, either bought or baked, packaging and delivering.

If you wish to receive cookies during the month of December 2026 in memory of your child, please let someone on the BPUSAStL Board know in October 2026; or contact Deb Bronder with your address [knowingyou@sbcglobal.net](mailto:knowingyou@sbcglobal.net)



**In Loving Memory of  
Kylene Bronder**





We're honored to announce our 2026 BPUSA National Gathering Keynote Speakers!

Each of these incredible individuals brings courage, compassion, and hope through their stories of loss and healing:

- ★ John DeDakis – Journalist, novelist, and writing coach whose award-winning books explore grief and resilience. A former CNN editor, John now teaches and writes about loss with honesty and heart.
- ★ Lenny Hunt – Grief coach, speaker, and author known for creative, heartfelt ways of making grief approachable. With a following of over 250,000, Lenny inspires others to live fully again after loss.
- ★ Erin Blechman – Author, speaker, and Certified Grief Educator whose book *My Unexpected Journey* shares her path after losing her son, Max, to suicide. Erin's work brings awareness to grief, mental health, and healing.
- ★ Janet Geller-Lesko – Retired Naval Officer and speaker who transformed the loss of her daughter and granddaughter into purpose, helping others find hope through The GRIEVE Method™ and The HELP Method™.

We look forward to coming together in 2026 to listen, learn, and heal through their powerful stories. ❤️

#BPUSA #BPUSANationalGathering #GriefSupport #HopeAndHealing #BereavedParentsUSA

## BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA NATIONAL GATHERING

July 24-26  
Pittsburgh Airport Marriott



John DeDakis



Lenny Hunt



Erin Blechman



Janet Geller-Lesko

# Weekly Word of Hope

<https://www.gpshope.org>



## THE DASH

*I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.*

*He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.*

*For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.*

*For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.*

*So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.*

*To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.*

*If we treat each other with respect and more often  
wear a smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.*

*So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?*

*—by Linda Ellis*

We might think about this for our child; how did he or she live their “dash?”

But I want us to apply it to ourselves. Pause and ask yourself: *How am I living MY dash? Am I fighting my way out of the darkness, back to a place of light, and hope and purpose again, in a way that honors my child, and honors the One who created my child and me?*

There is definitely a “before” and “after” in our lives.

Let's do our best to make sure that our dash matters, not just before the death of our child, but after their death as well. I want the FULL dash to count, for Becca, for me and for the rest of my family.

How about you?

## HOW GRIEF MIGHT SHOW UP IN YOUR BODY

Aches and pains that can feel like the flu, back pain, joint pain, and stiffness

Tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, and shallow breathing

Nausea or stomach pain

Lowered immune system

Increased inflammation

Increased blood pressure

Headaches

Noise sensitivity

Extreme fatigue, feelings of heaviness

Dizziness and dry mouth

Change in eating patterns, eating more, or eating less

Can't sleep, afraid to sleep or mixed up sleep cycles

@movethroughgrief

Grief has its own heartbeat inside of me.

Izzy Roe



WWW.BEREAVEDPARENTSUSA.ORG

*When you miss someone so much, they will often give you a sign...*

*Watch for a butterfly, a feather, a dime, a song.*

*They are always with you, pay attention.*



Missing You Always.

I lost you.  
but I got to love you.  
I got to be loved by you.  
and even in my grief,  
I will forever be  
grateful for that.



## Recipe for Grief

### Ingredients:

- \* 1 heavy heart
- \* 2 cups of memories
- \* A handful of tears
- \* A pinch of laughter
- \* Patience, courage, and gratitude



### Instructions:

◆ Mix memories with tears.

Fold in laughter.

Season with patience and courage.

Wrap in community or solitude. Serve with gratitude – not for the loss, but for the love that made it matter.



# I would trade it all

I would trade it all,  
I'd give up everything I own,  
if I could turn the clock back to a time  
before the angels called you home.

The grief it never leaves me,  
forever I will mourn,  
some days it's just a shower of rain  
other days it's like a storm.

And on the days it's heavier,  
when it hits me like a train,  
I know it's all my love for you  
and that my life will never be the same.

And when I feel the anger,  
as it sits heavy on my chest,  
I know its griefs way of whispering  
that I was truly blessed.

People mean well.  
They offer advice.  
They tell you how strong you are.  
They say things like “they’d want you to be happy,” or “at least they’re not suffering.”  
They talk about closure. About moving on. About staying positive.

But here’s the thing—  
Until you’ve sat in the front row at a funeral...  
Until you’ve looked at a casket and felt like the world cracked open...  
Until you’ve had to stand there and say goodbye when you weren’t ready—  
You don’t really know.

You don’t know how grief rearranges every part of you.  
You don’t know how long the silence lasts after everyone else goes back to normal.  
You don’t know what it’s like to carry someone in your heart because you can no longer carry them in your life.

So, if you haven’t been there yet, I’m truly glad.  
I hope that day doesn’t come for you for a very, very long time.  
But please—  
Don’t tell me how I should be grieving.  
Don’t tell me what joy should look like right now.  
Just sit with me. Walk beside me.  
Or let me be.

Because unless you’ve sat in the front row...  
You don’t get to hold the mic.

Becky Hemsley Poetry

# Support That Surrounds

## 2026 Community Grief Support Programs

### GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

- **SPOUSE/PARTNER LOSS GROUP @ Progress West Hospital**  
Groups will start in January and August. Call Christy Brimm to register: 314-225-0902
- **SPOUSE/PARTNER LOSS GROUP @ Christian Northwest Medical Building**  
Group will start in late spring. Call Kristin McGilligan to register: 314-304-6038

- **HEALING HeARTS ART THERAPY GROUP**  
Virtual group for young adults (ages 18-30) beginning in February. Call Tali Light to register: 314-713-6739
- **PARENT LOSS GROUP**  
Group will be held in North County beginning in the fall. Call Kristin McGilligan to register: 314-304-6038
- **CHILD LOSS GROUP**  
Group will be held at Barnes West County beginning in January. Call Sandy Dillon to register: 314-267-5967

### GRIEF EVENTS

**Walking Together Through Grief**  
October 2026 (specific date & location TBD)

**HOLIDAY CANDLE LIGHTING at The Heights Community Center**  
November 2026 (specific date TBD)



### LOSS OF A CHILD

**Weavings** retreat for mothers who have lost a child  
February 6-8, 2026  
October 23-25, 2026  
April 2-4, 2027  
October 22-24, 2027

Weavings 

### SUPPORT FOR GRIEVING KIDS & TEENS

**Stepping Stones** camp for kids ages 6-15 who have lost someone important  
August 7-9, 2026  
Camp Wyman in Eureka, MO

Stepping  Stones

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT BJC HOSPICE AT [GRIEFSUPPORT@BJC.ORG](mailto:GRIEFSUPPORT@BJC.ORG) OR 314-953-1676.

**BJC**  
**Hospice**  
Every Moment 

## The Heavy Coat Of Grief (And Why It Never Matches Your Shoes)

Grief is like a big heavy coat you didn't ask for, but suddenly you're wearing it everywhere. And not a cool, stylish coat, more like a burlap sack that smells faintly of sadness and old library books.

One of the weirdest things about grief, for me anyway, is how it makes you feel utterly, completely invisible.

I mean, people see you, sure. They might even offer the occasional, "How are you holding up?" which is always a loaded question. Like, do you really want the laundry list of ways my soul currently resembles a dumpster fire, or should I just stick with the socially acceptable "fine?"

But invisible in the way that no one really sees you. The you that existed before the grief monster stomped into your life and rearranged all the furniture of your heart.

Here's the thing...it's like you're walking around in a fog, and everyone else is just clearer and sharper.

They're laughing, they're planning vacations, they're arguing about the merits of pineapple on pizza. And you're just there. Watching. A ghost in your own life.

You feel like you're shouting into the void, trying to explain that the world has shifted on its axis, that the sky is a slightly different shade of blue. But no one seems to notice. They're still caught up in their own orbits, and you're just a faint, blurry satellite, orbiting a different sun.

And the humor? Oh, humor is essential. Because if you don't laugh at the absurdity of it all, you'll just cry. And honestly, who has the energy for more crying?

So, you find the funny. The dark, twisted, slightly inappropriate funny. Like the time I accidentally wore two different shoes to the bank and didn't realize it until the lady behind me in line kindly pointed it out.

Grief brain. It's a real thing!

The invisibility coat of grief is a heavy burden, but it doesn't have to define you. Find your little glimmers of light, your moments of laughter, your connections to the world, even if they're fleeting.

And remember...even ghosts can make a little noise if they try hard enough.



## The Heavy Coat Of Grief (And Why It Never Matches Your Shoes)

Surviving Grief

Used with permission from Gary Sturgis, Author of many grief books.

Gary Sturgis - *Surviving Grief*

# MEETING TIMES & PLACES

\*\*\*Call for meeting status\*\*\*



BUSINESS / FACILITATORS MEETINGS	LOCATION	DATE	TIME
<b>ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME!</b>	BJC Hospital St. Peters Medical Center Bldg. 1 St. Peters, MO 63376	Contact Mike & Jeanne. Meeting dates vary depending upon unforeseen events.	9:00 AM
<b>CONTACT: Mike &amp; Jeanne Francisco</b> <b>636.233.8490</b>			

GROUP MEETINGS	MEETING LOCATION	FACILITATOR(S)	DAY	TIME
BPUSASTL—St. Peters / St. Charles, MO	Meetings locations are currently TBD as we search for a new place. Please check the website or call before attending meetings.	Mike & Jeanne Francisco 636.233.8490	1st Thursday - Please contact facilitators for meeting status	7:00 pm
St. Peters / St. Charles, MO—siblings Facilitator	Same as above	Samantha Schaefer 636.293.1099	Same as above	7:00 pm
Wright City Group	Discontinued meetings. Feel free to call one of us.	Anne Marie Salyer 972.740.9702 Marilyn Kister 636.634.6019		
Troy Group	Dept. of Health Conference Rm #5 Health Dept. Drive Troy, MO 63379	Cindy Morris 314.954.1810	1st Wednesday	7:00-9:00 pm

SPECIALIZED MEETINGS	MEETING LOCATIONS Please contact facilitators to verify meeting dates/times.	FACILITATOR(S) / CONTACT(S)	DAY	TIME
SOUL: (Surviving Overdose and Understanding Loss)	Concordia Lutheran Church 505 S. Kirkwood Rd. Kirkwood, MO 63122 Or via Zoom (holiday weekends and church conflicts) *Be sure to contact MaryAnn before attending	MaryAnn Lemonds 314.282.7453 (landline) 314.330.7586 (cell) SurvivingOUL@gmail.com	Sundays *To confirm dates, contact MaryAnn before attending	5:00 pm
Life Crisis Center Survivors of Suicide	9355 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132	314.647.3100	Wednesdays	7:00 pm
Healing After Suicide Loss	Baue Funeral Home 608 Jefferson St. Charles, MO 63301	Kristen Ernst: Call to confirm meeting location and time at 636.328.0878	1st & 3rd Monday	6:00 pm
Trees of Righteousness Grief Support Group—Any loss	Christian Hospital in the main lobby conference room—Please call Johnnie for correct location, dates and times	Johnnie Coleman 314.740.3602	3rd Tuesday	6:00 pm to approx. 7:30 pm
Grief Support Group	Ferguson Library 35 N. Florissant Road St. Louis, MO 63135	Pat Ryan 314.605.3949	3rd Saturday	2:00 pm
BPUSA Virtual Bereaved Sibling Chapter — Ages 18+	TBD	TBD		

# TELEPHONE FRIENDS

**BPUSA ST. LOUIS CHAPTER CO-CHAIRS:**

**Mike & Jeanne Francisco**

**636.233.8490**

Accident, Auto	Theresa DeMarco	636.544.3478
Adult Sibling	Samantha Schaefer	636.293.1099
Drugs/ Alcohol	MaryAnn Lemonds	314.330.7586
Child with Disability	Linda Frohning	314.721.5517
Illness	Marilyn Kister	636.634.6019
Jefferson City	Sandy Brungardt	314.954.2410
Only Child /Single Parent	Donna Arnold	314.608.3655



## Representation in Lieu of Meetings

Tri-County, MO	Brenda Wilson 573.438.4559
OPEN ARMS (Parents Left Behind)	Kathy Dunn - 314.807.5798 <a href="mailto:kathydunn333@yahoo.com">kathydunn333@yahoo.com</a>
West County Group (formerly held in Ladue, MO)	Jacque Glaeser 636.236.5103 <a href="mailto:jlynn63021@yahoo.com">jlynn63021@yahoo.com</a>

## Newsletter Submissions

Cut-off date for our next issue is

**February 15, 2026**

Send your submissions (poems, articles, love gifts) to:

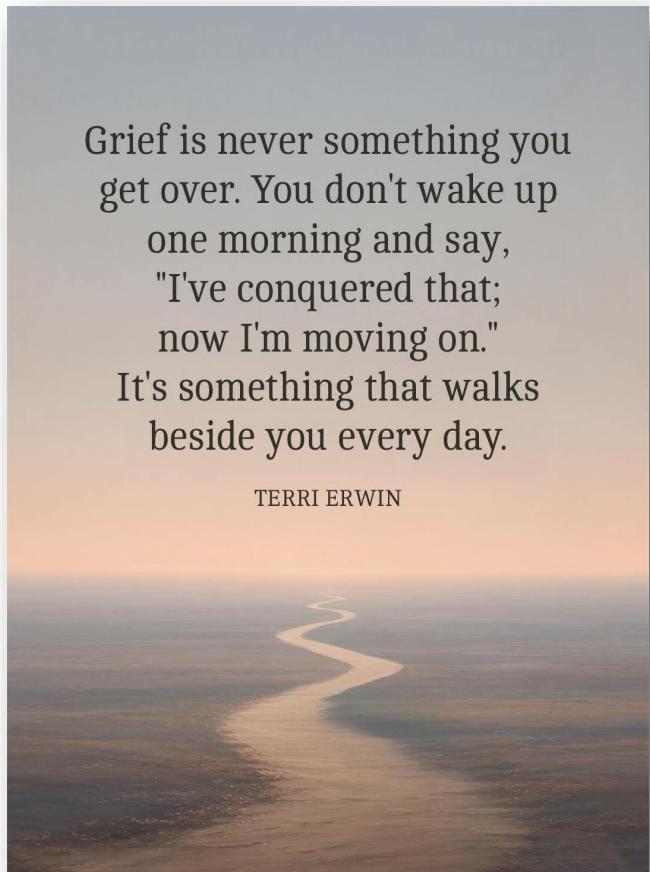
Newsletter  
PO Box 1115  
St. Peters, MO 63376  
or to :

[snowwhite6591@gmail.com](mailto:snowwhite6591@gmail.com)

Your writings may help someone.

Grief is never something you get over. You don't wake up one morning and say, "I've conquered that; now I'm moving on." It's something that walks beside you every day.

TERRI ERWIN



## OUR COMMITMENT



Part of BPUSAStL's commitment to you is that we are the space where our parents and families communicate. Printed in your newsletter are articles to educate and ones that are private expressions of writers. We offer our writings only for your reflection, sometime serving nature or establishing routines signal solace to the writer. Often they turn to religion or spirituality for comfort and guidance.

BPUSAStL share these insights not only for your contemplation but also to acknowledge our community's many and rich sources for strength and hope.

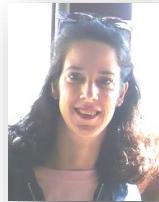
# Children of BPUSAStL's Board Representation



**Julie Bardle**  
*Daughter of  
Marilyn Kister  
Newsletter  
Editor*



**Joseph DeMarco**  
*Son of  
Theresa DeMarco  
Treasurer*



**Jennifer Francisco**  
*Daughter of Jeanne  
& Mike  
Francisco  
St. Peters Group  
Facilitators  
& Co-Chairs*



**Mickey Hale**  
*Son of  
Jacque Glaeser  
Secretary*



**Jeffrey Morris**  
*Son of  
Cindy Morris  
Troy Group  
Facilitator*



**J. P. Rosciglione**  
*Son of Terre  
Rosciglione  
Trivia  
Coordinator*



**Patrick Salyer**  
*Son of Anne Marie  
and Steve Salyer*



**Rosie Umhoefer**  
*Daughter of  
Rosann Umhoefer*



**Matthew Wiese**  
*Son of Kim Wiese*



**Arthur Gerner / Emily Gerner**  
*Son & Granddaughter of  
Deceased Margaret Gerner  
Founder of BPUSAStL*

# Children of BPUSAStL's Special Events



**J. P. Rosciglione**  
*Son of Terre  
Rosciglione  
Trivia  
Coordinator*



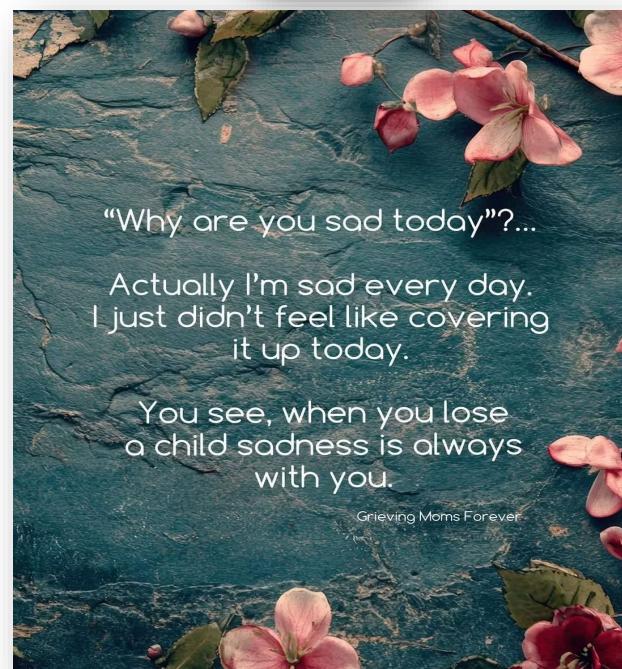
**Aaron Cole**  
*"Aaron's Ms.  
Courtney"  
Trivia Coordinator*



**Danny Brauch**  
*Brother of  
Samantha  
Schaefer  
St. Peters Group  
Sibling Facilitator*



**Valene Connell**  
*Daughter of Chris  
Connell  
Candlelight  
Coordinator*



If you wish to make a love donation - IN ANY AMOUNT - We will include a picture of your child(ren).

(See pages 2 & 3 of this newsletter)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF CHILD(REN)

I WOULD LIKE A LOVE GIFT DEDICATED TO MY CHILD(REN) IN  
THE MONTH OF: \_\_\_\_\_

I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**MAIL TO: Bereaved Parents of the USA-St. Louis,  
P. O. BOX 1115, ST. PETERS, MO 63376**



*Grief doesn't fade –  
it just learns how to fit  
in our pockets.*

*Izzy Roe*



## *WELCOME*

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a safe space where grieving families can connect, share our stories, and learn to rebuild our lives. We attend meetings whenever we can and for as long as we find helpful. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness, and feelings of hopelessness, knowing these emotions will be met with compassion and understanding. As we support, comfort and encourage one another, we offer hope and healing. As we confront the deaths of our loved ones, our shared grief brings us to a common ground that transcends differences, building mutual understanding across the boundaries of culture, race, faith, values, abilities, and lifestyle. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, sharing the joys and the heartbreaks as well as the love that will never fade. Together, strengthened by the bonds we create, we offer what we have learned from one another to every bereaved family, no matter how recent or long ago the death.

We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA.

We welcome you