



JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario
Toronto
Founded in 1978



WHAT'S INSIDE

02

- Tree of Light Remarks
- Tree of Light Speech

03

- Speech Continued

04

- In Memoriam
- Collecting loss
- Online Message
- Our Funding
- Designer Needed

05

- A Moment
- Facilitator Training
- Tree of Light Supporters

06

- Adult Grief Drop-Ins

07

- Comfort Food

08

- BFO-Toronto News

Please Note our Email
address & Website:
info@bfotoronto.ca
bfotoronto.ca
soul2soul.ca

Next Issue:
Mar/Apr 2008
Submission Deadline:
February 22, 2008
Mailing:
March 4, 2008

The 10th Anniversary

Judith McCaffery

You're reading this in January. However December 24th was the 10th anniversary of my son's death.

Eddie was 24 years old. He had struggled with bi-polar illness (manic-depression) for eight years. On Christmas eve in 1997, he sat down on his favorite park bench near the Humber River; the waterfall silenced by ice.

He left this world in a peaceful morphine haze. No jogger slowed his pace. No dog-walker called 911. It was time for Eddie to go home.

My cousin left some pistachio shells on the table, which I found after the funeral. I realized that I too had become a shell of person-- frozen in the rawness of my grief.

That pain is indelible but it is no longer a point of connection. We hold our pain, afraid to imagine any other intimacy, yet the Divine energy urges us to move forward in our healing until one day you find yourself present in your body.

Perhaps the eyes look a little older after having cried the oceans of the world. The heart is bandaged, yet somehow still beating.

Through dreams and intuitions, Eddie has told me to live and thrive, to learn to love and laugh again. He wants me to reconcile the sorrow of a million names and to seek joy which requires faith, trust and prayer. Eddie, my darling son has made it perfectly clear and simple for me- the soul never dies.

Its journey is an ongoing adventure. We are connected in life and beyond, by our unconditional love. Eddie has planted a rose in my heart.

Tree of Light Memorial Story

by: Fauzieh Reza Mohsenzadeh

Good evening. Twelve years ago, my beloved son, Teimour, who was 22 years old at the time, died in a car accident. The first few days and weeks were a blur. The pain was intense. I was lucky in that I had a great support system in my family and friends. They showered me with love and were there for me both emotionally and physically, helping me get through each day, one at a time. However, I still felt alone and isolated because I refrained from speaking about my grief and pain. I felt that if I spoke about the loss of my child, I would be frightening them as they had not had the experience of losing a child. I wanted desperately to connect with people who felt the same visceral pain I did. I needed to learn from them - and with them - if and how we would be able to survive this horrific, life-altering experience. I had a desire to share my story with others like me, and to hear their stories.

This is where BFO came to my rescue. For me, BFO was a refuge. My mothers' group at BFO was an oasis where I could voice what I kept hidden from others. Sometimes we would cry until we laughed. We expressed our feelings of anger, guilt, sadness and uncertainty. We wondered whether we could be strong again. We talked about how we would be able to live without the loved one who was no longer with us physically. We listened intently to each other, seeking a balm to soothe the pain, hoping to find the answers we were seeking. When the group ended, we wondered whether we would manage to go on - but go on we did. Together we had found the strength to keep going even when we faltered. BFO enabled us to meet each other, and share a difficult time with each other. BFO gave us hope that we could survive our loss and supported us with great warmth and empathy.

A friend of mine once told me that it was impossible to think that one's child could die before oneself. But when her own child and husband were murdered, she felt her world shattering. She cried out in anguish that the impossible had happened - that the impossible had become possible. Within these words there is sorrow but there is also tremendous hope. There is a chance that we may survive and become stronger as a result of our suffering. BFO volunteers who co-facilitated our group were our models. From them we learned that it is possible to rebuild our lives.



To tell you the truth, I do not come to the Tree of Light ceremony every year. But I do come to see it every year after the ceremony and spend some quiet time walking around it looking at all the names of our dearly loved ones. BFO honours them and us every year with white doves beautifully adorning a tree of light. I search for my son's name and can't help but cry when I see it. I also look at it with great joy. He is in good company - each and every name on the tree represents a much loved person. Thank you, BFO.

I end by sharing a short line by the great Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran, who wrote:

"When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight."

Thank you.

Tree of Light Memorial Story by: Gilles Lavigne

When Janet first asked me if I would speak at this year's Tree of Light ceremony I was immediately stricken with fear. I was (and still am) nervous about public speaking, and concerned I wouldn't know what to say and certain that I would not be able to get through it.

continued on page 3

Despite my fear, I was also aware that it was something I deeply wanted to do because although wildly outside my comfort zone, it was a chance to honor my father and all of our loved ones who have passed. It also gave me a chance to honour BFO, an organization that I am proud to be involved in and associated with. My father died on July 20th 1994 of suicide after many years of struggling with mental illness. I came to BFO almost 11 years later.

At the end of 2004, I came across the BFO website in my quest to find an organization to volunteer with; I had decided that I wanted to use my own experiences to help others along their journey through grief. As I started to tab through the various sections on the website I became more and more excited! Being from small town Northern-Ontario, nothing like BFO was available for me after my father died. I immediately knew that this was the organization and opportunity I had been searching for- and I couldn't wait to get started.

When I began the volunteer-training I didn't know what to expect but I was anxious to get into it. I thought that it was something I was ready for; I had after all "dealt" with my own loss.

Boy was I wrong.

I learned that there is no dealing with, or getting over it. There is however the new-normal and learning to live with my grief. I was relieved to learn that it was OK to still miss him so many years later, and that it was OK that some days I'm still angry that he is gone. I was also made aware of the fact that everyone's grief is unique and no two people grieve the same way. I had found a place where I could be honest about my feelings and not be judged, a place where people would nod their heads in agreement.

The training was an amazing and yet difficult process. It transported me back to the moment my dad died and the difficult years that followed. It forced me to put words to feelings and emotions I had never before had words for. It did for me what I in-turn was going to do for others when facilitating groups- it provided me a sense of normalcy and a safe space to explore my feelings. Feelings that for years were kept bottled up inside- I never had an outlet or safe space to explore these feelings before. After all, being 14 my peers weren't comfortable talking about it and I always felt like an outsider because I was different. My family was just as resistant- it was like they thought if we didn't talk about it, it would just go away. It helped me find meaning in my own loss. BFO also allowed me to bear witness to others' stories of loss and also to share my own. As the training went on I became more and more passionate about the work that BFO does and was ready to help in any way I could. I felt and continue to feel blessed to have found this organization- this place to belong.

I came to my first tree of light ceremony in 2005 with a Young Adult group that I was facilitating. I was unsure how I felt about attending; as I was still reeling from having celebrated my father's birthday on November 29th. I wondered if it was really necessary to put myself in another situation that would remind me yet again that he is not here. Regardless of my anxieties, I felt reassured that I was going with a group, a group of people who I had just spent 10 weeks sharing with, listening to and bonding with. I knew that I wanted to be there for them, and also knew that they would be there for me.

It was a wonderful experience. When I saw the trees with all of the lights and white doves representing all of our loved ones my heart skipped a beat and I was overcome with emotion. It was also wonderful to see so many familiar faces. Faces of people I had met over the past year, so many other people I felt connected to.

When asked what the tree of light ceremony represents for me I can say that it is a time when I am reminded that I am not alone on my journey through grief. It presents a space that allows me to give thanks and praise to BFO; an organization that does such wonderful albeit difficult work. At the same time, it provides me with a safe place to honor my father and grieve my loss; and all the while, I am able to do all of this amongst a group of people with whom I hold the common thread of grief. These connections remind me that we are not alone and that despite the pain and of our losses, there is someone who walks beside us. This is our true blessing.

IN MEMORIAM

*John Patrick Abbott
Maria Bucek
Sean Murray Drennan*

*Jeanne Gershater
Ed Gray
Eva Myers*

*Arnold Rutledge
Ethan William Simpson
John Fulton Shea*

COLLECTING LOSS: WEAVING THREADS OF MEMORY LAUNCHES ONLINE GALLERY

BFO volunteers, Karen Haffey and Esther Kalaba, continue to co-create Collecting Loss, a community-based art project exploring stories held in the clothing of our loved ones who have died. More than 100 contributions were received from across Canada and beyond. Photographs of each item of clothing and excerpts from all stories can now be viewed online. Please visit the Collecting Loss Gallery at <http://www.collectingloss.com/gallery.html> or go to www.collectingloss.com and click on the Gallery page. This touching collection weaves together the threads of memory so many of us hold in life of those we love who have died and will become part of a future public art exhibit and accompanying book. We hope you find a thread within that touches you. We welcome your responses at info@collectingloss.com.

Karen Haffey
Artist, Bodyworker,, Creative Soul
kultivate: a creative wellness company

PHONE: 416 846 3909
EMAIL: karen@kultivate.ca
WEBSITES: www.kultivate.ca & www.collectingloss.com

*“Correcting oneself is correcting the whole world.
The sun is simply bright. It does not correct anyone.
Because it shines, the whole world is full of light.
Transforming yourself is a means of giving light to the whole world.” -Ramana Maharsi*

DO YOU LIKE TO HELP BEREAVED PEOPLE THROUGH ONLINE MESSAGES?

We have a need for a couple of people to respond to messages posted to our website. You can do this from your home if you have access to the internet. A wonderful way to provide support! If you are interested in supporting our youth website or our main website (loss of a child, parent, sibling, spouse/partner). Call us at 416 440 0290 extension 10 Or email us at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca

THANK YOU!

BFO-TORONTO RECEIVES FUNDING FROM THE FOLLOWING:

- The Ontario Trillium Foundation
- City of Toronto, Community Service Partnerships
- City of Toronto, Community Safety Investment Program
- City of Toronto, Access, Equity & Human Rights
- Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario Victim Services Secretariat

REMEMBER GOING GREEN

You can read the newsletter on our website www.bfotoronto.ca instead of getting a printed copy – saves paper, envelopes, stamps, etc. Let us know your preference by calling Larry Konyu, Office Manager at (416) 440-0290 extension 10 or by emailing us at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER NEEDED

The BFO needs a new graphic designer for our Journey’s newsletter. You will need experience with Adobe Indesign. It takes about 3 hours, plus editing time. Please contact Larry Konyu for more details. Lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca

A MOMENT

I remember the softness of your hands
 I used to hold yours in mine gently and lovingly
 Wondering why I wasn't blessed with this kind of beauty
 Quietly envious
 I marveled over them
 Delicate, slender fingers perfectly displaying the rings you
 loved to wear
 Flash of brilliant coral polish on each
 A defiant rresponse to the illness stealing you away
 Various bottles of colour stood like soldiers by your bedside
 An impression of normalcy in a life so changed, so challenged
 You would chuckle over the roughness of my own
 How did a daughter of mine evr come to have these
 farmeer's hands...
 I loved your smile for that moment, the sweet connection
 between us
 For precious seconds the curtain parted on your despair
 and fear
 I forgot my anguish...
 You were must my mum
 And lwas just your daughter
Shelley Black, in memory of Lynda Black, my mum.

VOLUNTEER FACILITATOR TRAINING

Are you interested in facilitating a bereavement group or meeting one to one with newly bereaved people? Join our team of compasionate and caring volunteers. Training to begin in mid February, 2008. Please call us at (416) 440-0290 extension 11 to arrange an interview with Betty Ann. Space is limited and fill quickly so call ASAP.

Proposed training dates

Core training

Tuesday February 26	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Tuesday March 18	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Tuesday March 25	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Saturday March 1	9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday March 8	9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Tuesday March 11	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm

Child, youth, adult & 1-1 training

Monday March 31	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Monday April 7	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Monday April 14	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Monday April 28	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm
Monday May 5	5:45 pm – 9:00 pm

We are particularly in need of volunteers in our children and youth programs and our infant loss programs.

LIST OF SUPPORTERS FOR THE TREE OF LIGHT 2007

We would like to sincerely thank all our supporters for this year's event. Your support is truly appreciated. It is through your generosity and spirit that we are able to continue to support the GTA community with our grief support work.

Toronto City Hall

- Kat Ramachandran – Co-ordinator Facilities & Logistics
- Peter, Benji, Brenda & Vince – staff

SAS Party Consultants

- Sylvie – set up & storage of tree & lights, supplier of doves

Café on the Square

- Ralitsa Neykova – provided Coffee, Tea, Hot Chocolate

Open Window Bakery

- Jane Ross – cookies for the event

MacLaren McCann

- Tiffany Punnett – scroll of names

MacKinnon & Bowes Ltd.,

- Allan Cole – offering 7 coordinating special services – storage & transportation
- Jerry Peacock – Humphrey's Funeral Home – transporting tree from City Hall to BFO

Harpist

- Eithne Heffernan

Singers

- Shauntelle Haynes
- Jason Julien

Stories

- Fauzieh Reza Mohsenzadeh
- Gilles Lavigne

Turning on Lights of Tree

- Florette Bacchus-Haynes & Family

“We Remember Them” Poem

- Rebecca Weintraub
- Alaa Khalaf

Photographer

- Anna Yeung

Volunteers

- Dawn Phillips • Michael McCamus • Ira Bannister, Alaa Khalaf, Rebecca Weintraub (Students) • Julia Farquharson
- Marilyn Ortega • Carol Stewart • Diana Draper • Diane McIntyre • Dawn Thomas • Mary Jane McNicholl • Jane Gardner • Sue Shin • Dragan Matijevic • Esther Korn

Winter/Spring 2008 Adult Grief Drop Ins

A drop-in group for any adult, over 30 years of age, who has experienced the death of a parent, sibling, spouse or partner.

- *Facilitated by BFO-Toronto peer volunteers who have experienced similar losses*
 - *Attend as many drop ins as you wish*
 - *Open discussion format – no set topics*
- *Share your story or simply be present with other bereaved people who are learning to live with their grief*
- *PLEASE NOTE: we ask that people arrive NO LATER than 7:15 for each session*

February

Thursday 7th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Wednesday 13th evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Thursday 21st afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Wednesday 27th evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm

March

Thursday 6th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Wednesday 12th evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Thursday 20th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Wednesday 26th evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Where: *BFO-Toronto offices 28 Madison Ave.
(One block east of Spadina, ½ block north of Bloor)*

RSVP: *416-440-0290*

Note: *Our January series of closed, 10-week groups begins the third week in January. A new series of 10-week closed groups for **all** BFO programs will begin in mid April or early May 2008.*



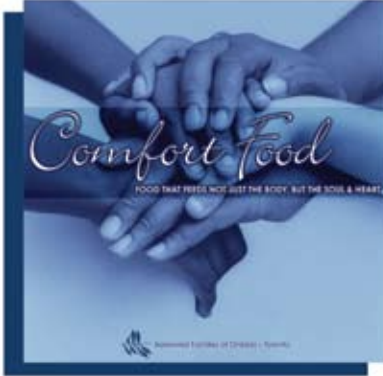
Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto
*Bereaved helping the bereaved learn to live with grief.
We can help the healing begin.*

BFO-Toronto 28 Madison Ave. Toronto, ON M5R 2S1 416-440-0290

bfotoronto.ca soul2soul.ca

Comfort Food

It's not too late to pick up your BFO – Toronto “Comfort Food’ Cookbook!



This cookbook features introductions by both James Chatto of Toronto Life Magazine and Lucy Waverman of The Globe and Mail, as well as, recipes from well-known chefs across the city, including Jamie Kennedy (Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar, Jamie Kennedy at The Gardiner) and Anna Olsen (of FoodTV’s “Sugar”).

This cookbook would make a wonderful gift for your family and friends.

Cookbooks are \$25 (taxes included) with all proceeds going directly BFO – Toronto to allow us to continue to offer our programs and services free of charge to individuals, families and communities.

Cookbooks are available for pick up at BFO-Toronto, located at 28 Madison Avenue, just east of Spadina station. Please drop by or give us a call at (416) 440-0290 extension 26 or email your order to sshin@bfotoronto.ca.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

In Memory Wristbands

BFO-Toronto is pleased to offer wristbands in memory of your loved one who died. The wristbands are white with the words “In Memory” engraved on them. They can be purchased at our office for a small donation. If you would like to order a number of wristbands and have them mailed right to your door please contact our Office Manager, Larry Konyu at 416 440 0290 extension 10 or via email at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca to place an order.



I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT BFO-TORONTO

I wish to support the work of **Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto**.

Please accept my donation of \$_____ services to bereaved individuals and families in the Greater Toronto Area.

Payment Type: Cheque VISA M/C Amex Cash

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Signature: _____

Please mail your donation to: Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto. 28 Madison Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1S1

or call the BFO-Toronto Office at 416.440.0290 to make a donation over the phone or go to our website www.bfotoronto.ca where you can make a donation online.

BFO-TORONTO NEWS

The Tree of Light ceremony held on December 6th 2007 was, once again, a memorable, memorial event. For the fifteenth year harpist, Eithne Heffernan played her exquisite music as people gathered. Two youth, Jason Julien and Shauntelle Haynes, from our summer, Soul II Soul Program, sang a piece that they had written and produced, and Shauntelle sang “Somewhere” from West Side Story, in honour of BFO. Fauzieh Reza Mohsenzadeh, a bereaved mom, and Gilles Lavigne, a bereaved son, shared their grief stories of the loss of a son and the loss of a father, respectively, and spoke warmly of how BFO had supported them. Larry Konyu, coordinated the event this year and was assisted by BFO volunteers who hung 500 doves each carrying the name of someone’s loved one, so carefully on two trees— well done Larry and Julia, Alaa, Rebecca, Ira, Marilyn, Diane, Diana, Anna, Dawn, Mary Jane, Jane, Sue, Dragan, Sarah, Esther, Carol and Michael!

In November I had a visit from Margaret Darte, one of the four founders of BFO. She brought with her, a psychiatrist from Cuba - Dr. Ernesto Marzoa. Dr. Marzoa is hoping to establish a mutual support group in Cuba, for parents whose child has died and Margaret wanted to introduce him to BFO to learn more about how our mutual support model works. It was a very interesting visit and I am so pleased I had a chance to meet and talk with Margaret – she is such a warm and delightful woman, with a wealth of experience behind her.

Many of you will remember volunteer facilitator, PAC Chair and ex –Chair of BFO’s Board, Elaine Gort, who resigned from our Board of Directors last year. In November she had major heart surgery and thankfully, after a few ‘ups and downs’, she is now recovering well. We trust that her healing will continue and her strength will be restored.

We are all looking forward to Betty Ann returning to work in mid January, just in time for our Spring Volunteer Training. Vic and Anna did an amazing job ‘filling her shoes’ and I am very grateful that they were willing and able to do so.

Many of you now know about our new cookbook – Comfort Food: Food that Feeds the Body, Soul and Heart. We are extremely pleased with its ‘look’, the recipes and the support from both BFO members and professionals in the field. James Chatto and Lucy Waverman both wrote a piece about comfort food, and Jamie Kennedy, Anna Olsen, Carlos Fuenmayor, Craig Lauzon and Leah Miller generously submitted recipes, which made the cookbook so special. We are extremely grateful to the following people who volunteered their time and skills and without whom we could not have produced such a beautiful cookbook: Ayako Shimizu, the designer; Shannon Gerard the illustrator; Vince Satira, Fely P. Guinasao, Carol Tsang, Jeny Marin and Sara Goodchild from Pronk and Associates, the typesetters and proofreaders. Many thanks also to our Cookbook committee members, Laura Divilio, Zoe Arden, Terrie Tucker, Laura Nicholls, Karen Tyrell and the staff coordinator Sue Shin. We need your help selling them, so please think about buying a cookbook as a birthday or anniversary gift; or sell them at your local Church, club or community centre.

Finally I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciations to everyone who has supported BFO-Toronto over the past year. Whether it was your time, your donations, your ideas or your care and concern, we couldn’t do this work without you. Many, many thanks. I wish you all, and the world, peace for 2008.

Take care everyone, *Janet Wilson, Executive Director*

We are looking for volunteers with skills and ideas in marketing to help with fund raising initiatives. Call Janet Wilson at 416 440 0290 x19 or jwilson@bfotoronto.ca.

This newsletter is produced for our members and supporters and is available by mail and on our website. We welcome submissions, please forward to info@bfotoronto.ca. We reserve the right to edit items submitted for publication.

The opinions and ideas expressed by our members and other authors in this newsletter, represent their own unique experiences of grief and do not necessarily reflect the views of BFO-Toronto

BFO-Toronto website design by Joli Design, jolidesign.ca
Journey’s Newsletter design by: Jenn Lawrence, jennlawrence.ca

BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO-TORONTO

28 Madison Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M5R 1S2
Phone: 416 440 0290 • Fax: 416 440 0304
bfotoronto.ca • soul2soul.ca