



JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario
Toronto
Founded in 1978



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We're Looking For...

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

Next Issue:

Sept/Oct 2008

Submission Deadline:

August 21, 2008

Mailing:

September 2, 2008

Lost—One Green Scarf

I had definitely left it with my coat, and it was definitely not there when I went to put my coat on to leave. I shook out the coat sleeves; looked under coat rack with its one remaining coat; checked behind my boots, and at the suggestion of someone, retraced my steps to the large meeting room where we had been for the past three hours. I knew it wouldn't be there, for I had chosen not to wear it in there, but I checked anyhow. No scarf.

It was then that the familiar fear swept over me, the fear one feels when suddenly, inevitably encountering an acquaintance from one's multi-storied past, but not sure what one should say, only knowing, it would likely be an awkward encounter, or a cathartic one, or both. It's the fear that begins in the lower entrails and moves swiftly up to the rib cage, then upward to the throat, tightening its grip as it climbs. It's the fear that something significant that was, will be no more. Something is lost. Grief awakened from its slumber.

"Just leave," I tell myself. "Just get going. It's only a scarf, for heaven's sakes." Yes, only a scarf. A vivid green silk and Pashmina scarf that makes my brown skin shine when I drape it against my face and neck, a green scarf that goes so well with the blacks and browns in my bud-

get-bound wardrobe, a green scarf that I spent months hunting for, and finally found for \$7.99 at a sidewalk sale, a green scarf that my daughter loves to share, and I love to wear, a green emerald scarf that I was beginning to build a loving fragrant relationship with, fingering its black-brown veins and the laughing, hanging tassels. It's just one, lost, green scarf.

Stepping briskly off the steps of the BFO house (Bereaved Families of Ontario) down to the sidewalk on Madison Avenue, I walked deftly towards the Spadina Station, clutching my naked throat. It was then that I began to notice peoples' scarves: some dark, some brightly coloured, some woolen, some cotton -- all deftly knotted at the nape, complementing coats, shielding owners from cold.

Déjà vu, grief whispers. Didn't you notice every mother with a baby after you buried each baby? Didn't you hear your babies' cries in the cry of every child for a year or more? It's the way grief travels, a river running its course through a crowded landscape on its way to the open sea, tracing and retracing its paths. It must get to the sea to be the part of the ocean it was meant to be. Let grief go. Let it run through your blood stream to the heart and race back out to your

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limbs-- oxygen-rich, life-giving, meaning-making grief. Then you'll know you are still alive, still breathing, still being.

Going eastbound on the subway is instinctive, but tonight I must remember to change trains at Yonge and Bloor. Sitting awkwardly on the nearest subway seat, I'm keenly aware of the absence of a scarf, and feeling vulnerable, aware of the absence of two children, the absence of my friend Jean, gunned down in her own home on New Year's Day, a demented man driving away with a blood-stained gun. Wise, beautiful Jean, dying on her kitchen floor. And before that, dead brown babies in small white coffins on fine summer days. What's not to cry for?

"Union Station. This stop, Union Station," the robotic voice calls out. I stumble off the train, the subway doors closing smoothly behind me. What next, Vilma? Climb those stairs and make your way towards the GO Station signs. I'd never taken the GO train home from here before. This is new. This strain of grief is new. Where the heck do I buy tickets?

Ah. Steady now, Vilma. Get a grip. Follow the signs. "One way to Pickering" I shout to the man behind the counter as I hand him a \$10.00 bill. Why are you shouting, Vilma? "Which platform?" I ask him, panic rising. "It will tell you when the train is arriving," he answers brusquely, pointing to the overhead arrival and departure schedule as if annoyed by my inane question.

How was I to know? I've never been here before, never buried babies before, never organized a prayer vigil for my murdered friend. How insensitive!

I sit down to wait. Get up, move to another bench, then sit down again. Finally my brain decodes the jumble of words and numbers on the screen. My train would arrive at 10:13 p.m. Breathe, Vilma. Breathe.

I take in gulps of air scented with burnt cinnamon from the Cinnabon kiosk nearby and sweaty cologne from the teenage boy propped up against the wall.

Breathe, Vilma, Breathe. Let air in, let loss out. Breathe, grieve. Breathe, grieve.

Let the rhythm lull you the way you rocked babies in the womb. The womb that became their tomb. Breathe, grieve. Breathe, grieve ... You gave love. They gave life lessons. Keep going. Push...

Suddenly a light is flashing numbers beside the 10:13 train Eastbound to Pickering. Platform cues. I pick up my feet and move. I move up the stairs, into the night air, without my scarf, loss trailing me doggedly.

I know I'm going to cry on the train. I choose a solitary seat, far from the crowd. On such a night, a dark window spot is a woman's best friend. Grief settles down beside me. Tears reappear. Why now, eighteen years after the babies? Why, after two living babies whom I'm racing home to kiss goodnight?

"How was your session tonight?" my husband asks hopefully when he picks me up from the GO station. "Good" I answer. "Good. But I lost my scarf. Or maybe it was stolen. I don't know. I just didn't come home with it." "Oh dear," he says, his concern echoing my tone. But I say no more, nothing more on the way home. And he says no more, taking his cue from comfortable silence. Talk can come later.

I go upstairs and check on my kids. Just to be sure, they're alive. Our eight year old is curled up in his usual pillow hugging position and snoring softly. Our sixteen year old is reading beneath a mound of blankets, her clothes carpeting the floor.

I stumble into our bed, my knees jabbing into my husband's ribs. "Good night," he mumbles half asleep as he turns to kiss me and turn back to his side of the bed. "Good night" I whisper, taking care he does not hear the sound of tears arriving. I guess one can never say good night to grief.

I can kiss that green scarf goodbye. But I'll miss it. I'll miss it every time I put on my coat. I miss my friend. And I miss my babies.

Breathe, grieve. Breathe, grieve. This too, is the rhythm of living.

Submitted by Vilma Blenman, bereaved mother and BFO-Toronto Volunteer Peer Facilitator

The Gift of Time and Perspective

Recently, I received an email from a bereaved parent volunteer and I asked if I could share it with all of you. I had called Christie on the anniversary of her son Gavin's death to let her know I was thinking of her. Gavin, 14, died as a result of suicide on May 30, 2000. Christie's other son Jason, 13, died of a brain tumor on May 17, three years later.

The email I received in response to my message of support was so moving and such a powerful example of the kind of resiliency that I am privileged to witness again and again at BFO. I hope that it gives you a moment of comfort and strength on your own unique journey of grief, survival and transformation.

Hi Betty Ann,

Sorry I haven't gotten back to you about your kind letter and phone call. It was much appreciated.

I woke up that morning and decided that I wouldn't spend the day being sad. Although the days leading up to that date were edged with sorrow, (as memories

of Gavin's stay at the hospital kept showing up in my mind), I decided that the anniversary of his death was no longer going to be a sad day. It was going to be the anniversary of the day that Gavin was set free from his pain and anguish. No more suffering for him. It was a release for him, and for me, in a way. There was nothing more that I could do to help him.

And so this was the date that he was freed, to go to the other side, where he could be showered with love. And this is the image that I will hold.

I actually decided to change how I felt about their birthdays, before I changed my thinking about the anniversary of their deaths. On those days, the days of each of their births, I would think back, and so came to realize how grateful I was that they had been born.

I feel blessed, to have had Gavin and Jason, for the amount of time that I was given to spend with each of them. They were lovely human beings. And I think of their smiles as often as I can.

*Thank you Betty Ann, for your thoughtfulness...
Christie*

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 p.m. for each evening session & no later than 2:15 p.m. for the afternoon sessions

Monday July 7th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Monday July 21st evening 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Monday August 11th afternoon 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Monday August 25th evening 7:00pm – 9:00pm

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

RSVP: 416-440-0290 ext. 12

Note: Our current series of 10-week groups is full. A new series of 10-week closed groups for all BFO programs will begin in mid September 2008.

Remembering June...

Remembering What Matters

by Rye Asuro

On April 25th, 2008, Rye Asuro hosted a gala in memory of his wife June to raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society. The following is an excerpt from his speech. Rye and his 6-year old daughter participated in BFO mutual support groups and now Rye is training to become a peer support volunteer.

We are here tonight to honour my beloved wife June, loving mother to Jasmyn and our dear friend. After a 2-year battle with cancer, June died August 10th, 2006 at the tragically young age of 34. Our story begins when I was 6 years old and I first met June at our apartment building on Bathurst Street.

When I first saw her I thought, “Ewww a girl.” and she thought, “Ewww a boy”. We shared many childhood memories with our families: camping, vacationing and spending holidays together. Fast forward to high school where she became my prom date. (she still said ewww a boy!) Then really fast forward - 10 years later - on September 4th, 1999 - she became my wife. And yes, she said “Ewww”.

Two years later we had Jasmyn. And then just before Jasmyn’s 5th birthday, her mommy died. August 10th, 2006.

I miss her. Jasmyn misses her. I know we all miss her.

What I miss most about June is her time. The time we spent together. What June’s death has taught me is that the most precious thing we have is time. The time we have together. It doesn’t matter - young or old, rich or poor - when our time is up, it’s done. It’s finished.

Before June died, she said to me, “Rye, remember the times we had together. The fun, the laughs and loving times we shared. Forget the bad times. Forget the hospital times. The chemo times. Forget the surgeries and operations. Remember the good. Remember the smiles. Remember the “melt my heart” moments. The birthdays, the anniversaries, the Christmases, the family trips, the Disney times. Remember our love. Remember the good times.”

June said it’s important to be happy with the time you have. Yes there will be sad times. Go there - be sad - but don’t spend too much time sad. There will be mad times. Go there - be mad - but don’t spend too much time being mad. Be happy. Spend time with good friends. Spend time with loving family. Take time to love who you are and to love the ones you are with.

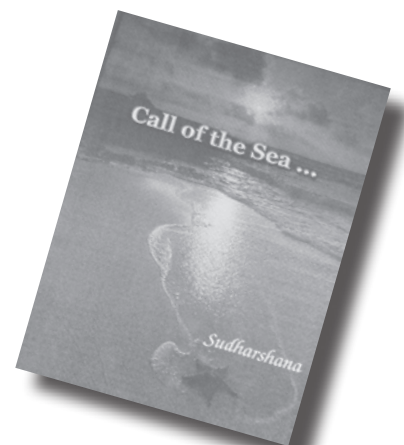
In the end, it doesn’t matter how *much time* you have in your life. But *what you do* with the time you are given: how you spend your time and who you spend it with. This is what matters.

Call of The Sea

A book of poetry by BFO-Toronto Volunteer Sudha Coomarasamy
\$15.00 each, proceeds to benefit Bereaved Parents programs

Seeking Sea

Resting with reason
moving with passion
you came.
Belly swollen with children
you returned home.



A Broken Heart Still Beats

The following are a collection of quotes from the book, "A Broken Heart Still Beats". The book was compiled by two bereaved mothers looking to make some sense of their loss – Ann McCracken and Mary Sewel. The quotes were submitted to the Journeys newsletter by bereaved mother Judi Tullio in loving memory of her daughter Nicola who died at the tender age of two and a half, in September 2006.

Most often, I'm a woman looking for an answer, or at least for a clue, still trying to understand how such a tragic loss could have happened, exactly how it has molded me and how I can prevent it from happening again.

I didn't plan to be this person, for whom loss always hovers at the edge of my awareness like next month's bill, but there you have it. I've carried the remote ache of longing with me long enough to understand it is part of who I am now....This is a part of my identity that I can never change...

Our lives are shaped as much by those who leave us as they are by those who stay. Loss is our legacy. Insight is our gift. Memory is our guide.
-Hope Edelman, Motherless Daughters

Grief remains one of the few things that has the power to silence us. It is a whisper in the world and a clamour within. More than sex, more than faith, even more than its usher death, grief is unspoken, publicly ignored except for those moments at the funeral that are over too quickly, or the conversation among the cognoscenti, those of us who recognize in one another a kind chasm deep in the centre of who we are.

Maybe we do not speak of it because death will mark all of us, sooner or later. Or maybe it is unspoken because grief is only the first part of it. After a time it becomes something less sharp but larger, too, a more enduring thing called loss. Perhaps that is why it is life's less explored passage, because it has no end. The world loves closure, loves a thing that can, as they say, be gotten

through. This is why it comes as a great surprise to find that loss is forever, that two decades after the event there are those occasions when something in you cries out at the continual presence of an absence.

"An awful leisure, "Emily Dickinson once called what the living have after death..."

The landscapes of all our lives become as full of craters as the surface of the moon...As I write my obituaries carefully and think about how little the facts suffice, not only to describe the dead but to tell what they will mean to the living all of the rest of our lives. We are defined by who we have lost.
-Anna Quindlen, Life After Death.

Your son is seven years dead. "But it seems," I said, seeing your face buckle in mid-conversation as over the fields came winging the trebles of children at holiday play – I said, "but it seems like yesterday."

"No," you said. "Like today."
-Sydney Lea, After Labour Day

How can one endure in the face of tragedy? People have asked me. Surely, I have reason to ask myself. Joe Sr. was right in his words: "Carry on... take care of the living...there is a lot of work to be done."
-Rose Kennedy Fitzgerald – who lost 4 of her 8 children.

Calling All Runners!

BFO-Toronto is now one of the Official Charities for this year's Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon, ½ Marathon & 5K Walk/Run. This is a tremendous opportunity for BFO – Toronto as last year 54 charities raised over \$950,000.00! For some charities, this marathon is their largest fundraiser, and now BFO-Toronto is a part of this special event with our 'Soul Runners Team'.

Join the 'Soul Runners Team' or raise money as an individual and help BFO-Toronto. You can either be a part of the Soul Runners Team and use the existing team webpage for your fundraising efforts, or join as an individual and have your own webpage to tell your story and collect pledges. BFO-Toronto will cover the registration fee for the run for each individual who raises \$300.00 or more. In addition, all runners

will receive a "Soul Runners" T-shirt as our way of saying "thank you" for your generous contribution.

Collecting pledges couldn't be easier! Once we register you, the Scotiabank Marathon Website gives you your own personal Fundraising Webpage. You can use this page to tell people about why you are running and what BFO means to you. Fundraising on your part simply consists of you sending a link to your webpage in an email to potential sponsors. Interested sponsors then select the donation link on your webpage and all transactions are completed over the internet - safe and secure. You never have to collect door to door or be responsible for cash. The site even sends you an email notice when someone has sponsored you as a personal reminder to send a

thank you!

Not interested in running but want to support a friend or family member who is? In addition to sponsoring the runners, you can also join the '26.2 Pit Crew' and help encourage the runners along the way! Nothing is more inspirational and motivating to tired runners than seeing and hearing supportive friends in the crowd.

Please help by running or sponsoring a runner by contacting Philip Barton at 416-500-4988 or email bfocharityrun@boltdevelopments.com.

For additional run information go to the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon website at www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com.

Charity Challenge Training Run Schedule

To help everyone get prepared for the Charity Challenge Marathon on September 28th, we are organizing three training runs to help you. Join the "circle of hope and healing" by running/walking with us. The run/walk will vary depending on your requirements but at least we can start together and support each other. Please email or call Larry Konyu at lkonyu@bfotoronto.ca or (416) 440-0290 to register for the running/walking training sessions.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| START LOCATION: | Leslie Street Spit (Bottom of Leslie Street – south of Lakeshore) |
| START TIME: | 9:00 am |
| DATES: | Sunday July 20 Sunday August 24 Sunday September 14 |

CONGRATULATIONS

Our very best wishes go out to Dragan Matijevic and his wife Deanna on the birth of their son Filip on May 25th, little brother to Sophia.

Fall 2008 Volunteer Training

- You want to be a part of the “circle of hope and healing” that peer support volunteers create at BFO-Toronto
- You are committed to the principles of access, equity and inclusion
- You want to work with bereaved individuals and families from diverse communities across Toronto
- You are a compassionate, empathetic and open person
- You can listen without judgment and support someone without trying to “fix” them
- You believe in the value of mutual support and peer support (bereaved people supporting each other)
- You want to be part of a caring and responsible community organization

If this describes you, then please consider applying to become a volunteer and take part in our Fall 2008 volunteer training program. **We are especially in need of bereaved parents and infant loss volunteers as well as peers and professionals who want to work in our children’s program.** Contact Betty Ann Rutledge at 416-440-0290 ext. 11 or barutledge@bfotoronto.ca for more information. Feedback from past training participants includes:

- *A wonderful, emotional, challenging and strengthening experience.*
- *An unforgettable experience with a greater impact than just training.*
- *A solid beginning to the road of learning to be a “wounded healer”.*
- *Excellent structure, organized – good mixture/ variety of speakers and exercises - it was all very impressive.*
- *The training was a lifetime learning experience*
- *Immensely moving, enlightening*
- *Very well thought out, inclusive and respectful. The training team respected and adapted to the needs of the group*
- *Please remain as open, aware, reflective, and balanced in your approach. Care and emphasis on diversity, community, etc. were particularly excellent. Thanks so much.*
- *I am more sure than ever that I want to be a part of the BFO community*
- *What a gift this was...thank you!*

To train as a one-to-one support volunteer, you must attend all 6 Core Training Sessions.

If you wish to be a group facilitator, please note: you must attend all 6 Core Training Sessions PLUS the 5-Session Group Training.

6-Session Core Training Series:

- 1) Thursday, October 2nd 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 2) Saturday, October 4th 9:30am to 4:30pm
- 3) Thursday, October 16th 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 4) Saturday, October 18th 9:30am to 4:30pm
- 5) Thursday, October 23rd 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 6) Thursday, October 30th 5:45pm to 9:00pm

5-Session Group Training Series:

- 1) Thursday, November 6th 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 2) Thursday, November 13th 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 3) Thursday, November 20th 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 4) Thursday, November 27th 5:45pm to 9:00pm
- 5) Thursday, December 11th 5:45pm to 9:00pm

Taken from Memorial section of the Toronto Star on Saturday June 21, 2008.

ALMEIDA, Nellie
A Mother Grieves.

You died. 10 years ago, June 25, 1998.
Too young to have died, my heart cries out.
In the prime of your life,
A vibrant, beautiful, young woman,
A spirit so strong yet so gentle.
Gone.
I live.
A half-life now.
In the deep shadow of my sorrow and sadness at

losing you.
I bear the unbearable pain.
My hopes and dreams forever shattered, as yours were.
Often when my spirit fails me I weep despairingly.
Then you come.
My strong but gentle daughter.
You are the Whisperer, telling me you love me, comforting me.
You lift me out of my despair,
restore my courage,
send help through others where you cannot.
You set me back on Life's Path
I miss you so.
- Mum

IN MEMORIAM

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>George Abady</i> | <i>Daniel Nicholas Giggio</i> | <i>Glenn Pember</i> |
| <i>Cameron Alkins</i> | <i>Monte Himal</i> | <i>Nadine Schappert</i> |
| <i>Nellie Almeida</i> | <i>Lori Humphreys</i> | <i>Ryan Scozzese</i> |
| <i>Brent Wayne Arnold</i> | <i>Sherri James</i> | <i>Brian Shepherd</i> |
| <i>Maxwell James Barton</i> | <i>Ashkan Katirai</i> | <i>Sheila Smart</i> |
| <i>Laurie Campbell</i> | <i>Doug "Muff" MacFayden</i> | <i>Michael Webb</i> |
| <i>Catherine Dietrich</i> | <i>Eddie Aidan McCaffery</i> | |
| <i>James Fowler</i> | <i>Albert James Morton</i> | |

Come and join the fun while supporting a good cause.
in cooperation with 'ang Pilipinas' Organization

A FUNDRAISING DINNER/DANCE

for an orphanage & the Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto

When: December 20, 2008

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.

Where: W. Garnett Community Centre
501 Clark Avenue, Thornhill

Attire: whatever is comfortable for you

Ticket: \$ 23.00

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 call us at (416) 440-0290 extension 12 for our reception desk or email your order to info@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.

PLEASE GIVE A GIFT TO OTHERS - SUPPORT BFO-TORONTO

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

- Donation (general) **Donation in Honour of (anniversary, birthday etc.)**
 Memorial Donation (would you like this mentioned in the newsletter?)
 In Memory of: _____

Person making donation: _____

Please accept my donation of \$_____ to help the organization provide free services to bereaved 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 secure donation online.

BFO -Toronto News

On June 19th 2008, we held our 29th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Volunteer Appreciation Evening. Again we held it at 28 Madison and approximately 55 members, volunteers and staff attended. The following are the appreciations I spoke to, as part of my report.

“I want to look back on 2007, 29 years after BFO was first founded by four mothers whose children had died, and give you some sense of what has been accomplished; what you, staff, volunteers, members and community partners have accomplished through your commitment, your generosity, your care, your courage and your compassion.

Over the years Betty Ann Rutledge, our Adult Programs and Vounteer Coordinator, has transformed our volunteer training into an exceptional, experiential, ‘experience’, which is grounded in our values of compassion, integrity, mutual support, relationship, understanding and diversity. 2007 was the first time we held 2 trainings in one year (and this will continue in 2008); our volunteers came from a wide range of experiences, cultures and backgrounds...more so than in any other year. Some words that have been used to describe the training include...enlightening, transformative, amazing, thought provoking, awesome, and powerful. So this is quite an accomplishment, especially when you consider the fact that Betty Ann’s beloved father died last October, and she was away on bereavement leave for the latter part of the year.

In 2004, BFO made a commitment to reach out to youth, particularly youth who live in racialized and underserved communities. Last year, continuing this commitment our Child & Youth Coordinator, Sarah Henderson facilitated 5 in-school bereavement groups; provided one to one, in-school support to over 30 youth; began a weekly youth drop-in; supervised the youth website, soul2soul.ca; and answered many, many phone calls from anxious parents and school personnel, who just didn’t know how to help a grieving student. This was in addition to coordinating our in-house programs for children and youth.

In 2007, we piloted our Soul 2 Soul program for disadvantaged, racialized youth who live in Mayor Miller’s 13 priority neighbourhoods. This summer program allowed youth to explore and express their grief through the use of media arts; they directed, acted in, and wrote the script for 11 podcasts that can be viewed on soul2soul.ca. Thanks to our then, Coordinator of the Black Community Bereavement program, Janina Joseph-Walker and with assistance from Florette Bacchus Haynes & Sarah, Soul 2 Soul was a huge success. I can tell you it was a success because the youth who participated in it said it was, and so did their parents.

Whether we like it or not computers and the Internet are a huge part of how we work. Much of our work last year was often disrupted because of overloaded and outdated computers. For each of the funding proposals that we submitted we asked for money for at least one computer. Gradually we were able to replace 5 of the old computers with 4 new ones and one very good used one. Thank goodness we had Larry, our Office Manager, who researched the best prices, helped with the networking of the computers, and ensured that each staff person had up-to-date software and email systems. And then there’s Facebook, an anomaly that I still haven’t quite got into, but Rebecca our Ryerson student placement knows all about this social networking site. She has set up a BFO account and we had Big Night Out and our new cookbookout there.

As part of a public awareness strategy to inform the many communities in Toronto of the work BFO is doing, we hired Julia Farquharson and Marilyn Ortega, two bereaved moms, to go into the different neighbourhoods to spread the word. They met with staff from other organizations, did presentations and supported bereaved people they came into contact with. This was funded by Service Canada.

We then received funds from the Attorney General to provide support and resources specifically to victims of murder. Julia and Marilyn held an Eat & Meet for mother’s from the Black community whose adult children had been murdered. They also provided one to one support, telephone support and facilitated in

community groups and discussions. They are both courageous women who strive to make a difference in a world where our young men and sometimes young women and children are being killed.

Our Healing Through Connection program, started in 2007, aimed to share what we know about grief and bereavement with others, so that there are more people who can support grieving children, youth and their families. Last year, we provided 6 in-community training and educational workshops to over 200 youth workers, social workers, Children's Aid workers and many others, coming from different schools, agencies and sectors.

In 2007 we received more funding from government ministries than at any other time in our history. I believe this is because there is a growing sense and awareness at all levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal - of the relevance and need for BFO's programs. Although these funds were all 'time limited' we will use the successful outcomes we achieved to leverage critical, ongoing, core funding.

The Power of 100 Campaign was a huge success. We asked our members to reach out and ask their families, friends and co-workers for financial support and as a result they raised over \$26,000 for BFO's programs. Four people deserve special mention.....Betty Ann Rutledge, Sarah Henderson, Ansley Swartz and Carine Blin who each raised over \$1,000. THANK YOU ALL for this incredible support.

For quite a while now we have been thinking about another memorial – one that is non-denominational and that would appeal to people in the diverse city of Toronto. Robin Pacific, a Toronto artist and BFO volunteer, had an idea for a visual arts memorial, based on a similar one she had done in Memphis. Betty Ann and Robin applied for a grant from the Toronto Arts Council to do this, and we were approved for \$10,000. Although the creative art workshops will take place throughout 2008, the actual memorial day will not happen until the Spring of 2009.

The general public is becoming more aware of BFO and the important work that we do. When I mention BFO at community meetings, conferences and

other public events, I notice the attention and interest it generates. There have been several articles in the Toronto Star and Globe and Mail about BFO, including articles on grief and travel, grief and the internet, motherless daughters and of course our Soul 2 Soul program.

BFO-Toronto has many community partners who have supported us in many ways over the past 29 years. This year we publicly recognized 7 very special community partners, five of whom are funeral homes: Ogden Funeral Home; Cardinal Funeral Homes; The Simple Alternative Funeral Centres; MacKinnon & Bowes and Turner & Porter Funeral Homes. The other two community partners were: Yvelo Mailing Services Inc., who responded to our printing requests with generosity, patience and a lot of help! Yvonne Lefleuve, the owner and a BFO member, has printed our Annual Report for the past three years, free of charge. The last award went to Corvello & Reesor, an eco-friendly furniture company owned by Christina Covello and Andrew Reesor. They made our youth room useful, comfortable and youth-friendly. All recipients received an Award of Appreciation plaque.

Every year we give two volunteers a very special award – the Noah Thorek Award, started and sponsored by Michael and Faye Thorek in memory of their son Noah. This prestigious award is based on a volunteer's quality and breadth of commitment and longevity of participation. This year the recipients were two bereaved mothers, Jane Smart and Joey Charron.

Last but definitely not least...we survived one more year! We not only survived but our programs grew! For this I have to thank my staff who worked extremely hard and who wore many hats to make it happen; and you the members and volunteers, who give and give and give..... because you know our programs are worth it. A huge 'thank you' to all of you.

Take care everyone

Janet Wilson
Executive Director

We're Looking For..

Part-time Community Development Coordinator

Working under the direction of a Steering Committee comprising members of the Jane & Finch community, and through information sessions, presentations, and Train the Trainer workshops, the coordinator will help to strengthen this community's capacity to provide bereavement support to its residents. Must know the Jane and Finch area well and have lived or work experience there.

Please contact Janet Wilson at jwilson@bfotoronto.ca for a full job description

Deadline: July 16, 2008

Part-time Youth Worker

Working primarily with disadvantaged, bereaved youth who live in racialized communities in Toronto, the Youth Worker will, based on BFO's peer and mutual support model, provide one to one support, group program facilitation and peer support training to youth between the ages of 13 and 25. In addition the Youth Worker will assist in the facilitation of community-based, grief and bereavement workshops.

Please contact Janet Wilson at jwilson@bfotoronto.ca for a full job description

Deadline: July 23, 2008

Board Members

BFO-Toronto is looking for a Board member who has a background in accounting.

For more information please contact Janet Wilson at jwilson@bfotoronto.ca



Janet Wilson, Executive Director, with the Noah Thorek Award Winners at the Annual General Meeting on June 19th: Joey Charron (far left), Jane Smart (middle right)

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This newsletter is produced by 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.

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