

# THE NEXT STEP

*A Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Publication*

Volume 1, Issue 10

March 2015

## Spring Brings New Beginnings

Sabrina McKeithan, RN Case Manager (Pilot Mountain, NC)

As we head to the close of winter, it suddenly hit me that our emotions are very much the same as winter – especially after the loss of a loved one.

We feel like a gray, overcast day; we feel barren. Our tears fall as the rain does outside. The cold overwhelms us much like our emotions do, with our loss leaving only feelings of emptiness.

We look out the window and see nothing but bare trees and dry, brown grass. No birds are singing. We feel only the cold winds that go right through to our sad bones. We ache, both

physically and emotionally, often unable to see our way through those feelings and downcast emotions.

Then one day, we look at the window and see buds forming on the trees. Birds land on bare branches with small twigs and grass in their beaks, looking to make a safe nest. Suddenly, a small sense of hope bubbles to the surface.

From those buds, comes new life – leaves and beautiful flowers – and new meaning. The sense of hope and new beginnings starts to take over our thoughts. Our raw emotions slowly start to heal and make way for less



painful memories.

The memory of our loved ones is still present, but we slowly change the way we cope with our loss. Much like the buds, we start to swell, stand up taller, and slowly bloom in a way we haven't since our loss. We smile as we see those flowers, smell their

scents, and pick and arrange them in vases while listening to the birds twittering outside the window as they busily prepare nests for anticipated young.

We look forward to a new life and new beginnings. We embrace and acknowledge the love we gave our loved ones. We are thankful for the opportunity to remember those we cared for, walked alongside of, and loved like no other as they progressed through their disease.

Finally, we are reminded that in death comes new life, new beginnings, and sudden

*Continued on page 2*

## Celebrating Life in Times of Death

Rachel Waddell, Special Contributor (Mount Airy, NC)

It is no secret that losing someone you love is never easy. Grief and sadness are normal emotions to feel when facing loss. Many people experiencing loss agree that the first year can be very painful. Trying to enjoy a holiday or your loved one's birthday can be a challenging task, knowing that this year will be different than years before. However, it is important to celebrate your loved one's life. Often we have a lot of great memories with our family members, and we don't want to lose those good memories



in the sadness of their passing. There are many great ways to celebrate a loved one's life!

**Make their favorite food.** It may seem silly, but you can try making your loved one's favorite meal and then sitting down and

enjoying it. You can spend time making the recipe with those who are also grieving over your loved one and even pass down the recipe so others can enjoy your loved one's favorite food as well. As you share the meal, it can serve as a great way to spark those "remember when" conversations. Sharing stories about good times you have had with a loved one is a great way to keep their memory alive.

**Write a letter.** It may be hard to verbally express your grief, so you might find it easier to write it

down. Expressing your feelings through writing gives you the ability to take a break if it becomes too much. Take as much time as you need to write the letter to your loved one. You can reread it to make sure you've said everything you want to say. After writing the letter, you may want to store it away to read again or take it to the loved one's grave and read it aloud. Some people have tied letters to balloons and let them go or burned the letter and let the smoke rise to Heaven for your loved one to read.

*Continued on page 3*

## Bereavement Support Available for Communal Grief

Josh Armstrong, Bereavement Coordinator (Pilot Mountain, NC)

Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care expresses its deepest sympathy to those affected by the loss of young lives in recent months. We understand the grief that comes with losing a loved one to a tragic accident or illness. A life full of promise and potential is suddenly gone from us, creating a ripple of grief that touches everyone who knew the individual, from loved ones to acquaintances. Hence, Mountain Valley Hospice wishes to remind you that we offer bereavement support, at absolutely no cost, to the community at large.

It is never easy to say goodbye to those we love, particularly when the death is abrupt. In addition to sadness, you may feel anger, anxiety, shock, and denial. You may have questions of “why?” and “what next?” Perhaps you

have even felt the physical symptoms of grief, such as headaches, stomach sickness, muscle aches, and exhaustion.

Mountain Valley Hospice has bereavement specialists who are dedicated to counseling all ages, including children and teens, as well as parents who have lost a child.

We offer several individualized approaches to grief, since everyone’s grief is unique. Grief is a normal reaction to a traumatic experience. It is not limited to a number of stages, an amount of time, or a specific set of rules. And the depth of your grief is often directly related to the depth of your love for the individual no longer present.

But there is hope. Grief is unpredictable – but it is not unconquerable. You will



have good days, and you will have bad days, but with the right support, you can have more of the former. Grief is a natural journey, but it was never meant to be a destination or even a resting place. It is an experience through which life will be different but still hopeful and with a new sense of meaning. Bereavement support is not about finding the bright side of death, particularly when the death involves one who seemingly had so much more life to live; rather, it is about refocusing our memories

away from the individual’s death and more toward their life. It is about celebrating who they were and how they enhanced our lives.

Mountain Valley Hospice’s bereavement services include one-on-one counseling, support groups, and newsletters written by our knowledgeable staff. We also have an increasing selection of books and videos available through the Northwestern Regional Library’s 13 locations in Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties.

We want you to know that you are not alone. Please let us help you through the grieving process. For more information, call us at 336-789-2292 or toll-free at 1-800-789-2922, or visit [mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-services](http://mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-services).

### New Beginnings cont.

joys. When a new baby enters the family, we start contacting old friends, head back to those groups we enjoyed, such as church, Bible study, and book clubs. We ourselves become new again, different in a way that is hard to explain.

We will always miss and love those we lose, but life is precious. Pick those flowers, and smile as the sun brings warmth and white fluffy clouds. Spread your arms and welcome those new challenges that will come your way, much the same as the leaf buds shoot out those glorious bright green leaves. We take comfort as we head

out of our own personal winter and into our own personal spring with new beginnings, new chances, and an easing of pain and hurt you never thought you could rise above.

Take time this spring to marvel at the new life that is occurring around you. Wrap yourself up in the glory that God has provided you. The warmth is His loving arms surrounding you; the flowers are the peace He gives your heart, and the sun is His love promising you He will never leave you alone.

### *Then Joy Stepped In*

Wilhelmina Stitch

She said, “I will not live with grief from morrow unto morrow. My heart cries out for some relief, ‘Goodbye, my little sorrow.’”

She closed the windows of her home and pulled down every blind. “I’m going forth to roam,” she cried. “You, Grief, can stay behind.

“And I’ll be gone the livelong day. Expect me back tonight.” Grief wanly watched her go away into the warmth and light.

With quickened step and brightened eyes, she mingled with the throng. Instead of pale Grief’s moans and sighs, she heard Endeavour’s song.

She saw a sister, crossed the road and asked her how she fared: Then helped to lift her heavy load and in the burden shared.

Throughout the day, Self was suppressed whilst Service took its place. When she returned at night to rest, of Grief there was no trace!

But Joy stepped in and sweetly said,  
“May I now be your friend instead?”

## Bereavement Staff and Support Groups

**Mount Airy, NC**

336-789-2922

Saundra Yates, M.Div. NCBF

Josh Armstrong, BS

Sarah Tweed, BSW

Ben Webb, BA

Fonda Younger, BS

**Pilot Mountain, NC**

336-368-1260

Josh Armstrong, BS

**Yadkinville, NC**

336-679-2466

Sarah Tweed, BSW

**Elkin, NC**

336-526-2650

Lisa VanHorn, BS

**Hillsville, VA**

276-728-1030

Bruce Thomas, M. Ed

**Stuart, VA**

276-694-4416

Patricia Morris, BS, TRS

**Mount Airy**

2nd Thursday of every month

9:00 a.m. Good Mourning with Fonda

Holiday Inn Express

4th Tuesday of every month

11:30 a.m. Fonda's Lunch Bunch

Golden Corral

**Elkin**

1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month

10:00 a.m. "Living with Grief"

Matty's Restaurant

1st Monday of every month

7:00 p.m. "Transitioning to the New"

Fairfield Inn

4th Monday of every month

7:00 p.m. Prime Time with Lisa

(Loss of spouse in one's 30s, 40s, and 50s)

Fairfield Inn

**Hillsville**

3rd Thursday of every month

11:30 a.m. Moments with Bruce

Hillsville Office

**Stuart**

3rd Wednesday of every month

1:30 p.m. Support with Patricia

Stuart United Methodist Church

**Alleghany County**

3rd Wednesday of every month

10:30 p.m. Listening with Lisa

Mustard Seed Café • Sparta

**Yadkin County**

1st Thursday of every month

11:30 a.m. Sharing with Sarah

Ace's Restaurant • Yadkinville

## Celebrating Life cont.

**Plant a tree or flower.**

Giving life to a tree or flower is a great way to celebrate the life of someone you love. As the tree grows or the flowers bloom, you can remember their life. The flower may have been your loved one's favorite flower or the blooms may have been their favorite color. If you plant a tree, it may be a tree that will one day provide shade under which you can rest and remember your loved one, or it may be a fruit tree that bears your loved one's favorite fruit.

**Make a donation, or**

**volunteer.** If a particular organization was important to your loved one, you can make a donation in their memory or volunteer for that organization. It's a great way to carry on their legacy and honor something that was important to them.

The suggestions above are just that – suggestions. You may be able to think of other ways to celebrate the life of the one you lost. Grieving for a loved one is never easy, but it can be beneficial to celebrate their

life in the way that you choose. In the words of author and journalist Anne Roiphe, "Grief is in two parts: The first is loss. The second is remaking life."



*GriefShare.org offers daily emails to help one through the grieving process.*

**Need reading material in-between issues of  
*The Next Step*?**

Visit the blog *Something to Think About* from Barbara Karnes, author of *Gone from My Sight* and *My Friend, I Care*. Karnes responds to readers' questions about the dying process and grief, with more than 30 years of experience as a registered nurse and life educator.

[www.bkbooks.com/blog](http://www.bkbooks.com/blog)

**Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care  
Bereavement Services**

Following a patient's death, Mountain Valley provides specialized grief support services to help loved ones cope with their loss. These services are provided as part of hospice care for 13 months, at no cost to the recipient, and include:

- Grief counseling and education
- Face-to-face/phone sessions
- Monthly support groups
- Monthly newsletter

Community support is also available for bereaved individuals whose loved ones were not in hospice care.

For questions and comments, contact Mountain Valley Hospice at 336-789-2922 or 888-789-2922, or [mtnvalleyhospice.org](http://mtnvalleyhospice.org).

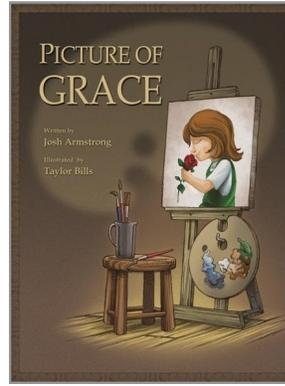
*The Next Step* — Publisher: Kristie Byrd Editor-in-Chief: Josh Armstrong

# Now available at our Grief Resources section



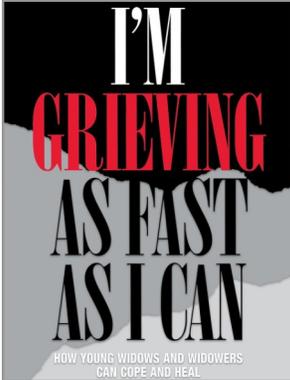
**Disney's *Big Hero 6***  
Don Hall, Chris Williams

Following a devastating turn of events, teen prodigy Hiro and his brother's healthcare robot, Baymax, form a high-tech team of superheroes to take on a mysterious villain. From the creators of *Frozen*, the Oscar-winning *Big Hero 6* is a comedic adventure that shows how good and evil can be motivated by grief.



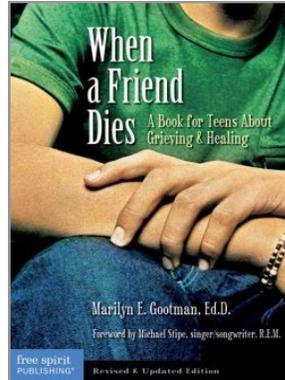
***Picture of Grace***  
Josh Armstrong, Taylor Bills

In the illustrated children's book *Picture of Grace*, six-year-old Grace aspires to be an artist like her grandfather Walt, who is under pressure from a greedy gallery owner to finish his latest masterpiece. When tragedy hits, Grace learns about art as an expression of love and grief.



***I'm Grieving As Fast As I Can***  
Linda Feinberg

*I'm Grieving As Fast As I Can* guides those who have lost a spouse, through the special circumstances surrounding an untimely death. Young widows and widowers share thoughts and dilemmas about losing a loved one, what to tell young children experiencing a parent's death, returning to work and dealing with in-laws.

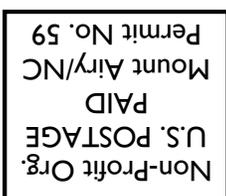


***When a Friend Dies***  
Marilyn E. Gootman

In *When a Friend Dies*, Dr. Marilyn Gootman offers firm but compassionate, non-judgmental answers to questions grieving teens often have, including "How should I be acting?" "Is it wrong to have fun?" and "What if I can't handle my grief on my own?"

Books and videos may be borrowed at any of the **Northwestern Regional Library** locations in Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties. To find a location near you, visit [nwrl.org](http://nwrl.org).

Return Service Requested



401 Technology Lane #200  
Mount Airy, NC 27030

Mountain Valley  
Hospice & Palliative Care