

A Journey Together

National Newsletter of the *Bereaved Parents* of the USA

VOLUME XIV NO. 1 Winter 2009 (January, February, March)



THE NEW YEAR

By Brenda Hobbs
BP/USA Northern Texas Chapter
From "Where are all the Butterflies?"

The holidays are over and we bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents have survived. Now we have a new year ahead of us. How can we face a whole new year without our precious children? My answer to that is *one minute at a time*. In our situation, sometimes one day at a time seems too much to face. Further along on our journey through grief, we will be able to handle a day at a time. But, for now, one minute at a time, one second at a time, we can hang on. We can survive. There is something else that I would like to share, however. It might help you during your journey; it has helped me several times.

One night my husband Jim and I were watching one of the many talk shows bombarding us on TV now. This one concerned children who had been murdered and one couple really impressed me. Of course they were devastated and felt the pain we all know so well, but they had a wonderful attitude. Their son, who had been murdered, was their only child. Their theory for their own lives was that they would never do anything that would make their child ashamed. They live their lives now in honor of their child. Isn't that a wonderful philosophy? Wouldn't it be great to live your life with that attitude?

I think about this couple's philosophy often. Even though I do not always live

up to that level of goodness, I do try. I do want my son Jesse to be proud of me too. I do want to be worthy of being his mother. Because, even though he isn't physically with me, I will always be his mother. We all want our children to be proud of us, don't we? It's up to us how we live our lives-how we survive. It's not easy to overcome grief, to rebuild our lives and to learn to be productive citizens again. But we can do it-together.



WINTERSUN
By Sascha from her
book "Wintersun"

There are those days in winter
when your world is frozen
into a vision of eternal ice,
when earth and air
are strangers to each other,
when sound and color seem forever
gone.

There are those days in winter
when you feel like dying,
when life itself surrenders you
to anguish,
to total mourning and to endless grief.

And then it happens: - from the bitter
sky,
A timid sun strides to his silent battle
against the gray and hostile universe-
It changes ice to roses,
sky to song.

And then it happens that your heart re-
calls
some distant joy, a gladness from the
past.
A slender light at first, then larger,
braver,
until your mind returns to hope and
peace.

Let memories be beauty in your life,
like song and roses in the wintersun.

(Dedicated to Randy Misita, son of
Bernie and Tony, brother of Angela.)

A NEW YEAR
By Shirley Ottman
From "The Slender Thread"

—a time for looking ahead
and not behind; a time for faith
and not despair, a time for long
great gulps of hopeful expectation.
Drink deeply, friend, so that fortified
with the promises it brings,
this new year will keep you
near fresh springs of healing love,
where you may come to weave
old and loving memories with
new understandings and
acceptance—
and find peace.



**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

A Journey Together is a national newsletter published quarterly by Bereaved Parents of the USA.

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You will find articles, location of Chapters, links to other organizations and other information on that web site also.

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**FROM THE-
DESK OF
THE
EDITOR**

BP/USA was saddened this past quarter by the deaths of two of our members who have been active nationally as well as locally.

Tanya Carlson was an active member of the Marion County Chapter of BP/USA (Ocala, Florida) and beloved by many of their members. She and her husband, Rod, were often at the annual Gatherings and helped with them. We especially remember Rod as one of the meal ticket takers and button makers. Shirley Ottman especially remembers all the help the Carlsons gave with the Gathering that was held in Texas. We will miss her and send our sympathy to Rod and her family.

Martha Honn was the chair of the Southern Illinois Chapter and very active there. She was a member of the National Board of Directors of BP/USA and was also the co-chair of the 2008 Gathering until she had to resign because of her cancer. She died recently and we will miss her. We send our sympathy to her husband, Gene, and her family.

Please note that three persons need to be elected to the Board of Directors this year at the Annual Meeting. Nominees must be active in their local chapter and, perhaps, on a national level and have a knowledge of the purpose of BP/USA. There are 2 Board meetings a year—one in Oct. and one at the Annual Gathering that a member must attend. Also, there is much communication by e-mail during the rest of the year so being able to use internet is important. Board members take on various responsibilities as they arise during the year to keep the BP/USA moving along as an organization. If you are interested in being nominated or in nominating someone else, the Nomination Form is available on our web site or from Donna Corrigan at 630-841-7056. Nominations should be returned by the deadline, Feb. 27, and should be sent to Donna at 561 North Yale, Villa Park, IL 60181-1635.

Paul Kincs, a doctoral student at the University of South Dakota is working on a research project which deals with parents who have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth or death of a child and the grief of a mother and a father. If you are interested in participating in this study, he has a brief questionnaire. For each questionnaire returned he will make a donation of \$1 and this money will be divided between BP/USA and TCF. This is not endorsed by BP/USA and your participation is entirely voluntary. If you wish to participate, go to www.usd.edu/~pkincs, where you will find more information and the questionnaire.

For information regarding the 2009 Gathering, see page 7 and watch your mail for full information coming in January. The Committee realizes the present economic conditions and are making every effort to get supplemental funding and keep costs as low as they can for those attending. Expenses in NY are usually high at hotels but the hotel has given a good discount and offered it for 3 days before and 3 days after the Gathering so this is a chance to tour NY before or after the Gathering, if you wish. Tour buses come to the hotel so you would not need to drive. The planning committee would welcome any donations for the Gathering by Chapters or persons. Those may be sent to BP/USA L.I. Chapter, PO Box 94, Bayville, NY 11709-0094. Please clearly mark that this is a donation for the Gathering costs. The Committee would also welcome Raffle gift donations, table favors, and butterfly boutique donations. For more information or to offer any of these things, please contact Olga Postiglione at the address above or Diana Roscigno at the address on page 7.

The Gatherings are an important part of the outreach of BP/USA to those who are grieving the loss of a child. A chapter—large or small can sponsor a Gathering. There are Board members and others who are available to help. If you would be willing to do this at a future time, contact Shirley Ottman at ro0002@unt.edu. This is a way to help others as someone helped you at one time.

PRESIDENTS AND GRIEF

Put together by the Editor

This is a listing worth repeating from time to time. This one is compiled from listings I found in different newsletters which I receive from BP and TCF chapters and I thank everyone for their input over the last several years to make this listing up to date.

We often forget how many people have suffered the same loss as each of us has. It is especially interesting to realize that many of our Presidents and their wives are not immune.

John Adams & Abigail had 5 children. One daughter, Susanna, died at one year of age.

Thomas Jefferson & Martha had 6 children. Five died: 5 month old Jane; a 2 and 1/2 week old son; a 4 month old daughter; 25 year old Mary and 3 year old Lucy. What a lot of grief!

James Monroe & Elizabeth had 3 children and their son died at 1 year of age.

John Quincy Adams & Louisa Catherine had 4 children. Catherine died at 1 year of age.

John Tyler & Letitia had 8 children and one, Anne, died in infancy.

Zachary Taylor & Margaret had 6 children. Octavia died at 3 years of age and Margaret at 1 year.

Franklin Pierce & Jane had 3 sons; Franklin died when 3 days old, Frank Robert died at 4 years and Benjamin died at 10.

Abraham Lincoln & Mary Todd had 4 sons; Edward Baker died at 3 years of age, William Wallace who died at 11 years of age and Tad who died at 18 years of age.

Rutherford Hayes & Lucy had 8 children. Joseph died at 2 years of age, George Crook died at 2 years of age and Manning Force died at 1 year of age.

James Garfield & Lucretia had 7 children; Eliza died at 2 years of age and Edward died at 2 years of age.

Chester Arthur & Ellen had 3 children. William Lewis Herndon died at 2 years of age.

William McKinley & Ida had 2 children. Both died: Katherine at 4 years of age and Ida at 4 months of age.

Calvin Coolidge & Grace had 2 sons: Calvin, Jr. died at 16 years of age.

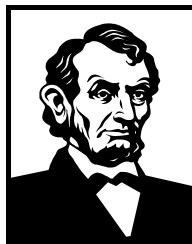
Franklin Roosevelt & Eleanore had 6 children: Franklin Delano died at 8 months of age.

Dwight Eisenhower & Mamie had 2 sons. Doud Dwight died at 3 years of age.

John Kennedy & Jackie had 3 children. Patrick died at 2 days old and John died after both his parents.

George Bush & Barbara had one daughter, Robin, die at 3 years of age.

Abraham Lincoln said: "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all. It comes with bittersweet agony. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better. And, yet, this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say."



WITHOUT YOU

By Malisa Pitts, Grain Valley, MO
Member of BP/USA

Mom's 1st poem for Amy Nycole
Darland from a 2001 newsletter

For a fleeting second,
When I first wake up,
I try to pretend you're still here.
But, just as quickly,
The pain crashes in....
My broken heart is filled with despair.

The tears fall silently,
As I look at the picture
Of a daughter I'm proud to call mine.
We only had 17 years together,
To enjoy your life...
Dear God, why couldn't we have just
had more time?

Your life ended unexpectedly and
so tragically...along with it,
A big part of my heart and soul.
My precious Amy,
I can't imagine my life without you.
You're Momma's Bubby and
I love you so.

I want to hear your voice, and see your
beautiful smile..
I want to feel the softness of your skin.
Dear God in heaven,
How could anyone expect a mom
to accept that all of this will be...
Never again?

I'll treasure each and every moment
We had together.
So many lives have been touched by
your love.
Being Amy's Mom is one of life's
Greatest gifts...
For that I thank God above.

They say that I have to go on
And will enjoy life again someday.
But for now, I live with endless pain...
And just pretend that I'm doing okay.

Trying to be strong takes all I've got.
I pray for strength to find a way;
While the memories of my girl,
Live on in my heart...
Our love eternal...always
Forever and a day.



BOOK REVIEWS By the Editor

THE GRIEVING GARDEN: Living with the Death of a Child a book by Suzanne Redfern and Susan K. Gilbert has been called a portable support group for parents who have lost a child. These women share their own experiences and that of 20 other parents whose children have died. The book has 5 parts, each dealing with a different aspect of grief, with comments by each of the parents as well as information on their personal experience and references as to how one might find help. The use of “garden” in the title refers to the garden that they each built in memory of their children and where they go as a refuge and to think. The book is printed by Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc. in Charlottesville, VA. You may find out more at www.hrpub.com.

BUDDY’S CANDLE BY Dr. Bernie Siegel is a wonderful little book “For anyone who has ever lost a loved one.” It is about a little boy and his dog. It deals with, “... how to live life fully and accept a loss and death with an open heart.” Dr. Siegel is a cancer surgeon and has written several books about the importance of a positive attitude in the healing and dying processes and this is very well handled on a children’s level in this book. A boy, Simon, has cancer and Buddy is his dog. Buddy is a part of Simon’s healing. He later dies and Simon learns of Dog heaven where the dogs all carry candles. Siegel deals with the healing aspects of a dog and we think of the use of Therapy Dogs. He feels it is no coincidence that the word “dog” is “God” spelled backward. He ends the book by saying, “I know there is a light in each of us by God’s/Dog’s design. We are all a part of the candle parade of light. As long as we remember to love, our candles will light up our lives.” The book is published by Trafford Publishing Company and is available in the US and in the UK and Europe at info@trafford.com and on www.trafford.com.

STAR CHILD, A Mother’s Journey Through Grief is a book by Jennifer J. Martin. Jennifer presented a workshop at our 2008 Gathering and sent this helpful book as a thank you. This is a journal type book and each date covers certain times and experiences in the grief journey. There are also poems and articles and a section telling of books and places one may find other help. The book is published by iUniverse, Inc. and they can be reached at www.iuniverse.com.

NOVEMBER MOURNING, A mother’s journey to find comfort and solace following the death of her son is a book by Mary Jane Cronin. This book tells of her experiences and gives some good insights. To me at least, one of the most helpful parts of the book is the extensive coverage of groups, web sites, and books that are available for the help of grieving persons. The book reviews are very good and she covers many books we are all familiar with and some newer ones. She has a very nice coverage of BP/USA in her section on group help. The book is published by Wiggle Bug Publishing in Largo, FL. For ordering information contact www.myspace.com/november_mourning or write to Mary Jane at griefgirl57@yahoo.com.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN...an observation about what hurts and what heals is by Nan Zastrow, a suicide survivor. This is a good book dealing with the many areas of grief, in the beginning of the journey and later, with suggestions of how to handle these areas. The book is published by Roots and Wings, Ltd., in Wausau, WI. You may read more at www.wingsgrief.org and may order by calling 715-845-3424. Nan also has a book, “Ask Me...30 Things I want you to Know.” This lists 30 questions with answers and is a helpful short book. This book may be obtained at www.centeringcorporation.com. Her work is all part of Wings: A Grief Education Ministry and they can be reached at the same addresses listed with the first book. Dan and Gary Zastrow will be holding a workshop at our 2009 Gathering in New York.

MOTHERLAND is a DVD that presents a program about six women and two continents. On Dec. 1, 2006, six women went to Africa to work as volunteers with children. It is the story of 17 days on the other side of the world and how it transformed them. Each woman tells her own story about the death of her child. They then tell the story of their trip and what they experienced. The DVD takes 80 minutes to watch but could be watched in parts—one of more of the women’s stories, the trip, etc. if wanted as part of a chapter meeting. For more information or to find out how to obtain a copy, contact Jennifer Steinman at 1-415-377-5515. or at Jennifer@smushmedia.com.

HEALING THE GRIEVING HEART is the transcript of a talk show. The hosts are Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley. The show on August 23, 2007 was with Kay Bevington with Alive Alone who has been a workshop leader at many of our Gatherings. The topic was “Being a Parent without Living Children.” This would be a helpful program to listen to and/or use to start a discussion at a chapter meeting. This show, as other helpful ones can be accessed and downloaded on iTunes or transcripts may be accessed on www.thegriefblog.com. Kay can be reached at www.alivealone.org.

Our President, Shirley Ottman, and Past President, Beverley Huley were also on this program on July 24, 2008, talking about BP/USA and our purpose and the helps that we provide. You may access their interview too. Go into www.thegriefblog.com and click on the archives and you will find many very good speakers and workers in grief support groups and much good information. You may listen to the program every Thursday at 9 a.m.. It is sponsored by Voice of America. TCF is one of the sponsors of this program. For information on where to hear it in your area, access the web site and you will find information.

NOTE: These are reviews and not necessarily an endorsement of the book or material by BP/USA.

THE TEACHER

May 4, 1992

By Jennifer Martin
From "Star Child"

This morning as I raised the shades in the kitchen windows, I noticed our mother cat and one of her kittens playing with something beneath a small shrub in our neighbor's back yard. At first, I thought it might be a field mouse.

Soon my gaze shifted to a bright red Cardinal, flitting from branch to branch of the small bush. I had been watching this bird for several months. He and his mate come daily to feast at the feeder in our back yard. Now he was dangerously close to the two cats—too close for his own safety. It was then I realized that the cats had one of his babies.

My heart ached for him. Helpless, he was not able to stop these animals from their instinctual act. I watched him as he looked on, only to see the lifeless body of *his* child. I knew in that moment that he and I shared a feeling—loss. I wished I could have rescued the baby bird from the death, breathed life back into its tiny body and placed it safely back in the nest—to again feel the safety and warmth of its mother's feathered breast.

It is now evening and I find myself thinking about the baby bird's parents. I wonder how they are feeling. Surely they know that one is missing, that they witnessed their own loss today. And I wonder if the red bird will sing tomorrow and if he will have that little happy skip in his flight that I have found so delightful? Perhaps he will be silent. Somehow, in my heart, I know that he will sing for me in the morning and continue to fly with that special, happy expression that is uniquely his.

As I continue to observe him, I will be searching for answers to these questions: What allows him to sing again so soon? Does he know a secret? Has God given him a greater wisdom than I

possess?

My relationship with this winged one has now changed. He will continue to remind me of God's creation in my observances of him. I am aware now of a quiet strength that resides in him. He has become a teacher for me.

When I recall this lesson, I will be reminded of his loss and mine. I will be comforted by the knowledge that we will both sing again.



CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

By Abigail A. Fuller

This was sent to us by Abigail, the mother of Scout, who died of cancer on July 7, 2007

For a parent who has lost a child, feeling gratitude, much less intentionally fostering it in oneself, might seem like the last thing on your mind (and heart). We have every right to be mad at the world and even to be mad at God. We have been robbed, blindsided, made the butt of a cruel cosmic joke because the thing we feared the most has happened.

But, astonishingly, within days of Scout's leaving this world, I found myself cultivating gratitude. At first it was unintentional. I began writing in my grief journal lists of things that were uniquely her: what she wanted to eat, funny things she said, exciting events in her life. I had a great fear of forgetting her—forgetting her essence, her soul, who she really was—and so set out to record the details of her life. Even if it prolonged my agony, I was determined to remember her with every ounce of my being. But I noticed something. I noticed immediately that writing about her brought me joy: it made me feel grateful for her life. I felt grateful for being part of that life.

Those states of gratitude did not last long in the beginning. But when I felt

them, I was transformed. I felt light, I felt in touch with the divine. And I felt much closer to Scout when I was feeling grateful than when I was deep in despair. Indeed, I began to notice within myself a fierce determination to keep front and center the joy that was Scout's life, not the despair that she was physically gone. Like a blade of grass pushing through a crack in a sidewalk, I felt inside an irrepressible force for life, for affirming life, her life.

I has been easy to be grateful for the comfort of family and friends. My sisters and parents came together to grieve and support me in my grief in a way I would not have thought possible before. We are so very grateful for each other, and we all know it. I was astonished by the number of people from our church, our community, my workplace who reached out in one way or another. I felt profoundly grateful for every card, e-mail, meal brought to our house, gift left on our doorstep.

Gradually, as I regained some control over my life, I saw that I could make a practice of cultivating gratitude. I had never been a disciplined thank-you-note writer, but I became one, because I so wanted to express the gratitude that I felt for the support I received. I vowed to give thanks every day for Scout.

Early on in this grief process, I realized that alongside the unbearable reality that Scout is physically gone, there is another reality, equally true: that she was here, that she lived a wonderful eight years. When I focus on that reality, I feel unbounded gratitude.

From PEANUTS AND
CHARLIE BROWN

"I have a new philosophy. I am only going to dread one day at a time."

"Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It's already tomorrow in Australia."

TRAIL OF TEARS

Those of you who attended the 2008 Gathering in St. Louis will remember that Jim and Linda Dixon were in charge of the Meditation Room and took the messages written to our children, grandchildren and siblings back to Illinois with them. On August 23rd, they took those messages to the Trail of Tears State Forest in southern Illinois.

This is what Jim reports. "In the native tradition, on a cliff above the Mississippi River, we put flame to the messages to our children. As the smoke rose into the sky above this sacred ground, our messages were delivered. I amazes me that there always seems to be a lot of butterflies as we drive thru the forest."



"During the harsh winter of 1838-1839 over 15,000 Cherokee Indians passed thru southern Illinois on their Train of Tears. Many hundreds died from cold and hunger on this long and tortuous forced trek from their homeland near the Smokey Mountains, where gold had been discovered, to their government designated lands in Oklahoma. The following is a legend you might be interested in."

THE LEGEND OF THE CHEROKEE ROSE: No better symbol exists of the pain and suffering of the Trail Where They Cried than the Cherokee Rose. The mothers of the Cherokee grieved so much that the chiefs prayed for a sign to lift the mother's spirits and give them strength to care for their children. From that day forward, a beautiful new flower, a rose, grew wherever a mother's tear fell to the ground. The rose is white, for the mother's tears. It has a gold center, for the gold taken from the Cherokee lands, and seven leaves on

each stem represent the seven Cherokee clans that made the journey. To this day, the Cherokee Rose prospers along the route of the "Trail of Tears."

REFLECTIONS: BRIGHTER TEETH AND LIGHTER GRIEF

By Dennis Klass, former
Adviser to BP/USA

If we can only find the right brand of stuff, we can solve our problems in just one washing, brushing, scrubbing spoonful or easy application according to the television commercials. Life is full of troubles, the television tells us.

We have ring around our collars; our whites are not white and our colors are not bright; Prince Charming won't kiss Sleeping Beauty because she has bad breath; we have headaches; our nasal passages are clogged and, after a hard day branding cattle, all we get is light beer. But that's okay because just when we think our trouble is going to get us down, we learn that its possible to get a good night's sleep, kill Johnson grass with no carry-over, fight germs while still having bright teeth and spell relief. And all of our troubles go away before the next program.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a bereaved person spray? Just spray it on and everyone will know what to say to make us feel good. We will pass places and days that used to hurt as if nothing were ever wrong. We will remember the cheery times and blot out the ugly rings around the collars of our minds.

Some people think that going through grief should be an easy, one-step miracle process. Send back the label and proof of purchase if not completely satisfied. If I can buy a pill that absorbs 47 times more stomach acid, I should be able to find a way to grieve that will absorb 50%

more of the acid in my heart.

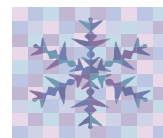
I sincerely wish that loving a dear one were in the same league with getting light beer after a hard day on the range. But it is not something we can get over or make go away. Losing a loved one is a change in our lives that we must go through. We cannot cure our grief, go around it or wish it away. New life, hope and a profound and deeply satisfying way of living is on the other side of our grief. But first, we must go through grief. We must walk that lonesome valley.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 10-12, 2009: BP/USA Gathering at Crowne Plaza NY/LaGuardia Airport. The theme this year is **LIGHT MY WAY**. Registration information will be available in early January and will be sent to you. You may also check the website and read more about it briefly on page 7.

August 7-9, 2009 TCF Annual Conference at Portland, OR. Further information as it is available or check www.compassionatefriends.org.

August 20-23, 2009: Annual Parents Of Murdered Children's National Conference at Cincinnati, OH at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The theme is **BROKEN HEARTS HEALING WITH HELP, HOPE & HUGS**. For information contact Sherry Nolan or Bev Warnock at 513-721-5683 or 888-818-7662.



Grief walks with you today,
your constant companion.
But in the morning, tomorrow,
the sunrise of hope waits for you.

By Sascha
From "Wintersun"

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Martha Becher
BP/USA Baltimore Metropolitan Area Chapter
Shirley Ottman
Phyllis Lynch
John & Therese Goodrich
Silver Newton-Crawford
Russell & Linda Horn
Karen & Lee Story
Mort & Lorraine Schrag

In loving memory of Griffin Douglas Heiney
In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of Tanya Carlson
In loving memory of Lee J. Lynch
In loving memory of their daughter Paula Marie & A. C. Sontgerath
In loving memory of Bobby Lee Newton
In loving memory of their son, David
In loving memory of their son, Lee
In loving memory of their daughter, Becky

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer, David Hurley, at 3805 West San Juan Street, Tampa, Florida 33629-7819, by phone at 813-831-2588 or by email at david.hurley@gte.net of your gift and the memorial, we will be sure it is acknowledged in the next Newsletter. Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization, your donation may be tax deductible. The work of BP/USA is financed entirely by contributions. All the leaders, national and local, are volunteers. Donations go directly to help start new chapters. There is no charge to found a chapter and each new chapter is given a group of books to help them start a library.

The money is also used to print and send copies of our brochures This quarterly newsletter costs about \$5.25 per year for each one mailed. Donations are always welcome towards that cost. We welcome donations to help keep the costs of funding our Annual National Gathering as reasonable as possible for the attendees, We also maintain a web site (www.bereavedparentsusa.org).

You may designate a donation to any of these areas by naming it on your donation or to the general work of the BP/USA by giving an undesignated gift. Please always designate carefully how you wish a memorial or gift listed. We thank our chapters, individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.



2009 GATHERING **Theme: LIGHT MY WAY**

Dates: July 10-12, 2009
July 9 is Leaders Workshop

Hotel: Crowne Plaza LaGuardia Airport: \$133.88 per night (includes tax).

This price is offered for 3 days before and 3 after the Gathering also.

A Shuttle to and from the airport and tour bus connections at the hotel are available.

Meals: The complete meal plan is \$161.00 for Fri. through Sun. morning. Separate meals are available.

More about the Gathering will be in a packet you will receive soon, so be sure to read it as soon as you get it.

For further information, contact Diana Roscigno at 2009gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org or by calling (516-233-4838).