



## Mission Statement

FEEL supports families through the unique and devastating grief process that occurs after the death of a family member with a disability; the depth of the grief they feel is a reflection of the exceptional love, joy and commitment they experienced during their lives.

FEEL seeks to ensure that all bereaved survivors of people with disabilities never stand alone or feel isolated. To that end, FEEL offers support, knowledge and understanding.



More Info?

Would you like to connect with another family?

Please contact us:

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Please share this newsletter with other families, friends and colleagues. If you do not receive it directly and wish to be on the mailing list, please let us know!

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.

*William Shakespeare*

Fall, 2010

## Remembering...

Piper Lynn Imrie

August 12, 1999 – December 16, 2009

Bryan John Janzen

August 9, 1988 – July 13, 2002

David Matthew Johnston

January 28, 1992 – August 2, 2005

Keenan William Philip Klisowsky

September 5, 1990 – June 22, 2002

Seth Larry Koester

February 8, 2002 – August 25, 2005

Kimberley Dawn Leir

February 8, 1979 – May 18, 1985

Cash Jesse James Morin

December 2, 2004 – February 18, 2009

Skyla Ann Penstock

July 10, 2001 – June 13, 2005

David Matthew Joseph Petroschuk

February 5, 1989 – October 31, 1989

Diane Lillie Poff

March 28, 1954 – August 17, 2005

Rachel Lilli Schorr

January 24, 1987 – March 23, 2004

Tori Lorraine Slade

July 19, 2003 – July 2, 2008

Rachelle Elizabeth Wilson

August 30, 1998 – April 3, 2003

If you would like your family member's name to appear in this section of the next newsletter, please contact us.

## Lessons My Family Member Taught Me

- ♥ What is really important in life
- ♥ How he/she was my model
- ♥ How to sit in silence
- ♥ How to be intimate (loving)
- ♥ How to go beyond and be creative
- ♥ How to live without pretense (grounded others, forced others to re-think ideas of how you "should" behave)

(Adapted from FEEL Grief Workshop)

## A Letter To You...

Our Dearest Piper,

It will soon be a year sweet angel, since you left us so suddenly. It's been a year of unimaginable pain and sadness with every minute of that horrible day replaying in our minds over and over again.

Yet, each day we get up and put one foot in front of the other with no understanding as to how or why. Then, we remind ourselves of the treasured gifts you gave to us when you came into this world, and each and every day since then – *Strength, Patience, Faith, Hope and immeasurable Love* - there we find the answer to the how and the why.

So Piper, Mommy will, to the bewilderment of others, continue to sing to you, to read to you, to greet you each morning and bless you each night. We continue to celebrate, with cake and balloons, every occasion that meant so much to you. Saturday and Sunday mornings will continue to be that special "Father-Daughter time" and it will always and forever be "the three of us", just not in the physical sense but in every other way. One day at a time, baby steps...

With eternal love,

*Mom and Dad*

*(Michelle and Chris Imrie)*

## Missing You Rachel...

It has been six and a half years since my beloved daughter, Rachel, died in her sleep, likely due to a seizure. There are many days where I can walk around admiring the sounds of birdsong and children playing, smell freshly mowed grass and think, "This is a beautiful world." But there are also days, like yesterday, when the pain is so *new, so surprising*, that I am bowed and nearly broken under the weight of it.

There are certain dates that are difficult and so it makes sense that grief would be present at those times. The anniversary of her death, her birthday, Christmas - these are the logical times to mourn. However, it is in the unexpected moments that incomprehensible sadness visits me: during a conversation in class about loving people with disabilities; trick-or-treating without my girl who I would have taken until she was sixty; or walking down the cereal aisle in the grocery store, which was always our last stop, due to its efficacy as a reward for not 'losing it'. I am not expecting my unwanted visitor - profound grief - to hold me captive in front of the Raisin Bran. But it does. Again and again.

Yes, life goes on. So does the experience of missing my girl. There is no doubt in my mind that everything was better, bigger and brighter when she was here. But there are moments of grace, of happiness, and of peace in the spaces between the return of the boomerang that is grief. I am carried along by the love of family and friends and the hope that Rachel waits for me in a place where vanilla soy milk rivers run and every aisle is full of flakes. Here's hoping there's room for one more.

*Michele Rowe*

Where you used to be, there is a hole in the world, which I find myself constantly walking around in the daytime, and falling in at night. I miss you like hell.

*Edna St Vincent Millay*



## Remembering Bryan John Janzen August 9, 1988 – July 13, 2002

How can I forget Bryan? It really isn't an option for me and I have no fear of it ever happening. Having said that I do know that how I remember Bryan or, more importantly, how I allow myself to remember him changes with time.

When Bryan died so suddenly I needed to let my family and friends support and guide me through the first fog filled days. I was totally overwhelmed and had to go somewhere else in my head to be able to cope. I know how fortunate I was to have these people in my life. As much as I wanted to somehow remember Bryan's life and give him a public goodbye I was not capable. I had found a deep dark hole and crawled in. I trusted that somehow Bryan's other loved ones would handle it for me. All of their goodbyes and remembrances of Bryan helped to pave a path for me. In the darkest moments to come they helped me to cry, warmed my heart and offered me some hope.

My own memories of Bryan needed to get in line behind my pain for some time. I was stuck in the last few tragic days of Bryan's life. I needed to go over and over all the heart wrenching days surrounding his death. I envied and was even angry with anyone that felt they needed to share their good memories of Bryan with me. How could they begin to celebrate him when I was hurting so much, how dare they?

Time changes everything when we allow it to. I know that I spent so much time and energy fighting off the pain in my heart. Days and nights were filled with tears and confusion. Somehow I finally allowed my heart to be honest with my brain about what I was feeling. Through that I was finally able to start to remember my Bryan.

As I said, "Remembering Bryan" changes with time. I expect that it always will.

I "remember" Bryan every day.

I "remember" that he always made me laugh.

I "remember" to try to always laugh at myself (as he always did).

I "remember" how humble Bryan always made me feel.

I attended the FEEL workshop in Saskatoon in September. As always, I came away knowing that I am not alone in my loss. There is such tremendous power in sharing our empathy with other families. When we allow ourselves to feel and connect in such an honest meeting of heart and soul it does such profound wonders for the mind.

A friend who is also a bereaved parent passed this on to me years ago. At that time it offered me some hope. I hope it offers you some also.

"Even when loss tramples your heart and shatters your spirit, it is possible that you, like the mythical bird the phoenix, can rise from the ashes to embrace life anew. "

*Ashley Davis Prend*

Thankfully I can now "Remember Bryan" with love and laughter.

*Bryan's Mom*

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.

*Kahlil Gibran*

### And the Winners Are...

As a fundraising initiative, the FEEL group raffled tickets on three wooden sculptures handcrafted by Cyril Brock. Thank you to everyone who helped in our fundraising efforts.

First prize – Cole Abraham, Saskatoon

Second prize – Carol Ireland, Moose Jaw

Third prize – Viv Sedgewick, Calgary

### Does Online Grieving Help Mourners Recover?

In the November 18, 2010 edition of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, an article looks at this topic studied by Amanda Vicary. Read more at: <http://www.thestarphoenix.com/news/Online+grieving+doesn't+help+mourners+recover+study/3847009/story.html#ixzz16SYKQfW4>

## A FEEL Workshop – Is It For You?

The recent grief workshop held on September 24 - 26, 2010 at the Travel Inn Resort in Saskatoon was again very successful.

What makes this event so special is a combination of factors. The families attending the weekend share an in-depth understanding of what it means to a family to lose a deeply-loved child with a disability. Many articles and books have been written about grieving, and often the contents address stages or phases family members experience as part of a process or journey. Whatever it is called, the writings never seem to capture the complexity of what these families truly experience, as the impact of the death of a child with a disability is so severe that it affects every aspect of life.

What is wonderful about the families who attend this weekend is their openness to share their experiences with others. This instills hope and the feeling of belonging and it helps others to feel understood and respected.

What is unique about the workshops organized by FEEL is that everyone is invited who has lost a child with a disability and this means that people with a recent loss can come as well as people who have been to the previous weekends. The documented activities and the notes of the weekends form a very precious document of how families experience this intense loss and how their lives are changing.

To the surprise of many, the weekend is not filled with tears and sadness. What is predominantly present is the love of the parents for their children, which is continuous, and the joy of sharing precious and often very funny experiences of their children's lives.

I feel honoured to be invited to facilitate the grief workshops.

*Elisabeth, Facilitator*

If you are interested in a grief workshop in your area, please contact us (info on front page) and we will do our best to host one in or near your community.

## Book Review – by Michele Rowe

*Here If You Need Me* by Kate Braestrup (2007)  
New York: Little, Brown & Company

One evening while experiencing waves of grief while missing my daughter, Rachel, I found myself searching the bookshelves of McNally Robinson for something that would help. When Rachel first died, I read frantically and vociferously, finding in the pain-drenched words of others a kindred spirit. Somehow, I felt less alone. There are lots of books on grief; some are good, a few are great. There is one that yet needs to be written on experiencing the loss of a child with disabilities.

I did find a little treasure in Kate Braestrup's book, *Here If You Need Me*. Although it describes the loss of her husband, not a child, I found much to connect with in her story. Kate's husband, a state trooper, is suddenly killed in an accident while on duty. Kate is left to raise four children on her own and is increasingly drawn to the idea of fulfilling one of her husband's dreams - becoming an ordained minister. I realize that this part will not be as fascinating to others as it is to me. Full disclosure - I am also in the process of becoming a minister. However, the focus of Kate's writing is not that process, but rather her personal and professional experiences as a chaplain to state wardens.

Kate is called out to accompany these wardens as they search for missing people in the woods, recover people who have drowned and attend car accidents. Thus, she deliberately puts herself in situations where grief is a constant companion. Her job is to be with people in their pain and anger and fear. She is good at it because she has been there. She finds deep meaning in accompanying people on a difficult journey.

The book answers the ultimate question "why?" by not attempting to answer it. Instead, Braestrup contends that the question should be met with the only answer we can give, "I am so sorry. I am here if you need me." As someone on a lifelong path dealing with grief, that is the only answer I can accept.

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