



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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Remembering...

Nathanial Brandon Mitchell Davison
August 23, 1996 – January 16, 2011

Twyla May Dyck
March 17, 2000 – June 11, 2011

David Christopher Gaebel
October 25, 1981 – October 6, 2010

Piper Lynn Imrie
August 12, 1999 – December 16, 2009

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

Spring, 2012

Kathy Barbara Janzen
May 14, 1953 – December 23, 2010

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

Beverly Ann Scotton
January 25, 1977 – January 19, 2010

Tori Lorraine Slade
July 19, 2003 – July 2, 2008

Acacia Rachael Tisher
August 12, 1993 – September 22, 2011

Alyssa Lynn Wilks
January 7, 2004 – July 27, 2009

Cody Robert Wilks
June 23, 2001 – May 6, 2002

Rachelle Elizabeth Wilson
August 30, 1998 – April 3, 2003

Adam Barrett Yoner
March 14, 1986 – January 2, 2011

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

The Season of Grief

I have survived another March. March is the month in which my beloved daughter, Rachel, died. For me, it is the cruelest month and one that affects me with a surprising ferocity year after year. Although I know that it is coming, I am always amazed at how powerfully I am affected by grief when it hits.

I have survived eight March's...and eight Christmas' and eight birthdays and thousands of regular days in which I have watched my daughter's classmates go on with their lives. I cannot count the number of hugs I have missed – rare as they were – or chances to shampoo her thick, curly hair, or the thousands of times I pulled on her warm socks and the hated shoes. Sometimes I am gripped with fear that I might forget her and the love we shared. But as I read what I have just written, I can feel her wet hair under my hands and the pressure of her leaning hug and I am transported to her presence again.

If you are newly grieving or grieving afresh, I cannot tell you how I survived...only that I did. For a long time, I did not want to or mean to but, one day at a time, March became April and then May and so on. I planted a garden and picked apples and made her favourite dessert – apple crisp. I set out her Christmas stocking and made her a birthday cake in January and then...March.

I have learned some important lessons after eight March's, including:

- March will always be the cruelest month for me, and that is okay
- I need to be gentle with myself, as gentle as I was with my girl
- I need to minimize the number and nature of the commitments I make to others during this time, allowing myself the time and energy to grieve
- April beckons, promising life beyond March in the emergence of crocuses and the exuberant return of the geese

As I write this, I have seen the back of March, but the tears fall nonetheless. They are a sign of the love Rachel and I shared that will never die.

If you are headed into your cruelest month, please know that you need not go through it alone. Call a FEEL member if you want to talk, and be gentle with yourself. One day at a time, you will make it. I did.

Michele Rowe, Dalmeny

Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.

Swedish Proverb

It All Starts With A Wish...

"It all starts with a wish..." proclaims Mickey Mouse as Tinker Bell takes flight from the top of the castle in the Magic Kingdom. We had dreamed of taking Piper there before she was even born. As a young girl my wife had gone to Disney World with her parents. Disney is one of the few happy memories she has from her childhood. When we were married she said we had to go to Disney World for our honeymoon. It is the "happiest place on earth" after all. When we finally discovered we were pregnant, we started talking about taking her to Disney World but not until she turned 12 years old. We promised her. That way she'd surely remember the experience (and her parents wouldn't have to carry her for miles). As it turns out, our precious little girl died when she was only 10. After two years of indescribable grief, we decided that we had to go to Disney World even if we could only take Piper with us in our hearts.

Shortly after Piper's death, my wife and I made an appointment with a psychologist. The day came and we went, reluctantly. I saw a couple of pennies on the ground on the way there. I never bothered to pick up lost change. I figured it wasn't mine and maybe somebody that needed it would find it. That night I received an email from a cousin of mine who has experienced much loss in her life. It was a poem.

Today I found a penny,
Just laying on the ground.
But it's not just a penny,
This little coin I've found.
Found pennies come from heaven.
That's what my Grandpa told me.
He said Angels toss them down.
Oh, how I loved that story.
He said when an Angel misses you,
They toss a penny down,
Sometimes just to cheer you up,
To make a smile out of your frown.
So don't pass by that penny
When you're feeling blue;
It may be a Penny from Heaven
That an Angel's tossed to you.

Had Piper been leading me around that day? Since then, I have picked up all the spare change I've come across knowing it's Piper, either following or guiding me on my journey through life. We call them "Piper Pennies". With bittersweet excitement, and a fair amount of guilt, the three of us, my wife, Piper's aunt and I, start the walk down the tunnel to our plane. I know that in my wife's head she's saying to herself, "It's not right that we're going if we can't take Piper". There on the floor was our first Piper Penny. We could then relax knowing that Piper approved of this trip.

While at Disney's Hollywood Studios, we decided to go to the "Fantasmic" show that evening, an amazing spectacle of music and lights. As we got to the show that we knew Piper would have loved, we had to try and figure out where to sit in this 8,000 seat outdoor stadium. In unison, we all said, "Row 'P' for Piper". Piper loved all things "P", "pea", "pee". It made her laugh uncontrollably. At the end of the show, Mama looked up and could see one amazingly bright star shining down at us. "Do you think Piper was here?" We headed back to a full bus that would take us back to our hotel. As Mama got onto the bus and scanned around to find an empty seat, she spotted one near the back door. When she got there, smack dab in the middle of the seat waited a "Piper Penny". It seems that Piper also enjoyed the show.

While at the Magic Kingdom waiting for the "Wishes" fireworks extravaganza, our emotions

ran high thinking of how much we wished Piper could be there with us. For years we looked forward to seeing her expressions and howls of excitement while she watched the Disney fireworks and parades of light. Mama was trembling and trying her hardest to hold back streams of tears. The crowds were immeasurable with hardly any room to move. Just as the skies began to light up, a family weaseled in to share our viewing spot. The parents stood behind us while their three kids moved directly in front of us. One of their daughters, about 10 years old, had Down syndrome. Her characteristics and enthusiasm reminded us so much of our girl. She didn't speak English (I think it was Italian), but this little girl jumped, smiled, pointed and displayed her joy while standing there right in front of us. Mama's tears couldn't hold back any longer and the river burst... Somehow this little girl found us when we needed it the most, in the dark and in a crowd of thousands and thousands of people. Another sign from Piper?

From our collection of "Piper Pennies", from Piper's piggy bank at home, we had brought six pennies, two for each of us. Three were "1999" pennies, the year Piper was born and three were "2009" pennies, the year she passed away. We stood on the bridge, saying prayers and making wishes, as we tossed them into the mote surrounding the Magic Kingdom's Castle.

While at Downtown Disney, a mecca for shoppers, I decided I wanted to create a t-shirt for Piper. I chose the color (purple of course), decided on a Disney image and the phrase "Piper's Promise" to print on the t-shirt. I took the design to the counter only to be told that I'd have to come back the next day to pick it up. Considering it was almost 11:00 p.m. and just twenty minutes before closing, their request was probably reasonable. I told them that wasn't possible and asked if they could deliver it to the hotel. The girl said it would take 48 hours. Once again that wouldn't be possible as we would be back in Saskatoon by then. The girl asked, "What does 'Piper's Promise' mean"? I told her that I had promised to bring my daughter to Disney when she turned 12 and

that, sadly, she died two years ago at the age of 10. She asked me to wait a moment and she disappeared into the back room. She came back and said it would be ready by closing time (20 minutes away). I came back just before closing and my Piper shirt was ready. Once again Piper's magic came through. Not only was the t-shirt put on "rush" but they also gave us a beautiful "1st Visit" Disney button with Piper's name on it and encircled her name with fairy dust and tiny crosses.

It all started with a wish...

Chris Imrie, Saskatoon



Daddy's Heart – Acacia Gives the Gift of Life

On my last night with Acacia, I followed a routine I have done for years with my beloved daughter. I gave her a hug, kissed her on the forehead, told her I love her, and said, "I'll see you in the morning." I watched as she was wheeled from her room into the operating theatre. I watched as long as I could until the doors closed behind her. I cried as they closed forever on her life with me.

In my hand I had a balloon given to her by one of her many friends. The message on the balloon read, "Make a Wish." My wish for Acacia to be with me was not answered, but five other wishes were about to be answered. In her passing, Acacia donated an opportunity for a better life to five other people in Canada. Her heart so full of love will help someone in BC to have a richer life. Her lungs so full of zest for life will help someone in Alberta smell roses again. Acacia's liver and pancreas so full of desire for a better life will give the opportunity for healthy living to someone in Saskatchewan. Both her kidneys so full of innocence and purity will benefit two people in both Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Organ donor recipients say they are not only given a new opportunity to live, but that they also find they start to experience the desires and characteristics of the people they receive their donation from. There are five people today who will live better both in their physical bodies and

in their spiritual beings. Because of Acacia's donation they will receive the benefit of a life that has been purified in the crucible of suffering; they will receive the rich maturity of an 'old soul'. The beautiful persona Acacia became over the last 18 years will be transferred to those immensely lucky five people. Acacia will live on for many more years both physically and spiritually, and she will continue to influence many more people she never knew in this life. I wish I was one of those five lucky people.

In the early hours of morning, I stood at the airport and I watched a jet take off bound for Vancouver. My heart was full of grief, pride, joy, and many more emotions as I watched Acacia's heart head for its new home. Life is not simple; it's full of paradox and confusion. When the difficulties and challenges of life rage as an angry ocean, stability comes from a faith knowing that God is real. He influences the lives, hearts, and hands of all. I thought to myself as the lights of that plane faded into the distance, although my prayers were not answered at this time, five others were.

Thom Tisher, Regina

The measure of life is not its duration, but its donation.

Peter Marshall

For The Love of Us

This much time later
The grief, the anger and sadness.....
Still creeps around in my heart.

Some might say I have lost my mind
To them I say "okay" cause I know.....
They just don't understand.

It's the worst kind to know
I pray our group doesn't grow.....
So much better to not feel so alone.

She yells at me in her Angel voice
"BE BRAVE!!! YOU CAN DO IT!!!!"
Through many sleepless nights.

I shared my Angel Bev with you
And I know you understand...
Our precious Angel team of strength....
Is always right by our side.

Connie Wagner, Saskatoon

This newsletter has been made possible through funding by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living and Thyssen Mining. Please share it 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!