



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...

Emmett Melvin Milton Sid Calibaba
June 8, 2008 – September 30, 2011

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

Winter  2014-15

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

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

Tammy Louise Gumulcak
June 10, 1983 – March 7, 2013

Alexander Jacob (AJ) Holdner
February 16, 1988 – July 10, 2013

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

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

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

David Matthew Johnston
January 28, 1992 – August 2, 2005

Jessica Stephanie Kihn
June 14, 1990 – September 16, 2012

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

Robert Gordon Marchand
December 27, 1992 – July, 2014

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

Jonathan Daniel Wiwchar
December 21, 1990 – March 22, 2014

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.

My Son AJ

As much as I'd like to tell you all about AJ, because of the ongoing court proceedings, I don't feel I can at this time. He died July 10, 2013, over a year and a half ago. He lives on in my heart and is constantly on my mind. I can still picture him working so eagerly under the hood of a vehicle, or telling a story the way he used to with such enthusiasm. I think about his ever present grin, and the last time I heard him laugh while watching TV at home with us. Those memories warm my heart. But they feel like a lifetime ago, and that saddens my heart in indescribable ways. I want to feel him close, as if yesterday was the last time I hugged him.

That's one of the hardest things for me.

I found having a special child a challenge and it made me question my beliefs, and the things I wanted and expected from life, many times. It also can give a different perspective and clarity not everyone is lucky enough to have. I'm not sure why I was given the blessing of being AJ's mom, and though I often thought of it as the exact opposite of a blessing, I believe being AJ's mom has made me a better person. I have learned from the challenges and heartaches life has given me, and I can choose the kind of person I want to be.

I can be bitter, angry, spiteful and resentful, feeling jealousy, envy and sorry for myself, believing life has treated us unfairly, OR I can choose to try to be better, more compassionate, understanding and tolerant, to be gentle and patient with others, and to try to have an open heart that can still feel joy, and give and receive love. I choose to try to be the better person. But this is not always an easy choice to follow. I accept there are many who do not get what we are going through, may not know how to deal with us, and possibly even avoid us. I harbor no resentment towards them. But I am extremely grateful to all those who are there. They don't have to "get it" to be helpful, just be a safe place when it feels like there isn't one. It is very easy to feel guilty and beat myself up over so many things in regards to AJ, but I also choose to accept myself, flaws and all, and will continue to work on forgiving myself, for all the ways I feel I failed AJ.

No matter what the circumstances, working through one's grief is never easy. With AJ's life ending by being murdered, it makes me question some of the most basic of things. I have found myself consumed and wrapped up

in the court process, but of my own choice. As painful and difficult as it is, for me, it's how I honour AJ, his life, and his struggles. I want the world to know he mattered. I believe there are lessons to be learned and messages to be heard from AJ's short life and tragic death. When the time is right, because of the support from friends and FEEL, I believe I will have the strength and courage to deliver those messages.

Nancy Holdner, Young

Exceptional family came from a place of pain and care giving. FEEL it? We exist because of a tremendous bond. Not the kind that we want to even share. I'm okay with being selfish about my good family. We are the best because of the worst. We are the best. Everyone I have met through FEEL is very exceptional. Thank you for being in my life.

Connie Wagner, Saskatoon



Mark Your Calendar



April 18, 2015

An afternoon get-together in Saskatoon complete with swimming and a potluck dinner. More information to follow.



October 23-25, 2015

FEEL is planning its 10th grief workshop in Watrous. Enjoy the salt water spa and the company of one another.



More information to follow.

FEEL helps us to:

- ♥ Connect with other families walking on similar paths
- ♥ Give and receive support
- ♥ Develop life-changing relationships
- ♥ Give parents, grandparents, surviving children and other close family members a safe place to identify and share their grief
- ♥ Gain information about our unique grief journeys
- ♥ Celebrate the lives of our children with people who understand their significance
- ♥ Reflect on how we have changed because of our relationships with our children
- ♥ Identify how we can live in ways that honour our children and our love for them

Dirge Without Music

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.

So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:

Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely.
Crowned

With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,—

They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses.
Elegant and curled

Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know.
But I do not approve.

More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.

I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Balcony and Basement People

Shortly after my daughter Malena died, I started a home based business to keep busy. During the course of this business venture, I was able to attend the company's annual convention. These conventions are geared toward encouraging and motivating the sales teams to sell, sell, and sell. There are workshops and motivational speakers all pushing you into "expanding your business". As I sat through many of these speakers, most of what they said I related to surviving the death of my precious daughter rather than expanding my business.

Three years later, one of the workshops I attended that weekend keeps popping into my head as my grief process extends past what the world finds "comfortable". The workshop was called "Balcony People and Basement People". I have spent days and weeks applying this to the people I have encountered during my bereavement. I continually seek Balcony people and I avoid those I consider Basement people.

Basement people are people who constantly pull you down or discourage you. Basement people in our grieving process can and do cause us much hurt and distraction. Basement people are the people who do not wish to hear about your child, they do not want to talk about your hurt or actively help you go through the grief process. Basement people are also people who say ugly or uneducated things about your loss such as "Aren't you over that by now?" Basement people criticize your bereavement or question every method you chose in dealing with your loss. Basement people make everything about them and their feelings; disregarding the fact that it is your child who died. Basement people can cause a lot of hurt (often, unintended) to you during your bereavement process.

Balcony people are the people who pull you forward and along the road of grief. Balcony people come beside you and cry with you, spend time listening to you talk of your child and tell you stories they remember, too. Balcony people encourage you to seek ways to heal and process your loss. They understand that the way you chose to deal with the death of your beloved child may not be their way but it is what is good for you. Balcony people understand when you do not want them around but stand by just in case you change your mind. Balcony people cook or clean for you because you just do not have the energy or they do not comment when the house is a little (or a lot) messier than it used to be. Balcony people understand that you will never be the "old" you and help you to find the "new" you who will emerge through the grief and loss you have sustained.

Take the time to identify the Balcony people and Basement people in your life. Spend most of your time with the Balcony people and try to limit the time with Basement people; if possible. Balcony people pull you up, cheer you on, encourage you and take care of you when you most need it. Basement people pull you down, criticize and find fault in what you do. Balcony people and Basement people; we all have them in our lives. It is our choice of who we allow to be part of our bereavement process and our lives. I choose my Balcony people.

By Traci Cooley, Bereaved Mother, Tampa, Florida (This was taken from the website: www.bereavedparentsusa.org/images/)

Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light.
Albert Schweitzer

This newsletter has been made possible through funding by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. 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!