

# Haven Herald

*“People seldom refuse help, if one offers it in the right way”*

*-A.C. Benson-*



## WHY ARE GROUPS SO HELPFUL IN GRIEF WORK?

by Judy McDowell

Our Haven support groups provide a welcoming structure for people facing grief. These groups, usually 6 weeks in length, give new grievers a safe environment and a sense of belonging. After all of the instability caused by the death of a loved one, the group provides stability and continuity through weekly meetings.

Many enter the first grief group session feeling isolated in their grief. The group gives them a place to express their grief and relate their stories—each so important for healing. As they listen to others sharing some of the same concerns and fears, their own feelings become affirmed and normalized. They realize that they are not alone, and not crazy; it’s just grief. Participants may speak of dead bodies, funerals, crying, and anger—all without feeling awkward. They don’t have to worry about how their words and feelings will be perceived. For some, the group is the only safe place to express this grief. Friends, family and colleagues may have tired of listening, but the group is there for them. The members’ sharing and affirming may also lead to connections that can outlast the group’s duration, and give them future support.  
(Continued on Page 2)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Fall season can be a busy time for most of us, and Haven is no different. This is the season that we see a lot of new faces. Many of the people who come to Haven are feeling scared and unsure, and are often overwhelmed by their grief.

Grief isn’t a logical experience, and its burdens are too heavy to carry alone. Haven support groups can help to create a new sense of normal when nothing else in life feels familiar. Our groups generally meet once a week over a six week period. Since space is limited, preregistration is required and we ask that the participants attend all sessions. Some of the groups offered here at Haven include Suicide Survivors, Widow/Widowers, and a General Bereavement Group. Please check our website, or contact us directly for more information

Finally, I’d like to take a moment to say thank you for all the wonderful feedback about our newsletter. We are excited by the new ideas and comments we are getting from our readers, so please keep them coming!

*-Frankie Smith*

WHY ARE GROUPS SO HELPFUL IN GRIEF WORK? (Continued from page 1)

Another benefit is seen in the support and encouragement members give each other in group sessions. They learn that even while in heavy grief, they still have something to offer another. This can boost their confidence in facing their own challenging emotions. One may also remain more anonymous in a group than in a one-on-one counseling situation. He or she may reveal little, while still receiving help and support from the group. This may make it less intense and easier for the person than regular therapy.

Also of value is the fact that groups bring together people of different ages, sexes, races, ethnic groups and economic backgrounds. Societies superficial classifications aren't important to the group. Grief is.

Haven's groups provide educational resources to attendees. The various stages of grief, self-help techniques, books and resources are explained and discussed. This knowledge can help members better understand all of the new emotional changes that they are experiencing with grief.

While groups aren't for everyone, we see progress in most who choose to participate through Haven. Most leave the group feeling stronger and



better able to process their grief. Ultimately the support and encouragement of the group and its facilitators will help each of them as they look for new meaning in their changed lives.

WHAT WORKED FOR ME  
by Ron McNally

Not too long after my wife Sarah died, I woke up one morning, went downstairs to take a shower, and discovered that the hot water heater had failed. Water was all over. Sarah always dealt with this sort of madness! She knew whom to call. I went into a sort of panic. Maybe not panic so much as a sad, painful understanding that I was not the person who was supposed to be dealing with this. For sure, I wasn't supposed to be dealing with it alone. It hurt.

At this point, Sarah and I would have been married thirty-five years. During that time, we had developed a division of duties that roughly corresponded to who was the better able to do whatever. A few examples: I did the taxes, got my daughter off to school, drilled my daughter on her

multiplication tables, and listened to my daughter practice her cello. Sarah was the social organizer, the vacation planner, and, for sure, the person who dealt with plumbers, furnace repairmen, and so on.

I went through the rolodex, no help. After a cup of coffee and a period of not so calm contemplation, I called a friend. My friend gave me the name of a plumber who had been able to help them in a similar situation. So, I called the plumber, called work to explain that I would not likely be in that day, and later that day a new hot water heater was installed, and I had cleaned up the mess.

Subsequently, I learned that when you need a recommendation for plumbers, furnace repair, carpet cleaners, just about anything associated with maintenance of a home, you can also call a real estate agent. An experienced real estate agent, through association with their

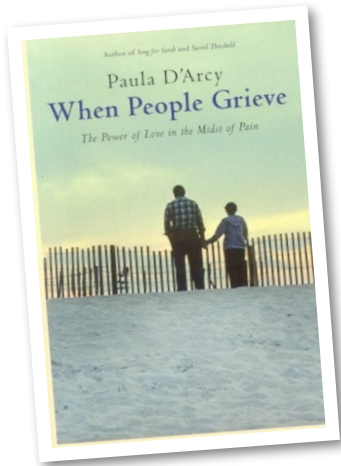
clients, will have experienced just about everything.

Ironically, that is something I should have known. Sarah was a real estate agent for a number of years. I had heard her giving similar recommendations to her clients.

But even if I had remembered, I still would have called my friend. I wasn't calling to get a plumber's number, that was pure luck, I was calling because I needed a friend.

Likely, by now, that hot water heater will also have failed (I sold that house). That is what hot water heaters do; ten years, give or take a few years.

The real problem was having to face alone, too soon, something that Sarah would normally have dealt with, something that she was simply better at than I was. What worked for me, in this situation, I called a friend.



**'WHEN PEOPLE GRIEVE'  
BY PAULA D'ARCY**

The author states: "This is a book about loss and hope. Designed to instruct and encourage friends who want to help and support those who grieve, it also serves as a

compassionate road map for the bereaved..." She achieved her goals. This book, only 130 pages, could be a Haven primer.

Ms. D'Arcy became a widow and a bereaved parent at the age of 27, when her husband and their 22-month old daughter were both killed in an automobile accident. The author, 3-months pregnant, and also in the car, was hurt, but she and her unborn child survived. She uses her own grief experience to write about the reality and the power of grief.

She talks about the confusion and the fear and the hurt of grief. She felt as if she was 'inhabiting a new land' deep within herself and wondered, "Will I ever be *me* again?" Grief seemed to have a life force of its own. Eventually

she realized she must let go of the past and find a future-that she was wrestling with life not death.

Ms. D'Arcy emphasizes the significant role her friends played during her time of grief. She believes that their persistent, loving overtures to her even when she had no energy to respond or even be pleasant were vitally important to her healing process.

Interspersed throughout the book are short poems and pertinent questions to ponder if you are helping a bereaved friend. An easy book to read, I recommend it to everyone- bereaved or not.

-Reviewed by  
Peggy Cauley

**RECIPES TO REMEMBER -A GREAT GIFT IDEA!**

*"This cookbook is dedicated to all Haven volunteers, past and present, those compassionate people who have given generously of their time and their talents to help people in our community find their way through the very painful experience of coping with the death of someone they love."*

You may order as many copies of our Cookbook as you wish using the form below, or you may call Haven and place your order directly. (Please make all checks payable to 'Haven of Northern Virginia Inc.')

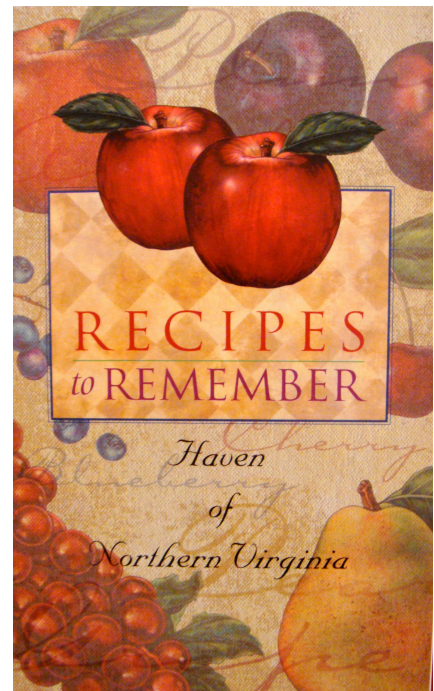
**Mail to:**

Haven of Northern Virginia  
4606 Ravensworth Road  
Annandale, VA 22003

Please Mail \_\_\_\_ copies of your Cookbook @ \$10.00 each, plus \$2.00 postage and packing per book ordered.

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**HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED**

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501©(3) non-profit organization, and is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work, and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation please contact Haven at (703)941-7000 or at [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)

## **Fall Schedule**

### **General Bereavement Support Group**

Beginning Tuesday, September 29, 2009

7:30-9:00pm

### **Widow/Widower Bereavement Support Group**

Beginning Saturday, October 10, 2009

2:00-3:30pm

### **Suicide Loss Support Group**

Beginning Wednesday, October 28, 2009

7:30-9:00 pm

Space is limited and reservations are required to attend all workshops and groups. Please contact Haven for more information.

**In November Haven will be offering a community presentation on "Coping With the Holidays"**

## **Contact Information**

### **Haven of Northern Virginia**

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia, 22003

Phone: (703)941-7000

Fax: (703)941-7003

Email: [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)

### **Hours of Operation**

Monday through Friday

9:30am-2:30pm

[www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org)

\*Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours

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