

“My Grief is My Own”

Photo courtesy of Robin L. Raine

Dear Air Force Families,

Welcome to your Winter 2012 Newsletter. We have entered into the chill of wintertime, the holiday season is upon us, and we are embarking on a new year. We pray that you will enter this new year with optimism and hope, and we dearly hope you have found comfort and support through your Air Force Family Support Network as you continue your healing journey.

Throughout our many combined years of providing care and support to families, we've come to realize that there are many factors associated with how individuals grieve. Every person has their own way of coping with stressful situations, has a varied support system, and different demands in their life that all contribute to how loss through death affects them. The relationship with the deceased is also a factor, as are the circumstances surrounding the death. For example, one may grieve a death caused by suicide differently than one caused by a long-term illness.

Before you delve in, understand that this particular issue may be difficult to get through. And while at no time is the topic of loss through death easy to talk about, we know that this time of year can be particularly painful. So please know that when we offer information about how to cope with death involving different types of loss, we know you may need to put this aside for another day,,, and that's ok. We thought it important though, not to wait another quarter to share, what we think, is helpful information. Sometimes it's good just to know that someone “gets it.”

Thank you, Air Force Family members, for trusting us to be a part of your support system throughout what may be the most challenging journey of your life. We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

Air Force Families Forever

“Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support.”

Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.



Facing a Sudden Loss...

"Everyone can master grief but he
that has it."

-Shakespeare



By Judy Tatelbaum, MSW

Of all the experiences we confront in life, the toughest to face is the sudden, unexpected loss of someone we love. Loss in itself is painful enough, but sudden loss is shocking. The shock doubles our pain and intensifies our grief.

Even if on some level we understand that no one lives forever, actually losing people we love is unimaginable. When we know someone we love has a fatal disease or when we have nursed a loved one who is very ill, we have a chance to begin to prepare for their loss--at least a little. However, the unexpected death of a loved one - regardless of how that loved one dies - can leave us stunned, lost, and overwhelmed with pain. We may not know where to begin to cope.

Sudden loss gives us no chance to prepare. It is not unusual that we feel cheated by a sudden death, cheated of a chance to say the last words we wish we could have said, or to do some last act that would have had meaning to us, like a hug, a kiss, a walk hand-in-hand. Missing out from having a way of saying some kind of good-bye can leave us feeling especially bereft for weeks or even months. Feeling cheated in this way can add to our grief, anguish and despair.

Besides our feeling cheated, sudden loss can make the world feel shaky or less safe. This is a natural response to any unexpected and traumatic event. When we feel as if someone we love is suddenly "yanked" out of our lives, we are left feeling that the world isn't a safe place. We may then become fearful and uncertain, or angry and frustrated. This loss can negatively color our view of life, but ideally only temporarily.

When we face a sudden loss, all at once we have three overwhelming tasks to deal with: our grief over the loss of our loved one, the absence of this special person from our daily lives, and the changes in our lives that are caused by this loss. Each is a big task to take on, and each will become a part of our mourning and healing process.

Although it may be hard to imagine at the moment, we must remember that people do recover from sudden losses, and that we too can ultimately move through this terrible pain and begin to heal.

It helps to bear in mind that emotional pain isn't constant, and that we don't have to grieve forever. We will love forever, whether our loved ones are with us in body or not, but we do not need to remain wounded to honor that love. We can just love.

In talking to many people who have suffered sudden loss, I have learned that there are several important, possibly universal, ways to help yourself heal:

~ Love yourself and take special care of yourself through your grief.

~ Do your mourning now. Being strong and brave is important, but I always tell those I counsel to never miss an opportunity to cry. That is not self-indulgent, but simply sensible and honest in dealing with your emotions.

~ Expressing your feelings will help you heal, as feelings expressed often disappear. Feelings repressed don't. So give vent to your feelings.

~ Get support from other people: counselors, support groups, bereavement groups, compassionate friends, or suicide survivors. You may find them through a hospice, your church, or a community or social service agency.

~ You will not only help yourself, but you may also help another and that can be a great source of strength, joy and recovery.

~ And, most of all, trust that the person you loved and lost would want you to recover from losing them, and would want you to remember and honor them by living a fulfilling life.

LOSS OF A SERVICE MEMBER TO COMBAT

The loss of a service member who was close to you is a devastating experience that can leave you feeling sad, scared, lost, overwhelmed, and experiencing a host of other emotions. Some of your feelings may take you by surprise or may seem strange or even wrong. You may feel incredibly frustrated if you do not know the exact circumstances of your service member's death. You may also experience intense anger directed towards our government or towards the conflict that resulted in your service member's death. Especially if you haven't experienced this kind of grief before, it may help you to find out more about "normal" reactions to grief, about the grief process, and what you can do to start healing. Nothing about grieving a service member is easy, but knowing more about what to be prepared for and how to help yourself can help bring you reassurance and comfort in a difficult time.

What you may feel

"Normal" reactions to grief are as individual and unique as the people who experience them. Some people might be unable to function for a while after a loss, while others may also be in great pain but find that staying busy helps them to cope. Although everyone experiences grief differently, there is no right or wrong way to grieve. There are, however, specific "symptoms of grief" that do not occur in any particular order but are common to the grief process:

~**Denial.** Because of the intense pain of losing a service member, it's normal to deny the reality of it. It might feel like the person can't really be gone or that he or she will appear again at any moment. This is a normal reaction; the numbness and disbelief you may feel help you to continue to function and protect you from lapsing into shock.

~**Anger.** You might find yourself feeling angry at individuals who worked with your service member, their leaders, or the branch of the military they served. You might be angry with a higher power, or angry with the service member you've lost for "leaving" you. These feelings are also normal--when someone you love has died, it's natural to feel angry and want to assign blame.

~**Guilt.** You may have thoughts along the lines of "If only I had . . .," wondering if you could somehow have prevented the service member's death. Guilt is another completely normal reaction to your devastating loss.

~**Depression.** When you're faced with a loss this profound, a period of crushing sadness is natural. For a time you may feel hopeless, defeated, or that life is no longer worth living. You might find it difficult to concentrate or find the will to even get out of bed in the morning. The things you used to enjoy or that gave you a sense of purpose just may not seem to matter anymore. As awful as it feels, this depression is normal, but at its worst, it should be temporary. The passage of weeks or months with no improvement can signal a larger problem.

~**Acceptance.** Acceptance is the result of embracing, and allowing yourself to experience, each emotion as you feel it. This emotional state is often marked with a sense of calm and peace, though not necessarily happiness and contentment (although that can come with time). Acceptance is a sign that you're adjusting to living in a world without the service member you lost.

Grief Reactions Associated with Suicide

Losing someone through suicide can lead to a whole range of emotions including shock, sorrow, confusion, guilt, depression, and even relief. The question 'Why did they take their life?' is often complex and may never be resolved. There is no easy answer – the most honest answer is "We don't know."

Factors that can result in a person dying by suicide are varied and may include:

- Overwhelming stress, especially compounded stress
- Social pressures
- Relationship problems
- Long-term problems associated with early abuse or trauma
- Chronic pain
- Physical disabilities
- Legal or financial problems

Some people have a mental illness, although signs of the illness may not have seemed evident before the suicide. The most common condition is depression. Others include schizophrenia, alcohol and other substance abuse, and severe personality disorders. There also is increasing evidence that those who die by suicide may have an imbalance in their brain chemistry. Overall, predicting who will take their life is extremely difficult, even for experienced professionals.

Many people who are bereaved by suicide have feelings of guilt. They may feel they should have seen the suicide coming. 'If only I had done this' or 'If only I had not done that' are common thoughts. Parents may feel there was something wrong with their parenting. Brothers, sisters and partners may feel responsible, particularly when there has been family stress or conflict. It is important for grieving people to remember that they acted with the information they had at the time. With hindsight, it is often easy to see signs of the person's distress and to criticize what was or was not done. Some people feel others blame them for the suicide. Some are blamed in a suicide note. These notes are usually written when the mind is disturbed and are unlikely to be a true expression of a person's thoughts and feelings about their family and friends.

Anger is a common reaction to suicide, even towards the person who took their life for the pain they have caused. It may be difficult to understand how the person who committed suicide was so intent on getting relief from their distress that they could not think of the hurt it would give others. It is common to experience feelings of inadequacy and loss of self esteem. Sometimes people doubt their own values and judgment and find it difficult to make decisions and carry on with normal day to day tasks.

Some bereaved people may experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress, particularly if they discovered the body. Symptoms of depression may also be experienced. At times there may seem to be little meaning or purpose in life. These thoughts pass but if they are strong, prolonged, or of significant concern, it is important to seek help from a professional. Many people feel deserted, rejected, or even betrayed by the person who committed suicide and may be afraid to begin new relationships. For many reasons, friends may not be able to give the support that is needed. It can be a very lonely experience and a support group may help.

In some families a suicide occurs without any warning, whereas in others it is obvious the person was suffering from a mental disturbance, and the death may not be unexpected. When this is the case, feelings of guilt and rejection may be less strong or even absent. After the suicide, there may be feelings of relief that the person is released from their mental suffering. In situations where there were repeated threats or suicide attempts, or in which the relationship with the deceased person was difficult, the family may experience relief that the suicide is over. The death may ease the tension and resolve the family problems so that life can settle down again.

Bereaved people often feel there were many things they would have liked to have said to the person they lost, but were unable to because of the suddenness of the death. They may yearn to tell them they were loved, or to settle misunderstandings. It is common to feel heartache and sadness about the waste of a life, but it may help to recognize the person's contributions and influences during their life, and to remember the positive times spent together.



Grief Reactions Associated with Death Through Homicide



Homicide is a crime that has a profound and lasting impact on the victim's family and friends. The grief that people experience in relation to death through homicide may be intense due to its sudden and violent nature. People can feel further distressed by having to deal with the police, the media, the coroner and other agencies. Another factor is undeniable fact that someone took the life of the deceased, which can evoke intense feelings of anger and a desire for justice.

Grief Reactions

Every individual's experience of grief is unique, although several common experiences have been identified. For homicide victims, the grief reaction may be more intense as there are other issues the family must deal with.

Often families of homicide victims feel isolated and alone. Society sometimes places some of the blame on victims and attaches stigma to the death. Many people bereaved through homicide also feel as though no-one understands the depth of their grief, and have unrealistic expectations of the time it takes to heal.

Effects/Impact

The effects a homicide has on individuals and families may be long-lasting, for many aspects of life are impacted... personal relationships, work, social life, physical, emotional and spiritual well being, values and beliefs about the world, etc. It is also important to remember that homicide also has an strong impact on children and that their lives will be affected too.

When families initially learn of the violent death of a loved one they often experience intense shock due to the sudden and unexpected nature of the death. Families are also trying to deal with the police, media, coroners and funeral directors which can be extremely confusing and foreign. It is often at this stage where families require a lot of practical assistance such as dealing with every day tasks, liaising with agencies involved, notifying other family and friends and organizing funerals. Dealing with all of this as well as trying to comprehend the loss of a loved one can feel overwhelming.

People may also experience intrusive thoughts about the violent way the person died which can be graphic and intense. These thoughts may be about how they imagine the person died and/or suffered, or actual memories from the scene of the crime or morgue. Also people may feel that their own safety is at risk.

As time goes on the full impact of the loss is felt and deep emotions such as sorrow, fear, anger and guilt are often experienced. People begin to understand what the death of their loved one means and how much they miss them.

Dealing with the criminal justice system

For homicide victims' families, dealing with the criminal justice system can be a frustrating and drawn out process. People may need support, information and assistance throughout the court process. There may also be ongoing issues such as anticipating the release of the offender from prison, seeing the offender in the street, and so on. For families where the body of the loved one has never been located, there will be ongoing issues that cannot be resolved. Similarly, if no offender is found guilty people might feel that there is no justice.

Grief Reactions Associated with Death Through Homicide, cont'd



Dealing with the Police

Dealing with the police can be difficult for families particularly in the early stages when people are in shock, confused and trying to cope with their loss. The police may have apprehended someone for the murder or may still be investigating. Either way the police will need to have contact with people closest to the victim to provide information or to gain information to assist with their investigations. The police may not be able to give out all the details due to their ongoing investigation, and they may also regard some people as suspects, which can be very difficult to cope with. It is important that people identify a point of contact that can be contacted to provide accurate and clear information.

Dealing with the media

When someone is murdered, the media's goal is to report the details to the public. This can mean that the family is approached for comments, photographs of the deceased, and further information about what happened. The media can be persistent in their endeavors to obtain information, which can create more stress for families. They can also print inaccurate information or appear to blame the victim, which can be distressing. Sometimes media coverage is important to assist with the police investigation or when a person is missing.

The media may print further reports on the case after court hearings, the trial, if the offender applies for early release, or even years later when the offender is released. These reminders may raise feelings of pain and grief.

Dealing with the Coroner's Office

The police may need someone to identify the body of the victim, and this normally happens at the morgue or forensic science center. This can be particularly difficult for families as they may not be adequately prepared for the experience. The victim may have physical injuries that are very tough to look at, and no one may be allowed to touch or spend time with the body. An autopsy or postmortem will also be performed to establish the cause of death, which may be traumatic for families and can also mean a delay in the release of the body, thus delaying the funeral.

Dealing with the funeral

Funerals are an important part of the grieving process as they provide a ritual to say goodbye to the deceased in a meaningful way. Sometimes in the case of homicide where the victim has sustained injuries, people are not encouraged to view the body. However, this may be particularly important to some people, as this is also the last opportunity to see the person. Also, if no offender has been identified the police may be present at the funeral and the media may attempt to get a story. This can feel like an invasion of privacy, but may be necessary for the police investigation.

Dealing with the courts

If the police have apprehended someone for the murder then there will be court hearings and possibly a trial. Most people have never had to deal with the courts and have little knowledge or experience about how they work. It can also seem frustrating, as there are often many delays, a lack of information, and few rights for the victim and the victim's family. Some people feel frustrated as they believe that the punishment the offender receives is not adequate for the life they have taken, and the lives they have affected.

Coping strategies

With time, people do learn to cope with such a traumatic event. Support is often the key to helping people get through this experience. Support can be provided by trusted friends and family or through counseling or support groups. Another important aspect is receiving accurate and clear information and being able to make informed decisions that are right for you.



Grief Reactions Associated with Cancer and Illness Related Death

The diagnosis of a life-threatening illness is often a devastating event for all involved. It can bring with it a range of intense emotions and reactions, which may include sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, helplessness, shock, numbness and even relief. It is common to hear people say that they cannot believe this is happening. As the reality of the illness sinks in, however, it is not unusual, even in the early stages of the illness, for the sick person and family to begin grieving over the patient's loss of health and possible death.

During the course of the illness, many changes and losses can be experienced by the patient and family, and a process of grieving may accompany these losses. Such changes may include:

- Disruptions to normal household routines and life style
- Increased stress and demands in caring for the sick person
- Reduced contact with friends and increased, potentially intrusive, contact with those who provide medical and nursing care
- Limited opportunities to talk about the illness and its impact due to social "taboos" about topics such as cancer, death and dying
- Physical deterioration and gradual loss of functioning experienced by the sick person
- Emotional ups and downs, fluctuating between times of hope and despair

This emotional roller coaster can leave patients and caregivers uncertain about how to deal with the patient's possible death. However, many people will experience what has been called "anticipatory grief," in which they acknowledge, albeit unwillingly, the possibility of death and begin to grieve and prepare for life after the death.

When a person dies after a long term illness, there may be some specific factors or issues related to the grief of those bereaved. The death often occurs after a period of prolonged and intense medical care and treatment. The death may cut the family off from this previous contact and support, and leave them feeling isolated and disconnected from those they relied upon. Parents may be moved to care for their married son or daughter, but may feel that is not their place, or that their care will not be welcomed by a spouse.

The long, deteriorating course of the illness may lead to some additional difficulties for those bereaved in this way. They may be bothered by memories of the physical changes and deterioration suffered by the person who died. They may have ongoing feelings and reactions about the nature and quality of care provided during the illness; perhaps wondering if treatments might have been done differently or better. Bereaved family members may be able to deal with any such lingering questions by talking to their family physician or to the specialists involved in the treatment of their family member, even after the fact.

While a death after a long term illness may bring relief from the demands and worries associated with the illness, it also can leave a significant "hole" in the lives of the survivors, who often have dedicated much time and energy to caring for their dying family member. It may take some time to adjust to this loss of the caring role. Survivors have often developed considerable knowledge and skill in dealing with the illness, and it may help them in their grieving to volunteer for the relevant illness-related association or to be a support person to another family dealing with the illness. Many volunteers in hospice and palliative care programs have themselves had a family member die, and use their experience as a basis for helping others.



Being without your loved one for the holidays

Few things are harder than spending the holiday season without a dear one who has been lost to you. Here are a few suggestions on how to cope with loss over the holidays:

- ~ Scale back on holiday activities if you want to; try not to feel obligated to maintain tradition (maybe consider a new tradition)
- ~ Say a prayer before the holiday dinner in memory of your loved one
- ~ Light a candle in honor of your loved one
- ~ Share fond stories with family and friends about him or her
- ~ If you live near the cemetery, decorate his/her memorial site
- ~ Give yourself permission to express your emotions as they come to you
- ~ Write an unsent letter to your loved one letting him/her know how you are feeling
- ~ Remember your loved one in prayer at your place of worship
- ~ Plant a tree in honor of your loved one as an enduring symbol

“May your heart find peace”





“Sharing tales of those we’ve lost is how we keep from really losing them.”

~Mitch Albom

“Our tradition the last 2 Christmases has been to light a white pillar candle for the entire day, which symbolizes Joel's spirit being with us. We take it into every room we congregate in, so that we feel Joel's presence wherever we happen to be. I also hang Joel's stocking and anyone who wants to write him a note and put it in the stocking can. They are not read...just saved in his stocking each year to the next. I guess it's our way of giving him a gift.”

~ Judy Gentz (mom of Capt. Joel Gentz)

This time of the year weighs heavy on the hearts of those that have lost.....

I have many memories of my son related to this time of year. One that always sticks out is Christmas of 2001. Sean was staying with me and on Christmas morning he discovered that my dog knocked down the tree that him and I spent hours decorating. He scrambled to get it upright only to find Dad standing behind him watching in horror. He tried to take the heat for my dog by telling me he knocked the tree over. I wasn't real happy at the time but I let it go. Fast forward 11 years: I learned that was Sean's nature; to stand up for, protect and absorb the consequences of others in order to keep the peace. He displayed the same qualities in his service to his country. His crew was everything to him.

For those that have lost an Airman I offer this, what has helped me: Go to your "Fallen's" last duty station if you can. Stand on the base. Go the Exchange, the Commissary. Watch the aircraft come and go. Observe the "Maintainers" on the flight lines. Look at the men and women that surround you in uniform, your heart will swell with pride and especially knowing at one time your loved one blended in along with everyone else. In doing this you feel and I mean really feel how your loved one lived. I have found by doing this has put me closer to my son more than anything else.....

My heart is extended to all those that wear our uniform, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force and most of all to those that hurt, you are not alone and never will be.....

Semper Paratus,

JD (Father of SSgt Sean DiCicco)



A Space to Share...



I know Christmas time is particularly difficult for most of us. I especially find it difficult since I buried my son in December.

Since attending the Compassionate Friends group I attend, I realize we are not all on the same journey in grief and healing. One of the mothers I attend with only days after burying her son found it comforting to put a life size cut out of him next to the Christmas tree. I found this appalling but to each their own. I do write a journal every day to my son telling him what I did that day and telling him how much I miss and love him. I remember going to my company Christmas party only a couple weeks after burying my son and putting on the festive face. What a mistake that was. I have realized on my grief journey that it is NOT my job to please everyone by smiling and pretending although I know we all do it from time to time. Some of us handle loss better than others, or I should say manage it better. The one thing I feared the most was I would get in and stay in the "angry stage" although normal, not a good place to be. It is difficult being a man because we are taught to be tough and not cry, however THAT ship has sailed. Being a custodial father I taught my boys never to be ashamed to show their love for family or one another (plus we are Italian so we can get away with it more) so I have cried more tears than I ever thought possible. I refuse to turn to drugs and alcohol to replace my grief. My son is a beautiful person, a hero, and I will not diminish his memory as such. All I can say Air Force family, is when they say "oh c'mon smile, cheer up, it's Christmas" and you don't feel the same, tell them for me to kiss you right in the mistletoe! I do say Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah, and all of that and I mean good wishes to all, but my ONE holiday wish is for YOU to stop telling ME how I should feel. God Bless each and every one of you.

Karl Porfirio father of SrA Tre Porfirio

"Tears shed for another person are not a sign of weakness. They are a sign of a pure heart."

~Jose N. Harris

Upcoming TAPS Events



Widows, Widowers, and Widowed Significant Other's Retreat

Wednesday, January 9, 2013—Sunday, January 13, 2013

Location: Bozeman, Montana

Philadelphia Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp

Friday, January 11, 2013—Sunday, January 13, 2013

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Parents Retreat

Wednesday, February 6, 2013— Sunday, February 10, 2013

Location: Savannah, Georgia

Hawaii Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp

Saturday, February 16, 2013— Sunday, February 17, 2013

Location: Kaneohe, Hawaii

Siblings Retreat

Wednesday, February 27, 2013— Sunday, March 3, 2013

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Seattle Adult Surviving Children's Retreat

Wednesday, March 20, 2013—Sunday, March 24, 2013

Location: Seattle, WA

To register for TAPS events, please visit www.taps.org or call the phone number listed above for more detailed information about upcoming events

The US Air Force proudly endorses the TAPS organization

Resource Center

Note: The following resources are intended to provide additional information that may be useful or interesting. Air Force Families Forever, however, cannot attest to the accuracy or value of the information provided. By providing these resources, Air Force Families Forever is not attempting to endorse a program or resource, its only intent is to contribute potentially helpful information.

24/7 Crisis & Help Lines:

Military One Source (MOS) – DOD ID Card Holders Only: 1-800-342-9647

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS): 1-800-959-8277

National Suicide Prevention Helpline: 1-800-273-8255 (**Vets Press 1**)

Counseling Sources:

Military One Source (MOS) - Provides face-to-face counseling, telephone consultation, online consultation (instant messenger), and financial consultation. www.militaryonesource.mil

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) - Offers bereavement counseling to parents, spouses, and children of service members; also available to reservists and National Guardsmen who die while on duty.

www.va.gov

TRICARE through Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) - Appointments with Social Workers, Psychologists, and/or Psychiatrists through referral from primary care physicians (health plan options and costs for TRICARE vary based on the sponsor's military status when he/she died; if surviving family member is a spouse or child). www.tricare.mil

Education and Employment:

Fisher House Foundation Scholarships for Military Children - A scholarship program for children of military members. www.militaryscholar.org/

Pat Tillman Scholarship - A scholarship intended to cover tuition, fees, books, room and board, as well as child care for spouses of Active Duty and veteran service members. Partners with existing education benefits. <http://www.pattillmanfoundation.org/tillman-military-scholars/apply/>

Folds of Honor Foundation - Provides scholarships to spouses and children of service members disabled or killed as a result of their military service. www.foldsofhonor.org/

USA Jobs - A job search site to help military spouses find careers with the Federal Government. Also gives the opportunity to use preference as a surviving spouse; preference also applies to surviving children. www.usajobs.com

Career One Stop - Helps military spouses with career planning, training, and job search resources. www.careeronestop.org/militaryspouses

Resource Center, cont'd

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Support Groups/Organizations:

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) - Offers peer mentoring, 24/7 information line, publishes quarterly newsletters, hosts online community of survivors (chat rooms, message boards, peer group discussion sites), sponsors military survivor seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for children). www.taps.org *The U.S. Air Force proudly endorses the **TAPS** organization*

American Widow Project (AWP) – Emphasis on healing through sharing stories over blogs, getaways, and conventions. www.americanwidowproject.org

Grief Share - Offers weekly grief recovery support groups throughout the U.S. and Canada, and many other international locations. www.griefshare.org

Airmen and Family Readiness centers at DoD installations - Offers a number of services to military members and their families. Services include, but are not limited to: transition assistance, employment readiness, and financial management, relocations, etc. www.afas.org

Air Force Aid Society - Provides emergency financial assistance and education assistance programs to spouses and dependent age children of Air Force personnel who die on Active Duty.

Compassionate Friends - Offers support groups in cities throughout the U.S. and online for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. www.compassionatefriends.org

Men's Bereavement Network - Offers support groups throughout the U.S. for men grieving the loss of a spouse, specifically designed to address the unique way in which men grieve. www.mensbereavement.org

Air Craft Casualty Emotional Support Services (ACCESS) - An air disaster bereavement network dedicated to connecting those who lost a loved one in a plane crash. www.accesshelp.org

The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families - An organization that helps grieving children in centers located throughout the U.S. www.dougy.org/

American Gold Star Mothers - A community of mothers who have lost a child while serving on Active Duty. Chapters located throughout the U.S. www.goldstarmoms.com

Gold Star Wives of America - A community of widows and widowers who have lost a spouse on Active Duty. Chapters located throughout the U.S. www.goldstarwives.org



Air Force Families Forever

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For more info & past newsletters go to:

<http://www.mortuary.af.mil/library/familiesofthefallensupportbranch/index.asp>

Air Force Families Forever

Mailing Address:

c/o Families of the Fallen Support Branch

116 Purple Heart Drive

Dover AFB, DE 19902

References used for newsletter

www.grieflink.org

www.hospicefoundation.org

www.militaryonesource.com