

AARP Offers Unique Support

AARP Offers Unique Support at Critical Juncture for Those Grieving Victims Of September 11

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4, 2002 PRNewswire — When a special phone in the home of an AARP Grief and Loss Programs volunteer rings, members of the household know it is an important call. Through an innovative peer support program, AARP Grief and Loss Programs is providing special support via a toll-free telephone line (1-866-797-2277) to the families, friends and co-workers of September 11th victims and grieving Americans throughout the country.

To provide support to those in need, dedicated phone lines have been installed in the homes of 50 AARP Grief and Loss Programs peer support volunteers. These volunteers, who themselves have experienced the death of a loved one, have been specially trained to provide compassion, understanding and listening ears to September 11th mourners and others grieving a death.

"Although the healing has begun for some, it will be a long time before many come to terms with September's terrible attacks," said Susan Kovac Eckrich, director of the 28-year old AARP Grief and Loss Programs.

Adults of any age may call toll-free 1-866-797-2277 and speak with a trained peer support volunteer. All calls are confidential.

Eckrich noted, "You do NOT need to be an AARP member to use this service. Phone lines are staffed daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET. Translation/interpreter service and the National Relay Service for the hearing impaired and speech disabled are also available."

In addition to the toll-free support line, AARP's response to September 11th includes a greatly expanded AARP Grief and Loss Programs website - <http://www.griefandloss.org/> — featuring resources unavailable elsewhere on the web including:

- articles written by grief professionals;
- guides on financial and legal decisions;
- discussion boards for interaction with others grieving a loss;
- online support groups;
- a national site locator for local AARP Grief and Loss Programs.

AARP Grief and Loss Programs offer a wide variety of bereavement programming that serves adults who are bereaved and their families. Services include one-to-one outreach, support

groups, informational booklets and brochures, and online assistance. For more information visit the Web site at <http://www.griefandloss.org/>; call (202) 434-2260; write AARP Grief and Loss Programs, 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049; or call 1-866-797-2277 to speak with a peer support volunteer. Mike Black of Alpharetta is the Georgia State Coordinator for Grief and Loss Programs.

AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization for people 50 and over. It provides information and resources; advocates on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assists members to serve their communities; and offers a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for its members. These benefits include AARP Webplace at <http://www.aarp.org/>; Modern Maturity and My Generation magazines, and the monthly AARP Bulletin.

Editor's Note: *If you need extra help in getting through the holidays, call AARP's Grief and Loss toll-free number and talk with a trained peer support volunteer. 1-866-797-227 or visit their Grief and Loss resources online at: <http://www.aarp.org/griefandloss/>*

Annie's Playground

November 10th will mark one year since our granddaughter Annie died in her sleep, just two weeks before her third birthday. She left her twin sister Sophie and older brother Natey bewildered, their parents devastated, and you know how we grandparents felt and still feel. A hard year for us all, but we have been trying to make something positive of it and that's why I'm writing.

Within two weeks of Annie's death, the family settled on a playground renovation project fitting to the memory of this laughing, lovable child who adored the outdoors and playgrounds. My husband and I began fundraising immediately and

raised enough to get the Seattle Dept. of Parks solidly behind our efforts. Then, when they were able to do more than just survive, our daughter and her husband stepped in to spearhead a neighborhood "Friends of Annie's Playground" committee. This local group is carrying the project forward through local involvement and support. They will participate in playground planning as well as fundraising efforts like T-shirt sales, bake sales, and play parties. Lauren and Glenn are truly the moving force in all this, inspiring others to help by their own ceaseless dedication.

For an overview of what has happened so

far, please visit the website at www.anniesplayground.org. Visitors to the website can purchase adorable T-shirts (our primary fundraiser at present) or make donations in memory of their own lost darlings. For those in the Seattle area, you might also want to join the Friends of Annie's Playground group or help us find grants or other funding.

Providing this playground, designed to bring joy to so many other children, brings a bittersweet sense of accomplishment. We hope it will keep Annie's memory a blessing for others as it is and always will be for us.

- Rita C. Frischer

Donations, Love Gifts, In Memory Of . . .

AGAST Thanks You For Your Donations and Love Gifts In Memory Of . . .

- ♥ Jim and Vicky Demshar, remembering granddaughter **Paige MacKenzie Curless**, February 14 – March 15, 2000
- ♥ Jim and Sue Mateja, remembering the fifth birthday of grandson **Peyton Thomas Mateja**, July 3 – October 9, 1997
- ♥ Ronald & Cherie Brown, remembering granddaughter **Lyndsay Dane Alm**, March 28 – July 22, 1994
- ♥ Modern Welding Co., Owensboro, KY, in memory of **Christopher James, Jr.**, grandson of Mr. & Mrs. James Gray, Clovis, CA
- ♥ Marian O'Brien-Frigo, remembering grandson **Keaton Thomas Whalen**, January 7 – March 30, 1998
- ♥ Roger & Rita Beauvais, remembering granddaughter **Blaine Marie Nelson**, April 20 – August 17, 2000
- ♥ Rodney & Gerry Ferraro, remembering grandson **Vince Peter Ferraro**, September 9 – December 17, 1999
- ♥ Jami Rae Garrison, Imaj Web Design, remembering her angel mother, **Lois Ellen Miller**, 1935 – 1983
- ♥ Mark & Judy Jorris, remembering grandson **Zacory Jude O'Connor**, April 11 – July 29, 2001
- ♥ Robin Kennedy, remembering grandson **Jared Michael Kennedy**, August 6 – September 20, 1997
- ♥ Lee Ward, remembering grandson **Grant Connor Maddox**, March 21 – September 24, 1995
- ♥ Pat & Bobbie DeLong and remembering granddaughter **Griffin Elizabeth Dailey**, October 28, 1996 – February 13, 1997
- ♥ Donald & Barbara Borenstein, remembering grandson **Calway Thomas Borenstein**, November 26, 2000 - August 8, 2001

Our sincere thanks to all who purchased cookbooks and other items to contribute to our cause:

- ♥ Rolen & Frances Bailey, and Denise Perdue Lee, cookbook purchases
- ♥ David & Lucretia Becker, remembering grandson **Nathan McGuire Carney**, April 12 – May 19, 2000
- ♥ Chuck & Leslie Doepke, remembering granddaughter **Sara Elizabeth Hulme**, April 17 – July 23, 2001
- ♥ Edna Gray, remembering Granddaughter **Linda Chandler Farrar**
- ♥ Kermit & Bonnie Klein, remembering granddaughter **Myciah Rose Coleman**, June 2 – July 19, 2001
- ♥ Jim and Sue Mateja, remembering grandson **Peyton Thomas Mateja**, July 3 – October 9, 1997
- ♥ Maureen Rogus, remembering Granddaughter **Grace Maureen Miller**, August 17 – October 30, 1996
- ♥ Ed & Bonnie Rohrbach, remembering grandson **Zachery Tyler Vannoy**
- ♥ Pat & Bobbie DeLong, remembering granddaughter **Griffin Elizabeth Dailey**, October 28, 1996 – February 13, 1997

The CJ Foundation for SIDS is the major sponsor for SIDS organizations in the United States; they also provide funding for those wishing to attend SIDS conferences. They receive funding from such organizations as U.S. Freightways (\$250,000), WAWA Corporation (\$150,000) and Chili's Grill & Bar on the east coast (\$216,000 through their "Tips for SIDS" program and selling peppers for \$1.00, \$5.00 and \$10.00). They appeared with grandparent Rory Sweeny on the 2002 WFAN Radiothon. The New York Stock Exchange sponsored the broadcast site. The First Annual Mehegan Sun/Joseph Abboud Celebrity Tennis Tournament raised over \$175,000 for CJ Foundation for SIDS and The Imus Ranch.

AGAST wishes to thank the CJ Foundation for SIDS for providing funding for website development.

Walking for a Cause

a letter from AGAST member, Vicky...

It is Saturday night, and the Walk is over. Colleen went. It was heart wrenching and I can't say the pain was any less this year than the first. But the Walk made \$10,070. The turnout was not as good as last year, but the money intake was. I was thinking when I was walking, about how the MS walk (we contribute every year because my Mother has MS) and the breast cancer walk, and the cancer walk and the walk for the blind, etc., always have really

large turnouts. And half way through the walk, I decided that the reason the SIDS Walk has such a small turnout is because we are not walking for survivors. We are walking for tiny, precious babies that are stripped from their mothers' arms by sudden, unexplainable, death. You can't jump on the bandwagon, and say "let's help the people who suffer from this disease, let's walk side by side with a survivor." You have to face the horrifying reality that you are walking for Angels, and maybe with Angels. Not many people can

muster up the emotional strength to do that. But I know that each person that was there today, came because they knew, or wanted to understand the pain that all the families of SIDS babies have experienced, and wanted to do something to help. The sponsors (YMCA) gave each family a beautiful stained glass sun catcher. Colleen's was a lavender tulip, and I know each time she sees the sun coming through, she will see her Paige's face, smiling, and whispering "I love you Mommy."

Angel Twins—Update

September 16, 2002

Twins are special pairings in this world, and a Lost Angel Twin is a tragedy. But as we face the hardship of grieving for a Lost Angel, it's miraculous how the surviving twin's spirit and personality can bring a smile to our faces, and joy to our hearts. Somehow we all manage to get from one day to the next in spite of the pain and the fear, and some of us need more help and encouragement than others. That's what we are here for: to provide support and encouragement. Nothing can ever replace the Angels lost, but their memory lives with us, and the surviving Angel brings out the best in us: hope, love, laughter.

It has been 17 months since our granddaughter Erin passed away from SIDS, and there are few days I don't think of

her, many days that I still cry for her. Her twin, Emily, is the joy of our family. Our "blended" family includes one daughter from me and a daughter and son from my husband. My husband's son Dave (my step son) is the father, and his wife Michele, (my step daughter-in-law!) the mother. Before their twins were born I sometimes wondered how I would feel about these children since they are not biologically mine. I wondered what role the family would want me to take. Silly thoughts — each and every one.

Babies must be the answer to everything. Since becoming a grandmother for the first time, I can tell you that nothing in the world is more important than Miss Emily when she comes to visit. Time stops and she is my everything, with chocolate fudge on top!

And if that wasn't enough — we have another baby on the way, a BOY this time, due early December. Another miracle on the way! Life has mysteries we will never understand but the blessing of a child is one we can all understand. Remember to count your blessings every day and take joy in the little ones we have. Miracles keep happening.

Bless you all,

*Carol Reid
Grandmother to Emily Joan Reid and Lost Angel Erin Kathleen Reid*

[If you have lost a twin grandchild and have need of peer support please e-mail Carol at angeltwins@agast.org]

WE ARE THE ONES GOD SENDS

I see your pain
and want to banish it
with the wave of a star
but I have no star.

I see your tears
and want to dry them
with the hem of an angel's gown,
but I have no angel.

I see your heart
fall to the ground
and want to return it
wrapped in clothes of rainbow,
but I have no rainbow.

God is the one
who has stars and angels and rainbows
but we are the ones God sends
to sit beside you
until the stars come out
and the angels dry your tears
and your heart is back in place,
rainbow blessed.

(Author unknown)

*Submitted by Rita, Grandmother to
Annie Sachiko Yasuda*

Thank you for responding. My grandson, Jonah Eugene Means, was born on May 22, 2001. He was the first delivered of twin boys. At 20 weeks, my daughter's ultrasound revealed something wrong with one of the babies. He was diagnosed with anencephaly, a neural tube defect, for which the prognosis is fatal. Jonah lived for about an hour, passing away on the same day as being born. He weighed 4lbs 8ozs, and was 17 1/4 inches long. His brother was fine, and is still doing fine. I also extend to you my love for the loss you suffered seven years ago. Thank you again, for your interest and for your wonderful web site.

*God Bless,
Jan Loudon, Jonah's Grandnannie*



Second request for your help! Peer Contacts

AGAST has grown phenomenally in the last few years, and during this time the office has been through some major moves and transitions. We would like to get all of our records updated, and we also want to include a list of Peer Contacts by state in each newsletter. If you are a peer contact for grandparents in your state, or if you would like to become one, please e-mail me at execdir@agast.org or write to AGAST; P. O. Box 17281; Phoenix, AZ 85011-0281; ATTN: Exec. Dir. Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and your grandchild's full name and birth and angel dates.

Thank you for considering this method of serving others who are new to this kind of grief.

Thank You for Sharing

The response to our request for articles for our new "Thank You for Sharing" column has been good, though not overwhelming. In this issue Pat Fife and Joy Schulke share their experiences with us.

If you would like to share your grandangel

My grandangel, Bridgid Noreen, was born with her identical twin sister, Isabella DeAngelis, on August 27th, 2000. She left us, a victim of SIDS, on December 12th 2000. Her life brought me and our family more happiness than some people ever experience in a lifetime. For that we are truly fortunate. The twins were my second and third grandchildren and first granddaughters. They were my son, Bill's, and daughter-in-law, Amanda's, second and third children. We were all ecstatic when we learned that twins were expected. My son, a physician, actually did the sonogram on his wife that determined twins were expected. The expectation of twin girls was the culmination of many dreams come true.

We received the news on the phone, having just returned from our first trip to Paris. We had recently moved into our dream house, a home which my husband and I had had built after many, many years of hoping and planning. Our son, Bill, was just completing a residency in family practice after many years of study and hard work. My husband and I were there within hours of the girls' births. We arranged our work schedules so that we could spend 10 days of uninterrupted time with our grandson and new granddaughters. We were never happier. I cried the day my husband and I had to leave to go home. I couldn't wait until I would see the girls again. I saw them at Halloween and we all went trick or treating. I also got to see the home my son and his wife were in the process of buying.

The Sunday before Bridgid died I had

with us, and with the universe, please send your article to me at editor@agast.org or P. O. Box 17281; Phoenix, AZ 85011-0281, **ATTN: Editor**. Don't worry if you feel you aren't a writer — if the pertinent facts and general gist of your story are there I can

also reached my professional goal. I had been promoted to Director of Patient Services at The Visiting Nurse Association of Long Island. I was on top of the world as I decorated my new office.

Our dreams and perfect world were shattered when Bridgid died, thirteen days before Christmas. We have found solace in the memories of our most happy times. For me Bridgid's spirit still lives on. I see her in the stars at night and in the butterflies that have crossed my path when something wonderful is about to happen. As I was on the phone one morning last summer, a butterfly flew in front of me. The phone call was the notice that our younger son had made law review at law school.

Three months after Bridgid died, my husband and I attended a benefit dinner dance. I knew that one of the prizes was a trip to Hawaii, a place I'd always dreamed of going. I had a feeling I would win the trip. I did. I'm sure Bridgid's spirit was at work. I know she wanted us to be happy again. One morning while in Hawaii, I woke up and looked out the window. What I beheld was Bridgid's spirit again. I saw the most spectacular double rainbow. I will always wish that Bridgid was here to be with us and her twin sister, Isabella, but I do know that her spirit lives on and I am grateful for the time and most perfect happiness we were able to experience when she was alive. As a tribute to Bridgid, I have established a fund at the Visiting Nurse Association of Long Island. The fund is used for our maternal-child health program. A

make it readable.

Whether you share your story with us or not, please be sure we have all vital information on your grandchild — full name and birth and angel dates. We want to know your grandchild in a personal way.

visitation program for SIDS parents will also be established with the fund. Thank you for allowing me to share my and my family's story.

-Patricia DeAngelis Fife, Bridgid's Nonna

LIGHTS OF LOVE

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white.

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As.....

.....we remember

by

Jacqueline Brown
Peace Vallley TCF, New Britain PA
Written for National Children's
Memorial Day