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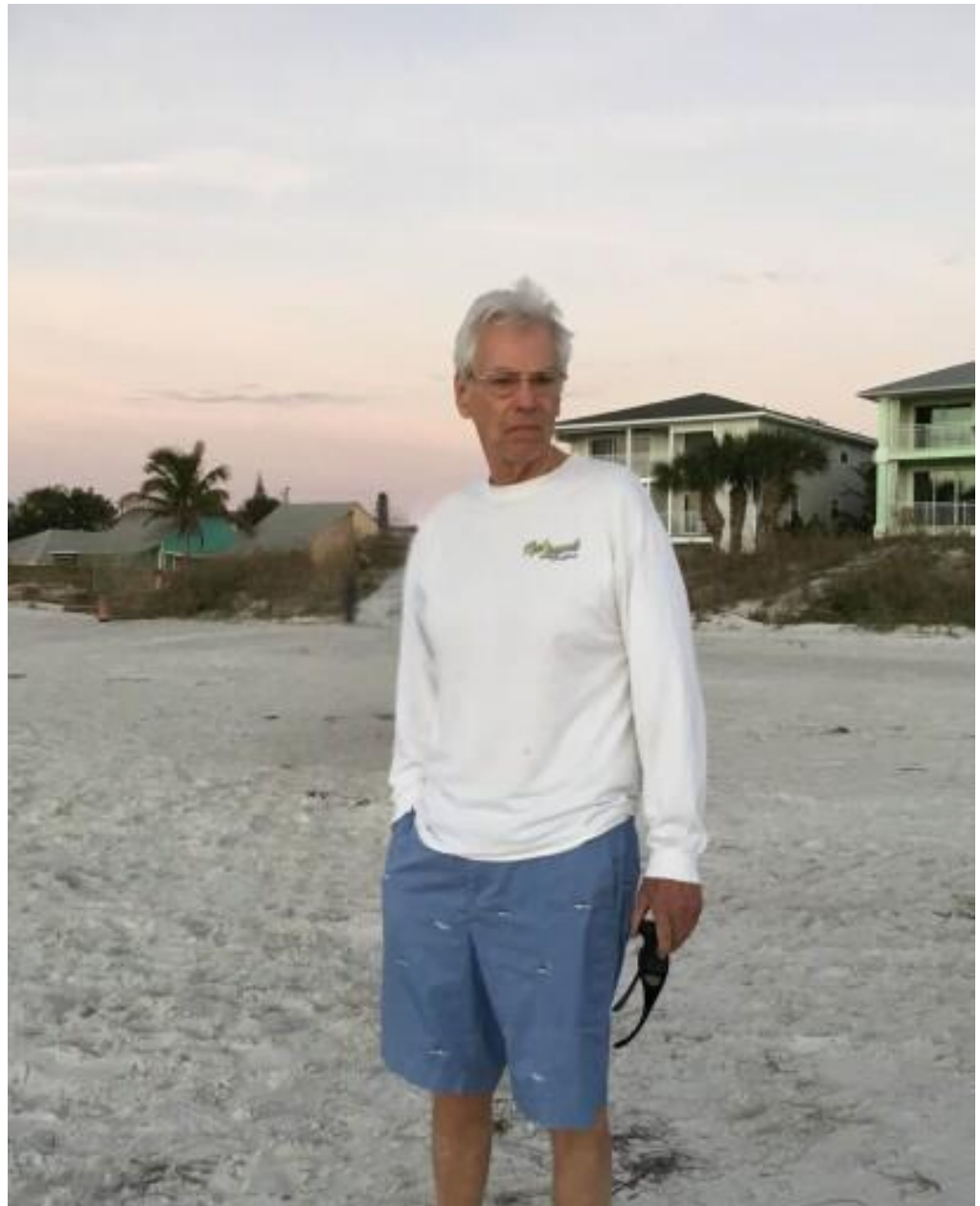
HOPEline is a **monthly newsletter** of **HOPE FOR BEREAVED**, a nonprofit community organization providing support for the bereaved. The **purpose** of **HOPEline** is to help those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Each month, **we share information and ideas** from bereaved people and professionals to help you through your grief journey. Please know you are not alone. **HOPE is here to help you.** To talk with a compassionate, caring member of our peer support team, **please call us at 315-475-9675.**

**Everyone has a story.
This is Diane's:**

When my husband passed away after nearly 51 years of marriage, adjusting to being alone and embracing the identity of a widow was challenging. I eventually sought help from HOPE, joining the Senior Widows and Widowers Group. Here I could share my feelings and connect with others experiencing similar challenges. Through group meetings, shared lunches, and monthly outings, I found a renewed sense of purpose and redefined what it means to live a fulfilling life after loss.

Do you want to share your story?

Contact us today to share how HOPE helped you or how you are progressing through your journey.



In loving memory of **Bob Kriesel**
Happy Heavenly Birthday
Miss you every day
Love, Pat & Family

TOPIC	PAGE
Cover Page & Dedication	1
From the Executive Director	2
New Years Hope	3
Dispelling the Myth of Letting Go	4
HOPE for Youth	5
HOPE for Teens	6
Happening at HOPE	7



Dear Friends of HOPE,

January is all about new beginnings, setting goals, and looking toward the future. As I think about the future of HOPE, my vision is clear: eliminate the stigma around grief. To do so requires us to admit a hard truth, first, and that is that as a culture, the way we approach grief is broken...

Hurry up. Get better.
Three days of bereavement leave. Now back to work.
You're not over it yet? It's been 6 months.
You'll be stronger for it.
They're in a better place.
Why are you still talking about this?
Thoughts and prayers.

Empty platitudes abound.

To help frame my vision for HOPE's future, I am currently reading *It's OK that You're Not OK*, by Megan Devine.

As Devine so eloquently states, we see it [grief] as something to overcome, something to fix, rather than something to tend or support.

As uncomfortable as it is, here's the truth: you have to live within your grief. The ugly, messy, inconvenience of it all. Acknowledge that it's unfair. Embrace the rawness. Tell yourself, I'm not OK.

And if that's the truth about grief, our goal as a community should then be - how do we stand with someone in their grief, with all of its ugliness and realness? How do we hold space for someone whose world is forever changed?

If you don't know the answer to these questions, it's not your fault. We've been taught from a young age not to feel our feelings. If you're grieving, and you're vigorously nodding your head in agreement, I see you. HOPE sees you.

As we move forward into this new year, let's commit to doing better—for ourselves and for those around us. Thank you for standing with HOPE as we work to change the conversation about grief.



From Executive Director
Kelly Ocampo

With gratitude and warm wishes,
Kelly

New Years Hope

By: Bart Sumner

I've never been a huge fan of the New Year's Eve celebrations. Oh sure, in my younger days another excuse to party, act stupid and kiss someone who you might never get a chance to some other time was fun, but in my early twenties I moved from the east coast to the west coast, and the whole idea of waiting for midnight when I knew everyone I knew back east was already passed out and asleep took a lot of wind from the sails. In fact, once the kids came a long, it became sort of a New Year's Eve tradition to celebrate with our kids and other families with kids at 9pm, and be home in bed watching the New Year arrive from under the warm sheets.

But then in October of 2009 my 10-year-old son David died. Getting through those three months and the holiday season seemed impossible. But we kept plugging forward, and before we knew it the celebration of Halloween, the nightmare of a day of giving thanks (pretty useless that year), and the nightmare of Santa coming and opening presents with his little sister without him, was done, and we were staring a new year in the face. We opted that year to go back east and visit family in Florida. There was for the first time in many years a real anticipation on my part for the year to change its last digits.

The year we were leaving behind was certainly the worst I had ever been through, and the idea of starting new was so very appealing. We were staying at the beach house my brother owned, and we spent a lot of time the days leading up, walking the beach, looking at the stars at night, and feeling very miniscule in comparison to this huge cosmos we are a part of. We spent a great deal of time talking with relatives about David and memories. It was a good time for sharing grieving and feeling safe to shed the tears we knew were necessary.

When New Year's Eve arrived, we went out to the beach at sunset to watch the last sun of the year disappear into the Gulf of Mexico. My daughter, who was only 8 at the time, played in the sand. We took pictures as the sun set, celebrating our lives, our dear David's love, and the hope that life ahead, though it would always be different, still held wonders for us all.

It was a very healing and important night for us all. But it's important to note, that it changed nothing. The idea that the turning of the numbers in the Year would make a difference proved to be just another dream and hope that never really came to fruition. We still had another 9 months of "firsts" ahead of us, which David was not going to be a part of. There was no magic healing that took place. Don't get me wrong, the time spent with family and marking the passing of the year was exceedingly important, and it did us a great deal of good, but stopping the hurt it did not do. Of course now I realize that nothing stops the hurt. It is with you forever. It always has the potential to rear it's ugly head when a certain song comes on the radio, or you see the number "18" (the number he wore when he died at Football) on some random sports team, or even when you are writing a piece to share about New Years for The Greif Toolbox. The tears have come, they do come, and they will continue to come at times. But it was a way of marking the time. Not the time of despair since David's death, but rather the time of our survival and life forward.

Every New Year now marks another step forward into a life that we have grown, and loved and just plain lived. We are moving forward, carrying David's love forward, not only in our own hearts, but also outwardly to the world. This year in particular was a big step for me in that I finally was able to put some form to the pain and heartache, and take my life's work and create a vehicle to use it to help others who have suffered similar pain as we have. In creating Healing Improv I have been able to reach out and help others see that life does move forward, and laughter and good times can still be lived, all while holding onto the love we have. I say love we "have" because as my wife loves to remind me, love never dies. I love David as much, if not more, today as I ever did. And though I no longer feel his kiss, or hear his laughter, he affects who I am and what I do as much as he ever did. So 2018 will be another year forward, with David making me who I am and improving on whom I was, and using his love to heal and help others.

I wish a Happy New Year to all who are wounded. 2018 is another chance to move forward. It's another year to keep living. Our loved ones who are gone do not want us to stop indulging in life's treasures. Move forward and live, if not for yourself, for them, for they are still with you, every step of the way.

Bart Sumner is the founder & President of HEALING IMPROV, a nonprofit charity in Grand Rapids, Michigan that provides no cost Comedy Improv Grief Workshops to people struggling with finding the road forward. He lost his 10 year old son David in 2009 to a sudden accident. www.Healing-Improv.org

Dispelling the Myth of Letting Go

By Kip Ingram, Montgomery Hospice Director of Bereavement Care

Contrary to popular myth, grief is not about letting go of our loved ones, it's about learning to hold on to them in new ways as we move forward with our lives. Often our society expects a brief time of grief after a loss followed by a quick return to normal as we somehow let go and move on. If we dare to open up and talk about the challenges of our grieving several months later, we are typically met with awkward and impatient responses that send the message, "haven't you gotten over this and moved on yet?" The reality is grieving takes time and is more like a journey into new places than a brief episode with a definite ending.



With gentleness and patience, we can learn to hold on to our loved ones in new ways that feel comforting and good. We can do this through the stories we share about them with others. We can also find that certain of their possessions take on a sentimental value because they remind us of something we cherish in our loved one. We visit the cemetery or keep the ashes in a special place because it helps us to feel near to them. We engage in rituals of remembrance like planting a tree or installing a memorial marker or toasting them at a family holiday gathering. Montgomery Hospice offers annual opportunities like this with our Tree of Lights ceremony at Brookside Gardens and our Cobblestone dedication at Casey House. We can also hold onto them when we take inspiration from their lives and take up a cause in their memory. Sometimes, we even find that we talk to them, either in our minds or out loud, and this can bring comfort and a sense of their nearness. The fact that many people actually have bits of conversation with their loved ones may be one of the best kept secrets around. These are a few of the ways we can continue to remember the special bond we share with our loved ones as we move forward in our living.

It needs to be said that sometimes, and for some people, it may not feel good to remember and focus on a loved one too much, especially in the early days following the loss. With the initial shock of the loss and intense feelings surrounding it, just to focus on other things for a while can feel like a relief. This is often a normal part of grief and a healthy way to deal with overwhelming circumstances. Rather than grieving all at once, we tend to do better by grieving in smaller, more manageable doses over time.

It is also good to remember that holding on to a loved one is not about trying to freeze time and live in the past. It's about learning new ways to remember, honor and cherish our shared journey. It's about affirming that our loved one's presence will be with us in meaningful ways as we begin to take tentative steps forward. Holding on is not a fearful, desperate clinging to the past, but a hopeful and life-affirming step into the future. When we lose a loved one, our world feels shaken and even demolished forever. It will never be the same as it was. Yet, moving through the journey of grief, we can begin to find that a new world comes together in our living, and that our loved ones will have a deeply meaningful place in it.














HOPE
FOR
YOUTH



1/2025

Dear Friends,

The New Year is a good  time to think about changes  we would like to make in the coming year.  This can especially apply to dealing with the death of our loved one.  What are some ways we can grow closer to our loved one who died? We can write them a letter or draw them a picture.   We can talk to other loved ones  about things we used to do together. We might keep a special remembrance of them in our room.  There are many things we can do to feel closer to our deceased loved one, and keep their memory alive inside of us!  It is helpful to make plans or set some goals as we journey through grief. Then we will see how we can grow  in the coming year!

Love, Mark 



Dear Friends,

Vol 3 #10 1/2025

As we entertain a new year, the world around us is filled with uncertainty, anxiety, and fear for the future. Yet at the same time, New Year's Day brings a sense of excitement, possibility, and hope for the future. For those of us traveling through our grief journey, these (seemingly) opposing views can be magnified. Since our loved one died, we are faced with many changes in our lives that may cause us to doubt ourselves and our destiny. However, as we navigate through grief, we also discover areas of growth and strength. We are survivors.

The New Year theme often feels like a paradox. We inevitably recall the past, which includes wonderful times, but also moments we may regret. Yet we anticipate the coming year with plans to improve and make life better. In grief, the beginning of another year can be bittersweet. Turning the calendar date is a reminder that we are that much further removed from when our loved one was still alive. This brings pain and sadness. Yet, the coming year allows us to take stock of how we've matured since our loved one's death. We can look forward to (and plan for) further growth and healing to occur. This brings gratitude and hope. We can then build upon our resume as survivors.

Thus it is important that we recognize that, although moving on can be difficult, dealing with our feelings of grief leads to successful ways of coping. As we continue to survive, we learn valuable life lessons that will lead to healing and contentment in daily life. May the New Year allow peace and growth!

Take Care -Mark

Please forward your questions, comments, and ideas to mail@hopeforbereaved.com

SAVE THE DATES for our 2025 Events

- ♥ Tournament of HOPE Golf Tournament - Monday, June 23rd
- ♥ Remembrance Run/Walk for HOPE - Saturday, August 2nd
- ♥ Celebration of HOPE - Friday, October 24th

Memorial and sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact Director of Development, Mike Valenti, to learn more!

E: mvalenti@hopeforbereaved.com

P: 315-475-9675

happening at HOPE



SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

**All groups are 6:30 to 8:30 PM at HOPE for Bereaved unless otherwise noted*

- January 2nd - Widows/Widowers, Engaged & Significant Others **rescheduled due to holiday, typically held the 1st Wednesday each month*
- 2nd Tues. | January 14th - Family & Friends
- 2nd Wed. | January 8th - Survivors of Suicide
- 2nd Friday | January 10th - Family & Friends
**Clay Senior Center, 4948 State Rt 31, 11:30-1:30*
- 3rd Tues. | January 21st - Death By Drug Overdose
- 3rd Wed. | January 15th - Bereaved Parents (separate groups held for death of all ages + infant, newborn, & pregnancy death)
- 3rd Wed | January 15th - Senior Widows/Widowers
**10AM to 12PM*
- 3rd Thursday | January 16th - Parents without Parents

Meetings are held in-person at the

Center of HOPE
4500 Onondaga Blvd. in Syracuse

and through Zoom.

One-on-one counseling is available.

Call us at 315-475-9675 for an appointment. Counseling can be done in person, by phone, or over Zoom.

There is **no charge** for counseling, but donations are always welcomed.



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JANUARY 2025

suggested
New Year's Resolutions
for the Bereaved

- practice self-compassion
- explore grief support resources
- establish boundaries
- create new rituals
- self-reflect
- pursue new hobbies

hopeforbereaved.com