



staying connected

Southwest Transplant Alliance

December 2006

“Coping with Celebration Days” AARP Grief and Loss Programs

Family celebrations, such as birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries, can sometimes be complicated after the death of a family member. For some in the family, feelings of grief over the loss may seem to conflict with desires to help survivors enjoy their special days. If the person who died played a key role in celebrations, his or her absence will certainly affect family dynamics.

The family has changed and must adjust to the absence of a key member. This raises questions such as who will assume the roles previously performed by the person who died. For example, after the death of an older parent, does the surviving parent take on the responsibilities of the former spouse, or do they pass them to another member of the older generation, to the middle generation, or can they be shared? If the former middle generation has become the older generation, what impact does this have? It is important that such questions be discussed, so that family members do not feel they have been

denied opportunities without an open discussion among survivors.

You and others in the family may be thinking:

- “Nothing will ever be the same.”
- “We are all in the same family; we should know how we all think or feel.”
- “It’s better just not to mention him/her (the deceased loved one); we will just go on ‘as usual’ for this particular day.”
- “I must be ‘strong’ for the others and hide my feelings.”

Proceeding on thoughts like these can result in hurt feelings and misunderstandings. Therefore, **it is very important to communicate**. It might be hard to bring up the subject of celebrations after a death, but it is essential. Otherwise individual family members may be operating on very different assumptions that could result in misunderstandings. You can’t know

without talking together. Here are a few suggestions:

- Encourage everyone to read *Understanding the Grief Process*, the basic pamphlet in this series (from AARP). It emphasizes that grieving is very individual.
- Ask family members what kind of celebration they would like.
- Talk about ways to involve one another in the arrangements. Many people are more comfortable when they are busy. Sharing tasks also minimizes the possibility of overburdening any one person.
- Discuss ways to add a new element to celebrations, start a new tradition, or blend the traditional with the new.
- After the event talk openly about how it went and plan any necessary changes for next time.

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Celebration of Living and Giving

It won’t be long before we will be honoring our donor families who generously said “yes” to organ and tissue donation and allowed their loved ones to give the Gift of Life. We do this by holding an annual Celebration of Living and Giving to commemorate our donors and honor their families. There will be a photo presentation of your loved one, so we ask that you send a photo along with a brief quote about them. Also, please include their name, date of donation, and the location of the celebration you wish to attend. There will be six events throughout Texas. Invitations will be mailed in February but you may begin sending photos at any time, using either address below:

E-mail: celebration@organ.org

Mail: Attention: Celebration
Southwest Transplant Alliance
3710 Rawlins, Suite 1100
Dallas, TX 75219

Dates & locations are as follows:

Beaumont

Lamar University
April 29th, 1-4pm

Corpus Christi

Solomon Ortiz Center
April 21st, 2-4pm

Dallas

Hilton Anatole
April 28th, 1-4pm

El Paso

Vista Hills Country Club,
April 21st, 11am-1pm

Odessa

MCM Hotel Elegante
April 14th, 2-5pm

Tyler

The Women’s Center
April 22nd, 2-4pm

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3710 Rawlins Suite 1100
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www.organ.org

Our Decision to Help Save Others

Justin Wayne Douglas was born February 5, 1987 at 6:04 p.m. at Citizens General Hospital, Greenville Texas. He weighed 8 lbs 6 oz and was 20 1/2 inches long. He was a perfect baby boy, with blonde curly hair and big brown eyes. He was a very good baby, sleeping all night from the first night we brought him home.

As a toddler he was a normal little boy full of life and into everything. He was always laughing and had a smile that was unforgettable. When he started school he made sure he was the center of attention. This sometimes caused him to get into trouble. As he got a little older and started playing sports, he wanted to be just like his big brother. He played baseball, football, basketball, and ran track. He had lots of friends and would do anything for all of them. He was also helpful to people he barely knew, and those he didn't know at all. He had a wonderful giving heart.

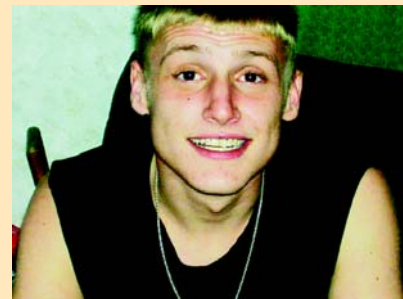
When he turned 18 he got his driver's license and we started looking for a truck for him to drive. On January 26, 2006 we bought

him his truck. He was always working on it and cleaning it. On February 16, 2006 at 11:35 p.m. he left our apartment to go to Wills Point to take a friend home. On the way back he fell asleep and hit a fence and two trees. Justin passed on February 17, 2006 at 2:30 p.m. and all of his organs, tissues and bones were then donated. His body was also donated to the University Texas Southwestern Medical School. I know he blessed many with his passing.

We will always love him and are comforted to know that he lives on in others.

Justin Wayne Douglas

Justin's mom, Robbie



Others Who Gave Life



Cylus Lee Craney was born Saturday morning, August 28, 2004. He weighed a very healthy 7lbs., 14 oz, with ten fingers and ten toes, and hungry from the moment he was born. When I brought Cylus home he was able to lift his head at only two days old! I knew from the moment I saw my baby there was something special about him. At two months old he rocked himself, leading his sister and brother to call him "Rocky." Cylus loved to be held and talked to, and he always responded in baby talk. At four months old he was able to roll over. It was like he wanted to do everything right away. He was already sitting down, and crawling at five months old. Cylus cut two lower teeth just a week before he passed away. I have many pictures of Cylus laughing, crying, sitting, eating and being held. He was very photogenic. When Cylus saw his brother and sister he let out a scream of excitement. My beautiful boy was loved so much by so many people. Cylus passed away on February 24, 2005, just four days before he turned six months old. I thank God for giving my family and me the joy Cylus brought to our lives. We miss him so much. I know Cylus lives on. His organs were donated to give children in need of the hope of renewed life.

Javier Martinez was a young man of 16 years who loved life and loved his family. He was born in Guanajuato, Mexico on March 21, 1985 and died on February 9, 2004, when he was killed by a drunk driver. His love for life could be seen in his enjoyment of the little things of life. He also loved his family, and his family loved him. He cherished the gifts he received from his parents. His parents have kept some of his most cherished toys from his childhood to remember him by. He has passed from this life to the next, where he continues to bless us, but Javier's death gave life to his recipients, and that knowledge gives some consolation to his family in their grief. His family sees Javier as a hero for saving other people's lives by his donation.



This is **Chris**, my special angel. This picture was taken during Spring Break in 2001, shortly before we lost him on April 28, 2001. He would have turned 14 on May 13th that year. Chris loved life and wanted to have fun. His smile always lit up a room. He loved to play Yahtzee, and won most of the time. He could ride anything with a wheel on it. He was the type of kid you just wanted to hug. He left a ton of family and friends who loved him and miss him every single day. Our consolation is that Chris knew Jesus. Even though I feel like heaven will never be the same, I know Jesus will keep a loving eye on him. I also know that others are living because of Chris. We had the pleasure of meeting two of Chris' recipients last year. One received Chris' lung and the other his liver. They are still living because of him. From the heart of a grandma, "We love you Chris".

Coping with Celebration Days *continued*

Usually, changing a long-standing tradition takes careful planning. The tendency is to compare the present with the past; it is difficult to measure up to those memories. After gaining as much information as you can about your family and your own thinking and preferences, consider completing a holiday planning calendar, especially for the fall and winter, to pave the way for as smooth a season as possible. If you plan ahead, you are more aware of what will or will not work and can be prepared for the unexpected.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is this event a "must do," and do I like doing it?
- Is it observed only out of habit or for reasons that no longer fit?
- What are the consequences of skipping the event for now?
- Is there another event we would all enjoy more?
- What would we like to do differently?

Many persons find it helpful to talk with others who have had a similar loss. Most communities have some form of grief support, such as AARP Grief and Loss Programs. Other sources include hospice and funeral provider aftercare programs. For more information, contact AARP Grief and

Loss Programs, 601 E Street NW, Washington DC 20049, phone 800-424-3410, www.aarp.org. Services include information and referral to community programs, resources to organize or start community bereavement programs, online support groups, publications and resource materials. AARP has prepared a variety of materials to assist individuals and their families. To order, write to AARP Fulfillment at the address above and please provide the title and stock number.

On Being Alone—A Guide for the Newly Widowed—D150

Final Details—D14168

Understanding the Grief Process—D16832

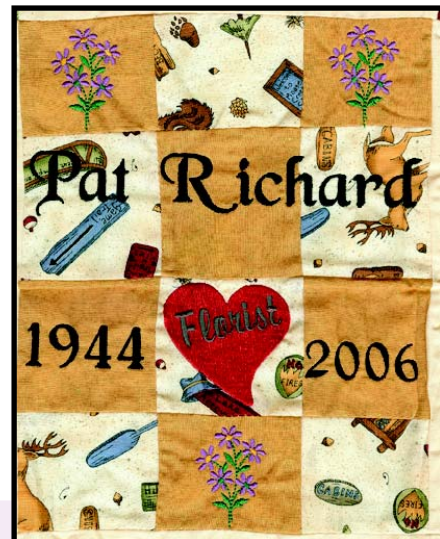
Men and Grief—D17008

Special Issues for Younger Widowed Persons—D17009

When a Parent loses a Spouse—D16831

Coping with the Death of a Parent—D17181

Coping with Celebration Days—D16830



Quilt Squares

Create a quilt square in honor of your loved one. The squares are quilted together with love to form quilts that are displayed at different events throughout Texas to promote organ and tissue donation. Quilt patches should be 8" square (including a 1/2" margin) on any color of fabric.

For more information, please contact Carol Anne at 214-522-0255 ext. 230 or 800-788-8058 ext. 230 or e-mail cagordon@organ.org

If you sent quilt squares within the last two years please contact Carol Anne Gordon.

Did You Know?

Texas has a new donor-registry for those who wish to register their intent to be an organ, tissue and/or eye donor. The DEAR (Donor Education, Awareness, and Registry) program was created by the Texas legislature in 2005.

You can register at any Department of Public Safety (DPS) office as well as online at: www.texasdear.org



The Texas Organ Donor Memorial Walkway

The Texas Organ Donor Memorial Walkway, sponsored by Southwest Transplant Alliance, was dedicated at Fair Park on November 15, 2003. Bricks were donated and dedicated by both transplant recipients and donor families, to honor those who gave the gift of life.

New bricks will be added to the Memorial each year around September/October. Brick forms are due by mid-March. If you would like to dedicate a brick, please print and fill out a form from our website www.organ.org and mail to Zulema Vail c/o STA with your check payable to Friends of Fair Park.



Southwest Transplant Alliance
3710 Rawlins Suite 1100
Dallas, Texas 75219

Phone 214-522-0255
Ext. 214 en español
Ext. 158 Family Svcs.
Fax: 214-522-0430
Website: www.organ.org

Family Services Coordinators

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Nancy Conner (Baytown)
BJ Craft (Midland/Odessa)
Toni Portwood (Tyler)

Mission Statement

Southwest Transplant Alliance exists to save and improve lives by providing organs and tissues for transplantation. We distinguish ourselves by forging meaningful relationships with donor families and the communities we serve in order to realize every possible donation.

Vision Statement

Every organ and tissue donation opportunity is realized as long as the need exists.

Grief Resources:

www.GriefandLoss.org
www.adultsiblinggrief.com
www.alivealone.org
www.bereavedparentsUSA.org
www.compassionatefriends.com
www.footprintsoflife.com
www.griefcompanion.org

Recipient's Gratitude

You don't know me but two weeks ago my 5-year-old son, Austin, was diagnosed with a failing liver from an unknown virus. Things were moving rapidly and he was transferred to the Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake in critical condition. The doctors here were not optimistic that the liver would heal and he continued to worsen. It was soon apparent that Austin would need a new liver if he was to survive. His name was added to the transplant list and we prayed that Austin would get a liver.

You can imagine the relief when we were notified early Thursday morning that there was a liver donor. Then our thoughts turned to the donor's family and we realized that a life had been lost, and there had been an unselfish gift from the loved ones in order that my son would have a chance of life. I know that somewhere in this there is a sacredness in this gift. Each time I look at my son I will think of our family and know that we are now connected through his life.

As we pray for Austin, we also ask our Loving Heavenly Father to bless the family from which his life has been extended because of your unselfish gift. There are not enough words to express my feelings to you for this "Gift of Life".

Once again, I would like to say thank you!

*Sincerely,
Douglas*



Austin with his mom and dad.

"What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

—Helen Keller