

 A February 2014 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another, from the Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death,

This is February, the month of love, or at least it is considered the most romantic month since it contains the day for lovers; St. Valentine's Day. It can also be one of the more difficult months of the year, just one of many with a "holiday" in it, that magnifies the loss of someone we love and have lost to violence. Along with Valentine's Day, February in NM also signals the beginning of spring; a time of rebirth and the earth awakening from the desolation of winter. For some of you, the desolation of winter is still a year round feeling, totally understandable after having someone you love deliberately taken from you by violence, but how difficult, exhausting and debilitating it is to live in winter all of the time. Winter means darkness, loneliness, emptiness, cold and crying; the "death" of winter shows not only on the trees and grass around us, but in the hopelessness and agony in our hearts. I have lived in a winter feeling for years at a time; especially in those first 1-3 years after Kevin was killed, but it has also visited me on and off throughout these many years as well. Yes, winter is a part of a victim's/survivor's life, but not a part where we should plan to stay forever. In order to survive this loss; we must find the strength and resources to move to spring. After almost 15 years, I almost always live in spring but I can remember vividly how hopeless those winter years were for me and my family. Please know that Pat and I think of all of you each month and realize that many of you still struggle with so much in your lives due to your loved one's death.

Speaking about how our loved ones have celebrated Valentine's Day, it reminds me of how our Kevin spent his last 2 years between and on Valentine's Days. Kevin only had one girlfriend in his life, the one who went to his only prom two weeks before he was killed. A tuxedo was quite a debonair change for him, something he had looked forward to for years since he was a ring bearer in a wedding at age 8. To him, the planning and dressing up was the fun part of going to the prom. It hadn't dawned on him or his girl that he couldn't dance, so the prom itself was not nearly as fun for her as it was for him. Well anyway, even though his favorite "date" was with a soccer ball, he charmed his girl friends at school by beading necklaces and bracelets for them. The fact that Kevin could spend hours of time beading a piece of jewelry for a girl was quite a feat of will for him; his ADHD made it difficult to concentrate and the processing issues that made taking school notes difficult were not an issue while beading. It was one of his favorite creative outlets that helped him cope with his learning disability; it was relaxing. Whereas his buddies wouldn't be caught dead doing

something so “girly,” Kevin had realized the way to a girl’s heart was something made with love and care especially for them. When Kevin was killed many of his girl friends told us about or showed us these special these pieces of jewelry and talked about how precious they were to them; what a great friend he was to have done something so personal for them. What is more precious than something that someone has made especially for us so that we will fall in love with it and, if one is lucky, with us as well? Maybe this story will remind you of something your loved one used to do for other that made a difference in their lives.

How did the person you are missing this month celebrate Valentine’s Day? Maybe they, like Kevin, made memorable gifts for you and others, maybe they baked a special cake for you on the day, or sent a loving card to you, made you a special meal, or maybe they always called on that day to tell you how much they loved you. I am so sorry that this year, and for many of you, another year has passed, that your loved one will not be doing something special for you.

However, I know that many of you will do or have done some type of memorializing of your loved one this time of year. Maybe you will decorate your home or their grave in their memory; placing pretty flowers or balloons around the area to celebrate with them. Maybe you will plant a flower or bush in their memory. Perhaps you prepared Valentine cards with your loved one’s children for school or made something special to give to someone in their honor and memory. Maybe you will play that special song that they loved and let it sink into your heart with a renewed realization of how much you loved them and how much they loved you as well. It’s okay to be sad too and not do anything, but maybe it will help if you do.

In whatever way you remember your loved one, I hope that you will find the spring moment in the memory you created. That by remembering them, you realized that you have lived another day, or year, without them and yet, you were able to find it within yourself to plan something; there’s always hope that each holiday and year will be a little less difficult for you. It’s okay to feel “better” this month or this year; it isn’t betraying your loved one to enjoy yourself and remember them with a smile of love.

They will always remain in your heart and will live on in you.

Joan



Remembering Those We Have Loved and Lost

(January through June)

Tyra Perry	1/2/1986	Alejandro Garcia	4/23/2012
Kip Mackey	1/3/2009	May Valero	4/28/2012
David Gutierrez	1/8/2012	Naomi Trujillo	4/28/2012
Cameron Weaver	1/14/2013	Isaiah Ithurria	5/4/2012
Gabino Venegas	1/14/1998	Joshua Apodaca	5/6/2007
Christopher Crawford	1/18/04	Antoinette Aguilar	5/8/2000
Rafael Serra	1/29/2012	Mike Herrera	5/13/2007
Robert Pacheco	2/1/2007	Carolyn Sanchez	5/16/2005
Starr Olsen	2/1/2013	Christopher Hanson	6/25/2005
Michelle Valdez	2/2/2009	George Orosco	5/20/2008
Baby Valdez	2/2/2009	Matthew Trujillo	5/26/2011
Matthew Hernandez	2/27/2013	Kevin Shirley	5/29/1999
Joshua Bean	3/2/2007	Ian Fraser	6/21/2012
Crystal Vazquez	3/13/2013	Michael Moore	6/15/2013
Cecilia Velesquez	3/21/1998	Travis Miller	6/27/2001
Brandon Terry	3/31/2012	Robert Rocha	6/28/1994
Melissa Romero	4/15/2006	Jesse Garcia	??/??/2011
Joseph Lucero	4/15/2011	Mike Mustain	
Amanda Wiley	4/19/2012		
Alfonso Garcia	4/232/12		

If there others who need to be placed on this list or if the information listed is incorrect, please call 243-2222 and we will correct your loved one's information. Thanks!

It's Okay; Valentine's Day Will Never Be the Same

Red Hearts, lace doilies, glue everywhere and a little glitter;

Memories of days gone by.

Hugs, cakes, Valentine's Day Cards and calls that said "I love you;"

Memories of days gone by.

Time passes sometimes with a blink of an eye and sometimes it moves like a lazy brook in the sun, but each year meant a big day on the way;

Memories of days gone by.

Now you are gone, the day still comes; I remember you with love and live on in all of those

Memories of days gone by. Anonymous

The Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death offers you some suggestions for Valentine's Day by Mary Toulsey:

- [If you're a writer, write](#). It could be an article, an anecdote, a story, a poem, a song, a letter, an obituary or a eulogy. If you don't want to write for someone else, keep a private journal and write about your feelings as you journey through your grief.
- Buy a very special candle, decorate it and light it in honor of your loved one.
- Purchase a book - perhaps a children's book - on coping with the loss of a loved one, and donate it to your local library or school. Ask the librarian to place a label inside the front cover inscribed "In memory of [your loved one's name]."
- Plant a tree, bush, shrub, garden or flower bed as a permanent growing memorial to your beloved. Mark the site with a memorial plaque, marker, bench or statue.
- Memorialize your beloved in cyberspace by lighting a virtual candle at [Light a Candle Online](#).
- Write a special note, letter, poem, wish or prayer to your beloved, go outside, attach the paper to a balloon and let it go - (You can get LED lights that are very small that you can put in a balloon when you release it; it's lovely to watch as it floats heavenward, don't release anything that uses fire) or place it in a fireproof vessel and burn it, and watch the smoke rise heavenward
- If you are harboring bad feelings or regrets, gather symbols to represent those hurtful or painful situations, events, or feelings from your past, place them in a container and hold a private burial or burning ceremony, saying goodbye and releasing them as you do so.
- Ask relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbors to gather their contributions, and put together a scrapbook or box of memories containing mementoes, letters and photographs of your loved one.
- Celebrate the life of your loved one by continuing favorite traditions or eating favorite foods.
- **Make contact with others who share a similar loss; join a support group.**
(Added by Joan Shirley)

Resource Center groups are on the 2nd Tuesday (1-3pm) and the 3rd Wednesday in ABQ office (6-8pm.) and the last Wednesday in Los Lunas and the last Thursday in Rio Rancho both (6-8pm.) I hope to see you there!