



January 2016 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another and as the
Victim Advocate for the Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death

BRAVERY

As we begin a new year, I want you to know that the bravest, most courageous thing you have ever done is to continue living your life after being victimized when all you really wanted to do was give up and die!

This month, we are going to talk about being brave, acting courageously in the facing of our unknown and difficult futures without the person/s that we love who have been taken from us by violence, undetermined death or have been taken from us by an attempted murder. Let's look at definitions;

Brave: *possessing or exhibiting courage or courageous endurance; to meet or face courageously to defy, challenge or dare.*

Courage: *the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face or endure difficulty, danger or pain, etc., even with fear.*

Do you see yourself in either of these definitions?

Well, if you don't; you should!

A statement to me from a friend: *"You are amazing; how do you do it day in and day out knowing that the life you had planned for your entire family has been devastated? Where do you find the strength and courage to go on now? How do you live knowing that Kevin's killer is free? I have no idea how you get out of bed every day and go on? I don't know that I would have the fortitude to go on with my life and make it into something new when all I wanted was the way it used to be; you are indeed the bravest person I know."*

"I am not amazing, brave nor courageous" was my answer - and yet, in a way, I am all of those things and so are you!

*We are getting up each day **living**, in some frame of mind or another, **living** within a nightmare that we can neither escape nor dismiss in our dreams or in our daily living. We are in a cage of sorts that feels as if nobody will ever open the door and let us leave; we long to be free and able to live our lives outside of the bars. We always crave for things to be as they were; it's the desire for the "normal" lives that we used to enjoy. Most sadly, those lives are now impossible for all of us; someone has taken them away. However, we are living, either within the nightmare or moving further away from the nightmare, you know where you are, and we are continuing our lives despite the fear of moving forward and feeling like we are "leaving our loved ones behind." Sometimes, courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying "I will try again tomorrow." **We are truly Amazing!***

There is a song called “BRAVE” by Josh Groban, which we heard played at our Snowflake Memorial in December, which was a wonderful evening of sharing and remembering our loved ones, which goes... *“Wake up, wake up, the sun cannot wait for long. Reach out; Reach out, before it fades away. You will find the warmth when you surrender, smile into the fear and let it play. You wanna run away, run away, and you say that it can’t be so. You wanna look away, look away but you stay ‘cause it’s all so close. When you stand up and hold out your hand in the face of what I don’t understand; my reason to be brave.”* (Find it on YouTube)

Josh has not lost anyone to violence, but I think that he “hits the nail right on the head” - every day, we stand up and hold out our hands in the face of what we don’t understand and we are brave. Another line says *“you can’t hide forever from the thunder, look into the storm and feel the rain.”* This is a place you and I live every day. We face the storm and often endure the rain of public opinion, juries who can’t understand, investigators who can’t move forward without new information, DA’s who can’t or won’t move forward with our cases, perpetrators who laugh at the criminal justice system, judges whose hands are often tied by laws that make it hard to sentence perpetrators effectively within a system difficult to understand and that doesn’t recognize our rights to be as essential as those of the accused.

Wow; we really are Brave, Courageous and Amazing!

The definition of courage says *“to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc., without fear.* But a very wise and courageous man, Nelson Mandela, points out a very important part of being brave: *“I have learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”*

So, not only are we brave and courageous in our abilities to live with our victimization; we are conquerors! For indeed, we have triumphed over fear and moved forward even though we are afraid of what lies ahead. So much seems to hold us captive during our striving forward to redefine our lives and finding justice for either ourselves or our loved ones but, none the less; we keep striving to find answers and justice. We continue to go day in and day out without answers, without guarantees of justice, where perpetrators go free and in a life often filled with unspeakable pain. Yet, we do go on; marching forward with expectation even when there seems to be no evidence of things getting any better. We are Brave, Strong, Courageous and even when we want to give up; we keep getting up and moving forward. We are Conquerors!

We must remember that as we move forward that there are many ways to remember our loved ones, ways to give meaning to their lives and that we are never alone even when we feel that the sun will never come out again in our lives. Remember that Pat and I are here whenever you might need us by email, text, website, newsletter or phone for help with answers or just to “make sure that I am doing this right.” We can help you fill out your CVRC reparation application. Our support groups in ABQ, Los Lunas and Rio Rancho have fellow journeyers who can learn from you as much as you can learn from them; it’s finding fellow companions for the long road ahead as well as sharing what makes it more bearable to keep walking. It will take a while, but I know that it will happen; it has for me and for many of your fellow survivors.

All our best, Joan

Take heart; you are brave!

Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death Support Group Meetings

February 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Notes:
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Feb. 14 Valentines Day Feb. 15 Presidents Day
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Feb. 9 ABQ afternoon support group Atrium Office ABQ 1-3pm
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Feb. 17 ABQ evening support group Atrium Office ABQ 6-8pm
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Feb. 24 Los Lunas evening support group 3445 Lambros LP Los Lunas 6-8pm
28	29						Feb. 25 Rio Rancho evening support group 800 Polaris Blvd. Rio Rancho 6-8

March 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Notes:
		1	2	3	4	5	Mar. 27 Easter Mar. 8 ABQ afternoon support group Atrium Office ABQ 1-3pm
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Mar. 16 ABQ evening support group Atrium Office ABQ 6-8pm
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Mar. 30 Los Lunas evening support group 3445 Lambros Lp Los Lunas 6-8pm
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	Mar. 31 Rio Rancho evening support group 800 Polaris Blvd Rio Rancho 6-8pm
27	28	29	30	31			

April 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Notes:
					1	2	Apr. 1 April Fools Day Apr. 5 ABQ afternoon support group Atrium Office ABQ 1-3pm
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Apr. 13 ABQ evening support group Atrium Office ABQ 6-8pm
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Apr. 27 Los Lunas evening support group 3445 Lambros Lp Los Lunas 6-8pm
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Apr. 28 Rio Rancho evening support group 800 Polaris Blvd Rio Rancho 6-8pm
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	