



A July 2014 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another.

## Victim Advocate - Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death

***This month, we are going to be talking about the “Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda and If onlys” that have hounded me for years, and I suspect have hounded you as well; and how they fit into our lives after the loss of our loved one/s or after an attempted murder. Wishing things to be different is an important part of grieving but we need not wallow in how things might have been if we hadn’t become victims of murder, attempted murder or assault.***

*I don’t know about you, but I want to go back in time and stop what happened to Kevin and our family in May 1999; I bet you’ve wished the same for yourself, your loved one/s and your family. “If only” I could go back in time and save Kevin; heck, I’d make sure that he’d never leave the house ever again to make darn sure that he was safe and not in danger. I would watch him “like a hawk,” pay much closer attention to his life and his friends and I’d be a “super parent;” I would be aware of everything and I wouldn’t allow this to have happened in the first place. As much as I can wish for this now, it was unrealistic then and it still is; it’s just an “if only” and my wish for things to be different. I thought that I had a handle on Kevin’s life and mine; at least I “shoulda” had control anyway. Does this sound familiar to you?*

*How many days, have I, or you, beat ourselves up by thinking: How would things be different if only I had....There had to be something that I should have done to change what happened...and I should have seen what needed to be done to stop this from happening to me or my loved one in the first place? Or the “if onlys”... If only I had been a better parent, spouse, sibling, relative, person; this wouldn’t have happened... If only I had stopped them from going, if only I had been paying more attention, if only I had realized the danger, if only I had done it or had gone for them, if only they hadn’t been there at that time, if only I had been able to get them the help that they needed; then they’d still be alive today and I wouldn’t be a victim.*

*It is a natural part of grief to find blame in ourselves for what we think we “coulda, woulda or shoulda” have done differently. We can blame ourselves brutally and guilt can break us apart if we take up residence in this area of the grief process for very long. We must visit this space, I still do sometimes, but realize that in order to live; we must push on. Eventually, we will finally realize that there was probably nothing that we “coulda, woulda or shoulda” have done differently. At the time, we could only do what we did, with the situation we were in, with the knowledge we had, to save them or to keep this from happening to us...we are only human and only able to do just so much sometimes. After coming to this realization, we can*

*accept our imagined and real weaknesses, helplessness, and failures. Simply put, that's called working towards resolution. It can be a frightening, humbling experience, but it can also liberate us from the "coulda, woulda, shouldas." Once we have gone through this process many times over, we will find a new life, we will keep working towards it, and we will do our very best to live our lives well. What would your murdered love one want you to do with your life? I know Kevin would never have wanted me to continually blame myself for his death. He loved life and because he did; he would want me to love my different life now.*

*I think that the hardest question for me is: If Kevin were here today, what would Kevin be like; what would he be doing and how could he be changing the world right now? Deeply inside, I wish I could see this and not have to wonder about it; my future through Kevin is gone. There will be no weddings, no grandchildren, and no male in our family to pass on the Shirley name. Kevin's friends have all gotten married and have had children. I had a dream where one of his friends was getting married and as the groomsmen came to stand by the minister; one of the guys was carrying a picture cutout, like those big life-size ones of movie stars, of Kevin and he set Kevin's cutout next to the groom. I kept saying to my husband, "Don't you think that's wrong?" Incredibly, nobody else noticed that it wasn't Kevin and I was the only one who was freaking out. Nobody notices that I am looking around frantically to see their faces. When the wedding was over, the maid of honor came over and picked up Kevin's cutout and walked it down the aisle. He was in all of the pictures... If only he'd been in those pictures for real...*

*The couple of months ago on the TODAY SHOW, they had a story about 4 young men who had been paralyzed from the waist down who were in an amazing experiment. Researchers had implanted electrodes into their spines and they were finding that the spinal messages could be overridden to pass over the damage in an area to tell the brain to move their legs once again. None of them were walking YET, but they were able to move their legs easily and were learning to stand on their own once again. Matt Hunt, who was killed with Kevin, had been paralyzed in car accident just months before he was murdered and he had told us that "one day, they will learn to override the damage in my spine and I will walk again; I just know I will walk again!" If only he had not been killed, maybe he might have walked successfully in time... His parents had just bought him a specialized car the day that he was killed that would have given him freedom, even paralyzed as he was, to go to college to become a lawyer; another hope and dream taken away by violence. If only someone could implant a device in our hearts that override the pain so we can walk pain free once again.*

*Now, I know that each of you, whether a survivor of homicide or an attempted homicide, have had many kinds of dreams like these taken from you. It just reinforces what a great loss you have experienced that has stolen many of life's happiest experiences from you and your loved one. Yes, it is horribly unfair, and yes, it is okay to be extremely sad and livid over your losses. However, again, like the "woulda, coulda, shouldas," it is a natural part of grieving, but*

*neither is this a place to take up residence. We must move forward, realizing that our future, as well as our past, have been taken from us and we must try to move forward.*

*You know that I am a great believer in counseling, peer groups and seeking help because I have seen the benefit of them in so many survivors that I have had the pleasure to know. We can push all of these thoughts, wishes and needs down to where they can feel buried by denial or pride, but in the end, they are real and they will never go away completely without dealing with them in some way. Left unresolved, they can take away our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. If you are finding that these grieving issues, any part of the criminal justice system or your victim rights are hard to understand or eating at you, give me or Pat a call. I can assure you that you are not being silly or that you are too weak to handle these things alone. What can help is having supporters and advocates helping you negotiate the many losses and issues you are dealing with personally and within the criminal justice system. Pat and I are here to walk beside you down this path; you need not walk all by yourself.*

*Joan*

**I Promise**

**© Bailey Fitch**

**I promise to carry on your contagious smile.**

**The same one that would light up a room the minute you walked in.**

**I promise to laugh and never take myself too seriously.**

**I promise to love harder and forgive faster.**

**I promise to be content, in every sense of the word.**

**To be thankful for the air in my lungs,**

**and the nineteen years I was blessed to have with you.**

**I promise to try and have as big a heart as you did. To be selfless.**

**To know what I have, and know what I can give to others who are not as fortunate.**

**I promise to grieve that absence of your physical being for only a moment.**

**And then I promise to set you free.**

**I promise to never give up on others, even when I'm ready to give up on myself.**

**I promise to be a friend and a mentor as you were.**

**To be a helping hand, a shoulder to cry on or a set of ears to simply listen...**

**And I can promise you this...**

**I can promise to open my heart to you when I fall in love and when I fall apart.**

**When I become a Mrs. and when I become a mother.**

**I promise to let you hear every giggle and feel every hug.**

**To know every heartache, and let you be there for every triumphant moment...**

**The most important promise I can make, despite all my failures and all my losses.**

**A promise that carries the equivalence of all the rest combined is this...**

**I promise to make you proud. With all that I am,**

**I love you.**

## *In memory of those we have loved and lost*

Kerry Lewis	7/1/2009		Adrian Orlando Lujan	9/16/1998
Marc Herrera	7/1/2012		Sharon Skidgel Family	9/17/1979
Nick Nellos	7/3/2002		Owen Chavez	9/17/2013
Andrew Acque	7/4/1997		Teresa Reyes	9/18/2013
Kevin Moomey	7/4/2004		J R Lee	9/26/2003
Teri Benally	7/7/2009		Dominic Smith	10/1/2009
Tina Vigil	7/8/2013		Samuel Pauly	10/6/2007
Shirley Pacheco	7/9/2011		Jacob Najera	10/7/2007
Kerry Lewis	7/10/2009		Ashley Martinez	10/13/2012
LeAnne Martinez	7/14/2002		Sonny Jim	10/23/2009
Kaitlyn Arquette	7/16/1989		Jose Holguin	10/29/1999
George and Elma Rigel	7/20/1986		Nancy Heacock	11/2/2012
John Cole	7/21/2001		Gary House Family	11/9/1981
Robert Carlstedt	7/25/2002		Gilberto Gonzales	11/17/2008
Cassandra Dichiaro	7/26/1996		Eric Martinez	11/28/1998
Julius Sanchez	7/28/1998		Dominic Smith	12/1/2009
Keith Miller	8/7/2013		Trinity Rains	12/1/2009
Andre Davis	8/17/2011		Aaron Roybal	12/5/2012
Robert Buckner	8/21/2011		Gino Valdez	12/10/2012
Amy and Mike Mustain	8/14/2010		Dawn Perez	12/11/1994
Joseph Threadgill	8/27/2010		Marvin Thomas	12/9/2011
Wesley and Amanda Hobbs	9/7/2013		Julian Washington	12/19/2009
Daniel Perez	9/10/2013		Danny Herrera	12/28/2011

*If there is a person that you want remembered or should be on this listing, or errors, please give Joan or Pat a call and we will add their name or make corrections; please forgive us if we have omitted your loved one by mistake. 505-243-2222 or 1-855-430-2232*

### **Resource Center support groups for July:**

**Albuquerque: July 8 1-3pm & July 16 6-8pm** 10701 Lomas NE, Suite 115

**Los Lunas: July 30 6-8pm** Village of Los Lunas Wellness Center at Heritage Park  
3445 Lambros Loop NE

**Rio Rancho: July 31 6-8pm** Star Heights Community Center library  
800 Polaris Blvd. SE

**Feel free to attend any group - Call for more information on groups  
505-243-2222 or 1-855-430-2232**