



An October 2014 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another, and from The Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death

*This month, we are going to be talking about “Was it a suicide, an accident, or was it murder?” For those who have unanswered questions as to the nature of their loved one’s death, and who want and need a proper determination of that death so that their loved one did not die in vain; this is for you especially.*

*There are many of you out there who totally understand what I am talking about in this newsletter, you understand because you are living in a personal hell that others are not readily helping you to escape. You probably feel that the world you live in has covered its ears, no longer wanting to hear your cries for resolution so that you can find relief. I was lucky enough to have a clear answer in Kevin’s death; someone murdered him. I cannot imagine how more difficult our situation might have been had the Office of the Medical Investigators’ (OMI) cause of death had been ruled a suicide, accident or undetermined; meaning there wasn’t enough evidence to prove otherwise or witnesses willing to come forth with new information that would have changed that determination. OMI does it’s very best to determine the true cause and manner of death and they must rely on the evidence that the body possesses. It was difficult enough for my family to wait 7.5 years for an arrest, but what if our detectives had never even thought to investigate any further because Kevin’s cause of death was considered undetermined or worse, a closed case due to it being ruled a suicide. My heart goes out to those of you who are desperately searching for information and witnesses to find answers and resolution in your loved one’s death. In the meantime, Pat and I are here to listen and care but you must remember to take care of yourself while you search and wait for those answers.*

*Just recently, I spent time in a preliminary hearing with one of our families whose son was killed by his wife. When the officers came to the house, upon questioning his wife, she claimed that her husband forced her to shoot him (an assisted suicide). The initial officers thought that it sounded like it needed more investigation, but others in command chose to believe the wife and therefore, the matter was not investigated as a homicide. Months later, this woman admitted to a friend that she had actually shot her husband and it didn’t sound like assisted suicide. Fortunately, this friend was willing tell the authorities what he had been told. The investigators finally arrested the wife on an open charge of murder. However, after several tries to charge this woman with 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder had failed, this prosecutor and the family persisted. At this rare preliminary hearing, she was finally charged and indicted with a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder charge within the court’s charges. This family and his friends never believed this woman’s story of forced assisted suicide; it just didn’t ring true for them. Now, they have a chance to see justice, whatever that may look like, down the road for their son.*

*I spoke with another mom who personally found her son dying; OMI, with an autopsy, determined that he died from an accidental drug overdose. This mom knows that her son did not do drugs. He had intended to meet up with her later in the day but at the time of his death, he had been with a couple of men who did use injectable drugs. This mom strongly believes that her son was injected with drugs by these two people. She spends all of her time trying to find people who will give a statement to the police to prove what she believes to be true. The potential witnesses are being threatened; they are too afraid to tell what they know. Law enforcement cannot make an arrest without willing witnesses with reliable information but they are still trying to solve this case. The waiting is agonizing for this mom as well as for many of you; it's devastating to your mental, physical and emotional health. This mom needs answers so that her son did not die in vain; his killers can't get away with murder. Many of you are still waiting for the same thing in your loved ones murder case.*

*Many years ago, I worked with a family whose son was killed in northern NM. Their son's cause of death was listed as an "accident." Their family worked tirelessly to find out more information about what happened before this "accident" occurred. They found that there was credible information, but, no willing witnesses to prove that this was a murder. It took years but in the end, it was declared to be an undetermined death - not enough evidence to prove that it was an accident and or a homicide. Their investigator did not do any further investigation to prove that it was a murder. Now, many years later, they still want and need answers to why nobody was ever arrested or questioned any further.*

*We work with a grandmother whose grandson supposedly killed himself at a friend's home. This friend is in law enforcement and this grandma feels that he knows more than he is telling. Personally, this grandmother has gone between believing that her grandson did indeed die by suicide and then back to her gut feeling that someone killed him; it's so hard for her to know what is true. She and his family may spend the rest of their lives with unanswered questions, but never giving up hope that one day, someone will answer those questions.*

*Lastly, we have a family where the wife told the police that her husband shot himself to death; a suicide. Unfortunately, there are many unanswered questions in this death that have left his mother believing that he was murdered. There were many answers that led the police to believe that this was probably a suicide, but in this mom's heart, that does not ring true with what he knows of her son. Her son is buried now but she has this overwhelming desire to have his body exhumed for a private autopsy to be done so that her questions can be answered. None of these families saw any of the typical warning signs of suicide in their loved ones nor were there behaviors that would have helped them understand why it's a suicide. None of these people left behind suicide notes, although, the majority of suicides don't leave behind a note. According to Dr. A. Leenaars, a Canadian researcher who has studied suicide for many years revealed that only 10%-35% of those dying by suicide left behind a suicide note.*

*There are many other cases of families who do not have firm evidence that can lead them to a more thorough investigation and answers to their agonizing questions about their loved ones death. We all wait for that evidence to surface that will prove that determined suicides or undetermined deaths are really murders. For those of you who are still searching for answers in your loved one's death; I hope that in time, there will be answers and justice to rescue you from your uncertainty.*

*To all of you, Pat and I pledge our support and assistance to you and your family regardless of what the final answers may prove or not prove; if you need us, please give us a call. I hope that this newsletter has given you hope as you are dealing with a loved one's death to keep searching for answers and given you insights into ways others have dealt with theirs. However, even with your and your detective's best efforts, your loved one's death could remain unsolved. Pat and I are here to walk along side you wherever your journey may lead.*

*Joan*

### **Poetry for the Grieving**

***"There is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."***

by A.A. Milne (Alan Alexander Milne was an English author, best known for his books about Winnie-the-Pooh)

***"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to."***

by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and John Kessler (Kübler-Ross wrote the five stages of grief and John Kessler is a grief expert)

In the event you must accept suicide for your loved one's death, here is information from the Albuquerque Survivors of Suicide group.

Marion 890-4464 Linda and Al 792-7461 Andrea 565-0308

Support groups in Albuquerque led by Al and Linda Vigil:

\*2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month 4-5:30 pm

St Luke Lutheran Church 9100 Menaul Blvd. NE [www.sosabq.org](http://www.sosabq.org)

\*1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month

Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church

1801 Montano Rd. NW [www.sharingnhealing.org](http://www.sharingnhealing.org) Outside of ABQ: [www.survivorsofsuicide.com](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com)

## **Opportunities for grieving families this fall and winter**

**Please put these dates on your calendar NOW!**

***Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death's yearly victim snowflake memorial  
Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm at our Lomas office***

*Please come for food, support by other murder victims' families and your loved one will  
be remembered that evening*

*(More info in our November newsletter)*

### ***Compassionate Friends Children's Memorial Service***

*(A support group for grieving family members of children who have died at any age to any cause)*

***December 14<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm at the Center for Spiritual Living 2801 Louisiana NE***

*Come for cookies, hot chocolate and to have your child remembered that evening*

*(More info in our November newsletter)*

### **Another Community Opportunity:**

***First off, let me tell you that The Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death has nothing to do with the study below but we were asked to pass on the information for Julie Staples to elicit volunteers for her study.***

*Participants are needed for a research study on an integrative trauma recovery program in NM  
performed by Julie K. Staples, Ph.D and Georgetown University*

*You may be eligible if you are at least 18 years old, have experienced a traumatic event, and are bothered by some of the following symptoms: Sleep problems, problems with anger or irritability, concentration problems, jumpiness, feeling alert or on guard, nightmares or memories of the event, avoidance of reminders of the event or trouble experiencing positive feelings.*

*This program consists of cognitive behavioral group therapy and yoga classes. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of this program on trauma symptoms and sleep quality. If you would like further information, please contact Daniel Mintie, LISW at [www.integrative-trauma-recovery.com](http://www.integrative-trauma-recovery.com) or 312 Wayne Rd. NW Los Ranchos de Albuquerque NM 87113 or 505-792-4519 or email: [dmintie@gmail.com](mailto:dmintie@gmail.com). You may also contact Georgetown University Institutional Review Board at [irboard@georgetown.edu](mailto:irboard@georgetown.edu) or 202-687-1506.*