

April, 2006

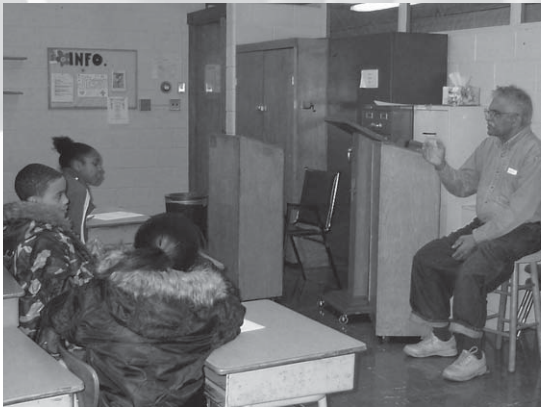
A publication for
and about St. John
Open Arms Grieving
Children's program

COMFORTER

(helping families embrace life again)

Retired From Business, But Not Life

He's like the grandpa some of us had and some of us wish we had. He's committed, gentle, compassionate, and a good listener.



His honest desire to help the needs of our grieving children is a true gift. I'm writing about Mr. Ben Collins.

He's retired from the business world, but not from life. Ben volunteers with Open Arms grief support program for children at our west location on Monday evenings. We love him. The kids love him and their parents love him.

When we first started Open Arms eight years ago, Mr. Collins was there to give his time. After three years, he took a leave of absence to become more involved with his church. This summer he decided to come back and help us again. As the group facilitator for our 10 to 12 year olds, Ben provides an environment of care and concern

that allows them to talk freely about their loss(es).

Grieving children can benefit from men who understand that grieving is a natural process that we all experience at some point in our lives. When children see men accept that grieving is okay-that feelings are okay and can be handled in a way that hurts no one-then they can begin to process their hurt and pain in a more health way. This is what Mr. Collins brings to the westside program. Ben also brings a great deal of wisdom to the staff along with a lot of joy.

I know there are more men like Benjamin Collins who can serve our families at the westside location. If you think you would like to serve our families as Mr. Collins is doing, give us a call. Or maybe you know of children who need to learn to grieve in a positive, safe environment with someone like Ben in their lives. Again, contact us at 313-921-7983.

Our westside grief support groups meets on Monday evenings at St. Thomas Aquinas Church at Evergreen and Ford Roads just on the border of Detroit and Dearborn. We also meet on Thursday evenings on the east side of Detroit in the Warren Conner Development Coalition Building. **RM**



Inside This Issue

- Good Grief Charlie Brown!
- Homicide survivors get help
- Grief and the Holidays
- Has Open Arms changed your life?
- What can you do?
- Calendar of Events

REAL MEDICINE™

Change Is Inevitable

By: Karen Gray-Sheffield, Program Director

Almost seven years ago, when I became Program Manager of Open Arms I had no idea how much it would change my life, my mission and my personal ministry. Although I had a great deal of experience working with children and families (in the trenches as they say), I had never worked with a program specifically for grieving children. It proved to be one of the most fulfilling positions I have ever taken on. Having worked now with thousands of children and numerous families, I can see the tremendous impact this program has had on the lives we touched through grief support and counseling.

Here I am, almost seven years later, finding myself on a road less traveled again, as I accept the role and responsibilities of Executive Director of the Infant Mortality Program. Even though this will mean additional responsibilities for me (I'll be dividing my time equally between these two wonderful programs) I must say that even though I enjoy the challenge of helping families cope with the death of a loved one, the prospect of saving lives in our communities is much easier to embrace. I can now say that I will be helping families from birth to death. My many years of community service have taught me one important lesson. I can't do this alone. So, I welcome and will continue to depend upon the dedicated staff of both of these programs as well as the many wonderful mentors, volunteers, friends, and financial sponsors who amaze me every year by their commitment to these very important programs. **RM**

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

EDITOR: MAUREEN McWALTERS
313-921-7983

PHOTOGRAPHY: KARLEST FORD

DESIGN: DIANE APFEL



Open Arms
11148 Harper Avenue
Detroit, MI 48213

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
ST. JOHN HEALTH



Volunteer Training
May 10, 11 & 13, 2006
Please call 313-921-7983
to preregister.

REAL MEDICINE™

Good Grief Charlie Brown! That Event Was Great!



Tish and Bradon Ross, mother and son participants from the program.

Yes, Charlie Brown was there in spirit last October at the 7th Annual Good Grief Fundraiser and Award Reception at the Roostertail. That was because the museum dedicated to Charles M. Schulz' artwork (the creator of Charlie Brown) sent us a few of their t-shirts to use in our silent auction.

Not only did we sense Charlie Brown there, families that have received help over the last year in the Open Arms program, stood at the podium (yes, whole families) to share how their lives had changed. They were so open and authentic as they shared both their grief and the new hope they are experiencing through Open Arms. Everyone was touched by what they heard.



Dina Jones of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan, Good Grief's event chair.

It was our biggest, most successful fundraiser so far—thanks to our wonderful sponsors, donors, volunteers and families that shared their stories. We really can't say enough about these people that give of their time, their hearts and their money to help grieving families in Detroit. We want to acknowledge all of the following for their part in making the 7th Annual Good Grief event so successful.

The Event Chair:

- Diana Jones, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan

Honorary Co-Chairs included:

- Donna Burke, SBC
- Juliette Okiet-Epoh, MGM Grand Casino
- Donna Murray Badgett, Charter One Bank
- Brenda Pye, O. H. Pye III Funeral Home
- Jimmy Settles, UAW Region 1A

Mistress of Ceremonies:

- Rhonda Walker, WDIV, Channel 4

Our Key Corporate Sponsors:

- General Motors
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan
- Comerica
- DaimlerChrysler
- Michigan Food and Beverage
- UAW-1A

Our Key Individual Donor was:

- Vernice Davis Anthony

Table Sponsors included:

- Century 21 Town & Country
- Friends of Vienna Café
- GDAHC
- Greektown Casino
- HAP
- Henry Ford Health System
- Matrix Human Services
- MGM Grand
- New Detroit
- Northeast Guidance Center
- Providence Hospital
- St. John Community Health
- UAW/Daimler Chrysler
- WCCCD
- Zonta Club II of Detroit

Individual Donors, Silent Auction Shoppers & Advertisers

- Sari Abromovich
- Calantha Asare
- Concha Azofife
- Alfreda Baker
- Scott Benson
- Michael Breen
- Julia Breidenstein
- Geneva Brown
- Wilma Caldwell
- Brenda Chalmers
- Jackie DeBeau
- Meg Delor
- Maggie DeSantis
- Barbara Douglas
- Shirley Edmonds
- Russell Ethridge
- Leslie Fields
- S. Frank
- Sharlene Gage
- James Gray
- CJ Harrison
- Valerie Henderson
- Rosalee Hill
- Brian & Lea Anne Ivory
- Andrea Jackson
- Daniel H. Krichbaum
- Ellen Logan
- Charlene McLemore

- Randy McNeil
- Joe Melnick
- Kathleen Neumann
- Cynthia Pasky
- Bonita Pedrosi
- Maureen Posler
- Brenda Pye
- J. Quiring
- Dorothy Rayford
- Susan Reetz
- Dennis Rice
- Steve Roach
- L.J. Ross
- T.F. Russell
- Senator Martha G. Scott
- Sybil Scott
- Cathy Sheffield
- LaVonne Sheffield
- Gerald Smith
- Loretta Smith
- Judge Craig Strong
- Cynthia Tauieg
- Alice Thompson
- Troy Tidwell
- Rhonda Walker
- Denise Wellons Glover
- Association of Black Judges of Michigan
- Butzel Long
- Comcast Cable
- Fairlane Town Center
- James H. Cole Home for Funerals
- New Detroit, Inc.
- New Galilee Missionary Baptist Church
- O. H. Pye Funeral Home

- Just Cruises
- Karen Gray Sheffield
- Linda Clark
- Lucy's Tavern on the Hill
- Maureen McWalters
- Mexican Village Restaurant
- Mosaic Youth Theater
- Muliers Market
- Original Pancake House, Inc.
- Pat Scott Jewelers
- Reddeman Farms Golf Course
- Rev. Gwendolyn Pettway
- Rev. Horace Sheffield
- Sandi Marchi
- SBC
- The League Shop
- The Whitney Restaurant
- Tom's Oyster Bar
- Vienna Café

Floral Arrangements

- donated by:
- Conner Park Florists

Entertainment donated by:

- Busker Brown-A jazz trio
 - Bill Harrison~piano
 - Jamie Ascenzo~drums
 - Dave Hertlein~bass

Our key volunteers included:

- Sari Abromovich
- C.J. Harrison
- Carla Heath
- Kita Hughes
- Kai Johnson
- Kim Long



(L to R) Gwendolyn Pettway, Clinical Supervisor and Program Coordinator of Open Arms and Rhonda Walker, News Anchor, WDIV channel 4, Mistress of Ceremonies for Good Grief.

Silent Auction Donors included:

- Bay Valley Hotel & Resort
- Best Western
- Bruce Hills Golf Club
- Buddy's Restaurant
- Canton Leisure Services
- Charles Schulz Museum
- CJ Harrison
- Del Gallery
- Detroit Lions
- Detroit Repertory Theatre
- Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall
- Diamond Jack's River Tours
- Fox Portrait Studios
- Greektown Casino

- Charlene McLemore
- Lois Nelson-Brown
- Consuella Smith-Phillips

A great big thank you to each of you and to everyone who attended and made this such a community event. If we have missed your name in these lists, please let us know so that we can acknowledge your support. **RM**

Has Open Arms Changed Your Life?



Many of you who receive this newsletter have either been through our program or have volunteered here sometime in the last seven years. You know why this program is so important to the Metropolitan Detroit area. That's why we need you now. We want you to tell us your story. Telling others how Open Arms changed your family, or gave you more purpose in life, helps to save other lives. Stories let others know about Open Arms. Stories inspire others to get involved. Stories give hope to those who have lost all hope.

Please give Maureen a call at 313-921-7983 and tell her your story so that she can share it with others. These stories will go on our web page or in another newsletter. Your story might be told to our donors so they will know their donations are making a difference. With your permission, we can use your story to help educate others about the importance of working through grief. You will discover purpose in your loss because you share your experience with others. **RM**

REAL MEDICINE™

Homicide Survivors Get Help

You've seen the stories on TV or you have read about them in the newspaper. Maybe you have even experienced something like the following.

- A drive-by shooting or a hit and run and a child or a mother is dead
- A little boy is caught in the crossfire
- A dad gets killed at a gas station because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In 2003, 366 people were murdered in the city of Detroit. For every victim of a homicide, five to eight family members are affected by this traumatic loss. That means for every homicide at least 1,830 people suffered the long-term emotional cost of violence. These family members are called "homicide survivors". Their lives have been changed forever. Without support, they often spiral down into severe depression, fear, rage and hopelessness. Daily life is a terrible challenge. The surviving children react with fear and isolation-often returning to much younger behavior. They can get aggressive. They have difficulty sleeping, are afraid to be away from surviving family members and can't focus at school. Some find themselves repeatedly reliving the violent experience.

If you have been reading this newsletter for any length of time, you know that children who do not get the help they need with their grief and trauma, are at extreme risk of academic difficulty/failure, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide and juvenile delinquency. What you might not know is that survivors of violence often become perpetrators

of violence or remain victims throughout their lives.

That's why Open Arms has started a Homicide Survivors Support Program. Through federal funding from Victim of Crime Act* monies, we have begun a free support program for families who are coping with these traumatic losses. The survivors are getting specific individual and family counseling. This counseling prepares them for group participation. Through this program, Open Arms is also able to help homicide survivors to apply for victim compensation through the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission. These funds can help with funeral expenses, counseling and travel expenses to get to and from court. The homicide survivor counselor helps identify possible costs that would be covered and helps the family apply for these funds.

To expand the program to its full benefit we are pursuing more funds and you can help. If you want to see this program grow, you can designate your donations for the Open Arms Homicide Survivor Program. If you want to learn more about the Homicide Survivor Program, give Phyllis Kearney a call at 313-921-7983, ext. 247.

***St. John Community Health Open Arms Program receives Crime Victim Assistance Grant to begin a Homicide Survivor's Support program.**

This grant was awarded to St. John Community Health Investment Corporation by the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission, Michigan Department of Community Health in October of 2005. The grant award of \$40,000 (80% of the project) comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The Community Health Investment Corporation, through its Open Arms program, provides the required match of \$10,000. **RM**



Grief and the Holidays

Spending that first holiday season without your spouse, parent, son or daughter is so very difficult. In fact, each holiday can be hard, whether it is the 1st or the 10th. There are so many memories and emotions. Families need help and understanding during these rough days. That's why Open Arms does an annual Memorial Candlelight Service during the Holiday Season.

This last December, our Program Coordinator and Clinical Supervisor, Reverend Gwendolyn Pettway, organized our 2nd Annual Memorial Service. It was held at Conner Creek Village and was attended by both past and present participants of our program as well as community members. Chaplain Sybil Scott, a volunteer with Open Arms and staff chaplain at St. John Hospital and Medical Center, spoke about dealing with grief during the holiday, encouraging those in attendance to remember and celebrate the life of their loved one(s).

They told stories of their loss and resilience, sharing what has helped them to move forward. Hearing each other's stories was very moving. At the end of the evening, a very large circle was formed where we lit candles, one from another, naming and honoring our loved ones.

The families came away from the evening with a scented memorial candle that was used during the service. We want to thank **Coventry Candles** in Ferndale for providing the candles for the past two years.

Whether your loss is new or from some time ago, this event touches your heart and brings further healing to all involved. You are invited to attend our next Memorial Candlelight Service. This community event promotes healing in our city. **RM**



REAL MEDICINE™

Two New Faces at Open Arms

The School Outreach Team has grown and changed. Nichole Marks joined us last December and Renee Yaldeo started this February. These two women bring compassion, training and experience to their jobs (both are MSW's). They are using a team approach, doing each group together. While they only work three days a week, they are serving children in seven schools right now. Both Nichole and Renee feel this is such a great job. Renee said, "It is so nice to going into the schools. We are reaching kids that wouldn't get any help with their grief otherwise. And they respond so well. In just eight short weeks they learn so much and we really build relationships. It's hard to leave these children at the end of their eight weeks." Open Arms is grateful to have Nichole and Renee on our team! Welcome! **RM**



What Can You Do At Open Arms?

There are so many opportunities to be a part of the Open Arms' family. Whatever your skill, passion or abilities-there is a place for you to come and do meaningful and fulfilling work. Everyone here is committed to meeting the needs of grieving families-whether we work with the children or their caregivers, assist in raising funds, manage the database, help get the word out, teach others about grief and loss, or help to steer this organization into the future. Each person's effort in some way helps families embrace life again.

Support Groups

Group facilitators (for children or adults) work to acknowledge and sympathize with the emotions of our participants in our evening peer groups. Facilitators help guide family members through the grief process by listening objectively and non-judgmentally. A three-part, 14 hour training is provided. Another way to support these groups is doing the greeting and security for our participants on program evenings. Greeters provide access to the parking lot and building while welcoming our families.



We also need help with food service for our evening programs. Church groups, community service organizations or individuals can all get involved.

Public Relations

All those serving in public relations promote the program, recruit volunteers and participants, and educate the community about the importance and effectiveness of Open Arms.

Members of our Community Outreach Team educate the public about the mission and value of Open Arms. They serve at events including health and job fairs, school and church activities and conferences; distributing brochures, answering questions and encouraging volunteerism and/or participation in Open Arms.

The Memorials Team visits funeral homes and distributes Open Arms materials, following up and delivering additional supplies as needed.

Website Development and maintenance are essential to the growth of our program. We need help making our website friendly, keeping it updated, helpful, educational and responsive.

The Newsletter, Photography and Media Team helps put the personal face on Open Arms, staying in touch with our supporters, volunteers, families we have served, media and the community of Metropolitan Detroit.

Fund Development

The Fund Development Team works in many areas including research and preparation of grant proposals, the planning and

implementing of open houses and fundraising events as well as networking and developing relationships with potential and existing donors.

Administrative Support

Those who work with the Special Projects Team assist with short-term projects such as trainings, one-day events, summer camp, open houses and fundraising events. Working on invitations, event brochures, mail-in registration, greeting, on-site registration, room set up and just helping people feel connected and informed about our organization are all involved in this area of service.

The Administrative Support Team is involved in a number

of general administrative tasks that help us function as a professional and responsive organization. Jobs include, but are not limited to, copying and assembling manuals, bulk mailings and



preparing curriculum materials and art projects. They also do phone follow-up with program participants and individuals who are interested in Open Arms.

Database Administration is a vital job as we work to stay in touch with our families, supporters, schools, churches and other agencies.

The "Good Grief" Library Team inventories, stocks and displays books, videos and other reading materials at each of our sites. They assist children and adults with resource selection and location. The Open Arms library is open from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Administrative work to support the library can be done on weekdays as well.

Hopefully you will see a role and a fit for you in the list above.

Come join one of our teams. Spring training is May 10, 11 & 13. Please preregister by May 3, 2006 by calling 313-921-7983, ext. 233, or e-mail us at maureen.mcwalters@stjohn.org. **RM**

Open Arms Calendar of Events

- **Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at Riverview Hospital, Wednesday, April 26th – Save the Date!**
- **Volunteer Training: May 10, 11 & 13, 2006.**
- **School Outreach Summer Cookout (end of the school year)**
- **Summer Camp: From July 3 to July 31, 2006 – Monday through Thursday. For information please call Ms. Pettway at 313-921-7983, ext. 236.**
- **The Open Arms Grief Garden is in the works.** This will be a special place where you can go to reflect and remember your loved ones. The setting is yet to be revealed to the public, but we are getting excited about it. If you and your family have participated in Open Arms and want to be involved in this project, please call Maureen McWalters at 313-921-7983 ext. 233. **RM**