

Journey

a *grief Haven* newsletter for grieving parents and those who support them

Hazing...

Team Building? Not On *Your* Life!

In Loving Memory Of Harrison Kowiak

by Lianne Kowiak, Harrison's Mom

Using the words "team building exercise" when combined with the word "hazing" is like saying, "Do you want to be part of the team? Okay, then look down the barrel of this loaded gun. C'mon, everyone else did it. They've done it for generations. You DO want to be part of the team, don't you?"

My beloved son, Harrison Kowiak, died as a result of what was supposed to be a "team building exercise" that, in actuality, was a deadly session of brutality. Harrison's

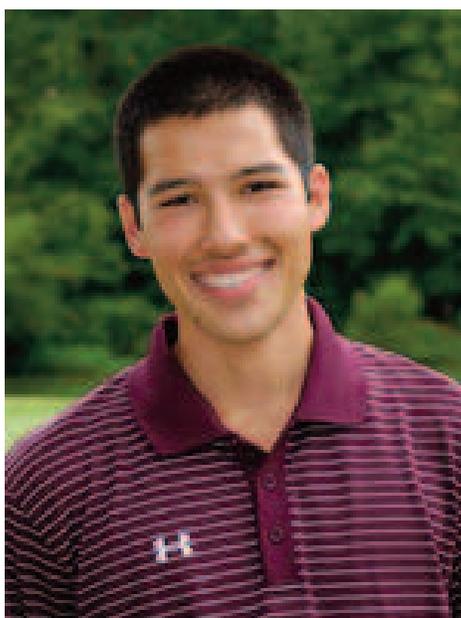
death was utterly senseless and completely avoidable. So I share my story with you, as well as what I've learned about hazing since Harrison's death, hoping that it will save lives and keep other families from having to deal with a lifetime of loss and grief. I want people to know that hazing exists, right in plain sight, and directly under the noses of school administrations.

Ritual hazing continues to be a real problem in colleges, universities, fraternities, sororities, sports teams, high schools, and even grammar schools! No age, race, or societal status is immune. Even though colleges will tell you that "officially" they do not allow hazing, it still goes on—not only behind doors, but right out in the open. We found that the "anti-hazing

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with your children, and give them

permission to report to you..."



Harrison Kowiak

I IMPORE YOU TO READ THE HAZING ARTICLE AND PASS IT ALONG TO OTHER PARENTS

I know...I say it every year, "Here come the holidays." What used to be an exciting time of planning now requires a "different" kind of planning. I hope that you will take care of yourself during these holidays and do what brings you the "least" amount of pain and the "most" amount of peace of heart.

Because the subject of hazing is so timely and crucial to every parent with a child of any age, we are imploring parents to read this comprehensive article about hazing AND asking that you pass it along to every parent you know. I knew very little of what Lianne shares in this extremely important article. That hazing actually starts in grammar school is shocking! As Lianne says, the "hazing" conversation needs to be added to the same one where parents talk to their children about drugs, alcohol, sex, and peer pressure.

Inspirational stories always give us new ideas, so I know you will be moved by Michelle's story regarding how she chose to honor her cousins. And congratulations to Cori Broberg, the winner of the 2011 Universal Studios free tickets! Debbie's and Cori's stories will guarantee a smile from ear to ear.

CHECK OUT THE SIBLING NEWSLETTER: ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO ENTER THIS YEAR'S DRAWING FOR 4 FREE UNIVERSAL STUDIOS TICKETS!

Last, please check out the website page "Events/Past Events" to see the photos and watch the video about our Friends of griefHaven fundraising event on October 8. We want to begin creating Friends of griefHaven in YOUR community!



Love and gentle hugs from all of us, Susan Whitmore, Erika's Mom

policies” of Harrison’s university and fraternity were just paper policies, probably added by their legal counsel so they were legally covered in case a hazing incident “surfaced.” Sadly, these policies were never enforced.

Unfortunately, the person subjected to the hazing is often too embarrassed or has succumbed to the ever-present peer pressure within their organization to tell anyone what is really going on—that is, IF they live to tell about it.

When choosing colleges for Harrison to attend, we were very diligent and took great care in narrowing down the list for him as where to apply. We settled on a small college, Lenoir Rhyne, in a small town, Hickory, North Carolina, and that was officially affiliated with the ELCA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

learned that “team building” was a euphemism for “hazing.” Individuals were lying to everyone just to hide the truth of what they had done to my dear son. It’s a joke that they refer to their relationships as one of “brothers.” Some brothers, huh?

It is hard to believe that this November will reflect the four-year anniversary of Harrison’s passing. He was 19 years old, just six weeks before turning 20. Harrison was an “A” student who took AP classes and graduated from high school with a 4.6 out of 4.0. He was a highly accomplished golfer and received a 75% academic scholarship, with the college golf program adding the remaining 25%. It was a “full ride” to college. Every student’s and every parent’s dream.

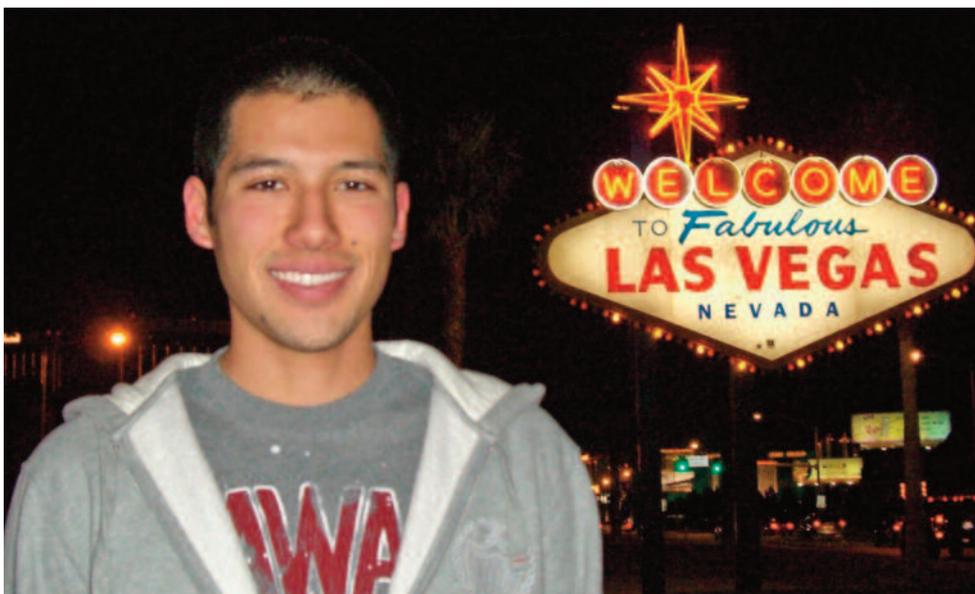
Harrison and I were very close. We spoke on the phone or texted one another almost

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I had worked my entire life to get Harrison to this point. And now this? And simply because of what his fraternity brothers thought was just another round of hazing incidents to prove that someone who had “passed the tests” was worthy enough to become one of the brothers.

There are many different types of hazing activities that are used to demean and break down the person they call the “pledge.” This is used to put the pledge “in his place.” Harrison was lured into pledging the Theta Chi fraternity by being told that he could be the next president of the chapter. He was told that former U.S. presidents were Theta Chi brothers and that becoming a brother would open doors to him for the rest of his life that otherwise would not be opened. In truth, the only door Theta Chi opened for Harrison was the door to the morgue. For us, it was the door to a lifetime of heartbreak.

The specific hazing activity that ended Harrison’s life was called “bulldogging.” Bulldogging occurs in the secrecy of the night—a cloak of darkness used by those who wish to hide their clandestine actions from others when they don’t wish anyone to know what they are doing. Harrison was told to dress in white, was blindfolded, and driven 20 miles off campus in the back of a pickup truck. There were no employees or staff from Lenoir Rhyne present. He was not told where he was going or what to expect when he got there. All he knew was that he was a pledge of Theta Chi fraternity and was doing what he was told to do by the brothers so he too could have the “privilege” of becoming a brother of Theta



Being Lutheran, we felt a sense of ease and comfort believing that the school followed high Christian ethics and had control over what occurred on its campus. Sadly, we were wrong...dead wrong.

It is every parents worst nightmare to receive that call. Mine came one November evening close to midnight. We were first told that Harrison sustained injuries after a school mixer on campus—that he and his Theta Chi fraternity brothers were tossing around a football when he slipped and hit his head on the sidewalk. Then we were told that Harrison was playing football off campus. Then it eventually evolved to, “Harrison was part of a ‘team building’ activity off campus.” None of the stories told to us by his fraternity brothers had the least shred of truth to them. We quickly

every day. He was a charismatic and handsome young man with an infectious smile. His presence was felt the minute he entered a room because he always lit up the room. He made me laugh. He introduced me to John Mayer’s music! How I miss him. I wish he could have graduated from college. I wish he had experienced the euphoric feeling of securing his first job. I wish I could have seen him marry one day. I wish...I wish...I wish....

By the time I arrived at Harrison’s side, he was already on life support. To see him like that...I just couldn’t believe it. Just the day before he was healthy, active, bigger than life, and looking forward to his future—as were we. And what a future he had to look forward to! Life was good, and



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Chi. Once at their location, though pitch black outside, Harrison was asked to run across a long field toward the difficult-to-see light of a very small flashlight. Unknown to him, there were fraternity brothers dressed in black leaping from the darkness, ambushing him and repeatedly knocking him to the ground. They tackled him over and over until finally he lost consciousness.

Knocked completely unconscious, Harrison laid there, never to awaken again. Had these students called 911 immediately, Harrison would very possibly be with us today. Instead, the brothers panicked and precious time was lost as Harrison continued to lie unconscious. His brothers brought him to the local hospital that was not a trauma center. Harrison needed to be airlifted to a trauma center, and the closest one was in Charlotte, North Carolina. Little did they know there was a helicopter landing pad near the scene of the incident! If they had only moved quickly, asked questions, and given the truthful information, things could have been much different. If they had, I would, most likely, not be writing this article.

Hazing is not just done to those who want to become a fraternity brother or sorority sister in college. It is also done to those who want to become a member of a sports team or even a club in high school, middle school, and sometimes even grammar school. Here are some examples:

- ♦ A senior who had joined a hockey team in high school had eggs thrown at him and was then run over by another hockey member’s car in a hazing incident.
- ♦ A volleyball player was found dead after

attending a team party where “rookie” players were urged to drink large amounts of alcohol and made to do degrading acts as part of a hazing ritual.

- ♦ Two supervisors were suspended without pay for getting employees to haze their co-workers by binding them with duct tape, pelting them with water balloons, hitting them, and otherwise humiliating them.

- ♦ The Ontario Hockey League team was fined and its general manager and coach suspended after four rookies were forced to crowd into a washroom on the team bus—naked and with the heat turned up—in a hazing ritual known as the “sweat box.”

- ♦ A freshman was given large quantities of alcohol in a player’s off-campus house in what had become an annual initiation ritual. He was stripped, shaved, covered with jam, eggs, and cologne, and left outside in near-freezing weather for 90 minutes!

- ♦ A slide into mud at the behest of veteran teammates during an initiation left a high-school senior paralyzed from a broken neck. The coach insisted the incident was “horseplay,” not hazing.

- ♦ A member of the school’s Lacrosse club died in a dormitory after being carried back to school following a drinking initiation in a wooded area near campus. Twelve veteran participants were given the incredibly “severe punishment” of having to perform community service for being involved in the death of their teammate. The sad part is that this initiation had been going on for years—unchecked by the school administration or the team’s coaches!

- ♦ And last, but not at all least, in a hazing called a gang “jump-in,” a rookie team

member suffered an eye injury when bashed with a bag of coins. Another member, at the same time, was pushed through a window and hospitalized with stitches.

I know hearing these stories is upsetting; yet, I have to let other parents know that this goes on so they will educate their children. Hazing is not funny or fun. Although the leaders convince the team members that it’s “team building,” it is not that at all. These activities can kill—and they often do.

The first part of November is typically what is referred to as “Hell Week.” Here are my suggestions:

Have the Hazing Conversation With Your Children

Regardless of what grade or what kind of school your child attends, PLEASE have the “hazing” conversation with them, and give them permission to report to you if they are subjected to it or know someone who is. Have the conversation again with your child before they go off to college. Since schools are all in session as of the publishing of this article, PLEASE talk to your kids about hazing now! Harrison and I spoke about his reasons for pledging a fraternity, but I was completely unaware of what that meant and the activities the pledges needed to go through to become a “brother.” Had I known, my conversation with Harrison would have been very different and perhaps he would be alive today.

Reinforce Open and Honest Communication

Reinforce open and honest communication

with your child, whether they are in elementary school, high school, or college. This will give you the opportunity to educate your child about hazing, give your child the freedom not to fear talking to you about it, and also help you and your child work together to come up with ways to react to or handle the situation if it does occur.

Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure

This is something most parents start when their children first enter school, and it should be a conversation that is discussed openly over and over again, year after year. With the issues that you discuss surrounding peer pressure, such as using drugs or breaking the law, please add hazing to that list. Give your child reasons why not to succumb to peer pressure. Give them examples of what has happened to others by putting up with hazing. Ask them if they know anyone it has happened to, and report any hazing you hear about immediately.

Be Involved

Ask someone at the college, fraternity, sorority, or school what their policies are regarding hazing. Also ask the members of the fraternity or sorority. Most likely the actual “members” of a fraternity or sorority will not tell you the truth, but, if you at least ask, you put them on notice that you know about this subject. There is a secretive push to maintain the traditions of their organization from years past. Ask the university what punitive measures are in place for disciplinary actions when hazing does occur and how they monitor it. Ask if the school has an anonymous tip line or telephone number students can confidentially call if they are being hazed or if they know of another student who is being hazed.

Know the State Laws

Educate yourself about your state’s hazing laws. In North Carolina, hazing is treated as a misdemeanor. When will tougher, more stringent laws be passed which will be a deterrent to this type of dangerous behavior—laws that make a real difference so these heinous, embedded rituals stop once and for all?

Know the School, College, or University

Understand that things are very different when dealing with a private versus a public school. There are fewer checks and balances

in private schools than there are in public schools. The state wherein the school is located monitors public school activities very closely, since state funds are used to support the school. Such is not true with a private school. Also, the activities of a public school are a matter of public record. This is not so with a private school.

It is so vitally important that all universities, public or private, have an open line of communication and strict policies to police and prevent fraternities from engaging in these activities. Stricter policies and, more importantly, strict enforcement of those policies by universities will prevent future incidents like Harrison’s. Even though the school, public or private, may “officially” have anti-hazing verbiage in its policies and procedures, it is critical to ask the schools if the rules are actually enforced. Does the school have employees who are monitoring and enforcing the hazing policies, or are the policies just ink on paper added by the university’s legal counsel to cover the school with no actual enforcement?

”With the issues that you discuss surrounding peer pressure, such as drugs or breaking the law, please add hazing to the list.”

Even though I will never think that there is something positive about losing Harrison, I am glad that he decided, when first applying for his driver’s license, to be an organ donor. Because he was a healthy young adult in 2008, he was able to donate his liver, kidneys, pancreas, heart, lungs, cornea, and tissue to five individuals who live a better life today. It is a bittersweet truth. Yet, what would give me the most solace and peace would be to know that I am raising awareness of this rarely discussed issue. If I can save even one family from losing their child or having their child maimed for life, I will then know that losing Harrison was not entirely in vain.

A child of any age should be able to attend any school and feel safe. A child should also be able to join any organization connected to that school without being subjected to infantile and dangerous activities actually designed by other students. These activities, represented as important and necessary to

become part of something supposedly so great, actually scare, humiliate, tear down, maim, or kill the one subjected to it. Just because a student “agrees” to the activity does not make it okay. They are still children, and they need to be protected when away from their parents.

Students also need to be educated on how these activities do not build up the team, do not make them a true “brother” or “sister,” and can be downright deadly. Parents, too, need to educate themselves about the realities of hazing and be on the lookout for any signs that their children are being subjected to it.

Hazing laws need to change, and the “boys will be boys” or “it’s always been done this way” mentality needs to end. Is it really worth risking another child’s life by turning a blind eye to this? Shouldn’t it be enough that one child died for the lesson to be learned? For the answers to those questions, simply ask the parents whose children died from hazing. You will hear their collective cries around the world.

Below are some excellent resources on hazing I recommend to become more familiar with this topic:

- *Preventing Hazing – How Parents, Teachers, and Coaches Can Stop the Violence, Harassment, and Humiliation*, by Susan Lipkins, Ph.D.
- www.hanknuwer.com
- www.hazingprevention.org
- www.stophazing.org

my support crew

by michelle howe

I have two amazing and beautiful children. They are my life. I cannot imagine losing either of them. Yet, I have two aunts and two uncles that have lost a child—both to cancer: Uncle Wendell, Aunt Susan, Uncle Carl, and Aunt Robin. You see, I am, besides a “Howe,” also a “Whitmore,” and I lost my beautiful cousin Erika Whitmore Godwin in 2002 to a rare sinus cancer and my amazing cousin Chris Winter Whitmore in 2012 to a brain tumor. How this happened twice in our family is a question I know will never fully be answered.

What could I say or do to be a part of their painful journeys? That is what I needed to know. I didn't want to be one of those I hear and read about who disappear just because they don't know what to say or do or because they might feel a little uncomfortable at times—I won't disappear. I gained a lot of knowledge and wisdom just by reading the griefHaven newsletter. Included in those newsletters are stories about others who did something special in honor of their loved ones. So as I thought about what I could do that would be meaningful, to honor Erika and Chris, I had an idea. That idea involved me doing my first Ironman Race.

The Ironman Race is a huge challenge. It involves three different events—swimming, biking, and running—with the collective outcome a total of 70.3 miles. I signed up for this particular race because it honors all of those people fighting cancer. That cause holds a special place in my heart because of what Erika and Chris went through.

In order to begin preparing myself for the Ironman Race, I started increasing my training a year in advance. During that training time, I had visits with Chris, and he would tell me how crazy I was to subject myself to such a challenge. That seemed so ironic to me, coming from a young man of only 18 who was going through challenges I could never imagine having to endure. Sadly, I knew in the back of my mind that there was a chance that Chris would pass away prior to my race. Nine weeks before the Ironman, Chris died. In those final weeks of training, I thought of Chris regularly as I “rode the hills,” all the while listening

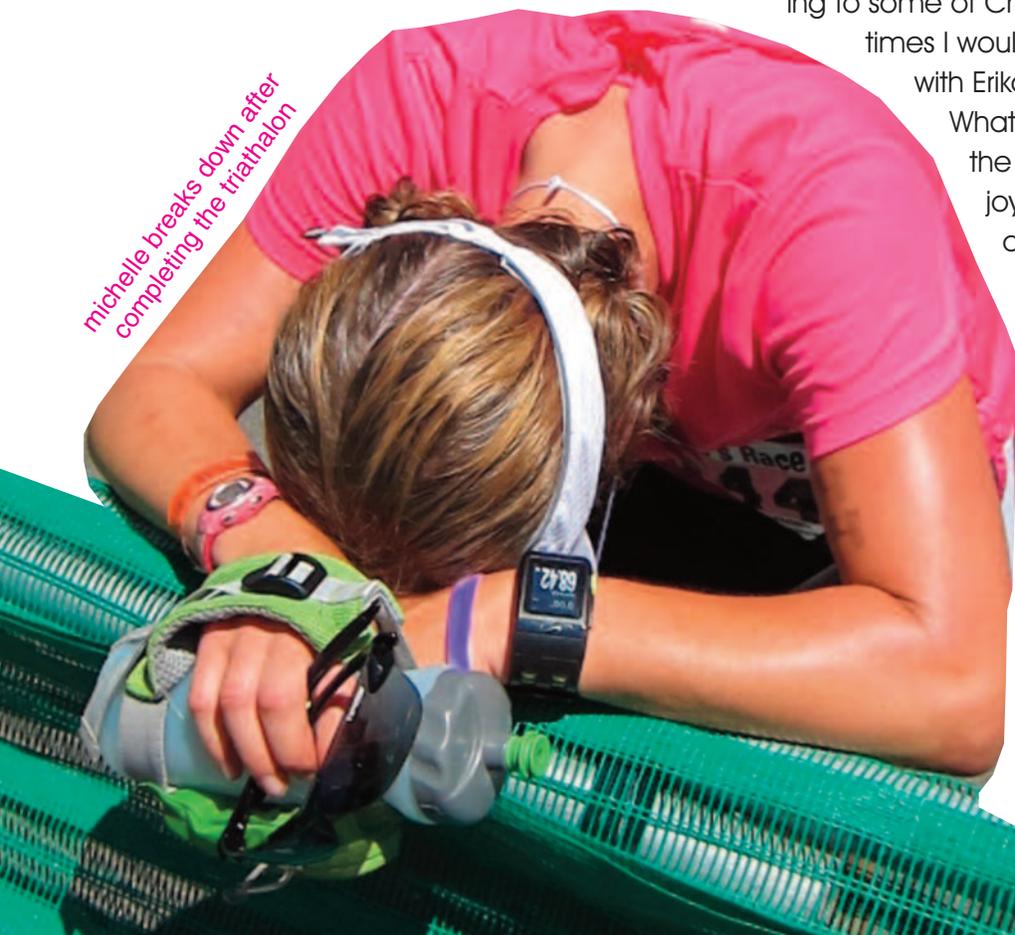
to some of Chris' favorite music on my iPod. Sometimes I would think back to conversations I had with Erika and Chris near the end of their lives.

What they reflected on and spoke about the most were those things they had enjoyed or were meaningful in their lives, and they both expressed how they felt they had given their best to the short lives they had lived—that they had lived their lives to the fullest!

As race day grew nearer, I knew it would take everything I had to finish all 70.3 miles. I decided that, by creating a way for Erika and Chris to be indelibly with me during the race, I would also be living my life to my fullest potential, just as Erika and Chris had done. So I decided I would run, swim, and bike in their memory. I HAD to finish the race for me AND for them!

Because our race numbers

michelle breaks down after completing the triathlon





“In so many places I have seen the words ‘In memory of...’ but not until I had my own sign did I feel the power of being part of remembering someone this way.”



Michelle and her children,
Daisy and Clarke

had to be written on our bodies so they were visible by all, I decided that my “support crew,” Erika and Chris, would be seen by all. After I had a friend write ‘In Memory of Erika and Chris’ on my leg, I had an overwhelming feeling come to me. In so many places I have seen the words “In memory of,” but not until I had my own sign did I feel the power of being part of remembering someone this way—as a tribute for all others to see—to let others know that we all face loss and that it is a part of our everyday lives, even on race day.

During my race, I had two incredible moments that stand out the strongest. On both of those, I knew my “support crew” was with me. The first was on my bike. As I approached a huge hill I had to climb looming in front of me, I said aloud, “Come on, Erika and Chris, I need you to get me up this hill!” I began to peddle. Pushing hard I kept thinking over and over, “They are with me; they know I want help; they are getting me there.” And it was amazing! This was a hill I had trained on for months and months and **always** struggled with; yet, on THIS day, with my support crew’s help, it was effortless! I truly felt Erika and Chris pushed me up that hill! Thanks, cousins!

The second incredible moment came during the 13.1-mile run. I am a strong runner, but this was a grueling endeavor that followed the 56-mile bike portion I had just finished. As I seemed to struggle with each step, I thought about Erika and Chris and how much they struggled to live, the journeys they took, and how determined they were. I thought about their highs and lows and reminded myself that what I was doing was nothing compared to the lessons they gave me of being strong and fighting—even when it hurt! If they could go through what they went through, I could run another step...and then another...and another until I finished.

And finish I did! I finished all 70.3 miles of that race! I did it for myself and for Erika and Chris—and I did it with their help and from my love. The ink used to write their names remained on my leg for several days following the race. At one point someone stopped me and asked about what was written on my leg. After I told them my story about love, loss, endurance, my “support team,” and all they had taught me, the person said, “Well that is about the best souvenir anyone could ask for.” And you know what? That person was right. Better than any medal or finishing time was my personal and loving “support crew.” Hey, Erika and Chris! Can’t wait until “our” next race!



Visiting My Friend After the Death of Her Son ~by Ellen Bass

Thirteen years ago she'd brought him home,
this child who'd never had a home.
Nights, she tied her wrist to his
with a satin ribbon so he could sleep,
as if she could repair the dark
when he woke alone, his blood mother
gone for a trick, a fix, the burn
of urine days-old, the bars of his crib
pulling in and out of focus.
Was it an accident? Suicide?
She can't help asking over and over,
as if she didn't know it's useless,
she has to grind the questions,
she's begun to turn the mill.
It's going to be a long haul,
I say, as if I know anything,
as if, even at times like this,
words are better than nothing.
As if I were still her lover,
I press her to me
too long, too hard, as if
her flesh would remember mine,
as if she cared, as if she had not begun
the journey that would take her away,
make her into an animal
we have no name for, as if
when she swallowed a spoonful
of the soup set before her
and said this is good
she would remember
to take another spoonful.
Her hair was combed, her t-shirt stained.
She sat on the couch working over
the story, the fight with his girlfriend,
the young policemen at the door, stiff
in their pressed blue cloth, telling her,
as if she'd believe them,
as if they hadn't gotten it wrong.

a Universal Studios day

reflections from a mother

debbie broberg, tyler's mom

As I reflect back almost five years ago to those days, weeks, months, and even years following Tyler's death, I remember the overwhelming sense of loss and longing. Even today I still feel it. Some days that longing is more intense than others, but it is never far away; always so easily and unexpectedly brought to the surface. I can't escape it, nor would I ever want to because the pain is a constant reminder of how great a love I shared with my son.

Until a person has experienced the loss of a child, they can only imagine the all-consuming grief that engulfs a parent. My father passed away two years before my son, and my husband, David, lost his father just 29 days after Tyler's death. Yet both of us agree that the loss of our fathers was swallowed up within the loss of our son. It is no wonder, then,

and loved Tyler. I knew one thing for sure: I had to go on for Cori. She still needed parents who were present, but I also knew that I couldn't do it without guidance. So we prayed—a lot—especially for Cori. We prayed that somehow she would know how much her brother still loved her and that she would have evidence that he was still involved in her life. We prayed to know what to do to help her and for understanding and guidance.

Let me give you a little background. Children didn't come easily for David and me. My

**“Thank you, griefHaven,
and thank you to
Tyler Barton for donating
the free tickets
and passes!”**

pregnancy with Tyler was a result of fertility drugs. Cori miraculously came along three years later, but even with the aid of fertility procedures, we were never able to have more children. Consequently, Cori and Tyler developed a special bond. Babysitters would tell us how they never saw a relationship like the one Cori and Tyler had. Tyler was fierce in his protection of his sister and always allowed her to be included when he was playing with his friends. Cori, in turn, idolized her brother. As they grew older and we took family vacations, I would ask them why they didn't want to make friends with other kids, and they always responded that they were happy with each other. During our last family vacation in Palm Springs, when Tyler was 16 and Cori 13, they still played endlessly together. Life was perfect!

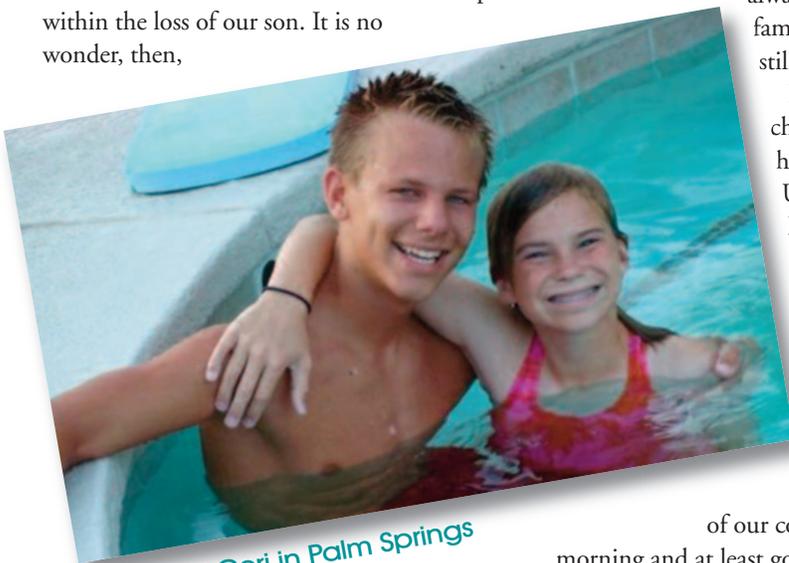
It was just a few weeks later that a tragic accident occurred, forever changing our lives. Tyler was swimming with his cousins and hit his head while going down a waterslide, knocking himself unconscious. Unnoticed, he slipped into the deep waters and drowned. Tyler, who had worked as a lifeguard all summer and was on the high school water polo team had drowned! It seemed impossible!

Our perfect life suddenly became a cloudy, gray, and dismal future as we faced the reality of Tyler's absence. Suddenly, our house seemed like an enormous empty cavern without Tyler's bigger-than-life presence and endless laughter. I just wanted to lie down, go to sleep, and wake up wherever Tyler was. And, yet, there was Cori...

Let's just say that our prayers were answered. Because of our concern with Cori, it gave us the ability to get out of bed in the morning and at least go through the motions of living life. An incredibly supportive community, the church, and our friends all blessed us beyond measure by helping us channel our grief into something tangible, raising over \$115,000 to donate to Habitat 4 Humanity for a home being built in our community. But most importantly to us, our prayers about Cori were answered. God (and I think her new guardian angel, Tyler) placed wonderful friends in Cori's life that helped her with her brother's absence. Although Cori has many friends who support and love her, three key friends have been instrumental in her success and growth these last five years: Jacquie Salgado, Cory Moberly, and Logan Bateman. They probably will never fully realize how much they truly did, or how they were an answer to our prayers, but we will be forever grateful to them.

So, it was such a blessing when griefHaven awarded Cori the opportunity to take three people of her choice to Universal Studios for a day of fun! There was no question who she would take, even though it was extremely difficult to find a day when they were all free.

Thank you griefHaven, and thank you to Tyler Barton for donating the free tickets and passes!



Tyler and Cori in Palm Springs

that with this intense grieving we also worried about our daughter, Cori, and how she was going to survive the loss of her only sibling. We weren't sure whether to seek counseling for her, whether we should force her to open up and talk, or whether we should avoid talking about her brother.

Truthfully, each person handles grief so differently and on such different time schedules that not even David and I were always on the same page. Some days I wanted to stay hidden away in my room; other days I wanted just to talk to other people that missed



Cori Today

Last month, Cori began her first semester at Brigham Young University in Utah. And guess who is attending with her? Two of her closest “Universal Studios” friends, Cory and Jacquie! In fact, they are living in the same dorm as Cori and on the same floor! They also keep in close touch with Logan, who plays football at another University. Family is forever...and so are some friends!

Now that Cori is in college, I think back to five years ago and how I worried about what the future would hold for her without Tyler’s great influence and example. It is with a heart of gratitude that I now realize those worries were superfluous. Cori has grown into a successful, beautiful, and wonderful woman—one I know Tyler is proud of!

No, we were not left alone in our suffering, and Cori has never been without her brother. She has had many experiences where she has felt Tyler’s love, concern, and involvement in her life. But the greatest evidence of Tyler watching over her has been in the presence of three people: Jacquie, Cory and Logan—three special friends who not only “said” they cared, but who regularly “showed” how much they cared.

Where Love and Friendship Equal A Day Of Fun, Joy, and Remembering

cori broberg, tyler’s sister

Universal Studios winner

of the 2011 griefHaven sibling writing contest



Jacquie Salgado, Cory Moberly, Logan Bateman, Cori Broberg



Cori Broberg and friends at Universal Studios

me: Logan, Cory, and Jacquie. They are the friends who have been at my side since Tyler’s passing, helping me every step of the way. I know that their friendship has made a huge difference in where I am in my life five years later.

During our special day at Universal Studios, we were able to laugh and reminisce about all of the amazing memories we shared. Many of those memories included Tyler. To have friends who talk freely and openly about my brother is very healing.

Throughout the day I continuously thought about Tyler and how much fun he would be having. I could also feel him close by, cheering me on. I know that he was so happy that I was able to “be” happy and have fun with people with whom I have created such strong bonds.

When asked about the day, Logan said, “It was a perfect day, with perfect weather, at a perfect place, with perfect people, remembering a perfect guy!” Jacquie said, “It was just what I needed to remember all that I have to be grateful for and not only to remember Tyler, but my brother as well.” Cory could not stop saying throughout the day that, “We are so lucky to have this opportunity to spend time together and just forget the world and laugh and be silly. Sometimes life is hard, but we can make it through anything as long as we do it together.”

I feel so extremely blessed to have had this experience with my dearest friends and to remember my brother—a person I will never, ever forget. Spending the day with these

three friends helped me to realize that, even though I lost a brother and have no other siblings, Jacquie has become my sister, Logan is like a brother to me, and Cory is my other half.

Going to Universal Studios with three of my best friends in memory of Tyler was easily one of the best days of my life! I am so grateful to griefHaven for making my dream a reality by allowing me to escape the everyday world and go to an amazing place with amazing people.

Thank you, griefHaven, and Tyler Barton, too, for the tickets!



SIBLINGS: ENTER OUR 2012 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS DRAWING! DETAILS IN THE SIBLING VOICE NEWSLETTER (FOR SIBLINGS ONLY).

Friends of griefHaven Annual Luncheon

October 8, 2012 - Luxe Hotel, Brentwood, CA

Friends of griefHaven Council Members



L to R: Wendy Broudy, Melanie Speiser, Susan Whitmore, Beth Abrams, Pam Solomon, Jessica Dishell, Nicole Foss, Christina Porter
L to R front: Linda Rosen, Robin Aronson



Rose Pomonik, Susan Whitmore, Board Member and Susan's mother, Penny Fellows, George Pomonik



Roko Belic, director, talking about making the film *Happy*



Board Member Wendell Whitmore, Karen Rhodes and Janet Swerdlow



Gina Zakarin, Linda Rosen, Paulina Smith, Sara Singsank



Gina Zakarin, Debra Zakarin, Leslie Leitner, Patti Blake, Beth Braunstein, Angela Millstein



Jayne Allison, Denice Fellows and Penny Fellows



Foster our Videographer



Board Member Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben and Susan Safier



Andrea Abrams, Fran Ostrow, Jane Abrams, Pam Jacobsen and Barbara Siegel



Board Member Jennifer Woolf and Susan Whitmore



Palisadian-Post

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2012 • PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

Director Roko Belic Speaks at Fundraiser for GriefHaven

By ANNE ROBERTS
Special to the Palisadian-Post

Friends of griefHaven, a newly organized support group for Pacific Palisades-based griefHaven, hosted its first fundraiser on October 8 at the Luxe Hotel in Brentwood. The "Live Your Best Life"-themed luncheon featured Roko Belic, an Academy-Award nominated director, who spoke about his journey of making the documentary film, "Happy."

The film, which has received numerous awards at film festivals, examines what makes people happy. Belic acknowledged that it might appear unsuitable to be speaking about happiness to a group focused on helping bereaved families. However, he moved everyone can live a happier life.

Belic presented cutting-edge science that gives a deeper understanding of this emotion. Citing the Dalai Lama, the director said, "The strongest predictor of a person's happiness is if there is someone you love and someone who loves you." He added that doing something that is meaningful can greatly enhance a person's happiness.

GriefHaven, founded by Palisadian Susan Whitmore in 2003, has become a nationally known nonprofit organization dedicated to providing an online, comprehensive one-stop resource where parents and family members who are grieving the death of a child can regularly visit and privately find strength, love, education and hope.

Whitmore started her organization after the death of her only child, Erika Whitmore Godwin, from a rare sinus cancer. Her process as she discovered that the array of support services she needed to endure the path before her were either scattered in where, in the comfort and privacy of their homes, grieving family members could, at any time, receive support and resources. And so, the Erika Whitmore Godwin Foundation, known as griefHaven, was born.

Each year in the United States, more than 53,000 children ages 0-19 and another 94,000 children ages 20-39 die in car accidents, from drowning, suicide, murder, birth defects, devastating illnesses, diseases and other causes, leaving families shattered.

Since 2003, Whitmore, now a certified grief specialist, has been a one-woman show, managing everything from editing newsletters and providing grief groups to conducting national speaking engagements. The number of people seeking griefHaven's assistance grew so large that a year ago Susan quit her job as a law office administrator to manage griefHaven full-time—even though she does not pay herself a salary.

Friends of griefHaven started with a core group of Whit-



GriefHaven founder Susan Whitmore and Roko Belic, director of the movie "Happy," at a fundraiser sponsored by Friends of griefHaven.

Photo: Robin Aronson

more's Palisadian friends, some of whom had also experienced a great loss in their lives. Sitting around her kitchen table, they talked about griefHaven's incredible work and wondered aloud how they might support their friend's organization.

The Friends now aid griefHaven's mission and vision through both financial contributions and hands-on assistance. Financial contributions help fund general operations and a substantial array of programs needed to help grieving families—such as one-on-one grief counseling, individualized "Packets of Hope," diverse resources within the griefHaven Web site, grief support groups and workshops, parent and sibling newsletters, educational speaking engagements and workshops for professional caregivers, and the widely acclaimed documentary, "Portraits of Hope."

To join Friends, e-mail hope@griefhaven.org or call (310) 459-1789. Visit: griefhaven.org.