

where brothers and sisters are heard

THE SIBLING



where hope resides

VOICE

july - september 2012

grief: as natural as... well, check it out

Are animals closer to humans on an emotional level than some would have us believe? The scientists, researchers, and other animal experts interviewed for the Discovery Channel's amazing documentary, *Why Dogs Smile and*



Chimpanzees Cry, answered with a resounding "yes!" They made their case documenting real-life stories: dogs who were deeply depressed after being used to recover bodies following major tragedies; chimps who grieved for the rest of their lives or quickly died themselves when a family member died; a herd of elephants who wailed and cried when coming upon a watering hole where, 20 years earlier, much of their group had been slaughtered by poachers. Or even, on the other side of grief, lab rats who giggled when tickled. As I thought back on that documentary, I decided to share more of these stories with you.

One incident of chimpanzees exhibiting grief was reported by Laura Tanglely in *U.S. News Magazine*. "In Tanzania, primatologists studying chimpanzee behavior recorded the death of Flo, a troop's 50-year-old matriarch. Throughout the following day, Flo's son, Flint, sits beside his mother's body, occasionally taking her hand and whimpering. Over the next few weeks, Flint grows increasingly listless, withdrawing from the troop and refusing food, despite his siblings' efforts to bring him back. Three weeks after Flo's death, the formerly healthy, young chimp is dead, too."

In another videotaped incident, a seal colony

had recently increased its population with hundreds of baby pups. As the parent seals sat atop rocks watching their pups frolicking and diving into the surf, a great white shark appeared out of the sea and grabbed one of the pups. Chaos ensued as

the adults frantically ran everywhere trying to find their own pups, whom they recognized by their sounds. One mother seal, looking back and forth toward the ocean, searching for sight of her pup, finally realizes it is her pup who is not coming home. She repeatedly throws her head back, letting out loud, plaintive wails over and over.

Then, there is the sweet story about the first chimpanzee birth ever witnessed. A scientist reports, "Unexpectedly, the entire chimp colony of about 200 animals gathered in silence around the mother-to-be. She squatted and delivered the newborn into her own hands. The mother's closest companion, an elder female named Atlanta, screamed excitedly in reaction to the birth, jumping up and down, embracing two other chimpanzees, and spending the next several weeks closely attending the mother and her offspring."

Accumulating evidence suggests that animals experience emotions, including grief. Grieving over their own is as natural and irrepressible as, well, a giggle when being tickled! Do animals respond to an innate emotional wisdom? Hmm...maybe we, too, can learn something from the natural, uninhibited grieving of our fellow species.

This month's *Sibling Voice* is a sweet and unique approach to grief. It is something we felt you would appreciate and enjoy.

griefHaven has been doing a lot of traveling, speaking engagements, and creating new support tools. In June, Wendell and I traveled to Buffalo, New York where I gave an all-day presentation on grief to specialists at Roswell Cancer Institute's annual conference. I spoke to professionals who deal with grief every day in their careers, giving them information to help better support grieving parents and siblings, and letting them know how griefHaven can help.

At the end of June, we traveled to Tampa, Florida, where I presented two workshops for the Bereaved Parents of the USA's yearly conference for grieving parents and siblings.



Susan and Wendell at Roswell Conference

Both events were beautiful and rewarding. To see photos, check out page 4 of this newsletter.

We remain committed to you and your journey. And remember to let us know if you would like to honor your brother or sister by writing an article for one of our future newsletters.

~ Susan Whitmore
founder & president

From Christian Makowski regarding his poem below...

My brother, Nicholas, would be 22 this September 15. And on that day we'll visit his gravesite. He died after just 13 days with us due to a heart condition, and although we never met (I was born two years later), I couldn't help but think about him and who he would be. I included each family member into the poem by including a "I wonder..." line that questions whether Nicholas would be like that person in some way. Happy Birthday, Nicholas!



Nicholas Jason Makowski, 12 days old

i often wonder

by christian makowski

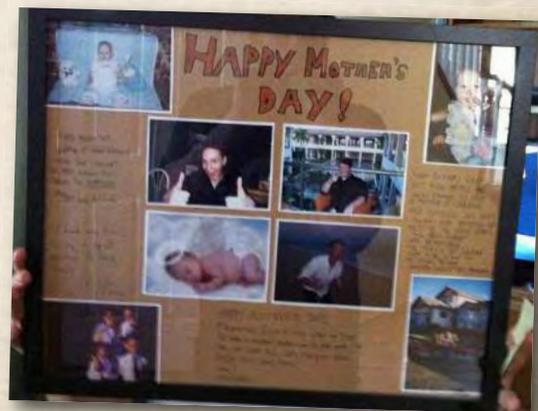
I often wonder how life would be, if you were still down here with me.
I often wonder if you'd make them proud, would you be quiet or would you be loud?
I often wonder if you'd be class clown, bring someone up if they were down.
I often wonder if you'd be bright, be the type who is always right.
I often wonder if you'd be like Dad, and be the rock for those who are sad.
I often wonder if you'd be like Mom, and the one who would keep us calm.
I often wonder about you, brother, and how us five could use another.

I often wonder how life would be, if you were still down here with me.
I often wonder if we would bond, would you be like me and be blonde?
I often wonder if we'll meet one day, about the words we'll choose to say.
I often wonder, I must confess, does our not meeting hurt more or less?
I often wonder if when we cry, is that just how we must say goodbye?
I often wonder, I can't resist, how you'd have loved times you've missed.
I often wonder late in the night, if, on a cloudy day, you're that ray of light.

I often wonder how life would be, if you were still down here with me....



Leanne Makowski, Tony Makowski, Christian Makowski and Joshua Makowski.



This photo is of a Mother's Day gift idea my brothers and I had; our parents were going on a three year contract to teach out of the country so we wanted to give something they could have there to remind them of us. The writing on the gift is as follows:

Mom, thanks for always being the best Mom you knew how; I know it wasn't easy but I hope you know I appreciate everything you do and have done for me. Enjoy your day today and relax—the cleaning is on me. Love Josh. (The oldest)

*Leanne, Thank you for always being the best Mother to our boys. Love, Tony (Dad).
Mom, not a lot of people can say they have a Mom quite like you and I am so lucky to have you in my life. Love Adam (the middle child).*

Mama, All I can say is thanks. Thank you for being doctor, teacher, friend, counselor...everything. Thanks for being you. Love, Christian (the youngest)

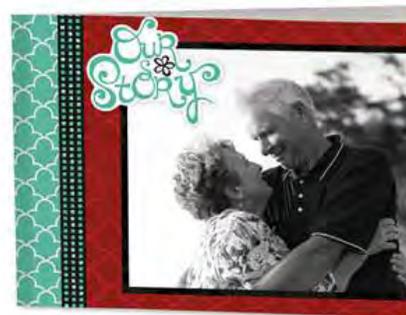
a gift that keeps on giving

by susan whitmore

As always, we are dedicated to letting you know when we find something special we feel you will appreciate. Here is something wonderful for anyone.

I was recently in Tampa, Florida leading two workshops for grieving parents and siblings, where I met Ruth Foss. Ruth provides something special and unique. Read below, and you'll see how you can turn your photographs into just about anything you want. We took Erika's photo and had buttons, a calendar, and items made for us and for gifts...our calendar is sitting right here.

And...these make wonderful gifts!



turning jpgs into something special

by ruth foss

Where are your photographs? In a shoebox, camera, or closet? Or perhaps they are on a flash drive, memory card, computer, cell phone, or even under the bed. The list is as long as the imagination.

And, how do you share your photos? I remember sitting on the couch with my Nana and her photo albums as she told the stories of her youth, her family and friends, the places they visited, and the things she did. We laughed, cried, pondered, and never grew tired of hearing the stories. I wish I knew now what I knew then. These stories can never be passed down to my children because we never thought to write them down for others to tell!

I believe we all want to preserve our memories, but where and how do we start? I am an independent Creative Memories consultant and have spent the past seven years helping others answer that question. I want to help you.

Four years ago, my great-niece, Riley, was born and sent home with the sad words no parent ever wants to hear: *she won't live long*. I felt I had to do something to memorialize her, so I took her photos and created calendars, photo books, and more for family and friends. I thought, "At least I can share in the struggles, sadness, and happiness of her life."

Although we received such terrible news those four years ago, Riley beat the odds and will be celebrating her fourth birthday this year! Creating the memory projects made me realize that what began as a way to help my family had turned into a full-blown passion! That is when I decided to become a Creative Memories consultant. With each item I create, I am blessed to hear the stories of the person whose photos I am working with, then making a unique one-of-a-kind gift for his or her loved ones. This, for me, is truly a blessing.

Here are just a few of the items we can create together:

- photo albums
- calendars
- cards
- invitations
- mugs
- mouse pads
- photo panels



Each item memorializes a special person and celebrates that person's life. Some are happy, some are sad, and some simply say, "Remember when?" No matter the emotions they evoke, our photos and the stories behind them deserve to be remembered for generations to come.



To learn more, see examples, or speak with me, please visit: www.mycmsite.com/ruthfoss and click on "my files," call (813) 766-6311, or email me directly at rfosscmc@aol.com. Please mention "griefHaven," and I will donate 10% of anything ordered to the foundation, as I am deeply moved by the support griefHaven provides grieving parents and siblings.

You can also check out www.digital.creativememories.com for all the projects that are available for you to do, either on your own or with my help.

griefHaven goes on the road providing education, support, and hope



roswell cancer
institute conference
buffalo, new york

bereaved parents of
the usa conference
tampa, florida



mary crest manor
culver city, california

WE ARE NOW ACCEPTING ARTICLES FOR OUR 2013 SIBLING VOICE NEWSLETTERS!

we would love to hear from you!

Please contact us at griefHaven by email, letter, or phone

We would love to hear from siblings of any age who want to contribute to future newsletters or parents whose siblings have expressed an interest in contributing. Here you can share your stories and let us honor your brothers and sisters while also helping so many others like you who will be forever grateful for the loving guidance and hope your stories provide.

griefHaven
15532 Antioch Street
Suite 147
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

310-459-1789

hope@griefHaven.org

www.griefHaven.org



Anyone can afford to have this special tribute book, as griefHaven is offering each book at cost. What a special way to honor your brother or sister. You can see some of the many ways the Living Library can honor a parent's child or a brother or sister's sibling—go to www.griefHaven.org and click on the Living Library link.



Follow us to find out what we are doing, where we will be when, and the exciting and interesting things happening at griefHaven. **PLUS:** Share your sibling with the world by adding his or her photo at [facebook.com/griefHaven](https://www.facebook.com/griefHaven)