

His Heart is Still

By Lorie Haacke

Dear Compassionate Friends:

Let me start by apologizing for not being able to get to the newsletters this summer. As Sharon & Erin said in the summer issue that *did* go out, “sometimes... everything crashes and burns.” I’ve been newsletter editor for more than 10 years. There have only been a few times that I haven’t been able to publish the letter, usually due to mechanical failure (i.e. computer crashes!). However, this summer was especially difficult for me.

Last March I became foster parent to my sister’s 3 children. Amidst the usual summer chaos that comes with 3 school aged kids, both of my sons moved out of state; Alex to Washington & Andy to Idaho. At the same time we were blessed with a huge home - one with enough bedrooms and bathrooms that everyone has their own! The kids & I spent the month of June packing and moving the 3 households. We were so excited to start our new life!

In July, just as things seemed to be falling into place and settling down, the unthinkable happened. While we were preparing to leave for summer vacation, and to visit Andy on his birthday in Idaho, I got the call every mother fears. The nurse on the other end of the phone was crying and apologizing. “I’m so sorry. We did everything we could. He’s gone.”

The heart that first beat inside of me is now still. It only echoes within the memories I relive through the hundreds of photos that take me back in time to the days of simplicity and joy. As I drove to ID I told myself that this was meant to be. That Andy chose to leave on his birthday because he knew I was on my way & he was ready to come home. I was fortunate to be able to say goodbye. I know not everyone gets that chance. I held his cold little hands as long as I could. I didn’t want to let go. I didn’t want to forget the feel of his fingers, the feel of his hand in mine. Just like every single time he was in the hospital. Just like so many other times, if not every time, that I sat beside him. He would always reach over with his right hand and ever so softly touch the nearest part of me. His little fingers barely lifting as he tried to control the movement and direction of his reach. And then he would smile. Oh, he had the most amazing dimpled grin! You could see straight to his soul. The purity & innocence poured from his big brown eyes. He was the greatest. The most innocent and fun-loving guy you’d ever know. He simply brought joy & only asked for acceptance.

I am now a bereaved parent. I have earned my place at the table of other grieving parents who are trying to understand their pain, living with their guilt and anger. Today I put on the fake mask as unknowing colleagues ask about my summer. I don’t hold back. I tell them the truth, praying that they will understand and reach out to hold me. Some do, some are stunned and speechless. I don’t even try to explain my pain. I know if they haven’t lost a child, they will not understand.

I’m blessed beyond the stars to have Compassionate Friends to help me through my grief. Thank you all so much for understanding and for all of your support and love gifts in memory of my ‘sweet Andy’. I will be stepping down for a bit to take some time for myself. Please feel free to continue to call if you have updates or questions about our meetings or events.



With love, with understanding & with hope for brighter tomorrows,

Lorie Haacke