

## The Day Our World Changed

by Mary Brown

June 1, 2010. Our world shattered with a phone call. ..a medical doctor at Boeing, telling us that our son, David, was killed in a one-car rollover accident in Italy. David had been in Italy for only two months, working on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, a job he had requested, having visited Italy during his ten-year stint in the Navy. Only 48 years old, leaving behind a family of seven children, many lives were turned upside down that day.

We had heard about a grief support group put on by Volunteer Hospice of Clallam County. We made a phone call and were invited to join the group. Eight women, one man (my husband) and several hospice bereavement volunteers filled the small room in the church where the meeting was being held. Instructions were given...no politics, no judgments, and anything shared would not leave the room.

Jan, the facilitator, asked who would like to start by sharing why they were there. Silence. After an excruciating 60 seconds or more of silence, my husband raised his hand. "I'll start." Jan said, "Good. Tell us why you are here." Again...silence. My husband is not a quiet man, nor one to show his emotion publicly, but no words were coming from him. Only tears, and then sobs. Soon all of us were crying. We were all reminded of why we were sitting in this room together. It was a safe place to shed tears and share our grief.

Five weeks later, we all felt an emotional tie to each other. The stories were varied; some of the women had lost spouses, some had lost parents. Some of the deaths had occurred months ago and some only weeks ago. All were grieving over their lost loved one.

For my husband and me, it was an opportunity to begin the healing process. Sharing raw emotions with strangers might seem strange, but for both of us, it was a source of strength. The hospice facilitator and the volunteers who showed up every week were there for us, giving us comfort in this time of sorrow. Even months later, these same people who have become our friends, give us hugs and encouragement whenever we meet.

Thank you, VHOCC volunteers, for giving us your hours of listening, caring about us and sharing your friendship with us.