

FACES OF FAMILY CENTERS » Bonnie Covey



Bonnie Covey had the life most people only dream of. For 26 years, she and her husband William (more commonly known as Buz) enjoyed all the benefits a happy marriage brings. They traveled the world together, laughed at each other's jokes, watched five kids grow up to become successful adults and welcomed five grandchildren

into the world*. Sadly, Bonnie's remarkable world came crashing down in an instant.

As the Medical Director for a senior living facility in Fairfield, Buz loved his work. His passion for helping others – particularly the elderly – set him apart from other physicians in his field. So, it was no surprise that he routinely got an early start on the day. But right after Memorial Day 2009, something went terribly wrong. Buz fell ill and was admitted to the hospital. Unexpectedly, his condition quickly took a turn for the worse and he passed away the following evening.

"I don't remember much about the events the night of Buz's death," said Bonnie. "It's as if I went into a state of amnesia. I was completely blindsided. Buz was in the prime of his life and without any notice, I lost the person I ate breakfast with, discussed the newspaper with... I lost the other half of my life."

While her family provided her with the immediate support she needed, over time Bonnie had a desire to meet others also grieving the loss of a spouse. She was referred to the Center for HOPE by several friends, where she joined a support group for widows and widowers. At first, Bonnie was a bit skeptical whether a group setting was for her. But after listening to other people in the group sharing their stories of loss, Bonnie began to realize that everyone in that room knew what she was going through.

For Bonnie, just talking about Buz and the pain she was struggling with in a safe, compassionate atmosphere helped. The conversations seemed to take the sting out of her tremendous loss, and she gained a greater sense of peace as each week passed. But it was a simple email exchange that gave Bonnie a new outlook on her grief and the rest of her life.

While making arrangements for Buz's headstone, Bonnie emailed the group's facilitator to say she didn't have the strength to attend that evening's session. In her reply, the facilitator told Bonnie that her loss was like a "heavy boulder" similar to that in the Greek myth of Sisyphus, who was forced to roll a large rock uphill for eternity. "At that moment, I realized I didn't have to carry that boulder forever," Bonnie said. "I think of Buz every day and still have my moments of misery. But I just couldn't let my grief for him define the rest of my life."

**Editor's Note: Three more grandchildren were born shortly following Buz's death.*