



## CULLATHER BRAIN TUMOR QUALITY OF LIFE CENTER



5875 Breemo Road, St. Mary's Hospital, Medical Office Building South, Suite 108 Richmond, VA 23226  
(804)287-7809 [www.braintumorqaol.com](http://www.braintumorqaol.com)

Volume 4

### Coping with Grief and Loss during the Holidays

By: Dr. Sherry Fox

As we approach the holiday season, I am reminded that many of you have suffered losses in this past year that may be affecting your ability to join in the thanksgiving and celebration that come with special holidays. My heart goes out to you. I suffered the loss of my beloved Grandmother this year and I must confess that I face the holidays with some sadness and dread.

Loss comes in many forms, most notably the loss of a loved one. However, there are other losses that affect our ability to celebrate as well. These losses may include the loss of physical abilities, the loss of a job, loss of social contacts, the loss of financial stability due to illness and perhaps most difficult of all, the loss of a certain or predictable future.

As the holidays approach I have been contemplating my own grief and how I will try to ease that grief and still capture some of the joy that the holidays can bring. Certainly, nothing we do will completely take away the pain we feel but there may be things we can do to ease the pain. The following are suggestions that may be helpful to you.

1. Plan ahead as to where and how you will spend your time during the holidays. Allow yourself to cut back on holiday activities if you wish to do so. Decrease expectations of yourself and communicate those to family. Consider the opportunity to transition from old to new traditions.

2. Create a small memorial to your loved one in a central location in your home. You may want to include some pictures or special things that remind you of your loved one. Consider placing a candle in the memorial to light at special times

during the holiday as a way to signify the light of love that lives in your heart.

3. Give yourself permission to express your feelings. Cry if you feel like it. Tears are healing. According to some scientists certain brain chemicals in our tears are natural pain relievers. Laughing is good for us also. If you have funny memories of your loved one then don't forget to include those as you express your feelings.

4. Shakespeare once said, "Give sorrow words...." Write an unsent letter to your Loved One expressing what you are feeling. You could then decide to place in a book, an album or a drawer, at the memorial site mentioned earlier or just throw it away. If you have a flair for creativity then perhaps you might draw a picture, write a poem or even lyrics to a song.

5. At the times when you are especially missing your loved one or just feeling overwhelmed by the losses, call family members or dear friends and share your feelings. Ask others to share their good memories of your loved one with you.

Remember you are not alone in your grief. Call a favorite pastor or minister. Sherry and Cathy at the Cullather Center are also available to listen and to help with additional resources if you need them.

6. If you live near the cemetery decorate the memorial site with a holiday theme including evergreens, bows or other decorations. Decorating the site yourself can be helpful in remembering and celebrating your loved one's life during the holidays, and may free you to cherish the present holiday with your remaining family and friends.

7. Play music that is comforting and meaningful to you.

8. Participate in religious celebrations and traditions. Even if you have never done this Before, it may bring you comfort and peace.

9. Give money you would have spent for gifts for your loved one to a charity in your loved one's name. Provide gifts for a family who is struggling. Give your time at a local charity, church or homeless shelter.

10. Try shifting your focus from your losses to your blessings. Often having an "attitude of gratitude" can make all the difference in making it through tough times regardless of the loss.

11. Read a book or article on grief prior to the holidays. Suggestions are: "Don't Take My Grief Away From Me" by Doug Manning; "The Comfort Book For Those Who Mourn" by Anna Trimiew; and "A Grief Observed" by C. S. Lewis.

12. Remember the reality that the anticipation of the holidays without your family member or other things you may have lost is often harder than the actual holidays themselves. Give yourself a mantra, "I will get through this one day at a time".

I pray that each of you will be able to use some of these suggestions to ease your burden of grief during the holiday season. Feel free to contact Sherry with any other ways you have been able to cope with grief and loss.

Adapted from "Ten Ways to Cope with Holiday Grief" by L. B. Schultz, Carmel, Indiana.



## Would you like to make a meaningful donation to the Center?

Why not purchase a beautiful P. Buckley Moss hummingbird print titled "Indomitable Spirit"? Keep it for yourself or give to someone special this holiday season. The cost is \$100 and all proceeds go directly to helping our patients. The prints are available to purchase at the Center.



**Make a donation in Honor or Memory of a loved one.** Truly a gift from the heart, your donation will support the Center's work allowing us to continue to provide the quality guidance and care to our patients. All donations are tax deductible and are a wonderful tribute to a loved one. Donations may be sent to:

Cullather Brain Tumor Quality of Life Center  
5875 Bremono Road, St. Mary's Hospital MOB  
South, Suite 108  
Richmond, VA 23226

Please call (804)287-8700 for Credit Card donations

## Do you have questions about Financial Planning?

A representative from L.I.N.C. - Legal Information Network for Cancer Patients - will be at the 7:00 p.m. November 13<sup>th</sup> Brain Tumor Support Group meeting to provide insight into this area. At the meeting, you will be able to sign up for individual counseling sessions to be held at a later date in the Cullather Center.

The meeting will be at St. Mary's Hospital in the Education Center, which is located down the hall from the cafeteria. The room number will be posted at the entrance to the Education Center.

# Patient Interview:

## Marie Smook

### **1. *How did you become involved with the Cullather Brain Tumor Quality of Life Center?***

I was diagnosed in Dec. 2006 with a meningioma brain tumor which was located behind my left eye. A co-worker could see I was undecided about what to do after receiving several opinions from doctors. He placed a call to his good friend, Dr Sherry Fox, and she turned around and placed a call to me.

### **2. *What are the resources you have found to be most helpful at the Center?***

Dr. Fox and Cathy are, in themselves, the best resources anyone could hope to find.

### **3. *What advice have you found most helpful in your journey?***

There was talk of gamma knife radiation, surgery, and "waiting for awhile" as the tumor is known to be slow growing and benign. I took in all the advice I received, and followed my heart, and chose to have surgery. The surgeon spoke to my husband after surgery, and told him we made the right choice, as the tumor was more involved than he thought.

### **4. *What would you like to tell us about your experience with the Center?***

When Dr. Fox called me, she set aside time in her schedule that day for my husband and me to come in and talk with her. We arrived and my first thought, I was in the Center's "living" room....you immediately feel welcomed, at ease, and comfortable, Cathy joined in our conversation, and together the two of them gave me books, brochures, the Cullather 3 ring notebook that I like so much, (that tells you all about the Center, Cancer, etc.) phone numbers, etc. I walked away feeling thankful that my co-worker/friend made his call to Dr. Fox. What a wonderful thing Mr. Cullather did by creating a place for brain tumor patients, and their families to go and absolutely get everything they need to get headed in the direction of their decision-making. Unbeknownst to Dr. Fox and Cathy...I adopted 2 sisters!! I still thank both of them to this day for their cares and concerns...and for always being so ready to listen.

### **5. *What are your interests and hobbies?***

I enjoy a wide variety of things...reading, gardening (as a Master Gardener, I have enjoyed volunteering in the community), camping, fishing,

walking with my husband and dogs, knitting, beekeeping (we've been known to produce at least 70 pounds of honey a year), and making stained glass.

### **6. *What would readers find surprising about you?***

The last year, or so, has been a difficult journey at times. I shared in a wonderful experience by donating a kidney in early '06 to a non-family member. The expected hospital stay was 5-7 days for me, and I was released 3 days after surgery. It was an amazing and rewarding adventure for everyone, who by the way, are doing very well. Later in the year (in September 06) my husband and I planned to vacation in Vermont, but only got as far as Pennsylvania. My husband's aorta dissected as we were traveling down the interstate...the paramedics got him to a hospital that was only 3 miles away. As he was rushed into surgery, I was informed that 1 in 100 people survive this medical condition. The surgeon gave him a 50/50 chance, considering the quickness of how everything up to that point had happened. The surgery was a success and he started his road to recovery. In November, his brother was killed in an auto accident. In December, I was diagnosed, and had surgery in late April of this year. I was recovering, and doing well, and found out my sister-in-law was diagnosed with brain cancer. This is indeed a traveled, bumpy at times road...but I have grown so much as a person during this difficult year, and hope that I have been there for family, and friends.

### **7. *Do you have a favorite quote that gives you inspiration that you would like to share?***

I have several favorite quotes, and I have a Bible verse on my charm that I like: Phil 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

### **8. *Tell us about your family and what makes you tick.***

I have been married to a very loving and giving man for 25 years. We blended our families and together have 3 children. One is single and lives in Charleston, S.C. and the other two live locally and are both married. We have 2 grandchildren, who are quite adorable I might add! My parents are both well, and live locally, as does my mother-in-law. My father-in-law passed away from a brain tumor several years ago.

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What makes me tick....in a nutshell I would say, my belief in God who orchestrates my life and drives me to the person he knows I can be. I try to be caring and giving to as many people that I have the good fortune to meet.... who may themselves be on a journey.



*Marie Smook*



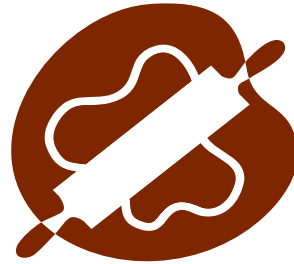
## First Anniversary!

The Cullather Brain Tumor Quality of Life Center celebrated its first anniversary on September 24, 2007. Advisory Board Members gathered to discuss the annual budget, needs assessment survey of patients, and potential fundraising opportunities. We are fortunate to have Board members with great compassion and insight regarding patient and family issues relating to this disease. The Board is comprised of the following individuals:

Sherry Fox, Ph.D., Director  
Peter Alexander, MD  
Maribeth and Tom Carr  
Jack Cullather  
Sue and Anthony Markel  
P. Buckley Moss  
John Muldowney  
John O'Bannon, MD  
Linda and Leon Stepanian  
Maureen and Mark Stepanian  
Archer Ticer, PT  
Harold Young, MD

Future meetings will take place bi-annually and the Board is planning another session during the spring of 2008. Support has been outstanding and the Cullather QOL Center looks forward to creating new services for our patients and their families.

Jack Cullather



## Holiday Recipe

### Holiday Peanut Brittle (microwave recipe)

A delicious and easy goodie to make during this hectic time of year! My mom makes it for all her friends and neighbors to wish them a wonderful holiday!

#### Ingredients:

- ❖ 1 c. sugar
- ❖ ½ c Karo white syrup
- ❖ 1 c. roasted, salted peanuts
- ❖ 1 t. vanilla
- ❖ 1 t. baking soda
- ❖ 1 t. butter

In a 2 quart dish, stir together sugar and syrup.

Microwave for 4 minutes.

Stir in peanuts.

Microwave for 3-5 minutes, until light brown.

Add butter and vanilla.

Microwave 1-2 minutes.

Add baking soda and gently stir until light & foamy.

Pour onto a lightly greased baking sheet.

Let cool ½-1 hour.

Amy Click

## Holiday Happenings!



Please join us for our Holiday Happening Open House . . . an evening of celebration and relaxation!

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres, family photographs,  
gift baskets, and holiday crafts  
Tuesday, November 27, 2007  
5:00-8:00 pm  
St. Mary's Hospital Auditorium

For more information, please call  
Cathy Willis @ 287-7809

### Next Volunteer Training

January 22, 2008 from 11:00AM-1:00PM  
Cullather Center

January 28, 2008 from 6:00PM-8:00PM  
Cullather Center

RSVP to Cathy at 287-7809. You need only  
attend one date.

### Treatment Updates for Brain Tumors: A Program for Patients and Families A Free Program for Brain Tumor Patients And Families

This conference can be accessed from your home phone or if you have a computer, you may access it from the Web. You may also come to the Center to view the presentation. Featuring: Dr. Henry S. Friedman from the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center

Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 1:30PM EST

Register today by going to [www.braintumor.org](http://www.braintumor.org) or call toll free 1-800-934-2873

### Cullather Center Holiday Hours

The Cullather Center will be closed on Nov. 22 and 23 for Thanksgiving.  
The Cullather Center will be closed Dec. 24, 25 and 26 for Christmas.  
The Cullather Center will be closed Jan. 1 for New Year's Day.

If you have an urgent need, call 287-7809 and leave a message. Messages will be picked up during the holidays.

### Newsletter Committee

The Newsletter Committee meets monthly to discuss upcoming articles and then again to collate and distribute the current issue. If you would like to become involved, please contact Amy Click at (804)402-0792 or [clickshouse@comcast.net](mailto:clickshouse@comcast.net).

The committee members include: Maureen Bannister, Mary Ellen Barton, Ron Brinton, Maribeth Carr, Amy Click, Peyton Ellis, Sherry Fox, Maureen Stepanian, Jamie Wigginton and Cathy Willis.

