

STORY OF THE *LITTLE BLUE LIGHTS*

I would like to share with you a story of hope.

This is the story of the Little Blue Lights.

In my first years of doing this work, I met a young mother whose husband had died from cancer. This was a young family with three surviving children, ages 4, 6 and 7.

“Jennifer” joined as a member of our support group and was, by far, the youngest in this gathering of ten spouses.

“Jennifer’s” story touched all of us; I think it was because we all embraced how challenging it was to face a loss of this magnitude while caring for three children who needed her for so many things.

This group met for eight weeks during November and December. Everyone in the group discussed the difficulties to be faced with the end of year holidays approaching , and “Jennifer” was no different. For her family, celebrating Christmas was magical. Two of her children still believed in Santa Claus and everyone in the family took part in decorating and baking cookies. Her husband and she usually began discussing Christmas gifts for the children in late August and, little-by-little, gifts were purchased and wrapped. There was a huge tree which everyone took part in decorating and “Jennifer’s” husband, Steve, was in charge of the outside lights.

The whole family would laugh at Steve's choices for outside lighting because, while the entire neighborhood was bedecked in bright white or multi-colored lights, Steve's choice was always blue. "These are different" he would say to his kids and "that makes our house the *coolest one on the block.*" The kids and Jennifer would always groan and make faces as Steve enthusiastically decorated with blue lights.

This Christmas, however, would be different. This was the year Steve had died and Jennifer looked forward to the upcoming holiday with dread.

"I don't know what I'm going to do" she said. "It is only a month away and I haven't bought any presents, and couldn't care less about decorating or putting up a tree."

She acknowledged she needed to do something and, as the holiday came closer, she told us she had decided to put up a tree – "For the kids – they need to have Christmas" she said.

"But" she also said "no outside lights this year. That's too much and I can't bear doing something that Steve loved – I could never match what he did."

Two weeks before Christmas, Jennifer came to the group and told us she had bought gifts and the kids really liked the tree. "They made some ornaments and we hung them and they are enjoying looking at them."

Then she said, “You know, you won’t believe what else happened this week. Remember, I told you I wasn’t going to put lights outside? I thought the kids probably wouldn’t notice that much anyway and the prospect of doing that was impossible for me.”

Of course, we all did remember.

“The kids and I had just finished dinner on Saturday night and I happened to look out the window. It didn’t register at first what I was looking at, but then, I realized, our entire neighbor was decorated in lights. My neighbors had remembered us. And, they had remembered Steve’s tradition, and when they decorated their homes with lights, *they were all blue.*”

This act of human kindness and generosity touched this family forever. It gave them a glimpse of hope. Their traditions were altered, that’s true. But, by this act, Jennifer was able to see that traditions could – and would – carry forward.

I invite all of you to remember the story of these little blue lights. This is an amazingly touching story that embodies the goodness and generosity of spirit offered by all of us. That is something we can easily see.

But, more importantly, I invite all of you to discover those “little blue lights” that exist in all of our lives; those times when we offer each other unexpected gestures of caring, compassion and profound humanity.

Little blue lights are not the brilliant beacons we yearn for – those lights that we feel will, *with certainty*, take us out of our dark places. Rather, little blue lights offer us those small glimpses of hope for the future. Those tiny lights that can take us, one step at a time, to those places that offer us meaning, peace and hope for our future.