There are dozens of web pages about grief and many include pages to help specifically for those who grieve during the holidays. Here is a quote from grief.com: “…how on earth can anyone be expected to cope with the holidays when a loved one has died? For many people, this is the hardest part of grieving, when we miss our loved ones even more than usual. How can you celebrate togetherness when there is none? When you have lost someone special, your world loses its celebratory qualities. Holidays only magnify the loss. The sadness feels sadder and the loneliness goes deeper.”

Do words on a web page help? They can. They might. There are many lists suggesting coping strategies. My favorite suggestion is: Don’t do it. Don’t do anything that does not serve your soul and your loss; accept your limitations and say “no.”

Don’t keep feelings bottled up. If you have 500 tears to cry don’t stop at 250.

Confide in someone who will listen without feeling he must come up with answers to your problems.

Try creating new traditions and to memorialize your loved one.

Do, in grief, pay extra attention to the children. Children are too often the forgotten grievers.

For friends and family:
• Don’t ask if you can help a friend in grief. Just help. Find ways. Just listen.

Can a web page completely soothe our grief unrest and anguish? It’s doubtful. Turn off the internet and get outside every day, no matter what the weather. And lean on a friend who understands you, “Do allow others to help. We all need help at certain times in our lives.”

Good support is available for the bereaved in Haines and Klukwan, but stepping out of our cloak of privacy and asking for help is the challenge. Help is in the phone book: Lynn Canal Counseling, your church pastor, Hospice of Haines, the SEARHC clinic. We offer big hearts and big ears.

Additional web pages specific to certain losses:
GriefNet.org        Dougys.org
Bereavedparentsusa.org  Taps.org
Compassionatefriends.org

“So it’s true, when all is said and done, grief is the price we pay for love.”
—E.A. Bucchianeri, *Brushtrokes of a Gadfly*
Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief  Liz Marantz-Falvey

"Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief" is the title of a book by Dr. Alan Wolfelt. The following is not a book review, rather I’m hoping the following article will elucidate the meaning underlying this poetic title. Why? The ghosts of grief represent all of our losses that we may not have mourned. Another term for this is carried grief.

It’s important to recognize that grief may be felt not just when someone we love dies. Losing our home, job, innocence, health, freedom, or anything that has great meaning to us counts as loss that entails grief. We heal our grief when it moves through our emotional, mental, spiritual and physical bodies. When we stifle this movement we risk emotional, mental, spiritual and physical limitations and/or suffering.

Though examples of this are many, here is just one. John Doe’s wife died. He had the rug pulled out from under him. He happened to be a person who had fallen prey to our mourning avoidant culture. Having grown up within a closed family system, as a child his losses were not acknowledged. He had some misconceptions about grief such as, being strong means keeping a stiff upper lip, and getting over his loss as quickly as possible would make life easier. He did not have the emotional or cognitive framework to support a healing, life-affirming grief journey.

He carried his unexpressed grief and believed he “got over” his wife’s death quickly and efficiently. He had neither the cognitive nor emotional framework to understand the challenge with which he was faced. He did not realize that underneath his stiff upper lip, his being was trying to make sense of a new way to be in the world. John did not have the opportunity to explore loss issues such as ‘who am I now that I’m a widower, has my sense of what has meaning been shaken?’ He believed that if he allowed himself to acknowledge what to him felt like abnormal reactions to his loss, they would only bring him down. He didn’t know about the concept of being present to grief in doses, that with support he could “evade and encounter” his loss. Keeping busy after a loss has its place, as does being present to the experience of loss.

Another misconception John held was that he would “get over” his grief in a linear fashion. His understanding did not include the notion of a spiral. Sometimes our grief takes a turn for the worse before it gets better. Not knowing this, he thought he was abnormal for having uncomfortable feelings a year after Jane’s death, and so he pushed these feelings away. When a good chunk of the meaning in our lives includes loving another person, grief is not fixed or resolved. It can revisit us in different ways and at different times asking for some attention, soothing and integration. No support for John here, either.

Though there are more examples of how John did not have much of a container to hold his loss, there is hope. Joining the writers, poets, artists and individuals who throughout time have been able to express their grief, scientists are now weighing in on the subject. In 1997, neuroscientist Candace Pert wrote The Molecules of Emotion. Daniel Coleman, another science writer, came out with his book Emotional Intelligence in 2006. The September 2017 issue of National Geographic interviewed the former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy who is also onboard with the growing understanding that emotions, such as the myriad of ones that might be experienced after a loss, are not a sign of weakness to be hidden away.

(continued on page 3)
Nearly two years ago my amazing father, Douglas, and my wonderful mother-in-law, Jane, died. Both left their bodies full of confidence for lives well lived. What does that look like? In my mind it’s a mix of kindness, gratitude, generosity, grace and faith. (My father was an atheist and my mother-in-law a devout Christian and you couldn’t tell them apart for their generosity and kindness.)

This newsletter is absolutely full of names, living and deceased, of those who have contributed to the lives of their families and friends, to their community and beyond.

Hundreds of names and organizations help Hospice of Haines remain in service in our valley. In the past few years, Lucy Harrell, has been our heroine, paying our rent and providing financial boosts for projects we otherwise could not afford. Likewise, our beloved client Marge Matthews surprised us with a gift from her estate.

This year a generous Tier 1 Grant from Rasmuson Foundation furnished our office and bereavement gathering space. Likewise, the Chilkat Valley Community Foundation gave our Giving Voice project a boost with a generous grant.

Thank you times ten to our Board of Directors, our volunteers, our donors, and our grantors. I am grateful; we are grateful to all…beyond measure.

Blessings,
Beth

A Special Thank You to Maribeth Walter and Rocki Rostad who served hospice as board members with skills and great spirits for a combined eleven years!

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**“...Ghost of Grief” (continued from page 2)**

Eight years after the loss of his wife, John Doe was in a doctor’s office to deal with issues around depression. His enlightened doctor suggested that before prescribing an anti-depressant, John might try reading the book *Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief*. It was possible that John’s depression might be connected to not having expressed his grief following his wife’s death. John did read the book and it did speak to somewhere deep inside him. The book gave him some confidence and tools to try out some “catch-up” mourning. A year later at an annual physical, John thanked his doctor for the book recommendation and shared that his sense of well-being had vastly improved. John’s healing is not to suggest that catch-up mourning is always at play when someone suffers, rather, having support to experience the myriad of challenging emotions around loss can allow us to not just survive but to thrive in the wake of loss.

If you would like to further explore the concept of carried grief, please feel free to call the hospice office at 766-3645 or Liz at 303-7036 to chat and/or check out any of our books including *Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief*. 
Thank You to Our Generous Donors: January 1, 2016 through December 2017

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Your generosity helps us provide free assistance to elders in our community.
In Remembrance of Loved Ones

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Sometimes we have the mistaken notion that people of faith do not grieve. Confident that the essence of their loved one has survived and that they will know each other again, they move calmly through this temporary separation without tears or turmoil.

Not so. Let us not add to our already burdened hearts any further burden of guilt that we so easily “give way” to our grief. Would’n’t we miss our loved one if he or she moved halfway around the world? The imponderable mysteries of death are far more impenetrable than having a loved one move to a foreign land!

Fortunate are those whose faith remains strong in the face of loss. They are also fortunate if they can mourn freely and without recrimination from themselves or others. To be human is to feel the pain of loss. To be healed of that pain is wonderful, but there are no shortcuts. There is only the way through.

from Healing After Loss Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief
Thank You Volunteers
we couldn’t do it without you.

SE AK State Fair Dessert Booth ’16 & ’17
(Please forgive us if your name is omitted)

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Anna Gilbert Sells Lemonade for Hospice in front of Haines Home Building Supply in honor of her grandparents, Bruce and Gail Gilbert.

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McDonough House Concert 2017
Thank you, hosts Ann & Tim, for yet another wonderful concert evening & thanks to board members for your delicious appetizers.


Rummage Sale Volunteers 2016 & 2017
(Please forgive us if your name is omitted!)

Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind." - Henry James
“Giving Voice” is a multi-faceted two-year pilot project building community by developing relationships between hospice clients and students (traditional and home schoolers). Students interview and record hospice (and bridge) clients and then use those interviews to produce a 'product' that will satisfy requirements of their school curricula. Right here in Haines, there are a number of interesting, well-traveled hospice clients willing to share a wealth of experiences, careers and knowledge affording students the opportunity to forget Google for a while and get out and interact with these local treasures. An annual community forum will highlight the results of these collaborations. Completed projects, with the approval of the participating client, will be archived and made available at the local public and school libraries.

Giving Voice will also provide hospice clients with additional services such as volunteer assisted internet searches, emailing and the ability to Skype with distant loved ones, friends, medical professionals and others that they would otherwise be unable to visit with, due to any number of circumstances. They will also be able to notarize and record their wishes in confidence, to be shared with the intended parties, at a time of their choosing.

This project was made possible and supported in part by a grant from the Alaska Humanities forum and the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency. “Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this (publication) (program) (exhibition) (website) do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.”

We also wish to thank the Chilkat Valley Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Alaska Community Foundation, for their generous grant, and the American Seafoods Company for their support of our project. Thank you to the National Products Industries, B &H Photo Video and Olerud’s Market for your in-kind support.

All hospice and bridge program services are offered free of charge. The Hospice of Haines budget is supported by individual donations, memorial gifts, fundraisers and grants. We are licensed by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as an All-Volunteer Hospice.
It’s a small commitment with big rewards. Consider becoming a hospice or a bridge volunteer this year. Call to inquire about our next training, Spring of 2018.