

Turning Tears into Triumph

Lynbrook woman turns grief into greatness'

By Clarissa Hamlin



Susan Ingrao-Woods

In losing a loved one, many individuals experience a range of dampening emotions from unbearable sadness to heavy guilt or even rage. But for some, it can be the beginning of a new chapter in life, which is exactly the case for Susan Ingrao-Woods of Lynbrook, who turned her “grief” into “greatness” by starting a web site, which not only helped her heal, but is helping others to cope with loss as well.

“My inspiration [for the website], over a long time, was the result of my own experiences with loss and grief,” Ingrao-Woods said. “[It] was emotional anguish I endured due to the extensiveness of the sorrow and I realized so many others have endured as well.”

Ingrao-Woods, 58, began the live website, “www.griegtogreatness.com,” in May 2008. The site features many grief resources like poetry, bereavement products, and stories about “acts of greatness” among other things to help people find solace and comfort. This site was a result of the culmination of Ingrao-Woods’ grief stemming from the death of her parents, Sylvia and Carl Ingrao and a beloved pet poodle, Cafe. All losses were very hard for Ingrao-Woods to deal with and she turned to bereavement groups for support.

“My personal story started with the sudden death of my mother in 1989 ... I couldn’t have asked for a sweeter or more loving woman to be my mother,” she said. “Although I had wonderful family and friends who were there for me, I felt a need to relate to others and their losses. In December 2001, her father, Carl passed away. “I attended a local grief support group shortly after his death, and the remarkable friendships I made there still continue.”

Ingrao-Woods noted that one of her coping mechanisms was reading many books about loss, which she also talked about her pain with family and friends. And with time, she was able to learn to live with it and push past the intense grief that plagued her. And the bereavement groups were very beneficial, too.

“I believe that grief is the most universal and unifying of human experiences,” she said. “When gathered together in bereavement support groups people connect on such a fundamental level. The group is a very safe place where no one is judged; and love, understanding and kindness flourish.”

With all her experiences with support groups, reading, and research, Ingrao-Woods found inspiration to create the website and a CD, “Love is Eternal — Songs of Love, Loss, Courage, and Survival.” She said that shortly after her mother’s death, a song on the radio by actress Grace Kelly’s daughter, Princess Stephanie of Monaco, called “Words Upon The Wind” tremendously inspired her CD compilation.

She remembers the power of that song. “I found the song to be consoling in its sentiments,” she said. “There were other popular songs by artists expressing their actual experiences with loss...Since then I thought that [the songs] should be compiled together into one CD because they were only heard sporadically on the radio. I thought their relatable and therapeutic nature could provide comfort.”

After hearing other emotional songs, Ingrao-Woods licensed reproductions of the songs from SBI America. Her mission was to share these songs with the world as the perfect prescription for healing. Through listening, the grieving feel that their loved ones are still very much present in their lives. And for further comfort, the CD featured a personalized booklet with information on grief psychology and intimate descriptions of each song from Ingrao-Woods’ perspective.

In addition, dancing provides another venue to express grief. On her website, viewers can watch a dance, “The Lyrical Interpretation of the Stages of Grief,” by Ingrao-Woods’ stepdaughter, Erin Woods.

But the highlight of her journey is that greatness is attainable. “Since I have observed that grief breeds greatness, I end the CD booklet with what I have come to realize, that helping others is a way of honoring our deceased loved ones, as well as facilitates one’s own healing,” she said. “The bereavement field is unique because it is comprised mainly of professionals and non-professionals whose loss and intense grief experiences have propelled them to want to help others enduring the same emotional pain.”