

What We Do

ACCESS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to pairing individuals suffering in the wake of private, commercial and military air disasters with volunteers who have experienced similar life-altering tragedies years earlier. Our 250 trained Volunteer Grief Mentors are on-call to provide free, peer-to-peer bereavement care from the minute an aviation disaster occurs, for as long as the grieving need support.

ACCESS bridges the gaps



Katie, Jim, Wyatt, and Hannah Morrison

On March 20th at 12:38 PM Katie, Wyatt, and Hannah were still here and our souls were more at peace. I am a surviving member of the thousands in the Tahoe Community affected by the loss of these three individuals we loved and are grateful to have known. As we approach the hardest and most joyous time of the year, one can't help but think about how we are all missing friends and family in some way. We've passed almost every milestone there can be in one year that marks "where we were this time last year." A few weeks after the crash I met Heidi Snow and from our brief conversation it became clear it was my job to help bridge the gap between the Morrison family and ACCESS. ACCESS helps in ways that others cannot, through safe, deep, unspoken insights that offer help to those brought together under such duress. I want to personally thank all of the ACCESS volunteers who bridge the gaps left in-between from this type of loss.

- Noelle Nixon lost her friends Katie, 37, Wyatt, 6, and Hannah, 5, in a private plane crash on 3/20/2011

10 Years After September 11th

Sharing grief with others who have been there



President and Mrs. Obama & Marion Kmínek on the 10th Anniversary of the events of 9/11

Now ten years later that day seems like yesterday but at the same time it seems like a hundred years ago. There have been family births and deaths, marriages and divorces, changes of residences and new friendships. The Pentagon Memorial Service was beautiful but I was detached until Vice President Biden said: "I know what it is to get that call." Once again sharing our grief with others who "had been there" really did make a difference and helped us to heal. ACCESS does that very same thing. Victims' families are put in contact with those of us who have gone through the same horrible grief and just like the Vice President, we actually mean it when we say, "I know how you feel."

- Marion Kmínek lost her daughter Mari-Rae, 35, on American Airlines Flight 77 on 9/11/01

15th Anniversary of TWA Flight 800



TWA Flight 800 Memorial 1996



TWA Flight 800 Memorial services 1996



TWA Flight 800 Memorial services 2011



Heidi Snow at the TWA Flight 800 Memorial 2011

It has been a year of reflection with the 15th anniversary of the founding of ACCESS, the 10th anniversary of September 11th, and the 15th anniversary of TWA Flight 800, which crashed in the ocean off of Long Island en route to Paris. I never could have imagined that out of the devastation of that horrific event would come a sense of purpose to help those who are just like I was 15 years ago. This year I had the honor of attending the TWA 800 15th anniversary. I read the names of those lost on that doomed flight with ACCESS grief mentor, Larry Gustin, who lost his mom aboard the flight. I was amongst so many amazing, dear friends who were brought into my life by this tragedy. When I look into their eyes I do not need to explain anything, we all remember that day when our lives were changed in an instant.



Heidi Snow, founder of ACCESS, lost her fiancé on TWA Flight 800
Photo credit: Gordon M. Grant Newsday.com (7/15/11)

At the time of the crash, I was overwhelmed and had nowhere to turn. The notion that I would survive my loss was beyond my comprehension. I realized soon after the crash that only others who had been through this type of tragic loss could understand what I was going through. I shortly thereafter vowed that no one would ever have to go through the experience of losing a loved one in air disaster without the support of others who had been through it. In the fall of 1996 I founded ACCESS to bring those who have lost loved ones in air disasters together.

As ACCESS has grown over the years it has been so touching to witness the kindness of others. So many people volunteer their hard-earned knowledge and resources to help make the grieving process easier for those affected by air disasters. Our 250 volunteer grief mentors come forward simply because they remember how hard it was for them to get through each day after their sudden tragic losses.

The significant anniversaries this year inspired me to launch our first ACCESS book, **Surviving Sudden Loss: Stories from those who have lived it**, to share what has worked at ACCESS with the world. We have found that learning about another's journey through grief can provide a unique comfort to others experiencing loss. With a foreword written by Mayor Rudy Giuliani, this book contains 28 firsthand accounts of grief and survival in the wake of the sudden loss of a loved one.



All proceeds from the book benefit ACCESS

Purchase this book at: www.accesshelp.org

The book presents real-life voices of people courageously and vulnerably sharing their stories of surviving tragic losses and the remarkable people they have become through their survival.

The stories of survival in this book are for:

- those who have lost loved ones tragically

- family members and friends who are helping the bereaved through their grief
- crisis response teams who interact with those who have suddenly lost loved ones

- everyone with loved ones in their lives

Whether you have lost a loved one or not, these stories will touch you.

I feel privileged to associate with all of the remarkable, generous, and compassionate people who are involved with ACCESS as grief mentors, board members, supporters, volunteers and contributors.

We rely on your generous support to provide our care to those who call us for help. On behalf of all of us whose lives have been tragically changed in an instant, I thank you.

Sincerely,



Heidi Snow
Founder / Executive Director

SAVE THE DATE: Join us for our 8th Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces charity golf tournament and dinner on September 8, 2012!



Heidi Snow & ACCESS board member Rachel Courtney

Kevin Chessen, Jeremy Umland, Mark Riccabona & Star Varga

Comedian Scott Henry, Tiger Woods, Professional Golfer Ashley Gomes & Larry Jackson

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Thank you for your generous support! Your contributions make ACCESS possible.

7th Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces Golf Tournament to benefit ACCESS



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Grief has no timeline



Julie & Brian Sweeney on their wedding day 6/26/99

September 11, 2011 represented to me the anniversary of the death of my husband, Brian D. Sweeney, on United Airlines Flight 175. In some ways ten years have seemed like a lifetime, and in other ways it still feels like it just happened yesterday. I spent the morning at Ground Zero amongst thousands. I have been to Ground Zero many times, but this time was so very different. Amongst thousands, I finally felt my peace. I wasn't alone any more.

I am so thankful for the short time that I had with Brian. As a result of loving him, I now deal with the pain of losing him, and that's OK. There is no timeline for grieving. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. When your loved one is taken from you

along with thousands of others, you see this firsthand. No one can truly understand your pain when it happens, and many don't understand still experiencing pain ten years later. I am so proud to be a part of ACCESS – a group of survivors who come closest to understanding the tragedy of losing a loved one in an airline disaster, because we all have been there. I hope that I've helped at least one person move forward a little easier as this helps me heal and move forward just the same.

- Julie Sweeney Roth lost her husband Brian Sweeney, 38, on United Flight 175 on 9/11/01

We don't have to struggle alone

On the 10th anniversary of September 11th, it was important for me to acknowledge not just Peter and the thousands of other victims, but also myself, for moving my life forward despite being derailed that unexpected day. I felt the difference this year. Looking back at how I coped, it suddenly seems simple – I let people be there for me in whatever way they could. I also discovered ACCESS, a network of those who have endured and rebounded from the loss of a loved one in sudden air disaster-related tragedies. It was 2003 when I first participated in ACCESS' grief mentor training. Learning how I could guide someone through a horrific and traumatic loss appealed to me both as a professional and as a person who desperately needed to channel her suffering in a productive way. Heidi Snow and ACCESS have remained a cornerstone of support for me. During the most devastating times of our lives, we do not have to struggle to come out of the dark alone, and no one should have to. Having someone by your side who "gets it" and can demonstrate that life can and will be good again is an invaluable comfort that will always be appreciated.

- Karen Carlucci lost her fiancé Peter Frank, 29, in Tower One on 9/11/01



Peter Frank and dog Chavez

15 Years After TWA Flight 800



Heidi Snow and ACCESS volunteer Larry Gustin at the 15th Anniversary of TWA Flight 800

July 17, 2011 marked the 15th anniversary of the tragic explosion and crash of TWA Flight 800. As in years past, it was a time to gather to remember and honor those lost in the crash. The Flight 800 family members have become compassionate allies for each other. Over the years many have become members of ACCESS and have been volunteer grief mentors for victims of other air disasters. I feel very privileged to be a part of ACCESS' grief mentor program. By mentoring others, I am able to be a supportive listener to those going through a similar event. I have also been privileged to present an ACCESS seminar to JetBlue Airways. It was encouraging to see how the airlines want to be there for those affected by an air disaster and learn what the needs of the families and friends are. By supporting each other and other victims, I feel that we have come a long way in the last 15 years as evidenced by the lasting and caring friendships, bonds, and dedication to air safety that we all have.

- Larry Gustin lost his mother Anne on TWA Flight 800 on 7/17/96

Surviving Sudden Loss: Stories from those who have lived it

with foreword written by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani

...*"One woman, widowed on September 11, remembers reading an article about Heidi Snow years earlier, and was shocked to find herself joining Heidi to share her anguish after losing her husband. Heidi has started a club of mentors that no one wants the credentials to join. But in doing so, she has eased the path to healing for other survivors. ACCESS provides a poignant and sadly necessary role in our society, and it is essential that these families speak to each other so they remember a critical fact: that they must survive and continue."*

- Mayor Rudy Giuliani from the foreword of *Surviving Sudden Loss: Stories from those who have lived it*



Heidi Snow was inspired to create this book as a result of her own loss, from her interactions with those who have called ACCESS for help, and talking to others who have experienced the loss of loved ones suddenly.

Grief after sudden loss is a life-long journey with many common threads, but each journey is unique. This book consists of 28 real-life stories of survival after loss. The personal accounts openly describe the horror of receiving the news of loved ones' deaths and reveal how people have overcome their personal struggles with the pain and anguish that accompany the tragic, unexpected death of loved ones.

These stories bring comfort to those whose lives have been forever changed by sudden loss, those who are helping them, and anyone with loved ones in their lives. They allow everyone to hear and benefit from the voices and insights of survival from those who have experienced the grief of the sudden loss of a loved one.

This book will inspire you to survive setbacks and difficult situations, turn challenges into opportunities, appreciate those who are in your life today, and will empower you to embrace every moment of every day with the people you cherish.

All proceeds from the book benefit ACCESS

Purchase this book online at:
www.accesshelp.org



The 10th Anniversary of 9/11

My daughter is still with me



Nicole Miller

On September 11, 2001 I lost my beautiful daughter Nicole. I wondered how was I going to survive after losing a child. Ten years later I can look back, knowing that you do survive and that you learn to live in a different way, and I can continue to move forward. When you lose a loved one it is with you every day in life. They say, "Grief is like the fog, some days you can see through it and other days it's so thick you can't." This is true. The sadness can come on at anytime but we learn how to live with it. We celebrate Nicole's birthday, I light a candle at Christmas, and we talk about her all the time.

This year on the 10th anniversary we went to Pennsylvania. I did not know what to expect since I have not been back in five years. We had a dedication, Memorial and a burial. The burial was the hardest part as it brought back many memories of the earlier years, but I got through this with our Flight 93 families. Now I move forward in life as Nicole would want me to. I know that my daughter Nicole is still with me and I will see her again in heaven.

- Catherine Stefani lost her daughter Nicole, 21, on United Flight 93 on 9/11/01

The hope to make a difference

I still can't believe ten years have passed and Michael is gone. Sometimes it feels like a long time and then other times it feels like it just happened. You never get over the loss and you never forget. This 10th Anniversary was a joyous one for me. I couldn't be happier about the Memorial that was created to preserve our loved ones' memories. I was truly blessed by all those who came out to help me start September's Mission Foundation.



Michael & Monica Iken on their wedding day

I was lucky to have met Heidi 3 weeks after the horrific attacks. We were both young and had both lost our loves in tragic, unexpected ways. I was trying to figure out how I was going to start my Mission knowing very little of the process. Heidi was able to guide me through her work at ACCESS and gave me hope that I too, could make a difference. I will be forever grateful to ACCESS.

It never gets easier and I didn't move on, I moved into my new life: the life without Michael. I am remarried now with two beautiful daughters. I'm able to have this life because of my Mission to make sure we would have a fitting Memorial for all those we lost on 9/11. I was able to bring my girls to the 10th Anniversary this year and showed them where Michael's name is. I hope I have created a legacy that they will be proud of someday and will inspire them to accomplish whatever they set out to do in their lives.

- Monica Iken-Murray lost her husband Michael Iken, 37, in Tower Two on 9/11/01

Other ways you can help ACCESS

- Help us redesign the ACCESS website – volunteer your time to help or sponsor the project
- Sponsor or volunteer at our upcoming Hearts, Clubs & Aces Event on September 8, 2012
- Volunteer to help ACCESS with other fundraising efforts
- Share your memorial stories to include on our website and in future newsletters
- If you have lost a loved one in or survived an air disaster, volunteer to become an ACCESS Volunteer Grief Mentor to help others through their grief

Please contact us at info@accesshelp.org if you can help!

ACCESS relies on your generous support to provide our care to those who call us for help.

Your tax-deductible donation will make it possible for ACCESS to:

- Train and educate our Volunteer Grief Mentors
- Provide our helpline and website for those in crisis
- Produce and distribute our bereavement resources
- Expand our outreach so that those who need ACCESS know that we are here for them
- Provide free, immediate and long-term peer-to-peer bereavement counseling to those affected by air disasters

We would be so grateful to you for any amount that you can contribute in support of our efforts. Thank you!

Air Disaster Preparedness

Some of the most important work ACCESS does starts even before an air disaster occurs. Our firsthand experiences with these tragedies have taught us just how important the first few interactions after an air disaster can be. This is why ACCESS provides courses based on the hundreds of case studies of our own experiences to prepare companies, airlines and care teams that respond to aviation disasters so that they can provide the most sensitive and effective care possible.

Contact info@accesshelp.org to learn how ACCESS can train your team.

SAVE THE DATE!



Join us for our 8th Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces golf tournament, dinner, and silent/live auction on Friday, September 8, 2012!

More than just the usual charity golf tournament or fundraising auction, the Hearts, Clubs & Aces tournament is an annual event that has participants, sponsors, and volunteers alike circling the date on their calendars every year.

This memorable day includes golf, games, prizes, a cocktail party, silent auction, dinner and an exciting live auction!

To register visit www.accesshelp.org or email: info@accesshelp.org



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