

I. Basic Requirements

Criteria E

2010 Innovative Program

Joseph Vertin & Sons Funeral Home

At a Joseph Vertin & Sons Funeral Home Staff meeting this past spring, it was suggested that the "Infant/Child Loss" Support Group I facilitate initiate a walk in memory of the children we wish to remember. While it had always been a dream of mine to 'build' a memorial garden of which would contain bricks with names engraved on them, I felt it might be good to somehow incorporate the two ideas. Many times in my work with the After Care, I would hear people say what joy it brought when they saw their loved ones' name on something that was meaningful...*What a perfect way to remember our loved ones; putting their name on a brick and creating a Memorial Garden with these bricks....*

When I brought up the ideas to the support group, they thought it was great. So then the questions and action began. *"Where would this be? What shape would it be" How?" "When?"*

Many calls were made to various places; to find a spot, to find the benches, plaques, & the engraving source. Once those tasks were finished, we began to generate publicity through the local newspaper, posters and local churches. Order forms could be obtained on our Funeral Home's website and at local businesses so the bricks could be ordered to be engraved.

After inquiring about a particular 'spot', I went to see this place and found it to be very serene & comforting. It was just being developed, so it really was the 'perfect' spot for a memorial garden. Not too far from where the garden was to be, there was a walking bridge, so the walk would be perfect here also. The Support Group also came to see this 'perfect spot' and they agreed that this indeed would be perfect. I did some checking with the person in charge and found him to be most helpful in the design, placing of the benches and also placing of the memorial bricks. . I found a reading, which is now placed in the garden and also the reason the garden is in a heart shape.

A date was set, music was organized, refreshments were donated, and the program was planned. This was going to be a special event to remember those children who were taken from us too soon. This was going to be a place where we would be able to come to and find peace, comfort and shed tears if we needed to.

The day came and everyone worked together to make this event a memorable and meaningful one. We expected about 150 people, as 120 bricks were ordered to be placed in the garden. When the people arrived, they were given a balloon and a small note card, so a message could be written to their loved one and later on the walk would be let go. Stories were shared; tears as well as laughter were also part of the night. After the 'un-veiling' of the garden, the names of all the children were called off as the walk began its way to the bridge. What a site it was to see the line of people with the different colored balloons walking, many not saying a word, just listening to the names being called off. Arriving at the bridge, there were two baskets of flowers (which were donated), each person took a flower and once everyone was on the walk bridge, they threw their flower into the water and let their balloons go. It was an emotional yet comforting experience.

As part of the After Care Service, it is my desire to continue to serve & to provide 'after care' to those families we have had the privilege to work with, even if it is years later. This event being sponsored by the funeral home is another way to continue to let the families know we continue to serve, and continue to care & remember.