

AMY BIEHL FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION

AUGUST 2003

"Coming to South Africa has made it easier to deal with the loss. Here nearly everyone has a story that would make your heart break. Here I've discovered I am not the only one who has suffered."

– Linda Biehl (People Magazine, July 21, 2003)

Dear friends,

I know you only recently received our June newsletter and it is not our intention to inundate you with mail, however, this is a special edition. August 25, 2003 commemorates the ten year anniversary of Amy's death. For those of you who knew Amy, you are probably well aware of this. I am sure, like our family, you are in shock that so much time has passed. I would ask that on the 25th all of you who knew her take a few minutes to remember the Amy that brought such joy to our lives. I plan to have a margarita; I feel she might like that. August 25th will be sure to bring sorrow to many of us; I hope that you will find comfort in celebrating her life and continuing legacy.

Love,
Zach Biehl

AMY'S LEGACY~

AMY'S LEGACY IS ONE OF INSPIRATION, NOT TRAGEDY. AMY WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE OF DEDICATION, PERSEVERANCE, COURAGE, AND COMPASSION. SHE LIVED HER LIFE TO THE FULLEST, NEVER ACCEPTING FAILURE IN ANY OF HER PURSUITS. IT WAS HER GOAL TO BECOME THE BEST AND TO USE HER TALENTS TO IMPROVE THE WORLD. SHE BELIEVED IT WAS HER DUTY, AS A PERSON AFFORDED OPPORTUNITY AND EDUCATION, TO ACTIVELY SEEK SOCIAL CHANGE FOR THOSE NOT SO FORTUNATE. IT WAS HER DEDICATION AND COURAGE THAT CONTINUES TO INSPIRE SO MANY PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

AMY'S LEGACY LIVES INSIDE SO MANY PEOPLE. IT DRIVES HER MOTHER TO CONTINUE HER WORK AND FLOURISHES AMONG THE STAFF OF THE AMY BIEHL FOUNDATION TRUST IN CAPE TOWN. HER LEGACY HAS INSPIRED YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF OPPORTUNITY TO THOUSANDS OF SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH. HER LEGACY LIVES IN A FAMILY OF TEACHERS IN ST. LOUIS WHO LEARNED OF HER THROUGH A TV SHOW. IT LIVES IN THE ACTIONS OF A COUPLE FROM CANADA WHO HAVE WORKED IN HER NAME FOR SEVERAL YEARS. AMY'S LEGACY THRIVES IN THE HEARTS OF ALL OF US WHO KNEW HER AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THAT SHE NEVER MET WHO HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY HER STORY. PERHAPS MOST AMAZINGLY, HER LEGACY LIVES THROUGH TWO MEN WHO PLAYED A ROLE IN HER DEATH. TODAY, NTOBEKO PENI AND EASY NOFEMELA SPREAD AMY'S LEGACY THROUGHOUT THEIR COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA. IT IS THEIR TRANSFORMATION THAT TRULY REPRESENTS THE POWERFUL LEGACY OF AMY BIEHL. THEIR TRANSFORMATION IS WHAT AMY WAS WORKING FOR.

Amy Lives in Nwabisa Bonxo~

By Ashleigh Murphy

Nwabisa Bonxo- After School Program Coordinator

"I look at where I come from and where I am now and sometimes I can't believe it," says Nwabisa Bonxo, age 34, who has been working with the Foundation since 1999. Nwabisa first met Peter and Linda in 1998 while working as a volunteer at the New Crossroads Youth Center. The Foundation was interested in how the reading program that was run at the center by Nwabisa could be combined with a similar model run by the Family Literacy Foundation, in San Diego, California, that was run by Molly Biehl. And thus, in 1999, the Foundation started the Youth Reading Role Models Program, managed by Nwabisa.

Nwabisa was born in Langa, the second oldest township in Cape Town, then moved to the Eastern Cape for five years, returning to Cape Town to begin 6th Grade in New Crossroads. When Nwabisa started working for the Foundation she lived at home, in New Crossroads, with her parents, brothers, sisters, and her daughter; 14 people in total. Her dream was to have a place of her own by the time her daughter, Thuliswa, started high school. The violence in New Crossroads worried her and she wanted her daughter to grow up in a safer environment. In April 2002, Nwabisa and Thuliswa moved to Kenilworth, a suburb of Cape Town. Eight months later Thuliswa started 8th grade at Good Hope Seminary High School.

While working on the Youth Reading Role Models Program, Nwabisa helped to implement the program in 19 schools, both in Cape Town and George, allowing hundreds of students to benefit from the literacy program. In February 2002, Nwabisa was promoted to After School Program Coordinator, working with the Area Manager to run and manage the five after school programs in the Cape Town area. "It's been stressful, but I can handle it now. I'm looking forward to learning new skills," says Nwabisa who now coordinates 30 teachers, ensuring that the programs run smoothly for the approximately 1,000 students that go to them everyday.

"Sometimes I look around at my apartment and I can't believe myself. It didn't happen overnight. I worked for this. It's been my dream." Nwabisa has traveled to the U.S. twice during her time with the Foundation to share her story with Americans. She says her dream now is to go back to school to finish her matric (12th grade) and for her daughter to go to university. "Working for the Foundation has motivated me to have dreams for myself and see myself there one day. And one day I will be sitting there and I'll be there because of the Foundation."



Amy Biehl Foundation/Trust Ten Year Highlights

By Linda Biehl

The first and most important comment I have to make is the profound pride and respect I have for Kim, Molly and Zach and their families and friends. Their strength, support, and love never faltered from the very first moments following Amy's shocking death. There is much I could say and write about this, but I hope they know my feelings. I think the ultimate compliment I can give them is that Amy would be honored and proud of their strength and ability to go forward positively, living their own lives successfully. I know that it has not been easy. I also believe that Amy would be very proud and delighted to be "auntie" to Zander, Will, Elizabeth, and the ones to come.

One of the most amazing and startling results of Amy's death has been the response from people around the world. Our family began to hear from friends, strangers, and media immediately following the event. Even more amazing is that it continues to happen today.

In looking back over the years I realize how important the first trip to South Africa was for me, personally, and for our family, including Scott Meinert. As Peter said on that trip (October 1993), he "could feel the revolution in the air". To know that Amy had some small part in the quest for democracy in South Africa was fortifying to our family. Instead of "closure", which people always ask about, it was the opening of a door that allowed us to learn and participate (in another small way) in South Africa's journey to freedom. South Africans opened their arms to us, sharing their remorse, but at the same time, they said, "come help".

The learning process that has occurred during the past ten years is something to be shared, but it will take more time and space than I have here. However, the opportunity to work with the United States Government (USAID), the South African Government (various departments), schools, colleges, universities, as well as wonderful individuals, to begin and expand the Amy Biehl Foundation (USA) and The Amy Biehl Foundation Trust (SA) has been both rewarding and challenging. The real learning has come from the people "on the ground". As Peter said, "we are trying to marry the wisdom of the streets with public policy." So many people from various walks of life have contributed to the work of the two organizations. There are countless names I wish I could list yet, space will not permit it. All of you should know in your hearts how instrumental you have been in contributing to "Amy's magic".

The ability to participate in the formal and informal Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa and share that experience internationally has been a

tremendously rewarding experience. I thank Easy Nofemela and Ntobeko Peni for helping me demonstrate to the world the importance of working towards peace and productive RECONCILIATION.

Although there is much to highlight, I am overwhelmed with pride as I look back at the work that has been done, and continues to be done, in Amy's name. South Africans, Americans, and others have all contributed to the efforts of the Foundation/Trust. People representing all ages, faiths, and backgrounds have come together to help create functional young people, and allow them to become productive citizens contributing to a peaceful world.

I have experienced great humility in the presence of many world leaders: Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Ahmad Kathrada, and Dullah Omar, among others, in South Africa. Kofi Annan, The Clintons, Madeleine K. Albright, Ambassadors Lyman, Joseph, Lewis, Hume, Congressman Houghton, Lewis, Gephardt, Bono and so many more who have encouraged the work. It is so difficult to mention all the names, but one of the most surprising experiences was to be included in the award ceremony at which Nelson Mandela was given the Congressional Medal and upon opening the program and seeing the dedication to Amy Biehl. I know Honorable Amo Houghton had much to do with that- Thank you!

As much as meeting "those in positions of power" has been exciting, I find spending time with children brings joy to my heart. I receive great hope for the future as I look into the faces of children in Guguletu, South Africa, as well as in the faces of children in places like St. Louis, Missouri. The greatest highlight of all is that Amy's legacy has helped enlighten and provide hope to the children of the world.

Finally, I thank the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust staff, volunteers, friends, partners in South Africa, and all of our supporters in the USA. You all have produced so many highlights over the last ten years. I hope you will continue to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Our simple newsletter over the years has recorded the humble history of the Amy Biehl Foundation. Peter Biehl did most of the writing of that history and, as we move forward, we shall not forget his input.



A Ten Year Reflection

By Zach Biehl

Ten years... WOW! Time sure flies by. When I look back at the last ten years, I become overwhelmed. So much has occurred, so many tough times, so many tears, and yet, so many inspiring and humbling events.

August 25, 1993 began as a good day. My mom and I spent the day shopping and preparing for the start of my junior year in high school. Not long after we returned home, the phone rang. Life would never be the same after that moment. Until that day, I had lived somewhat of a charmed life. I lived in a beautiful city with my loving parents and three sisters that, although they caused me countless headaches, we all got along very well with each other. Until that day, I never had anyone close to me die. I had traveled, seen so many things and experienced so much in my 16 years... but I was still young. I still had my youth. That all changed with one phone call, one moment in time.

For me the toughest part was knowing my family, the people I love so much, hurt so bad. Those who know me are aware that I am somewhat of a "tough guy." I am a protector. On that day, I could not protect my family from the pain. I could not protect Amy. The fact that I could not save her has weighed very heavily on my soul.

Following the phone call, the frenzy began. Reporters, friends, and strangers set upon our house. There was no time to grasp what had occurred. There was no sleep, no clear thought, no way to ease the pain for my mom or the rest of the family. In the days and weeks that followed, reporters camped in front of our house. We saw Amy's body on television. We received thousands of letters, most expressing condolences, and some that represented the hatred and intolerance that brought Amy to South Africa. I opened one letter written in blood; Amy's picture had been stabbed. Though still young, I lost my youth. I could never view the world in the same way.

I was angry. I wanted revenge, despite the view of my parents. But that all changed when we went to South Africa for the first time. It was on that trip that I realized that if I had grown up under the type of oppression that existed in South Africa, I would not have lived to be 16. I would have been the most militant of thinkers and activists. My anger was gone. On the plane flight home I realized I would never see my sister again and it was then that the void developed in my heart.

As the weeks turned to years, I've tried to live a normal life. My parents did the best they could to allow me to do so. But, how does one live a "normal" life after that? For a long time, I avoided South Africa. This proved difficult since the Foundation had now been established and my parents were completely absorbed in the continuation of Amy's legacy.

I would like to write briefly about my parents. I am often asked if it is hard having them travel so often. I have been asked if I wish they would stop going to South Africa. My answer is sure, it is hard, but not once have I felt resentment towards them. They have been, and continue to be, the best parents

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imaginable. My mom has always been one of my best friends and she will always be. My dad was so loving and taught me how to love back. I have always been so proud of them; words can not adequately express the love, respect, and admiration I feel for them. They have made me who I am today.

For the last ten years, every morning, when I wake up, the first thing I think about is Amy's death. I continue to battle the sleepless nights and, to this day, every time the phone rings, I get nervous. Every day there is a void, there is something missing... Amy, and now, my dad. I know that every time something good happens I will feel a bit of sorrow along with the joy. They will not be there when I get married, nor will they share in the birth of my children. These are the tough things I have faced and will continue to face.

Ten years...WOW! So much has been accomplished. Amy's legacy is more alive then ever. Thousands of people have been so positively impacted by her Foundations. I have watched my parents initiate, change and improve the lives of so many people. I have seen my mom carry on after the passing of my father with her usual amount of grace and courage. We started with \$20 checks and today we have the Amy Biehl Foundation (USA) and the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust (South Africa). You are all aware of the programs that have assisted so many South African people. Who knows how many lives have been impacted by Amy's legacy?

As for me, I keep plugging along. I have found joy and fulfillment in working for the Foundation as the American Operations Manager. I am coaching football at Santa Ana College which also gives me great joy and fulfillment. Coaching allows me to pass along the lessons I have learned from Amy and the rest of my family with the hope that I will have developed good people who will help us facilitate social change. I have a wonderful fiancé, named Denise. She helps me deal with the pain on a daily basis and I can't begin to describe the love and gratitude I feel for her. My mom is now my roommate, along with Hannah, my faithful dog. I have two studly nephews to play with and a niece I adore. I am waiting the arrival of my fourth niece or nephew this fall. I am very proud of my sisters, they are wonderful mothers and I love them very much.

I do not seek closure. I will celebrate the lives of Peter and Amy Biehl and I hope you will do the same. Their legacies are those of inspiration, not tragedy. I miss them so much; however, I am overwhelmed with pride. I want all of our friends to know that Amy's legacy will live on. I have lost so much in the last ten years. I will not allow her legacy, or the legacy of my father, to fade. The only way I know how to deal with the pain that has been cast upon my family is to continue down the path so admirably paved by Amy and Peter Biehl. I thank all of you, our extended family, for contributing to "Amy's magic".



Correspondence and/or contributions may be forwarded to the following address:

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