

Parents Release Doves in Honor of Lost Children

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The Mothers Unique Grief Support Group and onlookers gathered at the Alton Amphitheater to release doves in honor of their children.

On Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023, nearly 50 people came together to pray and watch the doves take flight. Tears were shed as Mothers Unique member Rita Young read a poem that noted there are words to describe a person who lost a spouse and a child who lost a parent, “but there is no word to describe a person who loses a child because the loss is like no other.”

“First of all, I’d like to give God all the praise, the honor and the glory for helping this group with the journey that we have been on,” said Mothers Unique founder Mary Jason. “I’d like to thank my grief support group for being so devoted and dedicated. They have been wonderful. They have helped me through the whole thing. Every walk, they were with me, and I thank them.”

Many parents were present, including Michael Brown, Sr., and his wife Cal Brown. Michael Brown, Sr., is the father of Michael Brown, Jr., the teenager who was killed in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and whose death sparked nationwide conversations about police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Mothers Unique decided to hold the dove release to spread awareness about their group and how they can help grieving mothers in the Riverbend area. The group’s mission statement is to support mothers who have lost their children, no matter the age of the child or the cause of death. “Mothers” is actually an acronym: “Moms Obligated To Healing Encouragement Recovery Support.”

The grief support group was started by Jason in honor of her son in 2017. The members reach out to grieving mothers by sending flowers and a letter, which expresses their sympathy and invites them to the group. They meet from 4–6 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at the Alton YWCA, located at 304 E. 3rd Street in Alton.

The group has eight dedicated members and regularly welcomes newcomers who just want to sit in and see if the group might be for them. Not all of these mothers decide to stay; Jason understands it can be overwhelming for some, especially those whose grief is fresh. But the group is always there for those who need it, and they offer to help however they can.

Mothers Unique wants to expand, with plans to eventually host a banquet and invite a speaker who can talk about healing after losing a child. Jason said they have “some big ideas, but it’s some big money.” They’re in the process of applying for grants that will “help us help more people.”

That being said, murmurs of agreement were heard as Alton Mayor David Goins voiced his prayers that the group remains small and there are no more losses in the community.

“The dove represents peace. Lord, I pray peace over the hearts of these grieving mothers,” Goins said in his closing prayer. “I hope this group never grows.”

The doves were provided by Roy Williams. Parents said the names of their children as they released the doves. If you're interested in learning more about the Mothers Unique Grief Support Group, call the [Alton YWCA](#) at (618) 465-7774 or reach out to Mary Jason directly at 618-468-1103.