

TRAGEDY LEADS TO NEW SUPPORT GROUP

Making A Difference Laura C. Jackson | Special to the Washington Gazette

E. Jean Brockington was working in her office 12 years ago when she got a call from the police about her son, Derek. "They wanted to come and talk to me," said Brockington, who was a real estate broker at the time. "They wouldn't tell me where he was or answer any of my questions. I knew something was dreadfully wrong." While she waited, Brockington read her Bible. She was prepared when the police arrived and gave her the news: Her only child had been murdered. Her 27-year-old son, who owned rental properties, appeared to have been a victim of a robbery while collecting rents in a Southwest neighborhood in the District. Police never found the killer. Today, Brockington, who is now a minister, heads a charity in honor of her son and founded the Mothers of Murdered Children support group. "When I was looking for support I couldn't find anyone," said Brockington, who lives in Mitchellville. "I went to a therapist but she hadn't walked this walk. She wasn't helpful." Brockington didn't start the group right away because she was struggling to accept the blow. "I could barely help myself," she said. "You got my only baby. You could literally go insane behind this." Not wanting to burden her family with her grief, Brockington leaned heavily on her faith. "I didn't have time to be angry at God because I needed Him too much," she said. Eventually she understood that she needed to use her pain to help other women. Today, three women attend the group regularly, and Brockington aims to get the word out to others. "You can say things to another mother that you can't say to friends and family," Brockington said.

Noting that people often expect grieving to end after six months, Brockington said, "People tell you to get over it, but they have their children and grandchildren. If I share my feelings with another grieving mother, she understands." Losing her son not only cut off the possibility of grandchildren but also ruined other hopes and dreams, Brockington said. "My plan was for Derek to take over my real estate business at some point and for him to take care of me," she said. Staying connected to her faith and other support systems helped her deal with her grief, Brockington said. Focusing on future goals helped as well. Eventually Brockington took classes in psychology and is now pursuing a doctorate in pastoral care/counseling. At some point her smile returned, although little incidents reminded her of the wound that never fully heals.

"Seven years later, while I was in school, I found out that a friend's son had died," she said. "I was sitting with a small group of classmates, and I just cried and cried." You don't fully recover from the loss of a child, Brockington said, you simply learn to live with it. Mothers in the support group meet once a month to talk or weep if needed. Occasionally the women get together for dinner. With Brockington's encouragement, women begin to deal with guilt, anger and other emotions. As for Brockington, she learned to let many things go. "I was frustrated with the police because I was getting no response," she said. "They would say, 'We're working on it.' After two years, I let that go. God is the equalizer, and it is not my job to chase them down." As for the killer, she says, "I felt pity because no one taught him the value of life. That person can't have any peace or joy." Brockington says the support group will sponsor community awareness forums as well as sessions on conflict resolution for young men. But she's most passionate about helping moms. Said Brockington: "I want to let them know we've created an environment where you can start the journey to becoming whole." How she makes a difference: Brockington is the founder of the Derek Anthony Moore Charity and the Mothers of Murdered Children support group. The group meets at 7p.m. on the third Thursday of every month at 4200 Forbes Blvd, Suite 103. Call 301-918-9799 (Reprint of the original Gazette.net article)