

For their loved ones lost

■ **At hospice**, family and friends gather to remember

■ **Annual ceremony** sustains those at 'bereavement tree'

BY NICHOLAS SPANGLER

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In Bay Shore, outside the little Cape house where Hospice Care Network counsels the families of Long Island's dead and dying, there is a tall fir. It's called the bereavement tree. On the first Sunday of December each year, it is hung with dozens of white rectangular cards bearing the names of the dead.

Yesterday, hundreds of their friends and relatives gathered next to the tree to recite the names as part of an annual memorial service held by the Bay Shore agency for nearly a decade. Mary Gravania, Care Network's vice president for counseling, said the event "is an hour that is carved out when the loved one is remembered . . . it sustains them [the families] through the rest of the season."

Carson Lalli Pohlman's name was on the tree. The little girl, not yet a year old, died in 2006. Anthony J. Zarba's name was also on the tree.

He died at 88, a year ago yesterday. Inside the hospice head-

quarters, his son Paul and wife, Ann, recalled him.

He was a professional clarinetist, a painter, a grower of tomatoes and figs in his garden. "That last night when he wasn't able to stand and get into bed, I called the nurse that night," said Ann Zarba, who is 83 and used to be a nurse herself. "It's a kind of nursing not everyone is able to do. When I was younger, I was not able to do it, and I certainly can't now."

Anthony Zarba had kidney cancer and had undergone five courses of chemotherapy, which was all he wanted.

"I put that to my dad's being Italian — he had his own way of doing things," said Paul, 53. "He said, 'I'm 88, I've had a healthy life, I'm not going to go through with this.'"

Gravania said she has a married friend who has a terminal disease and a husband in denial. "All he can say is, 'You're going to be fine, you're going to be

fine' . . . but she's living in a body that's letting her down. He can fool himself, but she can't."

Outside, it was bitterly cold.

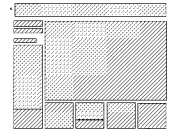
Carson's parents, John and Allison Pohlman, and her big brother and sister, Johnny and Carrie, were there.

They remember her face and her belly laugh she gave when Johnny and Carrie pretended to trip over the dog.

But Carson did not have 88 years and children and grandchildren; she had only eight months, which is something her parents, who are religious people, have a hard time understanding.

"Why would God do this to a 7-month, 8-month-old baby? And why to us? It's not like we're horrible people," said Carson's father, John Pohlman.

Pohlman, of Dix Hills, said despite his family's pain, coming to the event and supporting the hospice "helps Carson live through us by helping us help others."



Holiday 'escape' for ill kids, parents



Alison and John Pohlman and their children, Carrie, 8, front left, and Johnny, 11, join in song at Hospice Care Network in Bay Shore.