



HEATHER CORY/NEWS STAFF PHOTO

Dorothy Stone wipes away the tears at New Hope Hospice of Nevada's Light up a Life, an event to remember loved ones who died within the last year.

# Hospice helps holiday grief

By JEFF POPE

Willigan.

They wiped away tears as they sang low and mournfully. Yet, despite the sadness they showed in remembering a loved one, by the end of the ceremony some said they gained strength from sharing their grief and from listening to words of inspiration.

The Light Up a Life ceremony was a cathartic experience for families and friends who will be coping with their first holiday season following the death of a loved one. New Hope Hospice of Nevada Inc. organized the candle vigil on Dec. 2 to help families with the grieving process by remembering and honoring those who have died.

Marcella Willigan called it a wonderful ceremony and praised the hospice for treating her like family while her husband was in their care and even in the three months since he died. She will be spending the holidays without her husband of 42 years, Dr. Donald

"These people are caring and wonderful. They lift the burden from you," she said. "My husband and I very much appreciated their help on our behalf."

With festive music and colorful decorations everywhere, the holiday season should be a time of happiness and fun. But it can be a depressing period for people who have recently lost a loved one, Chris Grisste, a nurse with New Hope, said.

"Celebrating can seem disrespectful or irrelevant. You may feel like it's a betrayal of a loved one," she said. "But it still does not mean we hide ourselves away to keep from celebrating."

The Rev. Judy Andrews of New Hope said the ceremony was not a holiday celebration but a celebration of life. Candles bearing the names of the departed were placed in a bed of salt, because those who died were the salt of the Earth — decent, dependable and unpretentious.

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ERVING GREEN VALLEY RANCH, MACDONALD RANCH, ANTHEM AND SEVEN HILLS

# SOUTH VALLEY NEWS

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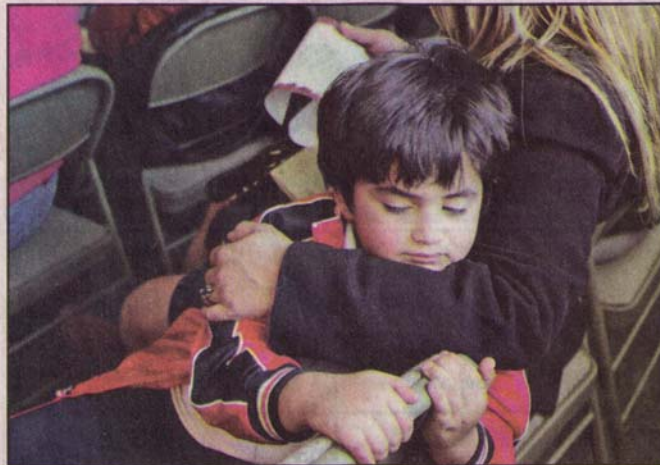
# Dealing with death can be difficult during holidays

Dealing with the loss of a loved one is hard work, Andrews said. Many people put off dealing with grief because it is difficult, but then they find the holidays remind them of just how long their loved ones have been gone.

"You have to pace yourself. Choose which traditions you'll continue, which ones you'll put off for a while and which ones you won't continue at all," she said.

The Henderson-based hospice offers continual counseling for 13 months after someone dies.

Other support groups help people handle the holidays after losing a spouse due to divorce. Park Baker, founder and president of Divorced & Widowed Adjustments Inc., said that many of the divorced people he's spoken to have said they prefer to



HEATHER CORY/NEWS STAFF PHOTO

Giovanni Ortiz, 4, holds onto his mother, Adriana, as they remember his grandfather, Robert Monanez, during Light up a Life.

change holiday traditions to cope with being rejected.

"Holidays tend to be a very difficult time," he said. "The thing I hear over and over

again is, 'I wish I could take a quantum leap over Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year.' We encourage people to do something different.

## For more information

For more information on Divorced & Widowed Adjustments meetings, call 735-5544 or visit [www.info4nv.org](http://www.info4nv.org) on the Web. New Hope Hospice can be reached at 736-8180 or at [www.newhopehospiceofnevada.com](http://www.newhopehospiceofnevada.com) on the Web.

Some people in our group get together and have a holiday together, which helps to support each one."

One of the most important things people who are grieving can do is to bring someone to a meeting who can be supportive, Baker said.

"It gets the person there maybe a little sooner than normally and the other person learns about the program," he said.

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