Oh the "dog days of summer", what does that even mean? Most people think the "dog days" are those summer days so devastatingly hot that even dogs lie around doing absolutely nothing because it is simply too hot to move. It’s these days that many people usually just complain or simply stay inside enjoying the comforts of the air conditioning.

Thankfully, we don’t get many of these days in Wisconsin; so our summers (although short) are filled up quickly with summer vacations, baseball/softball, cook-outs, trips up north, fishing, boating, parades, fireworks, the Polka Days and Farmer’s Markets. We might even get in a game of golf, ride a bike, see a race or two, or maybe eat a cream puff (or two) at the State Fair, and lots of family and friend gatherings. One only need look across the street, in a park, or even on Facebook to see all the memories that are being made, except . . . wait, we don’t have that opportunity to make any new memories. Or do we?

Yes, you actually continue enjoying life and the activities that summertime brings. It will be different; but let’s face it, life is different now. So, how can you do this? You do this when you wake up each day. Before you even get out of bed, say a prayer, meditate, read a positive quote, or just simply look in the mirror and say, “Today is going to be a good day.” Your loved one continues to live in you, so make it special, because of the love you have for your loved ones. Look at your loved one’s picture and say, “today is for YOU and ME!”

Yes, the pain you are experiencing doesn’t completely go away, but lessens with time and what is left can be managed. Rise up and enjoy the life you still have to live, with the people who are still very much alive and active in your life. Rise up for your loved ones who never meant for you to stop living, but who are ever present in your heart. Hold onto the bonds of love with them.

My challenge for all of you is to go out and explore new places. Make new memories, all while remembering your loved ones. Do something you always said you would do, but never took the time. Take family and friends with you, and take your loved one with you too. Talk to them along the way, take pictures, laugh and tell stories, and share the moments. Celebrate those still in your physical presence and share the love you have for life – you are alive – you make a difference. Love is truly the greatest gift of all, so why not share it? Share it not only with others, but with yourself, you deserve it!

Last year while in Portage, Wisconsin, I discovered Garden of Angels. It is open to the public and is run by Joanne Alt, who lost her husband to suicide. She opened her flower gardens to others who have had loved ones die by suicide. She calls it “a place of peace and hope.” There are angel figurines and 18 different types of flowering plants. She encourages visitors to cut flowers and take a bouquet home or simply sit in the garden and enjoy. There is no cost, but donations are welcomed. If Joanne is there, she will greet you with a smile and a friendly hug. It is located at W11360 Highway 33, Portage, WI. Sharing Robby’s story and hearing Joanne’s story was one of my sister’s greatest memories from last summer. Just sharing our little find from last year with you.

Peace and Love my friends, Jeanette