

Christelle, then 15, turned away from "Law and Order," got up and squinted through the peephole. Two policemen stood on her porch. They asked for her mother, then ushered her to another room: There had been a car accident, they explained. Police suspected that

Christelle, who had been listening by the open door, howled.

"I don't think I've screamed so loud in my life," Christelle said. "It was just raw emotion."

She recalled that three-year-old memory last week sitting on a wooden bench across from the chapel at Meredith College, where she is a freshman. Gazing at the pond, Christelle wore a distant look. Grief is hard for adults to manage. But when you're a teenager, she said, the voyage can be even lonelier. Everyone thinks they know what you're feeling. There are few resources to help you cope.

The night she learned of her father's crash, Christelle walked around like a zombie, she said. When her boyfriend, Brian Giovannini, called later that night, she was crying.

"She was always daddy's little girl," he said. "She went to him for strength, for advice. When something came up in her life, he was the first person she talked to."

That night, Christelle slept with her mother, Marie-Alix, in bed. Her baby sister, Margot, who would turn 2 in the following week, was asleep in a nearby cradle. In coming days, they picked up her sister Emilie from violin camp. And the ordeal began.

She learned the details of her father's death: His car had malfunctioned, gone over the median strip, landed in oncoming traffic, flipped over. He was 40. She endured the days-long wait for his body to be brought home. Neighbors cleaned their house. They brought food.

"We had ham for about two months," she said.

But Christelle couldn't eat. She kept to herself, stayed away from the phone. The one time she did pick it up, the caller asked about her father's organs; her dad was a donor. She just wished the reality would go away: She had just one parent. No father to help her choose her first car that fall. Or walk her down the aisle one day.

"She couldn't believe it," Giovannini said. "Even after the funeral, it was hard for her to accept."

Life changed. At school that fall, Christelle kept up with homework and her clubs. But in the evening, with time alone to focus on herself, she faced the pain. Christelle cried in her room. Her mother sent her to a church counselor, and to a school counselor. Christelle resented them, feeling that they didn't understand what she was facing. Mail addressed to him arrived. Friends who had been out of town when the crash happened asked about her dad. People kept dredging up his death.

"You have to face it again and again," she said. "What I hated the most was 'I've been there' from people who hadn't even lost a parent yet. How could the tell me it was going to be OK?"

A CHANCE TO HELP

Christelle found solace in going to church each week and becoming more active in youth group. "It had more meaning for me," she said.

Then Christelle came up with the idea of researching teen grief for a Girl Scout project. She had been a Girl Scout since second grade, rising from Brownie to Senior Cadette. She loved the support system the organization gave her, which helped her learn more about herself. She earned all of the pins and completed almost all the projects she needed to earn a Gold Award,

the Scouts' highest honor. The only thing left to do was a research project: Teen grief, she decided, was the perfect subject.

She started working toward the award in January of her senior year, going to public and college libraries. She found scant to nothing on the subject of teen grief. She tried Barnes & Noble: same thing.

She met JoAnn Spees, director of the Council on Adolescents of Catawba County. Spees helped her find enough information to start her research and talked with her about her plan to present it. Christelle decided that her research could benefit more than herself: She would create a teen-to-teen brochure for others struggling with grief.

"She is one of the most capable young women I've ever met," Spees said. "She's very talented, has an incredible joie de vivre and a maturity level beyond her years."

Now, Christelle had a cause, Spees said. After visiting the Council, Christelle left with books and diaries on grief to read at home. She read everywhere, even on the beach. She interviewed classmates who had lost parents to illness. She talked to psychologists, to teachers whose parents had died when they were young. The Gold Award project required 50 hours of research; Christelle, who completed the project that October, logged more than 92.

Her desire to learn was never sated. What were the stages of grief she would go through? What would Emilie and Margot face? Her notebook was the size of a phone book when she finished. Her journal was full of pages expressing her jumble of feelings: denial sometimes, longing the next.

The brochure she created is simple and powerful. A childlike drawing of a heart graces the cover. Inside, there's a road map showing the journey through grief with exits to shock, the "whys" (why them? why me? why now?) and healing. She reminds teens that there's no speed limit or deadline for working through grief. On the back, she offers tips and explains that she is a teen who has lost someone too.

The brochure not only earned Christelle her Gold Award—an honor achieved by about 3,500 Girl Scouts each year—but also led to her being named one of this year's Girl Scout Gold Award Young Women of Distinction—an honor shared by only 10 Scouts. Christelle was chosen because of the impact her brochure had on the community, said Michele Landa, spokeswoman for Girl Scouts of the USA. Catawba County's council on Adolescents has circulated more than 800 copies to school counselors, pediatricians and psychologists. It has been used to help students at a school where three teens died in a car accident. Everyone always wants more, Spees said.

As part of her award, Christelle is in Washington, D.C., this week for a Girl Scout anniversary celebration and gala. She is thought to be the first North Carolina Girl Scout to receive the honor since the award began three years ago, Landa said. Christelle will receive a White House tour and attend a luncheon presided by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She is scheduled to meet influential women such as fashion designer Vera Wang U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Dole and Kathryn Sullivan, the first American woman to walk in space.

"Isn't that cool?" Christelle said.

AN EMERGING WOMAN

Doing the research, Spees said, gave her a deeper sense of maturity. She had always been self-assured. But when Christelle spoke at a luncheon put on by the Council on Adolescents last year, Spees saw an emerging woman.

"She was calm, confident," Spees said. "She just had a sense of new control, a peace

that she was conveying. Before it was a cause, but now that the project was finished she found a sense of closure."

At Meredith, Christelle looks young in a pale yellow cardigan and jeans, her smooth skin and dark brown ponytail accented by a red and green striped bow. But she has grown in ways that don't show. She pulls out a memorial card with a grainy black and white picture of her dad, showing his hair parted on the side, his quirky smile.

"I see so much of my sisters in him now," she said, looking at the picture while the chapel bells ring. "His smile is exactly like my little 4-year-old's. I'll never be able to look at her and not see him. Dad is with us in his own way."

It has been three years, but Christelle still returns to her grief from time to time. Thinking about a special moment with her dad can cause the tears to run again. She gains comfort from the silver circle of moons and suns on her finger—the ring he bought her in Charleston, S.C., and that she still wears every day. And she leans on her faith. She has even taught her youngest sister that to talk to Daddy she can pray. Sometimes you have to turn things over to God, she said, and everything will be OK. ●

IN RECOGNITION OF NOTTINGHAM INSURANCE & FINANCIAL SERVICES

● Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Nottingham Insurance & Financial Services which is being honored by the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce with its Outstanding Small Business of the Year.

Nottingham Insurance & Financial Services represents one of the great success stories of family owned businesses. Since its founding in 1917, it has seen 4 generations of family members in successful perpetuation grow and expand its business. Over the years, it has grown from providing property and casualty services to the residents of Central New Jersey to providing group health and life insurance, and financial services.

While also providing valuable insurance and financial services to the residents of Central New Jersey, Nottingham Insurance & Financial Services has also played a vital role in the community. They support numerous youth leagues and teams while also serving on several local board and organizations such as the Hamilton Township Library Board of Trustees and Meals on Wheels of Hamilton.

Nottingham Insurance & Financial Services is a fine example of the positive and vital role that local businesses play within our communities. ●

HONORING SHARON DARLING

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a truly inspiring woman, Ms. Sharon Darling. Ms. Darling is this year's recipient of the prestigious National Humanities Medal. President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush will be personally presenting this award to Ms. Darling at a ceremony to take place next month.

Sharon Darling is the founder and president of the National Center for