

THE GAZETTE

1959 ♦ 50TH ANNIVERSARY ♦ 2009

Wednesday September 16, 2009

GAITHERSBURG • MONTGOMERY VILLAGE

Letting go

Butterfly release helps loved ones say goodbye

BY PATRICIA M. MURRET
STAFF WRITER

Clara Poole Fisher, 48, of Gaithersburg sat at a table in Bohrer Park while a teenager painted a blue butterfly on her cheek. Her late brother's favorite color was blue and she and her sister-in-law, Kathy Poole, 51, of Gaithersburg had come to remember him.

In recent weeks, Poole had been "seeing butterflies everywhere," she said.

"It hurts her all of the time because she lived with him and all, but it hurts me on special days," Fisher said. "But I do think today is kind of a letting-go day."

Fisher and Poole gathered with about 150 others Saturday at the park to honor loved ones in a serene, but music-filled ceremony organized by Hospice Caring Inc., followed by a butterfly release.

Charles Poole Jr., a Gaithersburg resident born and raised in Poolesville, died in January 2008 of brain cancer, said his wife, who wore a peridot and blue topaz butterfly necklace from her husband.

Several minutes later, Gary Thorud, president the Gaithersburg nonprofit which provides emotional and practical support to the terminally ill and runs a bereavement center in Bohrer Park, read Charles Poole's name amid hundreds of others.

Volunteers released hundreds of monarch and painted lady butterflies to the skies amid tears, gasps and laughter.

The event, which allowed guests to walk through a butterfly tent prior to the release, was based on a Native American legend that says if you whisper a wish to a butterfly, the winged creature will carry it to the Great Spir-



NAOMI BROOKNER/THE GAZETTE

As her late husband's name was read aloud, a butterfly landed on Silver Spring resident Berna Goldberg at the Wings of Caring Butterfly Release at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg.

See BUTTERFLIES, Page A-22

BUTTERFLIES

■ Continued from Page A-1

it and the wish will come true.

Butterflies cannot speak, the legend goes, so the wish will remain a secret.

When her husband's name was read, a butterfly landed on her chest near her heart, said Poole, who saw the arrival as a sign.

"They are sacred, I believe it," said Berna Goldberg of Silver Spring, whose husband, Edward, died of can-

cer five years ago. As his name was read, a butterfly landed on her head. It remained there 20 minutes later.

"I'm not taking it off," she beamed. "This may be my new winter look, I don't know."

Shortly after her husband's death, she said, she went to his grave, "falling apart," and crying, asked him to send her a sign. She watched a butterfly roam three rows of graves, stop at his grave, then fly away, she said. In sad times, she has arrived home to see her front door covered in butterflies.

Lynn Lee of Derwood, whose daughter Nicole, a 2007 graduate of Col. Zadok Magruder High School in Rockville, died in a January 2008 car crash, said that she has been raising butterflies to help her through her grief, she said. A naturalist at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds thought it would be helpful to watch life change from one form to another.

"Just to hold them for a moment, it represents so much healing," said Lee.

To her, the butterfly represents the afterlife and her daughter, who led a short and beautiful life.



NAOMI BROOKNER/THE GAZETTE

Lara Ring and her son, William Alfred Ring III, 10, of Bethesda assist in releasing butterflies during the Wings of Caring Butterfly Release at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg.