

Galesburg native's book a practical guide for death

By KELLIE BRAMLET

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GALESBURG —

Galesburg native Kat Reed and her husband Tim were planning a quiet, courthouse wedding for Aug. 8, 2008, when her father died the day before, Aug. 7. Reed had stayed up all night with her father until he passed away around 4:30 a.m.

But she and Tim decided to get married anyway. The date of the wedding was important to them, as it was both their parents' anniversary. Reed said she and her husband have always been happy they stuck to the plan, but it left them with a lot to handle.

The couple had just moved from Seattle to Stillwater, Minn., just outside St. Paul and purchased a house. They had a lot going on, Reed said. So to handle the logistics of her father's death — the bills, the accounts and everything of the kind — she depended on an Excel document that she had created after her mother died one year before. It got her through.

"When you lose someone close to you go on auto-pilot, and you're not really sure what to do," Reed said.

Reed said she had depended on that Excel document to make sure everything was taken care of. That same document is now the foundation for her guidebook, "Begin Here: Helping Survivors Manage."

"It's not an emotional book," Reed said. "It's what needs to be done."

In March one of Reed's friends suggested she turn her list into a book. Initially, she dismissed the idea, but then she remembered how hard the whole process had been and wondered how people who didn't have four helpful siblings like she did were able to pick up the pieces after the loss of a loved one. She decided her friend was right. Perhaps the book could be a way Reed could help.

She contacted Mark Thomas, Knox County coroner, and a co-owner of Watson Funeral Home, 1849 N. Seminary St., who she had worked with after her parents' deaths. Thomas agreed that there was a need for such a guide. Everyone always asks for a similar product, he told her.

So Reed began researching. She couldn't find a single resource similar to her book idea. Well, there was one she said, but it was \$245 and much longer than she ever would have wanted to put up with.

Reed published her work through Legacy Book Solutions, a self-publishing service and paid for everything out of her own pocket. She ordered 500 copies and has sold 50 so far.

The book, which Reed describes as "part checklist, part appointment calendar, part address book,"

covers everything from who to notify and how to delegate, from contacting the cable company to cleaning a home.

Reed said when she approached others with the topic of dealing with a loved one's death from a logistical stand point, they all responded, "I wouldn't know where to begin." So in answer to their struggles, Reed titled her book, "Begin Here."

"The idea is completely altruistic. I really just want to help people. And I'm excited to be getting good feedback," Reed said.

Next on her own personal checklist, Reed hopes to translate the book into Spanish and create various editions specific to different causes of death and relationships. "Begin Here" is available for \$19.99 through assisted living facilities, hospitals, funeral homes and online at www.helpingsurvivorsmanage.com/

kbramlet@register-mail.com