

# Center Highlights

## From the Founders-



***“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.” (Helen Keller)***

We are celebrating the Center’s 15 year anniversary, thus reflecting on the passage of time and all we’ve experienced, taught and learned. Our volunteers are at the core of our ability to provide the bereavement programs we offer. Looking back, hundreds of willing men and women have contributed in numerous ways to our success - hours of preparing mailings, developing fundraisers, preparing crafts or sewing quilts, undertaking maintenance tasks and working on the board, to name a few. In addition we have the hands-on interaction from volunteers within our children’s programs: Nello’s Corner and Camp Millie.

We have trained over 140 people for these roles, logging thousands of hours of their time. We asked a few seasoned volunteers what working at the Center has been like for them. Here are their responses:

• **Why did you choose the Center for Loss and Bereavement to volunteer?**

**John-** *“I wanted to work with children! And working with young children proved to be much more interesting than I ever expected.”*

**Jake-** *“As a kid feeling accepted and safe were big desires, so I wanted to do something to help other kids along those lines.”*

**Robb-** *“My mother died in 2004. I realized I needed a volunteer outlet to assist an even more vulnerable population that deals with bereavement at an extremely unfair age - children.”*

• **What advice do you have for future volunteers?**

**John-** *“To expect the unexpected!”*

**Jake-** *“Trust the training. I was able to recall what we were taught and it became 2nd nature.”*

**Robb-** *“Recognize that you will hear some tough stuff...and that you will get back more than you give because kids are so amazing.”*

• **What has been the hardest part?**

**John-** *“It was trying to work with a child who was having a difficult day.”*

**Jake-** *“The hardest part at first was wanting to save the kids. It was hard to see them cry. Now it’s easier in knowing I am there to assist them and when the deep and intense feelings come out, I know they are on a good path in dealing and living with their grief.”*

**Robb-** *“Recognizing that you cannot take the kids’ pain away and that their loss will affect them at every future stage of their lives.”*

• **What is a highlight of your time here at the Center?**

**John-** *“Playing a game they loved and that they then expected me to play every time from then on.”*

**Jake-** *“Hearing these words from one of the kids, ‘I want to give a shout out to Nello’s. It makes me feel safe and normal because I know I am just like so many other kids.’”*

**Robb-** *“I still have one of the thank you cards I got from a child. It has 12 words in it and is one of my most precious possessions.”*

This year we say farewell to John as he “retires” from 11 years of volunteering with us. We wish him well and thank him for a job well done. As for the current volunteers who work with us now, *“The world is hugged by the faithful arms of the volunteers.”* (Everett Mámor) We can say without a doubt, and with sincere gratitude, that our Center has been fully hugged.

*Shirley and Christine*

Shirley Elrod, LMFT, FT  
Christine Smith, MS  
Co-founders



## Silpada Fundraiser

Support the Center by purchasing this popular high quality silver jewelry as a gift to yourself or others. Your purchase results in 30% of the retail profit being donated back to the Center to support our programs and services!

**October 1st through October 25th**

Online @ [www.mysilpada.com/marg.ford](http://www.mysilpada.com/marg.ford)  
Look for "Bereavement Center Fundraiser Party"  
Place order online or call  
Marg at 610-237-1238

*Thank You!*

## Support from our Neighbor

The Center would like to extend thanks to **Heather Lewis** of *Simply Be Well* in Skippack, for generously donating 30-minute massages for use by some of our clients. The staff and clients are immensely grateful for Heather's thoughtfulness in recognizing the benefit provided from services addressing self-care and holistic health. We understand the value of treatment incorporating mind-body balance as restorative for all people, especially for those enduring the pain of grief. For this and for the services *Simply Be Well* provided our clients, we are so thankful.



## Grief Notes - On Pet Bereavement

Our last newsletter reported the death of Clara, the beautiful and cherished Golden Retriever who served cheerfully and dutifully as the mascot and therapy dog for Camp Millie for several years. The impact of Clara's death has prompted us to say a few words on this important subject.

Psychologists have long known that the level of suffering that pet owners endure after their pet dies can be as devastating as the death of a person. Similar to humans, each relationship with a pet is unique, therefore so is each grief process. It is normal and expected to grieve after any attachment relationship is severed, whether due to a sudden accident or prolonged illness. Grieving pet owners sustain physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual changes as they adapt to the upheaval in their lives presented by the loss. As with grief for a human, these normal signs of grief gradually wane with time, and the griever eventually maintains a relationship of warm memories of the pet.

However, there are some differences between grieving a human and a pet. Pet loss can be viewed as a type of "disenfranchised grief". Disenfranchised grief results when a person experiences a grief reaction, yet there is minimal or absent social recognition that the person has a right to grieve or receive social support. While many people in our society are aware of and enjoy intense bonds with pets, many do not recognize the precious human/pet bond, therefore adequate support for the griever is often lacking. This leaves grievers alone in their suffering.

Due to the disenfranchisement, grievers rarely have any sort of public support associated with a funeral or memorial ceremony for their deceased pets. Funerals and burial rituals are important to offer an opportunity for social support, but also aid in the healing process for the bereaved.

Another difference between grieving a pet and a human is that pets cannot talk to us and are often likened to children, who are dependent on the protection and care of their parents/owners. Particularly in scenarios of long-term illness, pet owners can't converse with their pets about the pet's experience of their illness, their pain level, their life - and in terminal conditions, they may feel helpless watching their pet suffer. In pet death, euthanasia is often an option. While this may afford pet owners some means of comfort and sense of control over their pet's suffering, it can also be immensely difficult to navigate and painful to endure. After the death of the pet the owner can be more prone to guilt.

The staff of the Center have personal and professional experience with pet bereavement and are clinically sensitive to the impact it can have on human lives. We eagerly encourage all of our clients to address any struggles with pet illness or death in counseling or our groups. As with bereavement for deceased loved humans, our goal is to aid in facilitating a healthy grief process in any way we can.

**Source:** *Omega*, Volume 69 #4 - 2014, Online Survey as Empathetic Bridging for Disenfranchised Grief of Pet Loss (Wendy Packman)



# THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

## Children's Summer Camp - **Camp Millie**



Camp Millie is about providing children and young teens a place to be with others who understand what it is like to be grieving. It is a chance for kids to feel less alone and build connections through the sharing of stories, memories and experiences. Every aspect of Camp Millie 2015 incorporated themes of support, coping and hope. For some it was a place to share the story of the loss for the first time; others had questions and challenges; many offered support and encouragement; and of course, it was filled with laughter and fun. All agreed that Camp Millie was an experience unlike any other and one that will be remembered as a time of comfort and hope.



Our remarkable Camp Millie Volunteers: **Karen Bottger, Robin Cavallo, Lisa Chambers, Sarah DiNolfi, Kristin Donatt, Kate Doyle, Ilissa Ducoat, Connie Fretz, Patty Flynn, Marissa Gleason, Nancy Hunt, Jake Marron, Robb Muse, Lesley Naylor, Sonalee Panchal, Carmen Phillips, Jen Pitchler, Amy Ramsey and Malinda Roth.**

**Olivia Cavallo** attended our Volunteer Training in the spring and served as our Camp Millie Intern. Always ready to lend a hand in many capacities, she especially shined by thoughtfully preparing our games. The activities strengthened the campers trust and helped build a caring community. Many thanks to Olivia!



**Gracie**, the Center's therapy dog, was an integral part of Camp. Her daily presence prompted discussions about grief coping strategies and relaxation techniques. The best times of her day were spent receiving cuddles and love from the campers. We appreciate the kind of special therapy only Gracie can provide.

For the fourth year in a row, **The Michael H. Wise II Memorial Foundation**, in collaboration with **Weikel Sportswear**, has generously sponsored our Camper T-shirts.

We are so grateful for this contribution to our Center.



# THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

Children's Bereavement Program - Nello's Corner



The Nello's Corner program offers high quality peer support groups led by experienced grief facilitators and specially trained volunteers. A sense of belonging and understanding can be felt by sharing time with others who have experienced the loss of a family member. Our groups will resume for children and teens ages 4 – high school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays beginning mid-September. Registration is ongoing throughout the year. Contact us at 610-222-4115.



Whether playing dress up or reading a story, retiring volunteer **John** has been a constant and supportive presence for the youngest children's groups of Nello's Corner and Camp Millie. We have appreciated his 10 year commitment to our Center and will greatly miss his calm and gentle influence in our groups.



### A Unique Way to Give Back

Past Nello's Corner participants, Kathryn and Elizabeth, are pictured here with a pile of donations! Remembering their time at the Center, they decided, together with their mom, that in lieu of receiving birthday presents from friends, they would ask for donations from our Wish List for the Center. Their generosity for the last two years has been overwhelming with gifts of toys, supplies, gift cards and checks. They are pictured here with presents from Kathryn's 10th birthday party. Thanks to the entire family for continuing to stay connected to the Center in such a unique way!

*"Your openness was reflected to her and she shares that openness with us. I hope you are blessed by your giving as much as she has been blessed by your presence."*

These words were shared with our volunteers by a grandmother who faithfully brought her two grandchildren to Nello's Corner following the deaths of their mom and dad. Volunteers are at the heart of our Center's programs and while each comes to our intensive training with a desire to give, most are surprised that the rewards of working with children can be so bountiful for themselves.



Pictured are the newest trained volunteers joining our team. They come from all walks of life, eager to be companions to the children and teens in their assigned groups. We will appreciate the special support that they bring to our programs. Even more than this, we hope they can be open and present to all the rewards that volunteering at the Center has to offer for them. And like **John**, we hope they will be with us for many years to come.

**Next Volunteer Training: March 2016**

### WISH LIST

- Gift cards to Walmart and craft stores
- Plastic tablecloths
- Embroidery hoops
- Construction paper
- Fabric paints
- Dark t-shirt transfers
- Fabric
- Pre-cut Quilt squares
- Glue sticks

**THANK YOU!**

## SEASONAL ADULT SUPPORT GROUP PROGRAM

Our adult support group program gathers individuals with similar circumstances and losses into a circle of support and encouragement. All groups are guided by our Center's staff, specifically trained in grief and group facilitation. Participants can expect an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and mutual respect while sharing their issues of coping with loss and living with hope.

*Groups listed below are expected to run in the Fall as interest is shown. Please contact us for specific dates and times.*

**Adult Loss of a Parent** - Six Thursday Evenings

**Support for Loss due to Suicide** - Six Monday Evenings

**Loss of Spouse or Partner** - Offered for various age groups and time since the loss occurred.

*On going groups:*

**Monthly Loss of Child** - On-going registration. For parents who have experienced the death of a child as an older teen or adult. 2nd Monday of the month, September - June 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.

**Twice–A-Month Young Adult Bereavement Group** - On-going registration. For men and women who are post high-school age – 29 years. **No charge.** Every other Wednesday beginning 9/9 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.

A registration form and fee are required (\$60 for six weeks/months).

**Call 610-222-4110, ext. 118 for information or to register.**

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## 2015-2016 PROFESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE TRAININGS



Experiential learning is the theme for the 2015-2016 Professional Roundtable Training opportunities. Our workshops this year will focus on exposing professionals to different aspects of Grief and Bereavement in a dynamic, interactive way. The Center is a pre-approved provider of CEU's for PA Social Workers, Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.

**October 22, 2015 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Looking at Grief Through Stories:** There is no better way to understand the scope of grief than by learning from those who have been through it. Using REBIRTH, a film by Jim Whitaker, we will examine the nearly 8 year grief journey of five survivors of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Through the eyes of these survivors, we will see that grief is not linear and is shaped by multiple factors that are as unique as the people who must walk its path. Our small group format will enable us to see and hear the grief experience through the eyes and ears of the real people in the film and process the experiences they embody. Current grief theories and concepts such as Assumptive World, Attachment, Continuing Bonds, Resilience and Dual Process are shown. Attending this training will help us be mindful that grief is not defined by stages that mark recovery and that "closure" is not the goal of grief.

**March 17, 2016 5:00 - 8:30 p.m. - Building Blocks of Life and Death for the Younger Child:** This training is for those working with an early childhood population who want to learn about a young child's processing of death and dying concepts. It will review the young child's developmental perspectives on life and living, death and dying, and their experiences in both learning/childcare environments as well as in the family system. We will present opportunities to enrich children's understanding of and ability to cope with death and grief. Use of therapeutic interventions, teachable moments and curriculum tools will be discussed.

**April 21, 2016 10:00 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. - Living and Losing:** In response to the requests we have had for a training that includes clinical exercises and participant responses, we have developed this offering. In a highly interactive format, participants will be exposed to tools and techniques that help clients of all ages to process the intense emotions that many grievers struggle to manage. Come ready to dive in and learn!

**Join us for one or all three! Call 610-222-4110, ext. 104 for discounts, information or to register.**



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**Serving Our Community for 15 Years!**

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**We have a new look!**

Visit our redesigned website at  
[www.bereavementcenter.org](http://www.bereavementcenter.org)  
 to check it out.

**The Center for Loss and Bereavement**

**Website: [www.bereavementcenter.org](http://www.bereavementcenter.org)**

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*If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please contact Shirley Elrod at 610-222-4110, ext. 102 or [sje@bereavementcenter.org](mailto:sje@bereavementcenter.org)*