



Center Highlights

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 2 Fall 2021

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At The Center for Loss and Bereavement, our work remains strong even as challenges continue to face us all. Our approach in this sensitive work is grounded in the trust that through tough times, there are always others who can relate, provide perspective, and offer support. That truth has been validated through this last year and we are reminded over and over just how integrated our needs and strengths as a community are.

From all ends of our small corner in the world, our Center has been stretching its arms and serving more need than ever before. As growing numbers of people have turned to us for counseling, consultation, or group support, we've sustained our capacity with added staff members, interns, and an immense investment of devoted volunteers. We've also been touched by the incredible generosity of those who've reached out to help others by contributing to our mission, enabling us to serve even more.

In this unique, essential work, we have always been inspired by the dedication of individuals who honor the importance of grief services and step into a position of humility by asking for help or in offering it. At one time or another, all will find this duality in life to be true as we move from a position of needing support to paying it forward. In this newsletter edition, we will highlight the many ways and the many people who currently are helping bring this truth to light in our service to the community. We could not maintain the important work we do without each person's unique strengths in every role, and we honor the spirit that has brought them to our Center.



Emily Vincent, LPC FT
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily".



Christopher Smith
Board President
Governance & Finance Committee

"I was asked to be a board member 17 years ago and because I had experienced the impact of (that) loss on my family, I felt it was important to assist in the growth of this great organization."



Rita Porreca
Board Member,
Clinical Supervisor
Programs and Services, & DEI Committees

"It is sacred work to help those grieving either directly as a volunteer in one of the programs or as a more supportive person on a committee or the board."



Robb Muse
Board Member,
Program Volunteer
Governance & DEI Committees

"I was initially drawn to the Center some 14 years ago as a volunteer – a short time after my mother died. I was seeking a volunteer experience working with kids dealing with grief challenges."



Chase Kneeland
Board Member
Programs and Services Committee

"My hopes for folks coming to the Center are that grieving their loved ones will be easier and have a certain touch of caring humanity that will make a tough journey more bearable."



Audrey Ditzler
NEW Board Member,
Program Volunteer
Community Relations, Events, & DEI Committees

"It wasn't until my adult years that I learned what a profound impact professional support can have on healing and growth. This inspired me to help others coping with loss, hoping they never have to feel that same loneliness."

FIELDS of HOPE



Thank you to everyone who supported, attended, and volunteered at our Fields of Hope Event. Sunflowers have a way of leaning into the sun to grow to their fullest potential, so this event perfectly aligned with our mission at The Center for Loss and Bereavement! We truly embraced the beauty that surrounded us throughout the event, in nature, and in all who attended. Fields of Hope was joyful, inspiring, and fun, allowing individuals to find their light while reflecting on those they have lost. In addition, hundreds of people participated in Photography, Plein Air, and U-Pick events, which helped us reach our fundraising goal to support our services and programs!

Special thanks to the **Smith Family** and Farm manager, **Ed Evans**, for making this fantastic event possible!

We also want to thank the countless other volunteers who made the event a success especially our volunteer committee, including: **Audrey Ditzler, Beth Hunt, Christine Smith, Gina Parlanti, Jillian Gallagher, Lauren Rieger, MaryKay Lojewski, Mary Lynn Morasco, Melissa Smith, Selaine Keaton, and Sherry Demito.**



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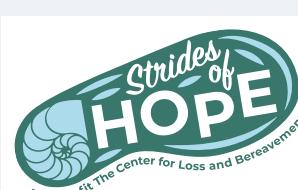


Jamie Lockwood
Group Intern,
Administrative Assistant

"The most meaningful part of being connected to the Center has been witnessing the benefit the Center has had on individuals and their families."

"Being part of an organization that has such a direct positive impact on the local community is very meaningful to me. The board is grateful for your continued support of an organization that has such a positive impact on our community."

"...we had lost our two-year-old son to Leukemia... I learned that {the Center} provided exactly the services that I had been looking for. My only disappointment was that I didn't know about the Center three years earlier."



Save the date!
November 6, 2021

Please join us for our second annual 5K Strides of Hope Walk or Run at Heebner Park!

There will be both in-person and virtual options!

For more details, please visit:

bereavementcenter.org/stridesofhope/

Specialized Adult Support Group Program

Over the past year and a half, we have observed that regardless of one's environment, the power of shared experience and open discussion allows for genuine connection and support for grieving individuals. We are happy to announce that we have been holding in-person support groups once again at our Center in Skippack; however, we also recognize the benefits of virtual support and will maintain this as an option for our adult group program. All specialized support groups are scheduled as interest is shown, and are facilitated by a trained professional.

Six-Week Adult Support Group Offerings

Loss of Parent, Loss due to Suicide, Loss of Spouse/Partner (various age groups), Loss of Sibling, Loss due to Addiction

Ongoing Groups

Monthly Loss of Child

For adults who have experienced the death of a child as a teen or adult, 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Biweekly Young Adult Group (YAGS)

For ages 19-28 who have experienced significant loss(es)
Every Other Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m. (No Fee)

"I had reservations about attending such a group but now I am glad that I did it. I felt (the group) bonded rather quickly and we were able to discuss our most personal feelings in a non-judgmental, caring setting."

- Loss of Spouse/Partner group participant

"I am amazed at how a group of strangers can connect and form a bond. I felt more support from them than people I have known for many years!"

-Loss of Parent group participant

FAQs

What is a support group and what can I expect? A support group at the Center gathers individuals into a circle of support. Five to ten participants with a similar loss experience share insights, concerns, and hopes in an atmosphere of mutual respect and caring.

What is the registration process like? There is a screening process in order to help identify a participant's needs. Our intake coordinator will obtain basic information and send materials along, including a link to complete a registration form. Upon receipt, a program staff member will be in contact.

How can a support group benefit me? Support groups help to normalize the grief process, which is unique to each person. Sharing feelings and experiences can help to explore new ways of coping and offers a place of solace where hope can be restored.

Grief Counseling CLINICAL UPDATE:

Our team at the Center is continuing to support children, individuals, couples and families in a clinical counseling setting with both Telehealth and in-person options. We are committed to providing quality care in exploring and processing the unique grief process of those who come to us. Please meet the newest addition to our Clinical team! We are thankful to have Hannah's expertise working alongside our other therapists who continue to provide meaningful connection and restorative guidance for those impacted by grief.

Hannah Feehery, NCC

Therapist, Support Group Facilitator



Hannah Feehery received her master's degree in School and Mental Health Counseling from the University of Pennsylvania, along with a dual bachelor's degree in Psychology and Dance from Goucher College. Hannah is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and is actively working towards her Licensure in Professional Counseling (LPC) as well as her Certification in Thanatology (CT) - Death, Dying, and Bereavement.

Hannah has served in a variety of therapeutic roles in mental health, including work with children, teens and families facing grief/loss, depression, anxiety, and trauma, among many other experiences in the outpatient services at Child Guidance Resource Center. There, she also served the autism population in group programs that foster relational growth. Hannah brings a client-centered approach to therapy by creating a warm, welcoming, safe space for individuals to heal through the telling of their unique stories. Hannah also practices with a family-systems lens focused on both living and lost attachment relationships in her work.

Finding support for grief when faced with profound loss in her own life inspired Hannah to serve in this field, and has cultivated her passion to be fully and empathically present for those turning to help at the Center. Hannah serves as a grief therapist and a group facilitator. If you would like to schedule an appointment with Hannah, please reach out to our intake coordinator Kim Burian. Hannah can directly be reached by phone at 610-622-4110 x. 127 or by email at hnf@bereavementcenter.org.



Kendra Stenack
Clinical Director,
Therapist



Brian McCaffrey
Center Intern, Therapist
& Group Facilitator



Kim Burian
Intake Coordinator,
Therapist



Allison Hutchinson
Center Intern, Music Therapy
Student & Group Facilitator



Terri Lepitre
Therapist



After a year of virtual programming, Nello's Corner looks forward to opening its doors to on-site, in-person peer groups for children, teens and the adults who care for them. This program is designed for children 4 years old – through high school who have experienced the death of a family member. Age-specific groups are scheduled to meet during the school year, every other Tuesday or Wednesday, either afterschool or in the evening. Adults gather to share insights at the same time. Keeping alert to all health and safety updates, we will adjust our program as needed.

Volunteering with our Children's Programs

To volunteer is to freely give your time to a community. Here at the Center, one of our communities is children and families who have experienced a significant death. Those who volunteer in this community are truly the heart of our programs. They work with our specially trained staff to provide a safe, caring, supportive, and welcoming environment. Like so many other organizations resuming in person services, we are looking to refresh and replenish our volunteer pool with those who enjoy being in the company of children, have a good listening ear, and seek a meaningful way to give back to others.

What's it like being a volunteer in our Children's Programs?

Volunteers are required to complete our Volunteer Facilitator Training which will provide the background knowledge and confidence to be a Volunteer Group Facilitator with Nello's Corner, every other week for 2½ hours mid-September through May, and/or Camp Millie, our 4-day summer camp in June. In both programs, volunteers assist staff in planning group sessions and engage with children/ teens by playing board games, basketball, air hockey, arts and crafts, along with offering grief-related activities.



One of the most common concerns from inquiring or new volunteers is: "I want to volunteer, but I feel like it would be too sad or I would cry". The truth is, of course there are sad moments. When those moments arise, as we are all human, we hone in on our training skills. In addition, we provide pre and post processing meetings with our volunteers for planning purposes as well as to talk about any feelings or triggers that may have occurred.



A Support Role

Volunteering is a hopeful, uplifting and even fun experience. This supportive role helps create an environment where children connect, receive and give support to one another. It is about their journey and experience, looking mainly to staff and volunteers to provide a safe place to explore grief. Spending time in the company of these young participants may provide a volunteer not only an opportunity to make a difference but to grow in their own journey as well.

Over the years volunteers have spoken of their time at the Center:

"I expected to give my attention and time. I hoped to make a difference. I did not anticipate the sweet, subtle gifts I would receive in return."

"Thanks for making me feel like an important member of this gratifying endeavor."

"(Volunteering) is an amazing and fulfilling experience."

"The most rewarding part of the experience has been getting to know a child and sharing the journey."

"I enjoy the connection with the children in a loving, supportive environment."

If you are interested in learning more about an upcoming Volunteer Facilitator Training, please be in touch with Christina at extension 119. We would love to have you join our team!

Please note: Photos used were taken pre-COVID.



Lois Harris,
Program Director, Group
Facilitator & Educator



In June, our Center was thrilled to be able to offer our children's summer bereavement program, Camp Millie! The year's theme, Trailblazers, was especially appropriate as campers, staff and volunteers returned to an in-person

group setting after a year's pause and explored new paths forward with others who have experienced loss. Blazing these two trails made for quite a memorable journey!

Like the early pioneers, we formed small-group wagons which provided a safe, comfortable space to share stories, memories and feelings of grief. Stops along the trail included quilt-making, drumming, creating spirit masks and celebrating our strengths.

Campers discovered new ways to cope with challenging situations and problems including identifying a rock-solid support system, practicing meditation, the value of physical release and musical expression.

Our Camp Millie trail ended with a celebration Hoedown. The air vibrated with the drumbeats of our feelings, sending messages to loved ones, and sharing colorful, unique masks representing the spirit of those who have died which may continue to be present within each camper. Though sad to leave new friends, all came to recognize that Camp is just a moment in a life long journey with carrying grief and there will be many new trails to blaze ahead. It is hoped the campers now realize they are not alone.



Special thanks to our tremendous Volunteer Camp Wranglers, including specially trained Buddies, teen volunteers and nurses, without whose time and talent Camp Millie would not be possible: **Audrey Ditzler, Marissa Gleason, Jill Herman, Jake Marron, Robb Muse, Kathy Nolte, Sonalee Panchal, Amy Ramsey, Heather Tomes, Robby Angelus, Matthew Reiger, Caroline Smith, Ellie Smith, Graham Smith, Joni Coleman, Chris Dougherty, Linda O'Rourke and Bridget Vincent.** Additional support was appreciated from **Christine Smith and Shirley Elrod** - our Center's Founders - and therapy dogs Gracie and Sadie.



Family of "Millie"

Many kind supporters purchased camp supplies through our Amazon Wish List. Our gratitude is sent to: **Anthony and Jameson Bowers, Cathy Larkin, Maria Morgan, Katie Ogoussan, Cindy Cherkas and Tucker, Linda Meixmer, Christina and Emily Frey, and Donna Piergallini**. Each year, the **Michael H. Wise II Memorial Foundation** generously donates our t-shirts, for which we continue to be grateful.

For those who think counseling or further group support might be beneficial, we encourage families to be in touch with us.

Mark your calendars:

CAMP MILLIE 2022

will be held

June 20, 21, 22, 23



Christina Larkin,
Program Coordinator,
Group Facilitator
& Educator



Grief Notes on... Focusing Our Mindset in Our Ever-Changing World

BY SHELLEY ROBBINS

As summer 2021 draws to a close, after 18+ months of living within the shackles of COVID, we once again find ourselves falling at the mercy of this precarious virus, its' variants and all of the debilitating ripples that it creates in its' aftermath. Perhaps as many people received vaccinations and restrictions were lifted in early summer, it gave us as a society a hopeful assurance that pre-pandemic life as we knew it would be in both our short and long views. However, as the Delta variant continues to rise, more and more rumblings can be heard of mask and social distancing restrictions being reinstated, school and business changes, and an uptick in virtual measures once again. We are all now armed with knowledge and experience as to how to wield a pandemic life, but it also may leave us with feelings of confusion, weariness, exhaustion and anger. Do we have the mental energy to continue to run this marathon with its' elusive mile markers and finish line? How do we fuel ourselves to continue to run a race that we did not ask to participate in?

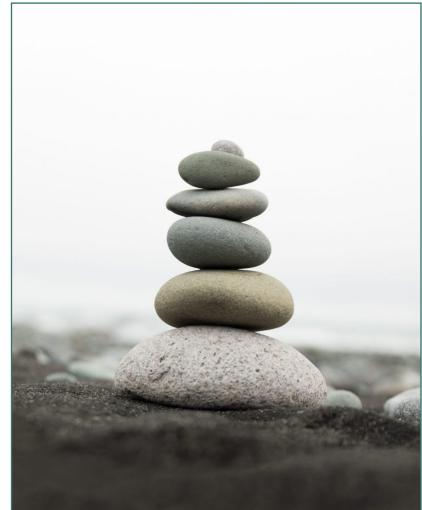
Some tools that may seem trivial or common knowledge can actually be ones that are vital to keeping a steady hand in our mental coping in dealing with both the pandemic stressors overall and for those managing long-term grief experiences, living with the loss of loved ones.

Control what you can amidst the ambiguity: We learn at a very young age the concept of trust vs. mistrust, and rely on the basic notion that our everyday, assumptive world is one that we can generally live within safely. The pandemic shifted those constants in our daily life and we have learned that it is necessary to live flexibly and fluidly within our ever-changing personal and professional spaces. This happens when confronted with death and dying, under any circumstances. Take stock of what you can control in your life while honoring your pain, letting go of what you must, and holding on to what you find to be helpful in carrying your whole self forward. If triggered by social media and preoccupied with others' thoughts, perhaps limit screen time and news coverage.

Know your personal pacing: Marathons are not meant to be sprinted; go at your own pace. Your pace may be different from your friends, co-workers, and family members, and that's OK. Our brains feel less anxious when we have a sense of control

over our lives. So, to the extent that you can, consider how you want to reintegrate with the losses you've faced, and at what pace. You can likely do more in your personal life choices in self-care, social engagements, or cathartic endeavors. Although you may have less control at work, it is worth having a conversation

with your supervisor about any concerns you have. There may be some creative short-term solutions that can ease your reintegration process during pandemic transitions as well as through a personal loss experience.



Maintain self-preservation: Whatever practices kept you physically and mentally healthy in pre-pandemic life – or in pre-loss living - continue to lean into them. However, don't be afraid to try new things that may bring you joy. Perhaps try a yoga class for the first time or say "yes" to your friend who invites you on a hike. When our bodies are physically healthy, our minds tend to follow suit. Fresh air, exercise, good nutrition, and proper sleep hygiene are some essential building blocks to mental health. Even just a few small healthy changes can be paramount to a positive mindset.

Remain flexible and set realistic expectations: We have learned globally that pandemic life may be our new normal, so it is important to still set expectations and goals for your life. Death and dying from causes not connected to COVID-19 have also been a part of life for us all, since the beginning of time. As we live, grieve, and grow through these challenges, it is important to be mindful that measures and practices may need to be safely adapted as we learn more about the virus. More realistic thinking can somewhat lower our expectations and lead to

less disappointment and anger within yourself when changes happen. This may be a helpful tool for your pacing with an unknown finish line.

We all continue to navigate a collective trauma, while some are faced with added personal losses. Give yourself time and practice patience in finding strength and peace, while still continuing to side-step grief's landmines. When we are feeling frenzied and anxious, being mindful of these key strategies can help to calm our brains, enabling us to make good decisions in keeping safety, supportive connections, and healthcare prevention top priorities.



Shelley Robbins
Group Facilitator & Educator



Steve Keller
Therapist, Grief Notes Contributor



Emily Cauchon
Therapist, Support Group Facilitator



Ashley Herr
Education and Community Outreach Director, Therapist



Pat Keeney
Group Facilitator



Claire Drexler
Grief Therapist & Educator



Lynda Rebarachak
Board Member
Secretary,
Community Relations Committee

"Suffering much loss in my own family, I was moved in listening to how others were helped by the Center's amazing staff. I wanted to do what I could to help the staff continue their great work, providing quality grief counseling and support to the community."

COMMUNITY *Connections*

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members". - Coretta Scott King

Our Education and Community Outreach program has provided support to various organizations and agencies this past year. As a Center, we hosted 2 Professional Roundtable Trainings and 7 Centered Conversation Forums to members of the community on a variety of grief-related topics relevant to living and working through a pandemic. This past spring and summer, we truly felt honored to have been able to respond to an array of support and educational requests for the PA Department of Aging Ombudsman Network, St. Joseph's University, Church Housing Corporation, The Variety Club, and ACLAMO Family Centers. Recognizing the grief being encountered in the local healthcare system, we created educational resource packets for family practices, hospitals, and specialists, and we will be participating in an upcoming podcast episode for Friends of Einstein. We appreciate each opportunity to participate in local health fairs and events for schools and county intermediate units, furthering advocacy and supportive resources for those who may be grieving.



Our Center's staff deepened our expertise and connections in this field by attending spring virtual conferences hosted by the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), PESI's Grief Summit, and the National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG). Along with other ongoing grief education, these forums in particular offer access to inspiring leaders who research current trends in grief work. As part of the Greater Philadelphia Grief Collaborative, our Center recently completed the two-year Childhood Bereavement Changemaker (CBC) research project offered through Judi's House/JAG Institute, in conjunction with the New York Life Foundation. Participating in this research has provided us with the data and insights needed to better reach underserved and special needs in our grieving community, while strengthening our partnerships across the region. We are grateful for these enriching opportunities that ensure we have quality programs and exceptionally trained staff.

We value the relationships and resources available to our Center that enable us to provide inclusive and quality support to the families and communities we serve. We invite you to stay connected with us as we offer new educational and supportive outreach opportunities throughout the year.



UPCOMING CENTERED CONVERSATIONS... Join Us!

The Center for Loss and Bereavement is pleased to continue offering a variety of topic-specific virtual forums throughout the year. These discussions engage both professionals and members of the community through interactive discussion, building knowledge and insight on important aspects of grief. Though registration is required, these forums are offered at no charge to participants. Additional Centered Conversations will be scheduled as needed or by request. Please inquire for more information on registration!

Grief & the Holidays

Wednesday, November 17th

12:00 p.m.- 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Professional Trainings/Tailored Presentations By Request

Grief presents itself differently in various systems, such as schools, faith-based or community organizations, and all-sized businesses. Upon request, we will work with your organization to develop a tailored presentation about grief, death or dying, in consideration of your needs. If your organization is seeking more intimate guidance and support for a specific time-sensitive grief-related matter, please contact our Education and Community Outreach Director, Ashley Herr at amh@bereavementcenter.org or by phone at 610-222-4110 ext. 123.

Please note that we will be sharing the Spring 2022 schedule for our Professional Roundtable Trainings (CE's available) in the coming weeks! Visit our website or sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter for more information and registration details.



The Center for Loss and Bereavement
3847 Skippack Pike
P.O. Box 1299
Skippack, PA 19474-1299



Save the date! November 6, 2021

Please join us for our second annual 5K Strides of Hope Walk or Run at Heebner Park! There will be both in-person and virtual options! For more details, please visit: bereavementcenter.org/stridesofhope/

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The Center for Loss and Bereavement

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Our Mission

The Center for Loss and Bereavement is a non-profit resource of specialized knowledge and professional support that provides meaningful connection and restorative guidance for those impacted by grief.

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Kendra Stenack, LPC, CH, CT

Executive Director, Therapist

Intake Coordinator, Therapist

Therapist, Support Group Facilitator

Therapist, Educator

Therapist, Support Group Facilitator

Program Director, Group Facilitator

Education and Community Outreach Director, Therapist

Group Facilitator

Therapist, Grief Notes Contributor

Program Coordinator, Group Facilitator

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