

Center Highlights

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FALL 2019



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we approach the start of our fall season, I appreciate taking time to reflect on many of the inspiring efforts happening around the Center. While counseling, peer group support, and community education remain the core services of our mission, this past year we embarked on several exciting new endeavors.

In March and April, we held our first creative arts workshop at the Center, bringing the tools of photography and the experience of loss together in what became a meaningful project of shared grief. Following in May, we gathered with an extended audience to raise awareness and support for our mission *Through the Lens of Hope* at our first fundraising event in several years. There, these workshop participants and other courageous individuals shared photo journals, video testimony, and moving speeches to eloquently portray the impact of loss and the critical value of finding help – and hope – through the services at the Center.

In response to the ongoing and growing demand for our specialized work, this spring we also enthusiastically welcomed Emily Cauchon as member of our clinical staff, Scott Sterling as an addition to our board of directors, and 6 newly trained volunteer facilitators for our children's programs. Tying into our expressive programming development, one of these volunteers, Allison Hutchinson, brought her talent and training in music therapy to featured roles both at our fundraising event and Camp Millie this June. We plan to also use her guidance in adding new activities to our Nello's Corner groups this coming year. Also dedicated to further creative outlets for grief, this summer we contracted with the Center's first licensed art therapist, Julia Meeker. We are thrilled to now offer counseling clients and support group participants an opportunity to express themselves with use of varied means in a creative arts studio at the Center.

Throughout the year, we continue to invest time in strengthening relationships with a wide range of individuals and organizations to increase awareness and responsive care throughout the community. These collaborative efforts continually maintain a strong network of referrals for those we serve, and connect those who have interest in serving others to our mission with added resources, support, and funding. Beyond all of this, across our staff and board leadership, we are also engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process that will reinforce the strong foundation of the Center to help provide enduring sustainability.

I feel very privileged to be surrounded by the compassionate devotion present in all aspects of our mission's people and hands-on work, and invite you to read more about all of these incredible efforts and stories throughout this newsletter. From all of us at the Center, we thank you for your continued interest and investment in who we are and all the that we bring to the grieving community. I welcome you to reach out to me at any time should you have more questions or curiosity in our mission, or to learn more how you can be involved.

Emily Vincent, LPC FT

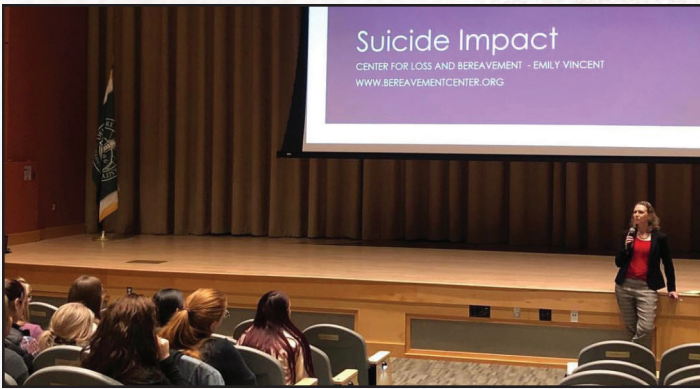


Center Staff

INTRODUCING SADIE!

Along with these other highlights at the Center, we are also proud to announce that we have another adorable pet therapy dog in training! Sadie joins Gracie and her beloved mentor Clara as now the third therapy dog involved in our specialized programming. Sadie has quickly captured our hearts (and hands!) during several visits to the children of Nello's Corner and Camp Millie this year. Gracie focuses most of her energy at the Center on the clinical therapy side of our programming, though also enjoys her time visiting in the children's programs and at other Center events. We are so thankful for their owners, founder Shirley Elrod and therapist Claire Drexler, for bringing to the Center the added comfort and affection found within these extra special members of our team.





GRIEF AWARENESS WITHIN A NETWORK OF HOPE: *Community Connections*

As part of our mission, we are dedicated to strengthen knowledge of grief's impact along with an understanding of effective tools for fostering coping skills, healing connections, and resilience. The Center works closely with many organizations and community resources to bring professional trainings and public presentations to special groups and events throughout the year. We regularly attend meetings throughout the region and maintain a large network of collaborative resources, all who support one another's missions to help others in need.

Did you know how far the Center's mission extends?

For almost two decades, the Center has been active in community networking and grief-related presentations throughout the greater Philadelphia area, including **school districts, colleges/universities and faith-based groups** in Montgomery, Bucks, Berks, Chester, and Delaware counties.

We have also partnered with a wide array of organizations such as **hospice centers, methadone clinics, crisis intervention services, hospitals, primary care services, mental health agencies, veterinary organizations, and retirement communities** to provide support and a unique perspective on grief and bereavement as it directly relates to the services these organizations provide.

This fall, our neighbors at Central Schwenkfelder Church are hosting a public forum entitled: ***Suffering Loss: Pursuing Hope in the Presence of Pain***, on Saturday, November 9. We are participating as guest speakers and are grateful for the opportunity to engage with others on these important conversations. Please see our website's events page for more details.

While we remain actively rooted in the services offered on our campus in Skippack, our counselors and program staff are prepared to offer practical guidance and hands-on services off-site, if needed. We welcome your interest in learning more about how we can help.

For information about these upcoming opportunities, please contact Claire Drexler at csd@bereavementcenter.org or by calling 610-222-4110 ext. 104.

Specialized Adult Support Groups

"The most important things in life are the connections you make with others." - Tom Ford

Our support groups provide a safe space for individuals with similar types of losses to connect with and support one another in a relaxing environment. Support groups are run on an as needed basis and are facilitated by a trained professional.

Six-Week Adult Support Groups

Loss due to Suicide, Loss due to Addiction, Loss of Spouse for various stages of life, Loss of Parent, Loss of Sibling

Ongoing Groups

LOSS OF CHILD: For parents who have experienced the death of a child as a teen or adult
2nd Monday of the month, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

BI-WEEKLY YOUNG ADULT GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP (YAGS):

For ages 19-30 (approx.) who have experienced significant loss(es)
Every other Wednesday, 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.
Ongoing Registration/No Fee

Upcoming Groups

LOSS DUE TO SUICIDE:

Mondays, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
9/30, 10/7, 10/14, 10/21, 10/28, 11/4

MATURE LOSS OF SPOUSE:

Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29

ADULT LOSS OF PARENT:

Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/10, 10/17, 10/24

SPRING 2020: Loss due to Addictions, Middle Loss of Spouse, Ambiguous Grief due to Illness (NEW)

For dates, times, and cost, or to inquire about other group options, please contact Lois at lh@bereavementcenter.org or at 610-222-4110 ext. 118.

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS 2019/2020

October 24, 2019: GRIEF 101

As we begin the process of categorizing our trainings to better communicate the learning level of each, we will start at the beginning with Grief 101. This is an introduction to the grieving process of both adults and children.

March 26, 2020: ADDICTION AFTERMATH

Last spring we presented *Suicide Aftermath* as a way to examine stigmatized and disenfranchised grief. *Addiction Aftermath* will explore factors that are part of the grief journey when addiction ends tragically in death.

April 23, 2020: AMBIGUOUS GRIEF

We experience grief for all kinds of reasons and in many different circumstances. Sometimes we grieve the loss of a loved one even before death comes. Terminal illness, cognitive disorders and chronic illness are a few examples. This training will address the unique features of this type of grief.

Cost is \$70 per training or register for 2 trainings at the discounted rate of \$130. Our series of Roundtable trainings are held at the Center from 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. CEU's are available. Questions? Contact Claire at csd@bereavementcenter.org or 610-222-4110 ext. 104.

To Share or Not to Share...

For those who have experienced a profound loss of someone close, leaving the often-controlled cocoon of summer and re-entering the social busyness of the fall brings unique challenges. Participants in our support groups have shared that anxiety about how to answer questions and deciding how much to say can present major roadblocks in getting off to a successful school year. The tips offered below suggest both practical ideas and character-building tools which may be helpful for adults to consider when helping children and teens navigate questions and conversations.



Check in: What are they comfortable in having others know? Who do they want to know? It is a good idea to explore this together and revisit from time to time. As children age, they often become more concerned about how they will be perceived by peers. These conversations may also help adults to be respectful of and build trust with their child when talking to other adults.

Practice: Help a child develop some short, comfortable responses to typical questions like “Where’s your mom?” or “Why are you upset?”, by role-playing in a safe environment with trusted people. It can be useful to share your own experiences as well. In addition, support group environments such as Nello’s Corner can give a child insight from peers in similar situations which may effectively reduce anxiety.

Hurtful Remarks: This is a favorite topic of conversation in our support groups – the insensitive and hurtful things people say. Kids have told us that walking away, saying nothing, staring back, or gently explaining are useful strategies. Having a trusted person they can “vent” to afterwards is crucial in processing their feelings.

Foster Resilience: Look for opportunities to increase a child’s ability to identify personal strengths, monitor and regulate feelings, and develop social supports. This will help a child be able to predict, plan, and practice, giving them much needed control over challenging situations.

Privacy: Gently explore a child’s desire for privacy, respectfully, without judgement. Sometimes children believe they are not supposed to talk; others think it is no one’s business; some have not been given much information to tell. A grieving child has the right not to say anything. Some good questions to help them consider are ‘why is the person asking?’, ‘would it be helpful to me (or them) to know?’, ‘is there a nice way for me not to answer?’.

Build a Support System with the Power of 3’s:

Assist a child in identifying 3:

- people who have helped you in the past
- people you can talk to
- places where you feel safe
- ways you can express your feelings
- things that have helped you in difficult situations
- things to help calm you down/relieve tension
- things to help you get your mind off your loss

Resources: Finding what works for children as they integrate loss into their lives can be challenging and change over time. Counseling and support groups, like those of the Center, can provide another safe space where children can explore what it feels like to share their “inside” thoughts and experiences with others not in their family system, gather new insights and ideas, and increase an understanding of self.



NELLO'S CORNER offers offers high quality peer support groups led by our staff of experienced grief facilitators for children ages 4 – high school and the adults that care for them. Families can feel less isolated and better able to manage grief when able to connect with others in similar situations.

Age-specific groups are offered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, afterschool or in the evening. Registration is on-going throughout the school year. Call Lois at 610-222-4110, ext. 118 for more information.

IMPACT CAPTURED *Through the Lens of Hope*



On May 2nd, our Center hosted an enjoyable fundraiser at the spectacular SEI Campus in Oaks. Through this casual event of gathered supporters, we are grateful to report that we raised over \$23,000 to strengthen the Center's programs and services. Beyond this generous funding, this event also served to further connect our staff, board, and volunteers with those who bring invested interest to our mission. We were overjoyed in personally meeting so many attendees and look forward to these continued relationships, engaging with our community of advocates in years ahead.

Throughout the evening, grief photo journals were displayed from **participants of the Center's Grief through Photography Workshop** along with portraits from our **Nello's Corner children's groups**, illustrating faces of expressed grief and hope. These featured images accompanied an inspiring video from **Tim Harris of Seven Knots Productions**, reflecting testimonials of grief's impact through the lens of the hope and help found through the services at the Center. Music from **Allison Hutchinson of Pure Voice Studios** and **Alfred Fox**, delicious food and drink, and amazing prizes further connected our guests to one another and to our mission. A most special thanks to our honored speakers, **Audrey Ditzler and Breanna Sokoloff**, along with the participants in our video, for having such courage and passion in sharing uplifting, personal stories of grief and hope.

Much appreciation to our wonderful event committee who worked tirelessly for our cause: **Shirley Elrod, Jill Gallagher, Beth Hunt, Selaine & Scott Keaton, Mary Lynn Morasco, Gina Parlanti, Carmen Phillips, Lauren Rieger, and Christine Smith**. Also, a very sincere thanks to our long-term volunteer and SEI employee, **Robb Muse** along with his colleagues **Sheri Wrzesniewski, Caryn Taylor-Lucia, and Eures't's Amanda Nicholas**, who all helped coordinate hosting this event at their beautiful SEI facility. Lastly, we extend our immense thanks to all of our generous **sponsors, donors, and attendees** - your collective support is truly inspiring and goes directly towards fulfilling our mission! We hope to see you at our next event in the spring of 2020 – more information to come!



SEI CARES...AGAIN!

Another exciting cause for celebration this spring was brought to us from the incredibly generous people at SEI. This year's **SEI Care's Rush Hour Run 5K** event was dedicated to benefit the Center along with another local charity. We could not be more delighted to once again have had the support of the people involved in this amazing company. It was a beautiful night full of inspiring energy and delicious refreshments, all enjoyed by a great crowd. Representatives of our staff felt so fortunate to be part of the fabulous experience and gladly set up along the trail to hand out water and cheer on the many runners, including one of our board members, **Selaine Keaton**.



A Rich Life Comes from Giving

In addition to the SEI Cares event benefiting the Center, special thanks to these individuals and organizations who recently took initiative to raise support for our mission through Facebook fundraisers, collections through personal networks, or through a portion of business proceeds:

- Audrey Ditzler of Audrey Ditzler Photography
- Montgomery County Sheriff's Office
- Donna Klein, Caricaturist, in conjunction with XL Sports Spring Event
- Walter Cherkas of Muddy Snow Productions
- Rebecca Richardson with St. Luke's UCC
- Michelle Stead with Arrowhead Elementary
- Noni Snyder with the "Love Like Greg" - Stand Up to Addiction event
- Claire Drexler, Cathleen Grandzol, Jamie Lockwood, Robb Muse, and Julia Peterdozzi through Facebook

We extend our sincere gratitude to these thoughtful people along with each of the generous donors who contributed to their endorsement in giving to the Center. Whether we were made aware of your specific donation to acknowledge you personally, we truly thank you all for supporting our programming! If you or your organization would like to hold a fundraiser or gather a collection of support to benefit the Center, please contact Donna Piergallini at dp@bereavementcenter.org or 610-222-4110 x 100.

A full annual list of our generous donors is printed each year in our spring newsletter, and is continuously updated on our website at: www.bereavementcenter.org/donations.

Camp Millie

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT Children's Summer Program

Camp Millie 2019 - "I walk with my..."

When someone in a family dies, it can be challenging to find ways to continue a connection with that person. Whether the relationship was strong and meaningful or distant and troubled, there is often a longing in grief to build a new relationship based on what is needed moving forward. This was the essence of our **Camp Millie Road Trip Adventure**.

Campers designed their own walking sticks and carried them throughout our week of busy activities. Attached to the top was a picture of the person(s) who died - a very concrete and tangible reminder that their family member(s) can always be taken with them wherever they go. Forty-one campers walked with their mom, dad, siblings and grandparents, creating new bonds and making fresh memories together.

Our Road Trip brought the campers and their family member(s) to many stops including a music studio, where Allison Hutchinson shared her music therapy techniques. A Moody Mountain Hike, yoga retreat, art museum and a splash park were a few of the other stops which offered opportunities for campers to share their stories, current challenges and coping strategies.



Camp Millie has always been about connecting kids to each other, in the hopes that each will feel less alone in grief and respond to the benefits of a support group environment. This year, the campers also experienced a unique connection with their person who died - a relationship which can continue or start fresh, and thrive as a source of comfort and renewal while on all of the road trips of their future.



OUR FABULOUS ROAD CREW FOR THIS YEAR'S CAMP:

Mary Ellen Babbitt, Robin Cavallo, Audrey Ditzler, Kate Doyle, Ilissa Ducoat, Connie Fretz, Marissa Gleason, Jill Herman, Casey Interrante, Olivia Keyte, Jake Marron, Megan Marron, Deb McGuinness, Elizabeth McMahon, Robb Muse, Sonalee Panchal, Amy Ramsey, Grace Ramsey, Ruby Ramsey, Steve Rasbold, Jason Rieger, Lois Robinson, Sandie Rollins, Christi Rotelle, Joyce Saddler, Ellie Smith, Graham Smith, Heather Tomes and Jen Toth.

SPECIAL APPRECIATION TO:

Our wonderful Student Intern - Megan Rowland • camp videographer from Muddy Snow Productions - Walt Cherkas • music therapist from Pure Voice Studios - Allison Hutchinson • The Michael H. Wise II Memorial Foundation for our t-shirts • Weikel Sportswear • Chris of The Party Center • Neelam Samant of Baking Smiles • Ellen Watson for the camp towels & waterslide

We also thank those who provided a host of supplies from our wishlist, camper scholarships, and contributions to our funding to help us offer this special experience for the campers.



Save the Date:
Camp Millie 2020
June 22nd - June 25th



Grief Notes on...Art Therapy

What Is Art Therapy?

Through the use of art-making, discussion, reflections, and relationship building, art therapists support individuals in a variety of life struggles, helping draw out – sometimes both figuratively and literally – deep-rooted feelings or stories that often can be challenging to express otherwise. This is especially true in processing grief and trauma, yet art therapy can also be a means of developing coping skills, increasing self-awareness, strengthening self-esteem, managing stress, and engaging in positive social interaction. All of these are useful tools in addressing the comprehensive work of rebuilding one's life following a devastating experience of loss. This adaptive, healing strength found in creative expression often results in a meaning-making process that transforms into emotional wellness.

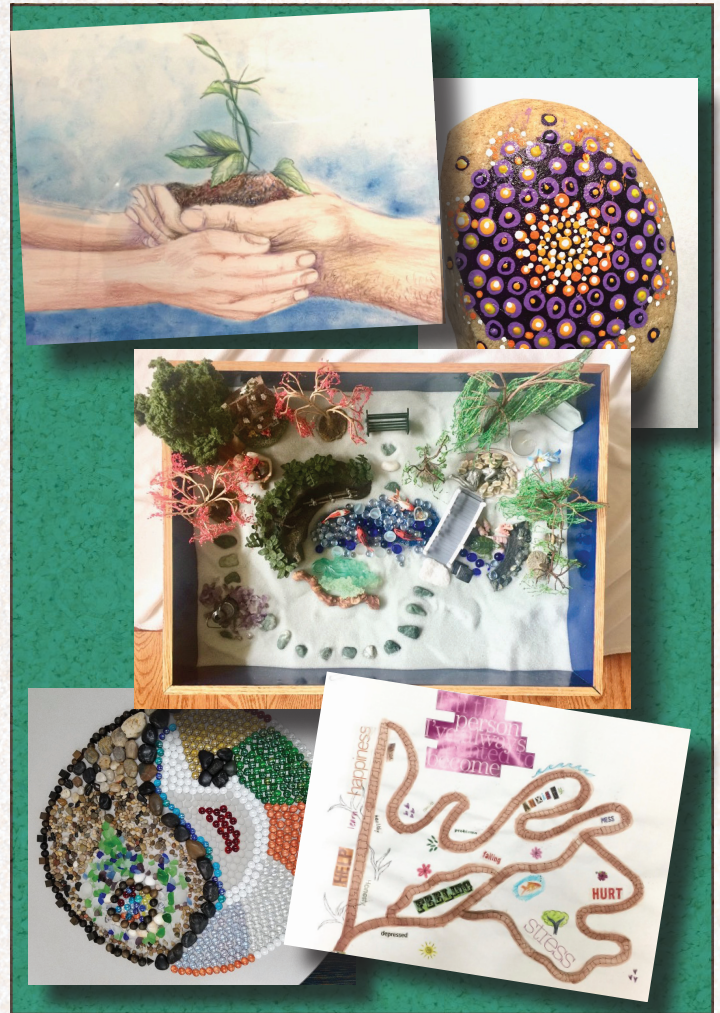
“But I can’t even draw a stick figure....”

A common misperception of art therapy is the need to have artistic skill. Individuals seeking art therapy services do not need prior art experience or confidence born in talent to gain the benefits of art therapy. The art therapy studio is a safe place where each individual can decide on the art materials to use, the concept to create, and the subject matter to talk about. Art therapy is about the *process* not the *product*.

While the process of art therapy is the means of growth and expression, the product can also be simultaneously moving and meaningful to the practiced artist, serving as a tangible representation of the insight gained within the creative process. Unlike talk therapy, having this piece of crafted work as a hands-on tool for grounding and reflection can be powerful in unique ways, beyond the creative experience itself.

Why Art Therapy in Trauma and Restoration from Grief?

Research shows that trauma is stored in the brain as a sensory experience, with fragments of images and sensations scattered throughout, leaving individuals more prone to frequent and overwhelming triggers. While grief alone may not be perceived as a trauma by all survivors, many will still struggle with an increased sense of fear and instability as one's attachments and routine in life are disrupted at best – and, at worse, are completely shattered. This added anxiety and loss of security adds a layer of distress to grief that, with or without traumatic features, can complicate even the most well supported and healthy individuals. A sensory practice such as art therapy can thus provide a vessel for externalizing traumatic memories and releasing tensions, helping to produce a more coherent, collective narrative of the traumatic experience. The kinesthetic experience of art-making also can serve to enhance a relaxation response and help increase the ability to tolerate stressors. The resulting art work can serve as a symbolic representation and container of the effects of traumatic stress, thus aiding the person with integrating the experience and feelings into one's life story.



Art therapy encourages creativity and supports the individual to connect with inner strengths in developing alternative responses to stressors and problems. Art-making can be a pleasurable experience that supports individuals in addressing emotional numbing that can come as a result of trauma or overwhelming, unrelenting feelings of pain. Reconnecting with calming, positive emotions and finding a means to release the heavy burden of grief or re-experiencing of traumatic memories can be found in these targeted, specialized techniques.

The Center has contracted with **Julia Meeker**, a licensed art therapist, and is grateful to now have the opportunity to work with grieving clients and group participants through a focused **Creative Art Studio**.

*If you are interested in exploring the unique benefits of art therapy, please reach out to Kendra Stenack at kns@bereavementcenter.org or 610-222-4110, ext. 101 to schedule time in the studio with Julia, or follow additional information about our **Grief Expression Workshop** coming this fall (on the next page).*

OPENING THE PHOTO ALBUM FROM OUR Grief Expression through Photography Workshop

This past spring, our Center launched its first Grief Expression Workshop. Using the creative outlet of photography, participants came together for two sessions to explore how the process of capturing a soul-stirring image can be used as a tool in coping with grief. Professional photographers, Audrey Ditzler and Brenna Sokoloff,

“I liked the technical training and having professionals there who showed their ideas. Also loved the opportunity to share and listen to our stories.”

- Workshop Participant

group further explored how an image can convey emotion, symbolism, memory, and continued bonds related to various grief experiences.

Ideas for creating expressive photo projects included: rediscovering or recreating old photographs in new ways; capturing images of resilience or hope; using a photo of those who have died

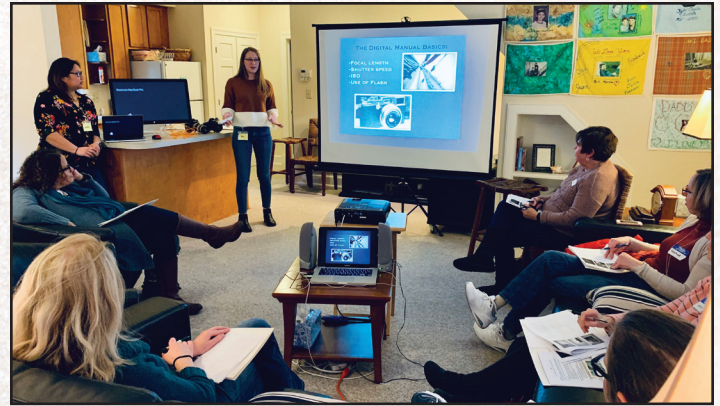
volunteered tips and strategies for both the novice and well-skilled, and shared how the means of photography helped them move through personal losses in life. With added perspective from staff member and practiced photographer Shelley Robbins, the



Sometimes the coldest days can still be as beautiful, if viewed at the right angle.

“My photography made me think and work through my grief and not look away from it.”

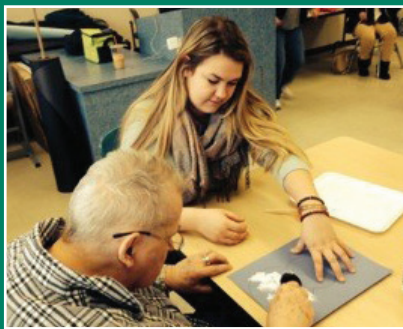
- Workshop Participant



to ‘bring’ them with you to new places or occasions, then capturing images of their picture(s) within new photos from those experiences; identifying a favorite place or object and taking pictures from new and different angles.

Group participants returned for a second session after exploring their ideas and skills through a new intentional perspective.

Each person shared their photos and reflections on how the camera offered a source of comfort, hope and strength to their personal journey with grief.



Ever been curious about exploring Art Therapy? Mark your calendar!

GRIEF EXPRESSION IN OUR CREATIVE ARTS STUDIO: Exploring Resilience through Warrior Figures

We are very excited to announce the opening of our Creative Arts Studio at the Center with the next in our series of Grief Expression workshops. Julia Meeker, our contracted Art Therapist, has designed a craft project to serve as a group introduction to how grief can be expressed and explored through hands-on creativity. Using just a few familiar materials, participants will design a 3d Warrior Figure, representing personal characteristics of resilience found through living with loss. In the safety of the studio, participants will have the opportunity to discover new channels of coping and connect with creative impulses while interacting with Julia as she shares her professional art therapy skills. This offering will be followed by future group workshops exploring specific areas of art – painting, sculpture, drawing, etc. for individuals and for families.

When: Saturday, November 16th, 10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Who: Adults and Older Teens

Contact Shelley Robbins at snr@bereavementcenter.org or 610-222-4110, ext.117 with questions and to register.



The Center for Loss and Bereavement
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Olcé
PIZZA GRILLE



Dining with a Cause!

Want to support those grieving locally?

Have dinner from Olcé in Skippack on Tuesday, **November 19th** and a portion of your cost will go towards our Center's mission and programming!

November 21st is Children's Grief Awareness Day. Wear blue and visit childrensgriefawarenessday.org to print out 'HOPE the butterfly', then share your personal message of support tagged #CGADHOPE. Don't forget to also share your support with the Center's followers by tagging us in your post!

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

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Click on our website's Amazon link & your orders will benefit the Center!

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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