

Center Highlights

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WINTER 2020



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

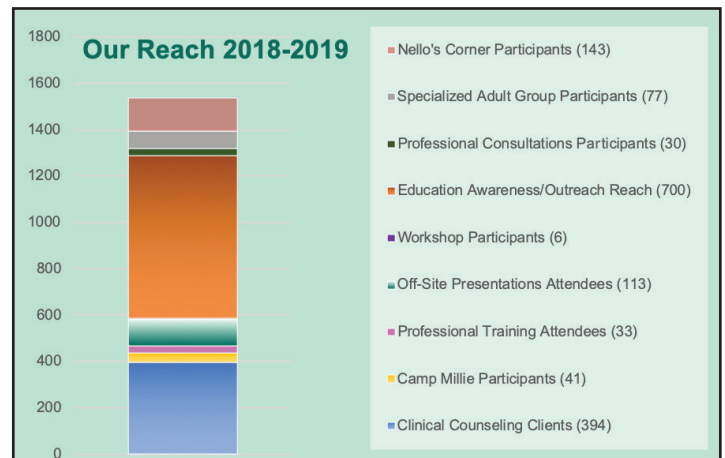
How do you measure a year? This question has been asked – sung, even – from scientists to philosophers, since the beginning of time. If you look to highlights surrounding a year's end, any news source will provide a plethora of statistics and key names along with events and trends of each year, decade, century, or – for those around during Y2k – the millennia! If you pose this question to the characters from the Broadway hit, *Rent*, they'll tell you measuring a year is about more than 525,600 minutes... that it's about seasons of love.

Markers in time cause us to pause, to reflect on the past and prepare ourselves for new beginnings. Perhaps one of our most challenging questions at the Center for Loss and Bereavement is – how do we measure *our mission's impact* each year? In supporting those in the throes of grief, we know the passage of time is measured by the intricate, unique, and complicated ways that people are able to find restoration over each new year of milestones. It's about gaining new meaning or purpose in life through loss's twists and turns, and about maintaining connections with those living and lost – for some – with life, itself.

Each year, in our assessment of impact, we tune in to the many stories shared in the trusted spaces of our therapy offices and peer groups. We hope to see that within our roles, we've been able to support the grief experience of our clients in ways that help them to find comfort, understanding, and growth through their journey. Again and again, we collectively witness and affirm that hope is found, shared, and cultivated through our services, and that our impact and reputation are not only strong – but growing.

On this cusp of our 20th year serving the community, whether you have been a client of ours, been comforted by knowing someone who was in our care, or been an invested partner by supporting our work, know that your place in our story has special meaning to us. As we focus on capturing the 20-year impact of the Center for our anniversary event next fall, we can proudly see that the cumulative impact of what started as a small opening of doors – and arms – has clearly grown to be an esteemed force of local hope and light worth celebrating.

Emily Vincent, LPC FT



Save the Date!

2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the Center for Loss and Bereavement! Since 2000, we have been working continuously to support all those facing loss in our community. We are thankful for your support and look forward to celebrating this distinguished milestone with you this coming fall!

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 22, 2020

We will gather at Normandy Farms in Blue Bell to commemorate this occasion. Invitations will follow soon! Please visit our site for more information: <http://bereavementcenter.org/events/>

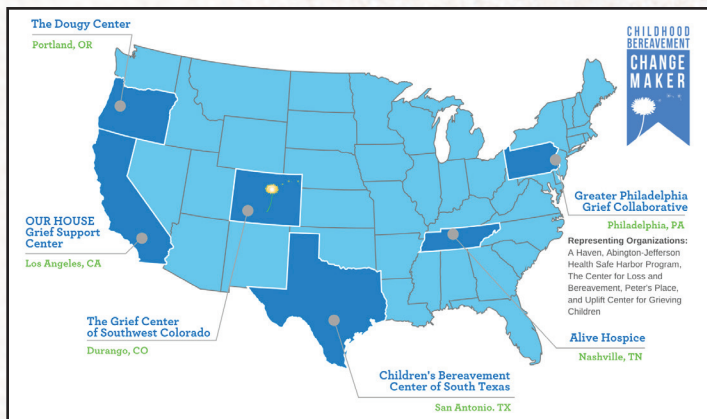
COMMUNITY *Connections*

Continuing to spread grief awareness has offered the Center several opportunities to connect with local, regional, and national organizations this past fall.

In addition to inviting professionals to our on-site Roundtable Trainings, this fall our staff participated in multiple off-site trainings, professional consultations, and community presentations regarding a variety of loss topics, including: Childhood Grief, Loss due to Overdose, Grief and the Holidays, and Loss for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. Beyond expanding education and support for individuals and organizations serving Montgomery, Bucks, and Chester counties, we also hosted a state-wide webinar to train school counselors for one of Pennsylvania's cyber schools.

In October we were grateful to have one of our staff members represent the Center as one of the area's experts in grief by being featured on *The Pulse*, an NPR show syndicated in over 50 stations throughout the United States. Claire Drexler, an experienced therapist of the Center, shared input on grief as it relates to the 'Passage of Time' for this episode. Complemented by other segments, Claire helped back up the assumption that – despite there being some truth to the adage, 'Time Heals All Wounds' – when it comes to grief, it really is much more complicated than that.

On top of all of these engagements, our Center was thrilled to be selected as part of a newly formed alliance of 5 organizations across Southeastern Pennsylvania (the Greater Philadelphia Grief Collaborative) to participate in a research program through Judi's House / JAG Institute and the New York Life Foundation. We are truly honored to have been granted this opportunity in collaborative learning, along with our partners in serving grieving children and families – Abington-Jefferson Health Safe Harbor (Willow Grove), A Haven (Exton), Peter's Place (Radnor), and Uplift Center for Grieving Children (Philadelphia). This two-year initiative will give us all a better understanding on childhood bereavement experiences in our area as well as nationally, helping us all more effectively reach underserved or sensitive grief needs with our programming. More details on how we will be involved in this **Childhood Bereavement Changemaker** project can be found on <https://www.judishouse.org/cbc>.



ART WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

On November 16, 2019 the Center welcomed nine expressive art therapy participants to the Art Therapy Studio for a group workshop focused on resiliency through warrior figure art making. Our contracted art therapist, Julia Meeker, put all at ease as she created a warm atmosphere of safety and acceptance in introducing the use of art as a tool for processing grief. The workshop involved guided meditation, art therapy and interactive group processing. Members were gently invited to explore art creation through the use of wire, cloth, felt, special beads, and additional embellishments such as feathers to create their warrior figures. Group participants then reflected on their creative process, highlighting themes of gratitude, reflection, and connection.



The Art Studio will once again be open for a Spring 2020 expressive arts workshop. More information will be posted on our website.

In the meantime, Julia is accepting clients of all ages at our Center. *Contact Kendra, Clinical Director at 610-222-4110, ext. 101 or kns@bereavementcenter.org to schedule an appointment to experience this unique process for yourself or your family.*

CONNECTION • UNDERSTANDING • SUPPORT

A hand to hold through your grief journey

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 specialized 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

Spring 2020 Groups (Dates TBD):

Adult Loss of Parent • Mature Loss of Spouse
Young Loss of Spouse • Loss of Sibling • Loss due to Addictions
NEW! Support for Ambiguous Grief - A group for caregivers of individuals with progressive, serious illness/disease.

For dates, times, and cost, or to inquire about other group options, please contact Ashley at amh@bereavementcenter.org or at 610-222-4110 ext. 123.

Camp Millie

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT
Children's Summer Program



Camp Millie TRAILBLAZERS

June 22, 23, 24, 25, 2020 • 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Hitch up the wagons and head for the trail! **Camp Millie TRAILBLAZERS** participants will become pioneers as they incorporate familiar western images with individual stories of loss, change, survival and hope. Activities include mask making, country-western hoe-downs, and a possible rattlesnake ruckus!

Camp Millie is designed for children ages 6 through young teen who have experienced the death of a family member. Held at Central Community Center directly behind Central Schwenkfelder Church on Steelman Road, Lansdale, families provide their own transportation and bag lunches. A \$100 fee per camper includes a t-shirt, supplies, snacks, and lunch on the last day of camp. Family discount is available for those with multiple siblings.

Call 610-222-4115 to register. Previous campers are welcome. However, registration priority will be given to new and second year campers.



Helping Hands for Camp Millie

Full and part time volunteers are needed for the week of Camp: Monday, June 22th – Thursday, June 25th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

- **Camp Buddy:** Must be 20+ years old and have completed our Spring Volunteer Facilitator Training Course. Camp buddies are assigned specific campers to help with grief circles, art, games, etc.
- **Teen Helpers:** Friendly, outgoing, helpful teens who are 16 years or older to help prep activities, run errands, assist with various tasks.
- **Donations Gratefully Accepted** to help defray camp expenses: Gift cards to Amazon, Walmart or Michael's; specific items designated on our Amazon Wishlist.

“Just Do It!”

This was the response many of our volunteers shared on our 2018-19 evaluation forms for advice they would give to others considering joining our Center's team to help with our children's programming. While many may feel apprehension about working with those who are grieving, after participation in our extensive training and then spending time with one of our groups, our volunteers soon discover that the honesty, wisdom and playfulness of children quickly erases any fears. We invite you to consider attending our next Volunteer Facilitator Training Course. It will provide all the support and information you need to help make a volunteer experience with the Center a meaningful one for the children and for YOU!

“My daughter has shown more empathy for others in similar situations since participating in Camp.”

“My children repeatedly spoke of the other kids and friends they were making (at camp). I noticed a difference in my son's willingness to talk about his father after the very first day. They LOVED it and I think it was so good for them to attend.”

WHAT DO PARENTS SAY?

“The loving, caring, knowledgeable staff and volunteers create an accepting environment.”



NEW TRAINING FORMAT: Volunteer Facilitator Training Course

For all who wish to volunteer with the children's groups of Nello's Corner or to be Buddies during Camp Millie:

- Saturday, April 18th, 9 am – 1 pm
- One Group Observation
- Saturday, May 16th, 9 am – 1 pm

Call Christina for information – 610-222-4115, ext. 119

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS 2020

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.

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.

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.



Grief Notes on...Caring for Elderly Parents

So... You've finally made it. You're in your 50's-60's, your children are raised and launched, and long-awaited retirement is in sight! You've got big bucket list plans to catch up on classic movies and novels, travel extensively, downsize your house, play with grandkids, and do meaningful volunteer work.

However, as you begin this much-anticipated stage in your life, you find your time increasingly consumed by helping your parents with tasks that they always did independently. As your parents age, you may observe deterioration in cognition and memory which often impacts their judgment and safety. The cognitive deficits may affect their ability to pay bills, manage finances, understand and advocate for their own medical care, and even to maintain their residence. At some point, they typically lose the ability to drive which compromises their sense of independence and competence. This overall loss of autonomy often results in increased anxiety, anger, and/or depression in the elderly, sometimes accompanied by personality changes. The personality changes may manifest in manipulative or passive aggressive behaviors which can be vexing for caregivers.

This scenario is increasingly prevalent in modern society. According to the Health and Retirement Study (2010), about 17% of adult children care for their parents at some point in their lives, and the likelihood of doing so rises with age. This is due to increased life expectancy which is largely attributable to dramatic medical advances in recent years. Modern medicine and technology have the ability to arrest or slow terminal illness and stave off death, even as the mind and body progressively shut down. Elderly patients increasingly require hospitalizations and shuttling between physician specialists who prescribe the medications and medical devices that keep them alive. Therefore, death often occurs in a protracted "piece by piece" manner instead of one singular event, as it had in previous generations.

Regardless of the quality of the relationship we had with our parents, we humans have a biologically-based loyalty that compels us to "give back" when they become unable to care for themselves. If the parent-child relationship was loving and functional, this "giving back" can feel straightforward and joyful, albeit quite challenging. If the relationship was conflicted, neglectful or abusive, the adult child may feel

deep ambivalence and/or resentment when having to make such sacrifices.

The adult caregiver may experience an ambiguous grief, related both to anticipation of the death of one's parents(s), but also in response to the hardships and losses posed by caregiving itself. This chronic grief is often perceived as an exhausting perpetual limbo. The caregiver may become hypervigilant, (e.g., dreading the next phone call), anxious, sad, angry, financially strained, and "burned out" overall. In moments of exasperation, the caregiver may have unkind thoughts toward one's elderly parent(s), lash out verbally, or yearn for relief. This may engender intense guilt and/or shame which can exacerbate one's suffering.



As the population ages, the clinicians at our Center have seen an influx of clients who are struggling in this caregiving role. We offer a nonjudgmental safe space for clients to ventilate and process feelings as well as glean support. We encourage clients to maintain a healthy perspective when immersed in the stressful day-to-day minutia of caregiving, in essence to realize that this adversity will not last forever. We inspire clients to view their "job" holistically, i.e. as an opportunity to be mindful of all aspects of the caregiving experience. This means not just focusing on the adversities, but embracing the good qualities of their parents, as well as any joy derived from the relationship itself.

Above all, of paramount importance for caretakers is self-care. We stress good sleep hygiene, exercise, nutrition, as well as maintenance of one's own healthcare. Wherever possible, we also counsel clients to seek respite for themselves, which may include recruiting other family members or friends to assist in tasks of parental care.

In addition to the in-person support offered through our Center's services, numerous online and community resources are available for support and information for caregivers as well. Two such websites are Caregiving.com and ParentingourParents.org which offer a plethora of helpful services. As more people are living through this increasingly relatable life experience, natural peer support systems may be created among family and friends. Yet, when this network is not available or the quality not enough, we welcome you to reach out to our staff for added support with a counselor or peer support group at the Center.

Positive Change After Loss

“Only in the darkness, can you see the stars.”

~ MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR

Our work with families and clients at the Center, as well as research in the bereavement field, clearly shows there is an ability to experience positive change after life-altering events, even one such as profound loss. While many come to our groups after a recent death, some come much later or remain with us for many years. We have observed that over time, children and teens in our groups begin talking or demonstrating feelings of relief, improvements, happiness, renewal and discoveries of strength. Their caregiving adults trickle into discussion topics of new avenues for relationships, careers, and pride at being able to accomplish what they once thought would never be possible.

Participants often apologize, perhaps concerned they will be judged in some way. However, this is part of the complicated process of grieving. These conversations actually provide an opportunity to acknowledge change and growth that is experienced through challenging situations, not to lessen the pain, take away the emptiness or imply that one is forgotten, but to lend support to the belief that healing does occur and life can continue. Adults understand that ripples from a death can be felt across a lifetime and that other difficult situations will almost certainly occur. This is life. Therefore, we can mindfully become proactive, even with children and teens coping with loss, to help them “see the stars”. This will illuminate pathways towards resilience and confidence that can support them through future times of darkness.



NELLO'S CORNER offers support groups for families with children and teens ages 4-18 years old who have experienced the loss of a close family member. Meetings are held on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, from 4:30 - 5:45 p.m. or 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. This is a donation-based program. If your family or a family you know might benefit, please share this newsletter and encourage them to give us a call. There is a place waiting in our circles of support at the Center.

Contact Lois at 610-222-4115 or lh@bereavementcenter.org

10 Things Adults Can do to Foster and Acknowledge Growth in Children and Teens:

1. Ask what changes, if any, children/teen see in themselves.
2. Consider sharing changes you have experienced yourself.
3. Have younger children draw before/during/after pictures and talk about it together. Invite older kids to make a timeline or keep a journal that will inevitably show the ups and downs; joys and sadness; challenges and recovery.
4. When you hear different views or feelings expressed about a situation by your child/teen, use as a conversation starter- “What do you think...”; “How is this different...”; “That’s new! Tell me more...”
5. Support new opportunities your child/teen wants to try– a different sport, new chores, redecorating room, creative arts expression, etc. Remember, it is about the effort, not the outcome.
6. Acknowledge the effort and energy that grief takes over time and at different times. It is ok to not think about the person constantly. Tell them you understand this does not mean they have forgotten.
7. Look for changes in their appreciation or outlook on life.
8. Tell your child/teen when you see them demonstrate strength, empathy, confidence, effort.
9. Point out images and objects that represent Hope and Growth to you in nature, home, photos and encourage them to find their own.
10. Consider a monthly check-in for the family or use the anniversary date of the death to reflect on how you are doing, what you are thinking, how far you have come and what has changed. Use as an opportunity to retell the loss story so changed perspectives may be seen or discovered. Some families have called this “Getting Through” celebrations.



In recognition of Children's Grief Awareness Day, peer group participants identified new supports they have discovered in their lives since their loss(es) which lift them in their grief.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR FIRST FUN RUN! *Strides of Hope* 5K

MAY 2, 2020 • HEEBNER PARK

Come and help us kick off a spring morning run or walk at Heebner Park in Worcester Township. The event will be fun for all ages! Along with the 5K course, there will be a children's fun run and family-friendly activities, with plenty of refreshments, snacks, and music.

Proceeds from the event will go directly to further The Center for Loss and Bereavement's mission.

www.bereavementcenter.org/stridesofhope

**Special thanks to our young adult group member Jamie Tyre for designing the logo for our event.*

YOUR GENEROSITY HELPS CHANGE LIVES!

There are many ways to support the Center for Loss and Bereavement:

- **Donations** The simplest way to make an impact is through a contribution. You can mail or make a donation online at our website. You can also designate this gift in memory or honor of someone.
- **Matching Gifts** Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match any charitable contributions or volunteer hours made by their employees.
- **Volunteer** Whether a one-time event or an on-going commitment, volunteers are at the heart of much of the work at the Center. No prior experience is necessary; however, some positions require mandatory trainings offered each year by the Center's staff.
- **Donate a Highly Appreciated Security** If you're going to be donating anyway, consider doing so with highly appreciated securities like stocks, stock funds, property, or similar holdings that are worth considerably more than when you acquired them. If you sell a highly appreciated holding (outside of a tax-sheltered account such as a traditional IRA) you'll pay capital gains taxes on the difference between its cost and its sale price. Instead, you can donate the security "in kind" to a non-profit organization and avoid the capital gains tax, subject to IRS rules.
- **Donate Your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** When you reach age 70½ you must begin taking RMDs from your tax-deferred accounts. If you don't necessarily need your RMD in a given year then consider donating it, as allowed by the IRS, instead of taking it as ordinary income. This is known as a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" and it allows you to avoid extra taxes and higher taxable income. The IRS allows you to donate up to \$100,000 annually in this manner.

As with all tax matters, consult your tax professional to better understand if these options are right for your specific situation.

We don't take you for **GRANTED...**

Special thanks to the foundations and organizations that have supported the Center. These foundations awarded the Center with grants in the last year to support our programming and capacity. Our impact is stronger because of these philanthropic organizations, making our community more resilient and our mission more inspired. Thank you!

- **VNA Foundation of the Greater North Penn**
- **Hogs & Honeys Foundation for Kids**
- **The Montgomery County Foundation, Inc., through an Anonymous Donor**
- **Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts**



Special Thanks!

Special thanks to these individuals and organizations who recently took initiative to raise awareness and support for our mission through Facebook fundraisers, collections through personal networks, or through a portion of business proceeds:

- **Tornetta Realty Holiday Card Donations**
- **Kris Huey through Facebook Fundraiser**
- **Montgomery County Sheriff's Office "No Shave November"**
- **Olcé Pizza Dine and Donate**
- **PJ Whelihan's Dine and Donate**
- **Shoppers who click through the Amazon link on our homepage!**

We extend our sincere gratitude to these thoughtful people along with each of the generous donors for their contributions and endorsement of the Center. Whether or not 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.

"Kindness is a wonderful way to let another struggling soul know that there is still love in this world."

THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 DONORS

The Board and the staff of the Center extend our heartfelt appreciation to our generous and committed donors. We rely on your contributions to offer refuge and hope to people during times of great need. Along with those who receive our services, we are profoundly grateful for your support!

Joseph and Tracy Abriola
Nancy and Mike Adelman
John Alchin and Hal Marryatt
Lena Ang
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In memory of my Parents, my Brother, my Uncles and my Grandparents
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This gift was made in honor of and in loving memory of Asher Brody
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John Flynn

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In memory of Christopher Fretz
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In memory of Elmer and Mary G. Fretz
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In memory of John Fitzgerald
Susan Greenfield
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In honor of Shirley Elrod and Chris Smith
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In honor of sweet Arie Meder
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In memory of Dan Howard
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In honor of our families
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Dan and Janet Johnson
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In memory of Connor McKelvie
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In memory of Barbara Kott, my dearest life-long friend whom I deeply miss
David Paone
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In memory of Mary Tornetta and Ann Tornetta
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In memory of Greg Herb
James and Lynda Rebarchak
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Wendy Ricker
In honor of Rita Porreca
Daniel and Lauren Rieger*
Gretchen and Jay Riley
Aileen and Brian Roberts

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In memory of our parents
John and Nancy Shane
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In memory of Lawrence Smith
Robert and Barbara Smith*
Noni Snyder
In memory of Greg Herb
Brad Sokoloff
Harvey Sokoloff
Susan Spencer
In memory of Rob Spencer and in honor of Robb Muse
Robert Stenack
In memory of our beloved family dog, Mo
Sara Sterling
Scott Sterling
Michael, Kelli, Kaitlin and Emily Suzuki*
In memory of Eric Y. Suzuki on his 26th birthday and the 8th anniversary of his death
Jennifer and Thomas Swavely
Caryn Taylor-Lucia
Alicia Taylor
In memory of Jason R. Taylor
Kathleen Thomas*
Holly and Brad Tiffany
Joan Torbet
Chrisandra and Mike Tosh
Steve Vibhute
Emily and Steve Vincent
In honor of my cherished Aunt Winnie Kassab
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In memory of Pat Walsh
David and Ellen Watson*
George and Joan Wausnock
In memory of Greg Herb
Meghan Wells
Binney Wietlisbach
Heather Winslow-Walker
In memory of Jeff Winslow
Kim Woodring
In memory of A.C Woodring, Joe and Jo Pacholski
Susan Wroblewski
The Zelli Family
In honor of The Fitzgerald Family
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In honor of our children and our grandchildren, who light up our lives
Lawrence and Christine Smith Charitable Trust
In memory of my beloved husband, Larry Smith and in honor of my children, Christopher, Lauren and Andrew for their unyielding love and support.

* Indicates giving more than once in 2019



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



Save the Date!

October 22, 2020
at Normandy Farms

Invitations will follow soon!

<http://bereavementcenter.org/events/>

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

Phone (610) 222-4110
Fax (610) 222-4116

www.bereavementcenter.org



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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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board@bereavementcenter.org

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