



Center Highlights

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 1 Spring 2024

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fostering Growth: Deepened Roots and Budding Blossoms at the Center

Our team at the Center has carefully balanced schedules and spaces to receive the hundreds of people coming through our doors for counseling and group support each year. The increasing momentum of individuals seeking warmth and solace in the company of others has required us to more than double service hours through the last five years. Reaching out for connection and hope is a quality of resilience, and we intend to be present with as many people as possible. While we have been fortunate in building our exceptional staff to adequately care for our clients and systems, a more critical need for added physical space became a priority in recent years.



Thanks to the generous support of many, we are pleased to announce that our facility now has expanded space in a recently renovated beautiful farmhouse right next door to our long-term home, widening our footprint in the heart of Montgomery County! With this connected property now part of our Center, we have 5 added offices for counseling and administration, along with two first-floor accessible rooms that are set to hold support groups, conferences, networking meetings, and workshops. We will also have added parking and a breathtaking landscape to further develop opportunities to connect with nature in peaceful seating areas and gardens. We have been busy readying the property for full use and are thrilled to now open these new doors to the added numbers of individuals and families coming to our Center for comfort, connection, and counsel through grief.

Branching out mission work both onsite and offsite requires a deep investment from others in our community, and we are so grateful for your being part of this journey with us! For any way you helped this vision become a reality, from generous donations to hands-on projects, our team thanks you from the bottom of our hearts. Read more about the many ways our team is bringing compassionate care and helpful resources to more people this year, and please reach out to connect if you'd like to learn more about how you can get involved.

We'd be honored to share the inspiration of this growth with those who have helped our Center nurture strong roots in the community we so dearly love!



Emily

Emily Vincent, LPC, FT
Executive Director

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OUR GROWING TEAM

With the addition of two new staff members and growth in roles, our newly formed Development team assumes a pivotal role of cultivating meaningful connections within our community, sharing impactful stories and building relationships with individuals and organizations aligned with our mission.

Audrey Ditzler was promoted to Development and Operations Director where she spearheads philanthropic efforts that strengthen support from our community, helping us maintain stable and sustainable systems around the Center. We also welcome **Kristen O'Brien** as our new Development Officer, who brings a wealth of experience in upholding the Center's mission through meaningful connections and partnerships with donors.



Marta Lawler, our newest Grief Counselor, contributes her therapeutic expertise and creative interests while also enriching our community engagement through communications and event coordination.



With our expanded team and revitalized spaces, we are better positioned to deepen connections and foster more healing, leaving a lasting impact on those we serve. As the Center evolves, we extend heartfelt thanks for the unwavering support from our community.



20th Year Celebration

From Then Until Now...

It is 4:25 p.m. and the sound of car doors and children's voices are heard from the parking lot. The door to Nello's Corner opens wide and several children come scurrying in, dropping their shoes in a bin and waving hello. In no time at all, we are sitting on pillows in a circle, sharing names and the names of those whose death has brought everyone together. The talk is about school tests, favorite activities, questions and changes. Some pull out pictures to share; others tell stories about their families. Another night at Nello's Corner has begun.

Excerpt from the Center's first Nello's Corner newsletter article, 2004

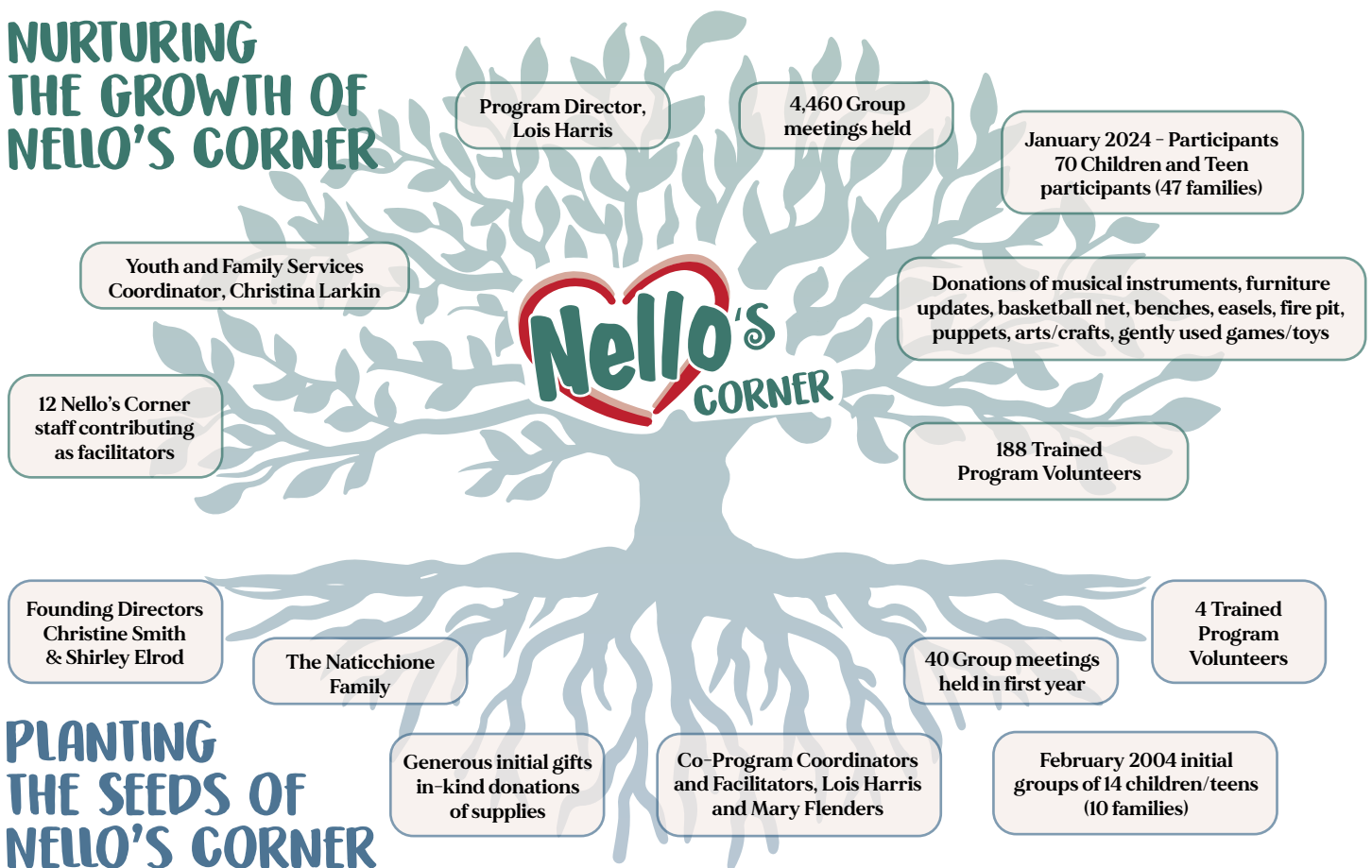
As we enter our 20th year of Nello's Corner, the Center's peer support group program for families, this description of an early peer group remains accurate and surprisingly comforting in its familiarity to now. A safe space and predictable format continue to bring solace to so many seeking meaningful connections with others impacted by profound family loss in a child's life.

Reflecting on the years, we are awestruck at the hope, strength, and support that has come from this unique program. Looking around, we see this through the abundance of paper butterflies and hearts that hang from our meeting room ceiling, representing each child who walks through our doors, and the names of those being remembered; we see the well-loved toys, including a wooden crafted dollhouse, gifted to us from an original participating family; we see crafts representing feelings, coping, supports, memories, and hopes for the future; we see

our beloved stuffed gorilla, who has been hugged, wrestled, and cried upon by countless children; we feel the energy of the air hockey table; we see our large book collection, many donated in honor or memory of a loved one; we feel the tender support of our colorful chairs, remembering the laughter and heartaches shared around their circle; and we hear the faint sound of the chime, telling us it's time for another group to begin.

To participating families, volunteers, staff, and generous donors throughout these 20 years, you are remembered and will always be part of our circle at Nello's Corner. Thank you for your ongoing support for the next 20 years, as we continue to open our door wide for children and their families looking for comfort, hope, and a place in our circle to feel less alone. For more information, visit bereavementcenter.org/nellos-corner.

NURTURING THE GROWTH OF NELLO'S CORNER



PLANTING THE SEEDS OF NELLO'S CORNER

SPOTLIGHT ON NELLO & ANDREA NATICCHIONE

Nurturing Growth and Hope Through Legacy



The Naticchiones celebrating resilience through growth of their own. Pictured are Nello III and Andrea, with sons Peter (upper left) and Gino (center), daughters-in-law Jeanine (upper right) and Alyssa (center), and grandchildren.

Nello and Andrea Naticchione confronted an unthinkable tragedy with the unexpected death of their 9-year-old son, Nello IV, in 1990. Amidst their grief, they were motivated to turn their sorrow into purpose and collaborated with the Center to help establish its children's grief support group program, Nello's Corner.

For 20 years Nello's Corner has been available to the community at no cost, thanks to the consistent commitment of the Naticchione family and the Nello Memorial Committee. At the heart of their own sorrow, a legacy of healing was created, honoring young Nello's memory while providing a lifeline of hope to countless families grappling with loss. The Naticchione family's ongoing generosity continues to illuminate the path forward, ensuring that their gifts of compassion and resilience remain a guiding light for future families for years to come.

Coinciding with the 20th Anniversary of the opening of Nello's Corner, the Naticchione family will be participating as the Presenting Sponsor of the Center's Strides of Hope 5K in April. Thank you, Nello and Andrea, and the entire Naticchione family of supporters, for all you do for the Center!



Nello IV, carried in Heart and Legacy, always

Our Volunteers are the Heart of the Center

We are so grateful for the many hours of time and talent our volunteers dedicate each year in support of our children's programming, fundraising events, and as overall helping hands around the Center! This year several of our volunteers reached service hour milestones! We had the honor of celebrating them among their peers during our Volunteer Appreciation Event in October.

SERVICE AWARDS

100 HOURS

- Kate Doyle
- Jill Gallagher
- Marissa Gleason
- Beth Hunt
- Selaine Keaton
- Kathy Nolte
- Sonalee Panchal
- Carmen Phillips
- Heather Tomes
- Sandie Rollins
- Jen Romano

250 HOURS

- Jill Herman
- Steve Rasbold
- Amy Ramsey
- Mike Sembello
- Kim Thomas

750 HOURS

- Jake Marron



Calling All Aspiring Volunteers!

2024 PROGRAM VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Each spring, we welcome a new group of potential volunteers to gather for a specialized training, preparing them to join with our staff to help facilitate children's support groups in our Nello's Corner and Camp Millie programs.

TWO-PART TRAINING DATES:

Saturday, March 2nd 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

AND

Saturday, March 23rd 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

In addition to the two Saturday trainings, we require an observation of one Nello's Corner group (held on a Tuesday or Wednesday in the late afternoon/evening).



If you are interested in being part of this incredible team and finding rewarding volunteer opportunities all around the Center or participating in our upcoming volunteer facilitator training, please visit bereavementcenter.org/volunteer or call Jamie at 610-222-4110 x124

COMMUNITY *Connections*

New Partnership!

The **Adalyn Rose Foundation** has recently launched a new program called Keegan Cares. This is an initiative that provides parents with support in navigating the start of individual therapy following the loss of a baby, with financial assistance for mental health services. This program is made possible by Keegan's parents, Bobby and Brianna Langerfeld, who have also been connected to our Center. We are inspired by their desire to support other grieving families and are grateful to have the privilege of working with many of these families in our counseling program.



ADALYN ROSE
FOUNDATION

Additionally, we will be partnering to offer 6-week support groups to meet the unique needs of the Adalyn Rose Foundation community. This year, we plan to offer topic-specific, in-person support groups such as Pregnancy After Loss, Miscarriage/Stillbirth, and Infant/Child Loss.

If you or someone you know can benefit from these sensitive, specialized services, please reach out via our website (bereavementcenter.org/contact/) or check out more of the support services that the Adalyn Rose Foundation has to offer.

Library Resource Initiative

This past November we supported **Children's Grief Awareness Month** by partnering with local libraries, assisting them in setting up small displays of grief-related books for children and teens. We will be continuing this outreach effort by launching a Grief Resource Initiative to continually support the library systems in our community. Through this project, we will be providing comprehensive grief resource guides for all ages, recommended



book and article lists, topic specific tip-sheets, parent workshops, and grief-related story times for children. Keep an eye out for updates in our future communications as we continue to raise awareness and increase accessibility for resources in support of grief's universal experiences.

Senior Center Partnership

Generations of Indian Valley, a local Senior Center in Souderton, received a grant targeted at increasing peer support for seniors experiencing isolation through their journey of grief. Their grant funding has enabled our Center to provide staff training and grief support services to members of the Souderton and Pennsburg communities, connecting seniors at Generations and **The Open Link** Senior Centers with others in storytelling of their lives, and creating hope in new, meaningful ways. We are grateful to have been given this opportunity to extend our care to this special population and look forward to growing this continued partnership through this year!

Specialized Adult Grief Support



Specialized adult grief support groups at the Center are not about changing the unique ways that individuals experience their grief. Rather, they are about creating a supportive environment for group members to move forward in their own grieving process while being surrounded and encouraged by others who find themselves in similar situations.

"I think back to where I was on my "grief journey" the day I called to get on the waiting list to join, and I look at the person that I am now – I am so grateful that this group has helped me move forward in the grieving process. I still have a long way to go, but the group has provided a strong foundation for me to do so."

—Elizabeth Bissell Parks, Loss of Parent Support Group Participant

ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS:

Monthly Loss of Child Support Group – Once a month, September through July 6:30 pm – 8 pm

Young Adult Grief Support – Every other Wednesday, September through June

UPCOMING GROUPS SCHEDULED AS INTEREST IS SHOWN:

Loss of Spouse/Partner **Loss Due to Suicide**
Adult Loss of Parent **Loss Due Substance Use** **Sibling Loss**

All groups require completion of a registration form, introductory call, and nominal fee. For current schedules and to learn more, visit bereavementcenter.org/specialized-adult-groups or call 610-222-4110.

Strides of HOPE
To benefit The Center for Loss and Bereavement

Join us for our 4th
Annual
**Strides of Hope 5K
Run/Walk**

April 13, 2024
Heebner Park, Worcester

Register to run,
sponsor, or
donate here:



Camp Millie offers support to children facing a life-long journey with grief. For many kids, it can be difficult to know where to start or how to ask for help along the way. This June, our **Road Trip Adventure** camp theme provides the opportunity to face challenges, overcome obstacles, and load up on coping ideas while “traveling” with others who understand what it is like to grieve.

Planning for the **Camp Millie Road Trip!**



Reserve the dates:

June 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th
9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Find Travelling Companions:

Children ages 6 – young teen who have experienced the death of an immediate family member.

Meeting Place:

Each day, the adventure happens at the Central Community Center on Steelman Road in Lansdale.

Itinerary:

First stop each day is an Opening Circle with up to 50 campers, helping all realize they are not alone in their journey with grief. Throughout the day, stops are made for age-specific grief discussions which give opportunities to show care and concern, validation and support, demonstrating that it matters what they are thinking and feeling.

Daily themed road-side adventures include physical activities for team building, meaningful crafts, and purposeful activities which may include: *designing a road sign • memorial customs from around the world • exploring artwork • our popular waterslide!*

Each day's road trip ends with memories made and souvenir sharing during our Closing Circle.

Pack Your Bag:

Families provide their own transportation and bag lunches. A few weeks prior to camp, campers receive detailed information of daily items needed.

Reserve Your Spot:

Visit our website (bereavementcenter.org/camp-millie) or call 610-222-4110 to register. Priority is given to new and second year campers. Registration fee per camper is \$100, including all activities, t-shirt, daily snacks and a picnic lunch on the last day.

Family discount and financial assistance are available.

Space is limited, register soon!

Although grief is a lifelong journey, Camp Millie's Road Trip Adventure may bring hope and camaraderie to their experience in learning to live with loss.

Support Every Child's Road Trip Adventure at Camp Millie!

Thanks to the kindness of generous grantors, this year our camp supplies are secured, laying the foundation for an extraordinary Camp Millie. However, we need your support towards essential operational aspects to make this road trip adventure truly magical for every child. With a gift of \$200, you can cover a child's expenses for an entire day at Camp Millie. Importantly, every contribution, no matter the amount, plays a vital role! Your generosity will offset critical costs of the behind-the-scenes planning, preparation, and hands-on skilled leadership of our staff, as well as volunteer training, orientation, and support. Thank you for taking this Road Trip with us by sponsoring Camp Millie at any level at bereavementcenter.org/donate/.

Grief Notes:

Healthy Distractions versus Avoidant Coping

BY TAMMY COURT-CUDD

Grief is an intense, overwhelming, and exhausting experience that can drain a person physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, and spiritually. When experiencing such intensity, it is only natural to want to take a break, pause, and catch one's breath in order to feel able to navigate the process. The good news is...taking a break from one's grief is actually a very healthy and helpful action. There is, however, a distinct difference between healthy distraction and chronic avoidance which is extremely important to understand.

Healthy distraction can be thought of as a "time-out" whereby there is intention of a "time-in" as well. Avoidance, on the other hand, is the act of distracting for an immediate sense of gratification without intention of a "time-in." Healthy distraction enables the mind and body to "opt back in the game" to process the experience, whereas avoidance is the act of finding ways to NOT "get in the game" at all. Any strain on the body and mind takes a toll on an individual. As such, taking time for healthy distraction allows and encourages an individual to replenish strength, build ways to manage the intensity of emotions, and adaptively cope.

Tips for Finding Balance

- Be conscious of when you want to escape a feeling and notice what you are doing to avoid it; ask yourself if you are participating in healthy distraction or avoidant coping
- Dose your grief through scheduled or flexible moments of leaning into your feelings and experiencing the emotions that come with grief
- Take a break from grief through healthy distraction: socializing w/ friends and family, reading, listening to music, exercising, walking in nature, meditation
- Develop and/or enhance coping strategies that help build resiliency and find balance
- Don't do it alone – find support through family and friends that can help strengthen you in times you are leaning into your grief. If these natural networks are not adequate or the right fit for you, reach out to our Center. You are not alone in grief's pain, and we can help you find others who can relate through a peer support group, or with a counselor who can offer professional support along your journey.

To read the full article, please visit the resource page of our website: bereavementcenter.org/clb-grief-resources



Growing Together: A Heartfelt Thank You for Your Support

A heartfelt thank you to our amazing community of donors whose generosity propels our mission and fortifies our programs! Each contribution has a profound impact on those navigating grief, and we are sincerely grateful for your support. Stay tuned for our Annual Report that will be published in Spring 2024, where we will proudly feature a comprehensive list of donors who made our work all possible. Your names will shine brightly, showcasing the power of unity in our shared commitment to positive change. Special recognition extends to our dedicated board members and supportive community foundations for recent contributions:

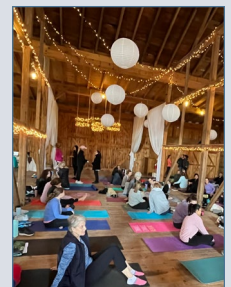
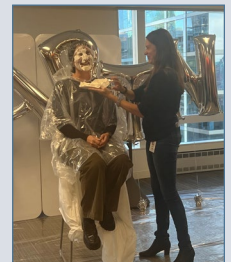
• **The Mary P. Dolciani Halloran Foundation** for a grant award funding Camp Millie activities and supplies

• **The Stratton Foundation** for providing technology infrastructure and office furnishings in our new building

• **The Healthspark Foundation** for supporting our team's wellness as part of the The Montgomery County Safety Net Program

- Board Member **Megan Brody** for participating in an office Pie-a-Partner fundraiser
- Board Members **Suzanne Miller** and **Selaine Keaton** for holding a Yoga and Chakra Opening fundraiser and **Stephanie Carfagno** for hosting in her beautiful barn!

Thank you for being the driving force behind our success. *Together, we give hope when it is needed most.*



COUNSELING SPOTLIGHT

Marta Lawler is the Center's newest grief counselor and brings with her a passion for grief awareness and experience working with Philadelphia youth coping with death, ambiguous loss, and trauma. Since joining our staff, she has been supporting our offsite work in local schools and continues to build a caseload of counseling clients at the Center.



She holds a Master's degree in Counseling and Mental Health Services from the University of Pennsylvania, and is ecstatic to be working at a place where grief is at the forefront. She is actively working towards her Licensure in Professional Counseling (LPC) and is furthering study in death, dying and bereavement. Too often, people feel like they must hide their grief away, yet at the Center they are encouraged to share their most sacred stories. Marta believes the Center is special, as evidenced by the compassionate people on the team and the individuals and families who courageously come here for help. We are thrilled to have her join us!

For more information about counseling at the Center, visit: bereavementcenter.org/individual-and-family-grief-counseling

Reflections on Growth with Farmer Ed

Each of us at the Center appreciates deepened awareness of life's meaning and purpose. Our senses are acutely tuned into life's cycle of birth, death, and renewal across the many stories shared in our counseling offices and group rooms. We recognize the importance of these core aspects of humanity, and how growth in ourselves and in life around us sustains us all.

Recently, we took in perspectives on growth with the agricultural craftsman behind the Center's Fields of Hope sunflower event, upcoming this July. Ed Evans, affectionally known as 'Farmer Ed', has been bringing wisdom and delicate care to every seed and row planted at the Smith farm for many years. He shared his approach to farming and his appreciation of growth, across all forms of nature.



According to Ed, the foundation of a strong crop is a caretaker who provides oversight and tending. Ed explains that caretakers maintain a healthy environment that nourishes growth and reduces threats to safety. In the fields, caretakers till the ground, providing necessary nutrients, water, and access to warmth and light. They inhibit invasive pests to encourage the natural, fullest expression of each seedling's

growth. In communities, Ed defines caretakers as those who nurture "relationships, skills, confidence, happiness, self-esteem, and productivity", while simultaneously "installing the guardrails necessary to protect" others from harm. Caretakers start with our parents and expand to include other family guardians, mentors and teachers, counselors and coaches, faith-leaders, colleagues, and "friends who look out for each other". They safeguard others "from the hurt of damaging outside influences," while instilling qualities of resilience, supportive presence, and encouragement along the way.

Ed notes that another key component in achieving growth potential is having a thoughtful approach in planning. Being goal-driven with a respect for timing and the responsiveness of each crop helps caretakers build upon success and adjust in order to maximize growth. Respectively, people living with intention, reflection, and direction find more stability and confidence in adapting to challenges, when and where needed. We build our potential to find meaningfulness in growth through seasons of joys, sorrows, and everything in-between.

When asked what Ed finds fulfilling in his work, he shared that, "Planting a seed, caring for the seed, and watching it grow into a beautiful flower is a very rewarding experience that brings joy



to the farmer and to the community." He believes people "are all born with a natural inclination to be close to nature and to care for nature." While he recognizes that many lose touch with nature either in location or in lifestyle, Ed finds gratitude and tremendous gratification by "being immersed in nature daily."

We may work in different environments and with different needs in support, but our team could not agree more. We are honored to be caretakers and to encourage caretaking for those seeking warmth and nurturance from guardians in their community. We are *Centered* every day, with tremendous gratitude for the opportunity to cultivate growth in ourselves and others through this mission's work.

Thank you, Ed, for all you do to inspire hope in others and for bringing us close to nature's serenity in the beautiful sunflower fields. All who are part of this special event are connected to your passion in caretaking, and join us in the support of our community. For more information on registration, sponsorship, photography, and finding hope in the fields with us this July, please visit bereavementcenter.org/fields-of-hope/.

FIELDS of HOPE

SAVE THE DATE

July 20-21, 2024
Collegeville, PA

For more info about this event, visit our website or scan the QR code!

<https://bereavementcenter.org/fields-of-hope/>



The Center for Loss and Bereavement
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P.O. Box 1299
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Did you know...

...there is a word for the longing we experience for something we can never quite get back – a special culmination of people, place, and time that are gone?

It is **Hiraeth**, pronounced like “here-eyeth.”

It’s a Welsh word that can be found in the country’s earliest records and that has been used by Welsh poets throughout history.

- Referenced from “All There Is”, a special grief-series podcast by Anderson Cooper

The Center for Loss and Bereavement

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 linkedin.com/the-center-for-loss-and-bereavement

DONATE



Did You Know...
that our Center relies on the generosity of individual contributions, unlike government-funded organizations? Your support powers our mission. Visit our website for ways to contribute and become a source of hope.
www.bereavementcenter.org/donate

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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For more information about our Board of Directors and membership, please visit: bereavementcenter.org/board-of-directors/

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Lois Robinson, Ed D	Group Facilitator	

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