Dear Friends,

The death of a parent or sibling leaves children feeling alone and isolated, as though they don’t fit in with friends anymore, or even that their family is somehow “different” from other families. But through the Peter’s Place community, there is help.

96% of children feel better about themselves after coming to Peter’s Place.

Created by the community, for the community, Peter’s Place would not exist, nor could it provide the essential support that it does, without the contributions of so many different people: children and adults who come to share their stories and help each other navigate this grief journey; donors who finance every aspect of the work; staff who come to work every day to work for the mission; volunteers who share their countless gifts; school counselors and social workers who collaborate with our Outreach Program; and Board members who care for the organization’s present and future.

Our community is defined not only by geography, but by common experience and shared passion.

Through on-site peer support groups and our growing Outreach Program, Peter’s Place is able to serve a larger and ever-more diverse group.

This program year, we enhanced our outcomes measures. As a result, we learned so much more about what Peter’s Place means to children and adults who participate in our support groups. Learning to feel better about one’s self would be reason enough to participate, but kids are benefiting in so many ways.

60% of children responding said since coming to Peter’s Place they have better focus in school. 81% are less frightened. 70% say it’s easier now to talk to their families about the death of their loved one.

Caregivers shared similarly uplifting responses: 94% feel better equipped to talk to their children about grief. 70% have better focus at work. 78% feel less anxious. And 92% feel less alone.

We want to make this kind of support available to every child and family who needs it. With an eye toward this important goal, we are actively planning for the future.

Within these pages, you will find an interview with a Peter’s Place family, hear from a school counselor who utilizes the Outreach Program, and read the words of a volunteer facilitator who gives her time to help run support groups.

You will also learn about the wonderful people who support this community as Board members, donors, and committee members. The Peter’s Place community couldn’t make the impact that it does without the participation of each of these groups. Whether you are a family member, a friend of the mission, or a supporter of Peter’s Place, you are making incredible things possible for grieving children and families.

And for this, we thank you.

“Our community is defined not only by geography, but by common experience and shared passion.”

Our Mission

Peter’s Place provides safe and supportive environments for grieving children and families and acts as a community resource to foster understanding of the effects of death and grief.
A Volunteer’s Perspective

Nadine Karel,
Peter’s Place volunteer

When I co-facilitated my first group of teens in 2008, I had no idea what to expect. I started volunteering at Peter’s Place not because of a personal loss, but because I’d heard great things about the organization. Until that point in my life, I had only ever lost a grandfather, when I was 11.

At first I felt a bit like an intruder: witness to intense grief and heart-breaking loss, and week after week I’d think to myself, “Do I belong here? How can I facilitate something that I don’t personally understand?” By the end of my first year I realized that the kids didn’t need me to understand what it was like to lose a loved one. They just needed me to be there, every two weeks, in the same room, at the same time, listening to them. And they didn’t really need to hear anything I had to say; they needed to hear each other, and they needed to be heard. That was it.

Two years ago I lost someone very close to me. It was a sudden cancer diagnosis—a whirlwind six weeks of watching someone I love die. I took a year off from Peter’s Place to work through my own grief and came back last year, curious if my experience as a facilitator would be any different now that I was “on the bus” (as a grief counselor I met with once put it).

I discovered two things. The first is that I now have “Yes!” moments. A teen in the group will say something—some comment about how they feel or what they experienced—and I will instantly relate to it. In my head, I say, “Yes! I understand! That happens to me, too! I know exactly how you feel when you look at the sky and sense your loved one all around you, I know exactly what you mean when you talk about those spongy-swab things they use in hospice, I know what it’s like to not want to delete that voicemail message.”

Supporting Our Community

On-Site
A total of 318 children, caregivers, and young adults were served at Peter’s Place during the Program Year.

Since coming to Peter’s Place:
96% of children and teens feel better about themselves.
81% of children and teens feel less scared.
79% of children and teens feel less alone.
60% of children and teens can focus more at school.
91% of children and teens enjoy spending time with their friends.
65% of children and teens say it’s easier for them to talk about the death with others.
70% of children and teens say it’s easier for them to talk to their families about the death.

Outreach
Total number of in-school groups: 34
Number of children served: 282
Total professionals educated: 709
Students’ average group rating: 9/10
92% of students report feeling better at group completion

Why did you want to join this group?
“ To make all the sadness go away.”
“ Because I wanted to stop holding grudges, and to relieve my pain from my relative passing.”
“ To talk about my dad so he knows I love him.”
“ To meet other kids who have lost a parent.”
“ I joined this group because I felt like I couldn’t express my feelings at home.”

What helped about the group?
“ That I could be open to complete strangers that ended up being my friends.”
“ To find out I’m not so different from everyone else.”
“ Talking about (my deceased father) and the things we did and what I like about him.”
“ I liked how we could all put our feelings in our writing.”

Visit www.petersplaceonline.org for a link to our Facebook page.

Announcements

New Board Member
We are very pleased to announce that George Bodenger, Esq., has joined the Peter’s Place Board of Directors.

CHOP Partnership
Peter’s Place is honored to begin the second year of our 3-year partnership with Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Funded by the Stone Family Foundation, and together with CHOP, we are developing a specialized program to serve children whose siblings have died. Peter’s Place welcomes Dr. Lene Larsen to lead us into the next phase of this project.

Ryan’s Hope
The first session of Ryan’s Hope was held this spring, in which 8 parents, whose children had died from addiction-related causes, were served. To learn more about this program or to enroll in the next session, please contact Kim Nelson.

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Continued on page 8
Too much exposure to graphic news events will fuel children’s fear, so
age 12) and Juan (age 9) graduated from the Peter’s Place program this spring and sat down with us to talk about grief, Peter’s Place, and their new family.

Peter’s Place is the only center of its kind in Delaware County and the only one convenient to Chester County. Frank and his children reflected on the struggle to find support after Jennifer died. Frank shared, “I was going through therapy for myself, and I didn’t like it. I really wanted to find a place that the boys could go with me, where we could go and talk and meet like-minded people. You read the statistics about how many people experience a death in their family, and you’d think there would be more out there.”

As a nation, we have been faced by news of tragedies such as school shootings, acts of terror, bombings, and natural disasters with more frequency than in past decades. As loving parents and caregivers, we naturally want to protect our children from the trauma and fear that is elicited when such devastation occurs and is broadcast repeatedly by the media. These senseless and random events make us feel vulnerable and fearful, and we wonder how they will influence the psyches of our youth, as we struggle for the right words.

Talking with Children about Tragic Events
Denise M. Paul, MA, CT, CPLC
Group Specialist

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Too much exposure to graphic news events will fuel children’s fear, so it is best to limit their exposure to news programs. However, it may be impossible to completely shelter your child from hearing news from other sources. Caring adults have the responsibility of being available and listening to children’s concerns as they struggle to understand what happened. Don’t give them more information than they can handle, or more than they’re requesting. Let them know that you’re willing to talk about it, but you are not forcing them to do so.

Be honest with children and use age-appropriate, simple language to explain what happened. Depending on the age of the child, an explanation such as, “He used a gun, and the people died,” may suffice.

Of course, a new experience like this one can be intimidating at first. As Juan explained, “I was nervous and scared, but the staff showed us around and it looked like a very nice place.” They quickly felt comfortable, and after some time here, the boys and Frank started to realize the benefits of peer support. Gavin noticed, “you...find people that you can relate to and talk to about it...it’s special. You don’t find places like this everywhere. Everybody’s going through the same thing, but their perspective is different. You get a wider view.”

And having this community helped him navigate his own journey. When someone dies, we might think we know what to expect. But grief is different for everyone and each loss is unique. Gavin realized he was adjusting to a new normal. “Well, a lot of people might think that it will come back to the same way it was before. If you were to smash a vase and try to put it back together, you probably still wouldn’t find all the fragments of it. There are little pieces that are still missing and they’ll never come back, and you can’t fix that,” said Gavin.

On a summer vacation in Boston, Frank had his own “Aha moment.” In planning the trip, he had been trying to offer a change of pace from what they did when Jennifer was alive. Something sunk in; “We were out in the mountains, and it just came to me—this is new. We’re three. And we took our first picture of the three of us. I hadn’t had pictures taken in 3 or 4 years.”

Life is forever changed by this kind of tragedy. Families must walk a journey and find a way to make sense of their losses and carry their memories forward. Gavin explained, “You can’t take it off. You can’t wash it off. You can’t Photoshop the scars away.” And Frank added, “It’s tough. When somebody dies, and you go through grief. There’s no way around it, you just gotta go through it. But knowing there are other people out there is comforting.”

We are so grateful to Frank, Gavin and Juan for sharing some of their story with the Peter’s Place community.

Simple answers will allow the child to process at a level that works for them, while leaving the opportunity for them to seek out further details when they are ready.

It’s okay to show emotion and to model for children that feeling sad and upset is normal after tragedies, but we don’t want to overwhelm them with our emotions. They will take their cues from the adults around them. Reassure children that these tragedies are very rare and that you are doing everything possible to keep them safe. Extra hugs and attention may be especially comforting.

A child’s response to tragic news will vary, depending on their age, experience with previous deaths, and personality. Some children may seem disinterested and unaffected, while others may display symptoms such as nightmares, eating disorders, stomachaches, aggressive behaviors, and even panic attacks.

Young children may revert to more regressive behavior, crying more easily or insisting on sleeping with their parents. It is likely that they will have an increased sense of fear about their safety and the safety of their family members, which is why it is important for parents to be accessible. In general, children may feel vulnerable—worrying that the same misfortune will happen to them. If you are concerned about your child’s response to a tragic event, a mental-health professional can help you understand if your child would benefit from professional support.

As caring adults, it is our responsibility and privilege to help our children navigate these challenging times, by helping them to experience the joys and the sorrows of life with compassion and resilience.
Peter’s Place is ever grateful to all of our contributors who make our programs possible.

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With Gratitude

Evergreen

On Saturday, April 27, 2013, Peter’s Place held our annual spring fundraising event, Evergreen. Event co-chairs Lauren Forman and Michelle Krietsch hosted 300 guests at the Merion Golf Club, just a little more than a month before the U.S. Open.

The event featured dinner, dancing, and a live and silent auction to benefit Peter’s Place. More than $150,000 was raised through Evergreen, thanks to our presenting sponsor, The Elliott-Lewis Corporation, and all of our generous friends and supporters!

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Bowl-a-Thon

Peter’s Place families, volunteers, and community members joined us at the Playdrome Devon Lanes on Saturday, February 2 to enjoy an afternoon of bowling for a good cause. Thanks to all of our Bowl-a-Thon supporters, the event raised more than $11,000 for Peter’s Place!

Thank you to our community supporters!

The work of Peter’s Place is only possible with the support of our community. We are truly grateful to the following organizations and community groups for hosting a fundraiser on behalf of Peter’s Place.

• Women of the Palette Art Sale
  A group of 10 local artists had a sale at Eagle Village to benefit Peter’s Place on November 9-11.

• Louella Shopping Event
  Louella in Wayne hosted an elegant evening of shopping for Peter’s Place on Wednesday, March 20, and generously donated a portion of the evening’s sales.

• Chestnutwold Elementary School Bingo Night
  On Friday, April 12, Chestnutwold Elementary School in Ardmore hosted a Bingo night, with a portion of the proceeds benefitting Peter’s Place.

• The Graham Company Denim Day
  On April 26, The Graham Company hosted a Denim Day for employees and donated the proceeds from the event to Peter’s Place.

• Coventry First Dress Down Day
  Thank you Coventry First for donating the proceeds from your recent dress-down day!
Peter’s Place is ever grateful to all of our contributors who make our programs possible.

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**Willow**

$500-$999

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- Joanna McNeil Lewis
- Dawn & Norm Miller
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- Shannon Chemical Corporation
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Fostering Community by Reaching Out

Tony Morelli, MSS, LSW, CT
Director of Off-Site Programs

The Outreach Program is a “mobile version of Peter’s Place” that brings our singular brand of grief support directly to grieving children in their own community via the local school. Outreach targets children in and around Delaware County who otherwise would be unlikely to attend Peter’s Place because of distance, transportation issues, socioeconomic stressors or other barriers.

Since 2011 Peter’s Place has offered 54 eight-week grief support groups in schools, and 13 have been in the Southeast Delco School District. Lindsay Hannigan, a lead social worker in this district, describes some of the challenges she sees there: “Most of our students are low-income and often come from one-parent families; and, because of real life problems that our families experience, education is not always given as much precedence as we’d often like. Consequently, there can be problems with communication between families and school staff.” Despite these stressors, however, Lindsay quickly identifies the inherent strengths of her students: “Many kids thrive here. They are resilient … and fun! There is an innocence to them, and often they want to come to school to see and be with their friends.”

Describing the impact of Outreach in her schools, Lindsay relates: “… A number of students in the groups–for various reasons–have not had the opportunity to even address their grief; so to have an outlet–to be supported and heard–and to hear others like them who are also going through a process of grieving–is so helpful … Administrators and counselors, too, are grateful to be able to offer this service to our students.”

In addition to the convenience that school-based groups provide for families, they also give students the emotional, social, and psychological support that enables them to perform better in the classroom. “In (the Peter’s Place) groups we are addressing things that teachers don’t necessarily see or hear about in the classroom,” Lindsay explains, “and these are oftentimes the very reasons that students may act out … When they have an opportunity to talk and really address what is going on in their lives, they are able to go back into the classroom and focus … It’s really working from a ‘whole child’ approach to education.”

A noteworthy effect of Outreach in this district is that it enhances communication between the school and parents or care-providers and forges a stronger alliance between them. Lindsay explains: “I’ve been able to follow up with care-providers and parents after their children have participated in grief group and we get to talk about it a little more … I connect with them in a supportive and non-threatening way, and we can build on that relationship–especially if other issues come up later on. The more we all work together, get to know each other, and are all on the same page, the better the students are going to do.”

Commenting on the successes of the program, Lindsay shares: “A number of times students in group–both at Harris and at Academy Park–have come to me in the time between (the weekly) groups … They ask about the group or tell me that they enjoy coming to group. They also tell their teachers that they like coming and tell their friends the activities that they did in group. These are all signs that the program is beneficial. You’re getting direct, unsolicited evidence that they feel connected and they’re getting something that they feel good about.”

As the Peter’s Place Outreach Program continues to expand, it is apparent that Peter’s Place is fostering “community” in ways we may never have even imagined!

A Volunteer’s Perspective

Continued from page 2

But I don’t say any of this, because the teens don’t need me to. I relate to it, I recognize that I relate to it, and I just nod and keep on listening.

The second discovery is that I recognize the value, all the more, of what Peter’s Place provides for kids: a safe space to hear and be heard. After my own loss, I could count on one hand the number of people I could talk to about what I went through. Friends and family were kind and supportive, but more often than not, as I would start to talk about my experience or my grief, I would see a certain look in their eyes. Scared. Confused. Worried. Hesitant. Pitying. I quickly learned exactly who I felt comfortable talking to, and the list was small.

I come to my group at Peter’s Place and look around at the kids filling the teen room, slumped and lounging on their bean bag chairs. Sometimes I count the people in the room, and the number fills the fingers on both of my hands. And I take a minute to appreciate how special and important it is that these kids have at least two hands worth of people who get it, people they feel comfortable talking to about death and grief. This knowledge alone–regardless of the conversation or activity of the group that night–leaves me feeling filled and settled as I drive home after group. Two hands’ worth of people. I am honored to be part of Peter’s Place, and am continually in awe of the truly magical work that is being done within its walls.
The Peter’s Place community is the heart of the work we do. With a small staff and no fee charged to the families we serve, it is our community that makes these programs possible. If you are interested in helping Peter’s Place, here are a few ways you can help.

Make a Gift
We provide support services and outreach programs at no cost to the families we serve, so no one is turned away because of financial limitations. We are entirely funded by the generous donations we receive.

A gift of...
• $1,160 sponsors a family at Peter’s Place for a program year.
• $800 funds an 8-week support group for up to 10 grieving children in their own school.
• $250 freshens worn out costumes, dolls, and toys used by small children to express their grief through play.
• $120 sponsors one month of on-site support services to a family.
• $100 funds one child in our Outreach Program to attend an 8-week support group in their school.

Volunteer
With only a small paid staff, Peter’s Place depends on the commitment of volunteers. Volunteer Grief Facilitators assist with our bi-weekly peer support groups. It is sensitive work and for that reason, training is required. Due to the cyclical nature of our Program, we offer Volunteer Facilitator Training once per year in August.

There are also opportunities to support the work and mission of Peter’s Place at community events or by offering administrative support.

Leave a Legacy
Bequests are a wonderful way to make a gift that will last beyond your lifetime. By naming Peter’s Place as a beneficiary in your will or trust, you will ensure that grieving children and families receive support for years to come.

Sample Language for a Bequest
“I hereby give, devise and bequeath to Peter’s Place, a nonprofit corporation organized and operating under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the sum of $________ (or ___ percent of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate) for its general purpose as an unrestricted gift.”

If you have already designated Peter’s Place as a beneficiary in your will or if you are interested in learning more about making a gift through a bequest, please contact Andrea McLean, Director of Development, at (610) 687-5150, ext. 4.

Donate an Item on Our Wish List
Peter’s Place has a Wish List of supplies that we need for our groups, ranging from gift cards, to snacks, to arts and craft supplies. These types of donations enable us to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment while growing our programs.

If you are interested in helping Peter’s Place in any of these ways or if you have any questions, please call Andrea McLean, Director of Development, at (610) 687-5150, ext. 4 or visit our website at www.petersplaceonline.org for more information.
Upcoming Events

Wednesday, October 23rd
The Little House Shop Shopping Event
Eagle Village Shops,
503 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, PA
20% of all sales* between 11 am and 6 pm will benefit Peter’s Place!
* Excludes sale items and special orders

Friday, November 8th - Sunday, November 10th
Women of the Palette Art Sale
The Village Hall, Eagle Village Shops,
503 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, PA
The Women of the Palette will be hosting an art sale with a portion of the sales benefitting Peter’s Place. There will be a Reception on Friday, November 8th from 5 pm - 8 pm, with food, music, and a raffle to benefit Peter’s Place.

Friday, November 15th
Peter’s Place Professional Development Series
Peter’s Place, 150 N. Radnor-Chester Road, Suite F130, Radnor, PA
Peter’s Place welcomes Carly Goldberg, DSW, LCSW to speak on Reproductive Trauma: Love, Loss, and the Face of Disenfranchised Grief. This is a continuing education program for mental health professionals. 2.0 CE’s pending from NASW for LSW’s, LCSW’s, LPC’s and LMFT’s. For more information, please contact Tony Morelli, Director of Off-Site Programs, at 610.687.5150, Ext. 3 or at Tony@petersplaceonline.org.

Friday, May 30th
Evergreen Gala
Merion Golf Club,
450 Ardmore Avenue, Ardmore, PA
More information to come!

Peter’s Place
150 N. Radnor-Chester Road
Suite F130, Radnor, PA 19087
Ph: 610-687-5150  Fax: 610-687-5120
www.petersplaceonline.org

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