



Peter's Place

A Center for Grieving Children and Families

Comfort. Hope. Healing.

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Summer/Fall 2008



An Eye Toward the Future

Melissa K. Ingersoll, J.D., Executive Director

With great enthusiasm, I take this opportunity to introduce myself to the Peter's Place community of friends, supporters, and volunteers. I am honored to take on the role of Executive Director of an organization with such worth and impact in our community.

After the sudden death of the mother of my daughter's classmate last year, followed by the death of my daughter's soccer teammate, we sought out Peter's Place, in the form of Board member Karen Moon, for advice and support. As we experienced firsthand the good work done here, my devotion to the organization grew. Last spring, I found myself co-chairing the Bowling Ball fundraiser along with longtime supporter and new Board member Robin Marzelli Pew, an experience that solidified my commitment to this organization. My new role here is a wonderful opportunity to combine my legal and fundraising experience with my passion for Peter's Place.

During two weekends in August and September, I took part in the annual facilitator training required of our new volunteers in order to work with our staff in the support groups. An amazing assortment of committed individuals donated 28 hours of their time to be trained as Grief Facilitators. The reasons people are drawn to Peter's Place are varied, but many have suffered or been witness to significant loss in their lives. These individuals have used the impact of their losses to find purpose, strength, and inspiration through their work here. I continue to find that, for all the hours contributed by those who work and volunteer here, Peter's Place gives back to us as much, or even more, than we are giving.

My challenge as Executive Director is to solidify the financial security of Peter's Place, and thus ensure that our in-house support programs and outreach programs in the community can continue to grow and expand into the future. Increasing our exposure and relationships within the community through accessible events, and building our relationships with area foundations and corporations, will help us achieve our goals. We continue to rely heavily on you—our stalwart friends and supporters—to keep us on even footing while these goals are realized. The importance of such generosity cannot be overlooked, and we thank you for continuing to believe in and support the good work that is accomplished here. I am fortunate to have been given this opportunity to build upon the important accomplishments of those who came before me to increase our exposure, our growing programs, and our fiscal security.

Despite the sad reasons that bring people here, Peter's Place is an inspirational, positive, even cheerful place. Good things happen here. Our sunny open windows and bright colors make it a lovely place to be. We have many opportunities for volunteers—our monthly Pretzels for Peter's Place sale here at the Radnor Financial Center, upcoming fundraising events, greeting those arriving for support groups, annual facilitator training, and others. In addition, donations are greatly appreciated and necessary; our

website, www.petersplaceonline.org, offers a variety of ways to give, in addition to a Wish List of needed items (see p. 7 for more details).

If you find yourself in Radnor, please drop in and introduce yourself to me—and find out what you can do to help keep this amazing place healthy and strong.



Peter's Place In Action at Episcopal Academy

The following excerpt is from a personal essay by Faézzé Woodville, a parent at the Episcopal Academy and a dedicated member of the Peter's Place fundraising community

Last fall, I got a call at 10 p.m. from my friend and fellow homeroom mother for the third-grade class at EA informing me of the death of a child in the school. I felt so grief-stricken, so puzzled, so aching. I had so many questions and not one plausible answer or explanation I could offer the other families in our grade, my own sons, or myself.

All at once, I felt sad for the child, for her family, for my sons, for myself, and frankly for all other parents of children that age. Suddenly, we had to face the weight of coping with the death of a loved one—in this case a young child.

We all wanted to express our grief, learn how to best help our children, hold on to one another, and reach out to the parents of the student. The children wanted to know what to do with her desk, what would happen to her uniform and holiday presents, how she died, why she died, what the funeral was all about, and if they were supposed to feel sad every day.

We parents wanted to know how to face this incredible part of life for ourselves, our children, and the family of the student. Should we prepare meals, send notes and flowers, or just weep quietly while remembering each detail of

continued on page 3



In Their Own Words

Children and teens share the best thing about coming to Peter's Place...

"Feeling normal because I'm with others who are going through similar things."

"It's nice to talk with other people about the death, especially because they can relate. It's nice to hear from other people, too."

"That I can talk to others like me who understand my sadness."

"It lets me talk about it."

"Meeting other people like me."



And caregivers say...

"Being in a support group with others who share your loss, don't judge you, and are willing to listen with open minds. My children share their grief with other children and are learning it's okay to grieve in whatever way they need to. It has helped them open up to me a bit more."

"I find I am not the only one who is going through the most painful time of my life. It helps to know others feel the same way."

"Interacting with others and listening to them made me realize I can help them in the same way they have helped me and my children—by being together and sharing."

"Thank you for offering this unique and wonderful program. The caring way we were welcomed was great. I feel my family has benefited, and we have faced—and continue to deal with—this devastating place we've found ourselves in."

Our Mission

Peter's Place provides a safe and supportive environment for grieving children and families and acts as a community resource to foster understanding of the effects of death and grief.

2007–2008: Peter's Place By the Numbers

Support Groups

- This year we served **208 children** and **188 adults** in support groups—a 42% increase over last year.
- **155 families** and **22 individual adults** participated in groups.
- **28 biweekly support groups** were held from September–June (13 for children/teens, 13 for caregivers, 1 for young adults, and 1 for survivors of suicide).

Intakes

- **70 families**, up 11% from last year, were seen at intake.
- **192 individuals** (adults and children combined) were seen at intake.
- **65 new families** (73 adults and 88 children) enrolled in support groups, up 12.5% from last program year.

Volunteers and Internships

- **44 Grief Facilitators** volunteered in groups, donating over 235 hours per month in service.
- **12 new Grief Facilitators** completed our 28-hour volunteer training.
- **2 graduate students** did practicum placements at Peter's Place, each contributing 100 hours.
- **3 people** gave up to 5 hours per week greeting families and helping with intakes.

Outreach

- **31 outreach programs** directly served **1,106 people** and touched **over 10,000 lives**. Our direct service numbers increased 262% over last year!

The organizations and schools we served in 2007–08 include:

- American Day Treatment Center
- Brandywine Middle School
- Brooke Glen Behavioral Health
- Chester County MH/MR
- Child and Family Focus
- Conestoga High School
- Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc.
- Delaware County Intermediate Unit
- Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center
- Gift of Life Donor Program
- Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems
- Northeast Treatment Centers
- Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School
- Radnor High School
- The Shipley School
- St. Katharine of Siena School
- The Coad Group
- The Episcopal Academy
- The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
- Wayne Elementary
- Wayne Presbyterian Church
- West Chester University





Weaving Our Stories



Carrie Miluski, MS, Program Director

A tapestry that hangs at Peter's Place was created by the children, teens, and adults that participate in groups here. It reflects the personal loss experiences of the many that come to Peter's Place, and to me, it also serves as a symbol of our special community and the healing that takes place within it.

Over a two-week period in the spring of 2008, each person attending a group was invited to participate in the making of this sacred piece. And each had the opportunity to weave a message into the fabric, adding it to the growing tapestry. Like Peter's Place, the tapestry started small and continues to grow with each new person who touches it.

The tapestry is created from ribbons that are woven into delicate fabric made for landscaping. This fabric is designed to reinforce the soil on fragile slopes, so that trees and flowers might grow sturdy without risk of being uprooted. The fabric itself is like grief—delicate and prone to unravel, requiring great care in its handling. Offered ribbons, yarn, and beads, families were invited to weave into the fabric a message of hope, a note to the people in their lives who have died, a prayer, or a special memory. With each addition, the tapestry was made stronger. With each story added, it was able to hold more weight and more stories.

And so it is at Peter's Place. Each story, each child, each adult that is woven into the fabric of this community makes it stronger. We grow in our ability to support others who come to us feeling vulnerable, fragile, delicate, and perhaps prone to unravel. Hopefully, here they find support, strength, and reinforcement for their grief journey.

This year, Peter's Place served more people than ever in our support groups and outreach services. We have added greater numbers to our corps of dedicated volunteers. We have welcomed new staff and board members, and, of course, many new donors to whom we are ever grateful. On behalf of Peter's Place, I wish to acknowledge and thank each of you for your own unique role in this community. Donors, volunteers, children, teens, caregivers, Board members, friends, and staff—each person weaves something into the fabric of Peter's Place. Together, we make this community, like the tapestry, stronger.



Episcopal Academy, continued from page 1

raising a child for 8 years—every joyful, stressful, and demanding moment of it.

Soon after the death, Peter's Place offered to come to EA to conduct grief counseling sessions for the students and their parents. After the initial regular sessions, they held monthly voluntary sessions for students to talk about their feelings and experiences.

My son Thomas had reservations about attending the first voluntary session, but I told him that I wanted him to. When I picked him up, Thomas was smiling. He said he was glad he had gone because the counselor looked like he was from Iran (where I grew up) and had brought the best crackers! That evening he talked about the questions he and his classmates had raised, at times seeming uneasy about what he thought were insensitive comments but still feeling he could open up about them. The next morning, he said, "Mommy, I wish I had taken one last good look at [my friend]. I wish I knew that it was going to be the last time I got to see her."

I witnessed the children express sadness, confusion, seeming indifference, and joy as they processed the loss. In time, they found ways to keep a place for her in their hearts and lives, and to learn to cope with the greatest form of loss that is also such an inevitable part of life. Together, they designed a mailbox they placed on her desk, feeling free to write her when they wanted to. In Chapel, they dedicated a special window where they placed her picture, pastel-colored roses brought in by the moms, and other objects.

Through the sessions for parents, we found a safe place to be together as a small community of third grade families, a place where we could express our grief, feel understood, and learn from one another how best to cope.

In one of the most memorable sessions, I recall our kind facilitator mentioning the obvious: that we and our children would always remember that a classmate had died in third grade. Along with other important life lessons, this was to teach us the importance of learning to assimilate loss into our lives, and to help us develop a fuller understanding of our life and its place in the larger world around us.

I am grateful for the counseling sessions that, through the generosity of its donors, Peter's Place was able to offer the Episcopal Academy. I think I speak for our community of parents, faculty, and students when I say that Peter's Place offered us a way to understand, affirm, and appreciate the fullness of life through the experience of a tragic loss.

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Peter's Place is grateful to our donors, without whom our programs would not be possible.

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Peter's Place makes every effort to accurately recognize all of our contributors. If your name is listed incorrectly or omitted, please notify us and a correction will appear in the next newsletter.

Off to Valley Forge Military Academy

Joseph Kelly, MA, Outreach Specialist

As my last day as an employee draws near and my role shifts from that of Outreach Specialist to hopeful volunteer, it's only natural to reflect on what my time here has meant to me.

As an intern in 2006–07 facilitating groups and conducting intakes for new families, I felt privileged to be trusted with such sacred and personal stories, and to be part of a community filled with so much love and comfort. I want to thank all of the families and facilitators for their remarkable courage and kind hearts. You taught me so much about the importance of relationships and valuing those around us.

As an Outreach Specialist over the past 15 months, I have had the chance to educate the community about grief and loss. My confidence as both a public speaker and a person benefited enormously. Thank you to my co-workers for providing me with an unbelievable amount of love and support.

Although I'm sure that my impact on the community was small, the hundreds of people I provided services to have forever impacted the way in which I conduct myself as a passionate educator and mental health professional. I continue to be humbled by the number of truly special helping professionals in our area that care as they do.

Not a day passed when I wasn't aware of how lucky I was to be representing Peter's Place and contributing as best as I could to others. I look at my efforts here as the most important work I have performed in my life thus far. I will deeply miss you all and will carry every cherished moment with me always.



Comings and Goings

Eleanor Morsbach and Andy Walsh, Co-Chairs of the Board

On behalf of the entire Peter's Place community, we bid a fond farewell to **Jack Hoopes** and the **Rev. Frank Allen**, both of whom have served on our Board since our founding. As our Treasurer, Jack has overseen our finances with a steady hand. Frank, the pastor of St. David's Episcopal Church, Wayne, PA, has been a guide and mentor to our Board and staff. With grateful hearts, we thank them for their years of support and commitment.

Filling the seats vacated by Jack and Frank, we are pleased to welcome two new Board members, **Robin Pew** and **Bob Prachar**. Robin has long been associated with Peter's Place, from the time her family came to us following the death of her first husband, to her work as a Grief Facilitator, to co-chairing the Bowling Ball fundraiser. Robin will concentrate on development and fundraising. Bob is President, U.S. Operations of Neuropharm Group Plc, a British pharmaceutical company working in the area of autism. He comes to us with an abiding interest in children and a background in strategic planning and growing businesses. We welcome the valuable perspective, energy, and experience that Robin and Bob will share with us.

We'd also like to share a few recent changes to our staff, starting with a very capable and dynamic new management team: **Carrie Miluski**, Program Director, and **Melissa Ingersoll**, Executive Director. Carrie will continue to direct all program and outreach-related activities. Melissa will be responsible for fundraising, public relations, and general office management. Both will serve as spokespersons and advocates for our organization within the community. Melissa Ingersoll, JD, began her law career practicing in the area of trusts and estates, frequently advising recently bereaved clients. She comes to Peter's Place with a wealth of experience in fundraising for such organizations as the Willistown Conservation Trust, The Shipley School, and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where she serves on the Women's Board. Just prior to joining the staff, she served as the co-chair of the Bowling Ball. A big welcome to Melissa, as well as to **Cara Margogan**, LSW, our new Outreach Specialist and Intake Coordinator. In addition to running children's groups, Cara will conduct intakes for new families and deliver outreach services to schools and community organizations. She brings to Peter's Place a background in crisis intervention, bereavement, and mental health. Finally, welcome to **Leila Gordon**, MBA, our new Finance Manager. Leila worked in the Trust Departments of Provident National Bank (now PNC) and The Bryn Mawr Trust Company, and as a Vice President in the Private Investment Counsel Group of Scudder, Stevens and Clark before starting her own business, Gordon Business Solutions, LLC. She is on the Board of The Lankenau Hospital Foundation and The McLean Contributionship. Leila brings with her a deep interest in, and understanding of, the Peter's Place mission.



From left to right: Cara Margogan, Outreach Specialist and Intake Coordinator; Melissa Ingersoll, Executive Director; Carrie Miluski, Program Director.

Partying with Peter's Place



The good times rolled at the Bowling Ball

On June 21, 2008, Peter's Place hosted our first-ever Bowling Ball, a fundraising event held at Lucky Strike Lounge and Lanes in Philadelphia. Guests enjoyed bowling, billiards, food, drink, and great company. The event was a great success thanks to the tireless work of the event committee—including co-chairs Melissa and Warren Ingersoll and Robin and Glenn Pew—as well as the generous support of our event sponsors.



Three cheers for our volunteers!

On June 11, 2008, volunteer facilitators, staff, Board members, and their families gathered at the home of Kathy and Al Benelli for our annual volunteer appreciation picnic. We shared food and games and great company. Peter's Place cannot say thank you enough to the amazing group of people that offer their time and compassionate presence to make the work of this place possible.



Peter's Place Needs Your Support

Donations to Peter's Place have meaning and impact.

With only a small paid staff working with over 45 volunteer Grief Facilitators, Greeters, and Intake Aides, Peter's Place serves hundreds of children and families every year. We also provide support and training to area schools at no charge. A donation to Peter's Place helps us increase the number of children and families we can serve, and enables us to continue educating the community about how to offer comfort and compassion to grieving families.

Donating in Memory of Someone

Many people decide to make a donation in memory of someone who has died. This is a way to remember someone special or to comfort a family by making a contribution supporting others who are grieving.

Donating in Honor of Someone

You may also pay tribute to someone by making a donation to Peter's Place in his or her honor. This connects the honoree to the special, caring work we do in the community for children and families.

How to Donate

- Use the included donation envelope.
- Visit www.petersplaceonline.org and click "Donate" in the green bar at the top of the page. You can make your donation via PayPal, credit card, or check.

Our Wish List

We have an ongoing need for items that help keep our programs running and our offices functioning. If you would like to help, **please see our Amazon.com wish list** for a selection of much-needed literature for children and adults. Or, please consider contributing one of these items:

- Paper shredder
- Children's craft supplies
- DVD player
- IKEA gift certificates (to furnish our small-group room)

To locate our Amazon.com wish list:

- 1.) Click on "Gifts and Wish Lists."
- 2.) Type "Peter's Place" in the "Find Someone's Wish List" box.
- 3.) Hit the "Go" button!

Find someone's Wish List

In This Issue...



Page 1 An Episcopal Academy parent shares the emotional story of the death of her son's classmate.

Page 3 Program Director Carrie Miluski writes about the significance of a very special tapestry that hangs at Peter's Place.

Page 6 We report recent changes to our Board and staff, and exiting Outreach Specialist Joseph Kelly pens a personal farewell.

Read All About It

With generous support from A Little Hope Foundation and the Gaetano D. & Mary C. Dolente Family Fund, Peter's Place has published two new brochures. One describes our available outreach services, and the other is about understanding grief and how to help yourself or a child after a death. **For a free copy of either brochure, please contact Peter's Place.**



Comfort. Hope. Healing.

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