



Peter's Place

A Center for Grieving Children and Families

Comfort. Hope. Healing.

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Summer 2007

Being Our Best Selves



At Peter's Place we practice being our best selves—to meet the challenge of dealing every day with such a deeply affecting issue as death. Being our best selves means having the emotional agility to be available for the range of emotions our community members experience. Our *best selves* are kind when we meet this challenge. As an organization, and as a community this means completing our mission with integrity—in *everything* we do—and working to open our services to the needs of the community outside our walls.

There is so much to do. I am often reminded of the story in Buddhist scripture about the grieving mother and the mustard seed. When a mother loses her only son, she takes his body to the Buddha to find a cure. The Buddha asks her to bring a handful of mustard seeds from a family that has never lost a child, husband, parent, or friend. When the mother is unable to find such a house in her village, she begins to understand that there is no cure for death. She learns that it is ubiquitous and that what had happened to her also happened to everyone else. In finding out this lesson, she finds some comfort.

If I ever forgot this, I was reminded this year with the death of my own mother, Dolly Caul. My Peter's Place community was the kindest place to be during these times and I have been even more grateful.

Peter Morsbach and those who loved him were the original reasons for beginning this place. The reasons go on and expand—with each new family and with each new person who supports us, reveals their story of loss, or calls on Peter's Place. These reasons brought us sorrow, but we are most agile together and find meaning and comfort by supporting each other.

Imagine what the understanding of grief facilitators, the knowledge of staff, the empathetic and safe community of grieving peers can do for a child who has lost a parent. The children tell us in simple, compelling language what they experience and some of their words are here in this newsletter. And imagine what we can do for the community as we broaden our outreach—this too is reported in this newsletter. (see Peter's Place Outreach by Joseph Kelly)

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June 2007 Volunteer Appreciation Bash held at the home of Dolly Caul

Peter's Place Outreach

Extending Our Services and Philosophy to the Community

As Peter's Place approaches its 6th anniversary, our continued growth is a tribute to the extraordinary philosophy that makes Peter's Place a special place. With the support of caring staff, generous and kind-hearted volunteers, and dedicated board members, we have been able to provide an empathetic and warm environment to an ever growing number of grieving families. It is this effort *by* the community that enables us to extend *into* the community.

Throughout the past year, Peter's Place provided outreach services to organizations, schools, and agencies, such as West Chester University, Shipley School, Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center, and Donahue Funeral Homes. It has been the vision of Executive Director, Elise Gaul, to build a more active and sustainable outreach program. Peter's Place has sought and found supporters for this endeavor. Utilizing grants from *A Little HOPE* and *Fox & Roach Charities*, this vision is becoming an actuality.

As the new outreach coordinator, I will be working with program staff and volunteers to present

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The 6 Reconciliation Needs of Mourning

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death.
2. Move toward the pain of the loss while being nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
3. Convert the relationship with the person from one of presence to one of memory.
4. Develop a NEW self-identity based on a life without the person who died.
5. Relate the experience of the death to a context of meaning.
6. Experience a continued supportive adult presence in future years.

By Dr. Alan Wolfelt

The Families Talk About Peter's Place

Peter's Place Parents Speak....

“This is a great place for my daughter. She is extremely invested in the group and I'm glad this place is here for her.”

“My 3 years here have enabled me to take strides forward that would have been otherwise impossible.”

“Peter's Place has been a consistent aspect of our lives for the past 2 years. I have felt it kept me in touch with feelings that I tend to suppress and therefore helped me to move on.”

“Great experience-good listeners...a 'safe' place.”

“You are doing a great service. Thank you.”

“All of our facilitators have been wonderful, supportive, and loving-just what we need!”

“My son gets a great amount of support and a sense of community. He looks forward to his group.”

“Thank you for providing a wonderful place for me and more importantly my family. My daughter has really been able to discover herself by communicating with other children that are experiencing the same loss.”

“I would recommend Peter's Place to anyone who is going through this.”

The Children Speak...

“I like everything about Peter's Place.”

“Peter's Place has made me a better and nicer person.”

“That I can talk about my feelings without feeling like I'm making anyone feel awkward.”

“There is lots of people who are nice to me and respect me.”

“I like the soft pillows and being with people who feel the same or similar feelings...”

“We get to express our feelings.”

“I like when we play grief games because it is fun and it helps you.”



IKEA Crew with Staff in the New Talking Circle

Our Services 2006-2007

Peter's Place Support Groups served over 118 families over the course of the year. A total of 279 children and caregivers received support services in 24 different groups at our facility in Radnor. We ran (1) group for 3-5 year olds, (5) groups for 6-10 year olds, (2) groups for 11-13 year olds, (3) teen groups, (1) young adult group, and a special short-term group for survivors of suicide.

Outreach Projects served 305 professionals, children, and graduate students. The following are some of the outreach projects where Peter's Place was enlisted to consult, train, and assist:

- West Chester University
- Baldwin School
- Shipley School
- Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center
- Delaware County Intermediate Unit
- Owen J. Roberts School District
- Donohue Funeral Homes
- West Chester School District
- Media Providence Friends School
- Project Reach/Holcomb Behavioral Health
- The Crime Victims Center of Chester County, Inc.
- Pennsylvania Prison Society

Intakes

Peter's Place experienced a 21.5% increase this program year from last in families seen

for intake appointments. Intake numbers were as follows:

Total number of families seen at intake: 62
Total number of adults and children combined seen at intake: 163
Total number of families enrolled in groups: 52
Total number of adults enrolled in groups: 60
Total number of children enrolled in groups: 75

Volunteers/Student Interns: Grief facilitators and general volunteers donated over 340 hours per month working at Peter's Place.

New Grief Facilitators trained: 14
Total number of Grief Facilitators: 42
Student Interns: 3
Total number of additional new volunteers working on-site: 6 Greeters/Intake Aids

Family Satisfaction Survey Numbers:

End of year surveys were completed by children and adults. The results were as follows:

90% said they feel better since coming to Peter's Place (10% feel the same)
93% of adults reported fewer negative feelings than at intake

Satisfaction with services rating (1-5, low to high)
Overall Satisfaction: 4.55
Adult satisfaction: 4.46
Child satisfaction: 4.46





Grief Facilitator Kathy Collins with Children in the Talking Circle



The Finished Dress-up Area!



Peter's Place Redecorates

Thanks to Founders Susan Buckley, Susan Burch, and Barbara Barnhart

In May, three of Peter's Place's founders and greatest supporters retired from the Board of Directors. Susan Buckley, Susan Burch, and Barb Barnhart have been dedicated to our organization since its inception. As founding board members, Susan Buckley and Susan Burch were instrumental in the creation of Peter's Place. Their dedication to our vision came from their personal connection to my son, Peter, and to our family and from their deep commitment to assuring that other families would have the support and care they need during times of great loss.

Barbara Barnhart was a Peter's Place founder and chairwoman of our special events. She joined the board in 2005. Her creativity and vision for the

spring luncheon helped to make it one of the most successful events in the region.

These three individuals have given tirelessly of their time and talent to help us grow and become the vibrant organization we are today. They hold a very special place in the history of Peter's Place and will remain ambassadors for our mission for years to come. With grateful hearts, the Peter's Place community will always be thankful for their commitment to our mission, for their financial support, and for the countless hours of hard work they gave to the organization.

Eleanor Morsbach
Co-chair



Karen Moon, LCSW Joins the Peter's Place Board of Directors

Peter's Place would like to welcome Karen Moon to its Board of Directors.

Karen Moon, LCSW is an Assistant Vice President with Merrill Lynch's Employee Assistance Program. Her experience includes over fifteen years working with individuals, families and children in crisis. Notably, she counseled employees affected by the Oklahoma City bombing and provided bereavement groups for employees and families affected by 9/11. Karen has been a dedicated volunteer trainer for Peter's Place in recent years. Her experience will enrich our board work and the Peter's Place community.

Please Support Peter's Place with Your Donation

Donations to Peter's Place have meaning and impact. With only a small paid staff working with over 35 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 helps to educate 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 to 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 their honor. This connects them to the special, caring, work we do in the community for children and families.

How to Donate

*Use the attached donation envelope

*Online: www.petersplaceonline.org, click on "Donate" from the green bar at the top of the page (choose PayPal or mail-in check or credit card form)

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.

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Without you our programs would not be possible.

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 Coopertown PTO
 Gladwyne Presbyterian Church
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Peter's Place Spring Luncheon 2007



Event Co-Chairs Karen Tarte, Andrea Freundlich and Christine Martinelli with author Ann Hood (second from right)

(Photo Courtesy of Main Line Life/Joyce E. Santora)

It was a beautiful spring day in May when over 200 attendees gathered at the Merion Golf Club in Ardmore. Following the tradition of the event, the guests were treated to fun and indulgence, and also given time to share the heart and meaning of Peter's Place.

Saks Fifth Avenue, a partner in the luncheon for 5 years, created a boutique of beautiful spring fashions accessories for the guests to peruse. Raffle tickets could be purchased for the chance at winning: \$1,000 shopping spree at Saks Fifth Avenue, Jane Roth Jewelry (Green Garnet Choker), a Hermes Mousseline Shawl, 2 tickets to the Spring 2008 Designer Runway Show in New York, a Capelli Salon Day of Beauty, or a dinner party for 8 at Dujour Restaurant. Saks Fifth Avenue models floated amongst guest tables donning this season's hottest looks. On the periphery was a new model Mercedes Benz displayed courtesy of Phil Miller, Mercedes Benz of Devon, PA.

The event was especially exciting this year because Ann Hood, author of the newly released book *The Knitting Circle*, was the guest speaker. Her book, recently featured in *USA Today* and *People Magazine*, is a fictional story based on her true-life experience of the death of her 5-year-old daughter. (see *Book Review*, this page)



Former Grief Facilitator Randi Coen Gilbert and Peter's Place Board Member Karen Moon



Grief Facilitators Niza Davidson, Penny Hull and Linda Matrunich



Peter's Place Executive Director Elise Gaul with Noele Wein, Event Sponsorship Chair, and Peter Savage, Vice President of Passport Health

(Photo Courtesy of Main Line Life/Joyce E. Santora)



Event Advisory Chairs Susan Buckley and Susan Burch

(Photo Courtesy Main Line Life/Joyce E. Santora)

Peter's Place is grateful to the advisory chairs Barb Barnhart, Susan Buckley, and Susan Burch as well as event co-chairs Andrea Freundlich, Christine Martinelli, and Karen Tarte, with sponsorship chair, Noele Wein.

Thanks to the women's committee for all of their hard work and support.

Thanks go to the M & S Foundation and Mercedes-Benz of Devon for their special generosity.

Book Review

"The Knitting Circle" by Ann Hood

The Knitting Circle by Ann Hood is an intimate and semi-autobiographical portrayal of a mother's grief. Mary Baxter is a young mother and wife whose world is shattered when her daughter dies from meningitis at the age of 5. Mary is thrown into a world unknown to her—the world of grief. She spends her day vacillating between anger, incredible sadness, disbelief and loneliness. Upon the suggestion of her own mother, Mary joins a knitting circle. It is through the stories of the women in her circle, their individual stories of loss, hope and survival that Mary begins to learn to live with her grief.

Peter's Place had the great honor to host Ann Hood at our spring luncheon in May. Ann shared honestly and openly her story of grief and loss after the sudden death of her daughter. She said that after the death, she no longer found comfort from reading and writing—her previous means of escape. It was only after joining a knitting circle where she listened to others' stories and eventually shared her own that she was able to move with her grief and return to reading and writing. Ann's experience is not uncommon and a testament to why Peter's Place is essential in our community. Grief needs a voice! Peter's Place provides the space for the stories to be told.

Contributed by Karen K. Moon, LCSW

Peter's Place Presents Anger Expression Research



Group coordinator, Denise Paul, reads a book about grieving to her group.

In June, Peter's Place presented a workshop at the National Symposium on Children's Grief Support in Birmingham, Alabama entitled *Grief, Anger, and the Volcano Room* to a group of over 40 grief support professionals from around the country. Leah Klerr, graduate intern at Peter's Place, and Carrie Miluski discussed research conducted by Peter's Place. Leah's graduate thesis research, along with a review of current theory on anger expression.

The workshop included how Peter's Place staff, volunteers, and families participated in changing how Peter's Place helps children express anger. Volcano Rooms are one way that some grieving centers offer children to cope with anger—and a method previously used by Peter's Place, but phased out last year. Research shows that "venting" anger doesn't make you feel better, in fact, it can make the emotion stronger and increase one's tendency to act aggressively toward others. The group shared ideas for teaching kids safe and constructive ways of dealing with their anger inside and outside of grieving centers. One important step is helping children learn to recognize and name their anger and its source, and then identify assertive, not aggressive ways of getting their needs met.

Thanks to all who participated in the surveys and discussions and to Leah Klerr, MA for her work conceptualizing, researching, and sharing this important information. To view Leah's collection of research on the topic, visit www.griefstudy.org



Being Our Best Selves

continued from page 1

I am pleased to report that as an organization, we are experiencing better times. This past year we have grown as a professional non-profit. We completed a strategic plan. Beginning with a new logo and stationary designs, we built a new web site, and produced a new brochure. We improved our accounting procedures, and upgraded and fully networked our computer systems. Thanks to the participation of IKEA and a group of families and volunteers, we redesigned the décor to make it brighter, more fun, and inviting for children.

Our program services have also changed as we standardized grief-work activities during support groups to offer children and adults more opportunities for expression and receiving support. We developed and delivered present and post graduate surveys for families to keep us knowledgeable of what helps from the perspective of the adults and children in our programs. We completed surveys and evaluation procedures for grief facilitators so that we understand their experience of Peter's Place. These last changes have made it possible to gather statistics on out-

comes and demographics—key to obtaining foundation grants.

We have grown measurably in terms of increasing our total assets and cash assets while keeping expenses in check.

In short, the work completed by staff, volunteers, and Board members this past year together has been nothing short of amazing.

Our founders placed this organization into our hands and I am proud to guard the mission. I am also proud that we have had the agility to adapt to change. We practice this agility every day as we try to find a way to talk about and deal with grief together. We cannot resolve our reason for being, there will always be more to do, and it does not stop. There are good times and challenges ahead, and times that may feel very difficult, but I celebrate our practice of being our best selves together and look forward to seeing how well this action brings comfort to the grieving children and families in our community.

Elise Gaul, MS, Executive Director



Peter's Place Outreach

continued from page 1

educational and professional development training programs. Our presentations include: *Introduction to Grief and Culture, Responding to the Death of a Member of the School Community, and Grieving Children: Their Needs and Experiences at Different Ages*. Demonstrating the numerous creative group activities for children is a major component of our training. This way we foster a better understanding of grief and the tools professionals and parents can use to best support those who have experienced a death.

There has been exciting progress this summer, as I, along with Elise and Program Director, Carrie Miluski, have conducted programs at West Chester University and for the social workers in the West Chester School District. Trainings have also extended to a broader range of organizations, with recent outreach taking place at the Pennsylvania Prison Society in Philadelphia and the Crime Victims' Center of Chester County in West Chester, where homicide bereavement in children was discussed.

As the summer rolls on and the fall months approach, we at Peter's Place are extremely excited about the forthcoming development and growth of our outreach program. Our goals of consistently reaching and educating the community outside of the walls of the Peter's Place facility are beginning to be realized. As we move closer to achieving these goals, additional support from volunteers is welcome. Any volunteer or community member interested in knowing more about the outreach program and how they can help in the future should contact:

Joseph Kelly, MA
Outreach Specialist
610-687-5150
joseph@petersplaceonline.org



Wish List

As a non-profit, donations help us to provide a quality of service we could not otherwise offer. Thank you to all who have donated in the past. For those wishing to contribute, the following is a list of much-needed items.

- ★ Portable CD Player
- ★ Hand puppets for children's theater
- ★ Children's craft supplies
- ★ Grief-related books, CD's and other products:

Please call us for a list OR Visit www.amazon.com and view the Peter's Place Wish List

(Click on the icon then from "Lists & Registries", select "Wish Lists". Next, type "Peter's Place" into the "Find someone's Wish List" box then hit "Go" button!)

Program Announcements

August 25-26 and September 29-30, 2007

NEW Facilitator Training- a new group of volunteers and student interns will become Grief Facilitators.

September 15, 2007

Kel-Moga Annual Golf outing benefiting Peter's Place.

September 17-20, 2007

2007-2008 Peter's Place support groups begin.

October 9, 2007

Survivors of Suicide Support Group begins. For more information, please call Carrie Miluski by September 28th

November 23, 2007

Philadelphia Charity Ball benefiting Peter's Place www.philadelphiacharityball.com

If you would like to learn more about any of these programs, please contact us.



Grief Facilitator Lauren Sullivan, Women's Committee Member Rory Whitaker, and guest Allison Fleitas at the Spring Luncheon.



Connor Riley (Craig's son) enjoys a game of badminton at the volunteer appreciation party



Comfort. Hope. Healing.

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