

Serving the Philadelphia Region  
Fall 2007



# THE CENTER CONNECTION



News and Program Updates for Friends and Supporters

## A Note from the Director



**B**ob Dylan sang it many years ago: "the times, they are a'changin'." And at The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families...they are, and it is good.

Into our 8th year as an independent agency, we are a'changin'. We are adapting to change so that we may better serve the needs of grieving children and teens in the greater Philadelphia community.

This time of transition is a time to affirm The Center's commitment to continued growth. As you know, The Center has operated as a small, solid agency. But we believe we must do more. We have listened to professionals and caregivers in neighborhoods from

throughout the city. We know the services we provide not only are distinctive but they are essential. Only through continued growth can we make free grief services available to more children throughout the city.

Foremost is our decision to fulfill our dream of finding a facility of our own, where we can create a warm, inviting, safe space to serve more children and families. Such an endeavor requires a lot of planning, fund raising, and commitment. We feel this is a realistic goal within our 3-5 year plan.

In the short term (3 months) we are moving out of St. Christopher's Hospital for Children into our "interim" space at Luzerne and K Streets. With increasing needs for space, the Hospital has decided to reassign the space so generously provided to The Center. We have enjoyed our donated space at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children for

the past seven years, and are appreciative of the hospital's support. Our move will take place in early January 2008.

Our strategic pathway for the next 5 years includes: 1) our interim move to Luzerne and K, with our long-term goal to create a permanent home-like facility; 2) building new partnerships with agencies in the community that will integrate The Center's grief support services into their programs; 3) launching additional satellite sites in new neighborhoods; and 4) widening The Center's circle of friends, supporters and "movers and shakers," who will work together to build The Center into the future.

"The times they are a'changin'." Our commitment to our mission to serve grieving children does not. It only grows stronger.

With warmest regards,  
Rob Sheesley, M. Div., CT

## NEW PRIMARY LOCATION

**Beginning early January 2008 The Center will have moved from: St. Christopher's Hospital for Children to:**

**1139 East Luzerne Street, Suite A, Philadelphia, PA 19124**

*Our program will continue to provide peer support groups for children and teens (ages 6-18) and their families in our new home.*

**Our telephone and fax numbers will remain the same: Phone: 215-427-6767 / Fax: 215-427-5971**



## PORTRAIT OF *Commitment*

### **Clare Rice, Volunteer Group Facilitator**

**V**olunteer group facilitator Clare Rice noticed something different this particular session about the young mother attending The Center's Adult Support Group. She had been attending since her husband died more than a year ago. The daughter was participating in The Center's peer support group for elementary school children. "She looked uplifted and 'brighter' when she came through the door," says Clare. As the adults settled into their seats, Clare introduced herself and invited the participants to do the same. Clare also gently encouraged participants to offer why they had come to The Center. When it was the young widow's turn to speak, she beamed as she exclaimed, "I cannot believe it but I had a date!" Clare beamed, too.

"I saw this woman grow into the person she never thought she would become—one who was hopeful and happy," says Clare. For Clare, that is the value of volunteering.

The Center's adult meetings offer guidance and support to help caregivers manage their own needs. In doing so, the caregivers can themselves heal and more effectively support the children under their care. "I play the role of the listener and the encourager," says Clare. "I have seen adults share their stories and help one other. Some show hope—and when they do it gives others hope, knowing that they too can get to that point," she explains. To prepare her for her volunteer service, Clare participated in The Center's training program. Retired for the past three years, Clare's professional experience as a nurse and teacher underscores her dedication to helping others. But Clare believes that helping bereaved people is her calling.

During her 28-year career in nursing, Clare often served the geriatric population. "I truly enjoyed my work. But when someone lost a loved one, I would always have this ache to reach out to help them in their grief. I could hug them but given my duties as a nurse, I would have to move on," explains Clare. In her 13 years leading a classroom, Clare repeatedly witnessed the importance of allowing children to express their feelings. Describes Clare, "Children don't know how to express what hurts them. They may bite other children or older children may become truant. The Center allows children and teens to show



Volunteer Clare Rice gets ready for facilitating The Center's Adult Support Group. During these adult group gatherings, caregivers find ways to help themselves heal and therein more effectively support the children under their care.

their pain through play, artwork and other positive ways."

Clare learned about The Center through her church, Canaan Baptist Church in Germantown. The Church began a bereavement program more than a decade ago and she volunteered, guiding adult sessions. She often referred parents to seek support for their children at The Center. Clare wanted to do even more—and became a volunteer at The Center. Today, she is also wonderfully immersed in service to her church.

"Much of my volunteer work relates to issues of death and if I let myself I could get depressed. Death is a part of life. But I deliberately take action to move myself away from the sadness. I do things that bring joy. I play the piano and organ. I read. I help with the children's ministry and the deacon ministry at my church. I draw upon my faith and I stand upon my spiritual base," explains Clare.

But most of all, Clare is buoyed by the volunteer work itself. "To see someone come out of their grief is a jewel within itself," says Clare, "I really love it."

**For more information on volunteering as a group facilitator, please call The Center at (215) 427-6767.**

## PORTRAIT OF *Giving*

### *Gifts to honor the memory of Maureen Gagan*

Maureen Gagan, a talented commercial artist, had enjoyed a long career and many friendships. "Throughout her life, she touched a lot of people," says her sister Kathleen Stapleton. Maureen died this past spring at age 49. Yet she continues to touch others' lives in a meaningful way—through a fund honoring her memory at The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families.

When Kathleen, who directs the Medical Laboratory at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, and Maureen's husband, Tom, were preparing Maureen's obituary, Kathleen directed that gifts "in lieu of flowers" support The Center. According to Rob Sheesley, Director of The Center, the outpouring of support was tremendous. "This thoughtful memorial is helping The Center reach children in need, providing free grief counseling at The Center and our satellite.

I am honored that Maureen's family entrusted The Center with her memory," says Rob. Kathleen selected The Center for many reasons.

"As the mother of two young children, Maureen had talked to me in the later stages of her illness about obtaining grief support for her own children, Jack, 6, and Matt, 4." Tom has since sought such care in their hometown in New York. Maureen had learned about The Center's work through her volunteer efforts with St. Christopher's Dragon Boat team. Kathleen was a member of St. Christopher's team, which raised more than \$7,000 for The Center last year. She had enlisted her sister's artistic skills to design the team shirt. "She was also one of our biggest fans, traveling from New York to cheer us on from the banks of the Schuylkill River for the races," recalls Kathleen.

Kathleen also felt it was especially fitting that The Center relies upon art to help children discover ways to move through their grief.



Maureen and one of her sons flash smiles while enjoying a ride at Disney World.

"Maureen's expertise was art. At the The Center, children paint, draw and shape clay, using artistic expression as an effective way for kids to show their emotions," says Kathleen.

It was also very important that the gifts to memorialize Maureen support direct services. "We chose The Center

because we knew that the funds will be used for services that are critically important," explains Kathleen. She continues, "In the pathology lab, death is part of our business. I have seen just how important it is to help families deal with the loss. Adults deal in a way that is different from children. Children need guidance to express what they feel. Adults also need help about children's capacity to grieve," says Kathleen. "The Center provides a fantastic service and I know that The Center can only reach more children by having the dollars to do so," she adds.

Kathleen shared that when her nephew, Jack, was recently asked how he is feeling about his Mom's death, he told his Dad that he was 'Sad on the inside but strong on the outside.' Gifts to The Center in honor of his mother will help other children to express themselves as clearly, ensuring they can also grow through their grief. **For more information about making memorial contributions, please call the Center at (215) 427-6767.**



Children pause from modeling clay to proudly display their clay-caked hands at a recent group session. Memorial gifts to honor artist Maureen Gagan are ensuring that children at The Center can express their feelings through clay modeling, painting and other artistic activities.

The Center for Grieving Children,  
Teens and Families

## Board of Directors

**Stephen Doherty**

**Elisabeth Doolan**

**Vicki Ellis**, Chairperson

**Kenneth Thurman**, Vice Chair

**Rob Sheesley**, Executive Director

**Judy Daniels**, Director of Operations and Special Projects

## Wish List for our New Location

We could use:

*Volunteers to act as greeters and receptionists  
when groups meet*

*Copy machine*

*Copy paper (white and color)*

*Upholstered chairs in good condition*

*Art supplies*

*Air hockey or foosball table*

Call (215) 427-6767 to donate any of these items.



With a box of colorful markers on hand, Kylie is poised to begin an art project. Art activities allow children another outlet to express their emotions in a meaningful way.

## The Center's Family of Supporters

The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families appreciates every donation. We want to ensure that all of The Center's donors are recognized for the important role they play in the lives of grieving children. If your name is not listed or it appears incorrectly, please forgive us and call it to our attention so that we can correct our records. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the following supporters:

### **CIVIC, CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT**

Applied Mechanical  
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church  
Capmark Finance, Inc.  
Drexel College of Medicine  
Elsie Lee Garthwaite Memorial Foundation  
Fourjay Foundation  
Juliana Doherty Fund  
Philadelphia Foundation  
Reformed Church  
St. Christopher's Foundation for Children  
Summit Presbyterian Church - Deacons Board  
United Way of Southeastern PA  
van Ameringen Foundation Inc.

### **MATCHING GIFT COMPANIES**

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Tenet Healthcare Foundation

### **DONATIONS OVER \$6,000**

Anonymous  
Calvin Bland

### **DONATIONS \$1000 - \$6000**

Judy Daniels  
Steven Doherty  
Elisabeth Doolan  
Vicki L. Ellis  
Rob Sheesley  
Richard and Carlyn Snelbaker

### **DONATIONS \$500 - \$999**

Gretchen Hartling  
Jan and Steve Whittaker  
Michael Zeik

### **DONATIONS \$101 - \$499**

Carole E. Anderson, MD  
Cathy and Kevin Cawley  
Anne Glass  
Robert Hartling  
Lorraine J. Heil  
Dale and Marilyn Keyser  
Joan Lipschutz  
Andrea and Robert Mahon  
Joan M. Martini  
John L. McKeever  
Robert and Anna Sheesley  
Carole Sheesley  
Reed and Renita Sheesley-Banks  
Karen L. Smith  
Samuel Gibson and Alisa J. Snelbaker  
Tiffany, Jim, Connor, and  
Will Tinson

# The Center's Family of Supporters, continued

## DONATIONS UP TO \$100

Jaqueline Agostini  
Howie and Donna Atkinson  
Casper and Joan Baratta  
Peter and Marilyn Barsky  
Maryanne and James Bednar  
Kathleen J. Birl  
Barbara Rolnick & Nathan Jon Blum  
Victoria Bogatyrenko  
Kathryn D. Bolger  
Ingrid Brown  
Stephen L. Burnstein  
Joe and Kathy Callaghan  
Robin Capecci  
Rachel M. Capuzzi  
The Chivi Family  
Karen Consalvi  
Carol Corson  
Ron and Joan Crohn  
Joe and Mary Curran  
Danielle Davis-Marrow  
Jack H. Dembow  
James and Mary Cushing Doherty  
Suvimol Ferguson  
Regina A. Foster  
Sherri L. Gannon  
Ann Germanetti  
Jeremiah Goldstein  
Deidre and Alan Gruber  
William and Judy Harrington  
Joanne M. Hawkinson  
Lorraine J. Heil  
Ken and Teresa Heuer  
Annemarie Jannotta  
Sharon Kane  
Judith and Frederick Kaufmann  
John and Doris Kelly  
Susan Kettell  
Donna Lee Konrad  
Ed and Beth Kramer  
Rachel Krauser  
Rev. Reinhard and Ms. Sue Kruse  
Kai and Delores Loedel  
Laura Lynch and Hans Peters  
Lorna Lyons  
D. Maggitti & N. Kerns  
Rosalia and Anthony Marano  
Kathy Martin  
Roger and Edith Miller  
Leon and Gloria Moore  
Paul and Helen Nuccitelli  
Patsy O'Connor  
Anna C. O'Riordan, MD  
Gabriela and Joseph Paladino  
Dr. and Mrs. Howard B. Panitch  
Susan and Richard Pink  
Joan J. Plam  
Estelle Price  
Grant and Nancy Purtle  
Mark and Karen Reber  
Mary Reville  
James W. Reynolds

Rita Riccio  
Robert and Jane Rose  
Eric Rosenstein  
Kathy Seelaus  
Jorey Bump and Julie Shuttleworth  
Karen L. Smith  
Samuel Gibson and Alisa J. Snelbaker  
Wayne and Cathy Strack  
Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Strickler  
Bart Swenson  
Eleanor Symons  
Tim and Tonya Thornton  
Ken and Marcia Thurman  
Mary Todd  
Sandra Toll  
Robert and Margery Tonks  
Vinny and Gina Valentino  
Albert and Martha Van Ness  
Cheryl and Richard Wade  
Thomas L. and Sue Ann Witters  
John M. Woznisky

## IN-KIND DONATIONS:

Therese Cruse  
William E. Howe & Company  
Ellen Saint Clair  
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

## IN HONOR OF:

Robin and Ronnie Milavitch Kling  
Krauser Family  
Staff at Leonardo Jewelers  
Mike Ziek

## IN MEMORY OF:

Alfred Anderson  
Anthony Baratta  
Penny Ellis  
Amr Fahmy  
Maureen Tobin Gagan  
David Gannon  
Daniel Harrington  
Deborah Jacobson  
Frank Jannotta  
Catherine Juszczyk  
Dalene Keyser  
Janis Keyser  
Isabel Krauser  
Catherine Lederman's father  
David Lindley  
Mildred Miller  
Bernard Milwerger  
Michael Tobias Plam  
Lisa Ellen Price  
Marion and Irwin Rosenstein  
Karl Seelaus  
Robert Sheesley, Sr.  
Mitch Steinberg  
Tim Strickler  
Henry Vondran

## VOLUNTEERS:

Bob Brown  
Lauren Caldwell  
Lauren Davis  
Lena Kim  
Claudia Lynn  
Robert Mahon  
Jennifer Mintimi  
Kadidra Nesmith  
Claretha Rice  
Linda Santiago  
Susan Shachter  
Daniel Student  
Andra Vasko-Ladden  
Brandi Whetstone  
Deborah White

## United Way Donor Choice Information

The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families is proud to participate in the donor choice campaign of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. The Center's Donor Choice Number is 14057. Thank you!



Children often cannot find the words to express feelings relating to their grief. At The Center, children can act out their emotions by making "feeling faces," as Michael does.



## FOCUS ON: *Training*

### GRIEF SUPPORT TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER HELPERS

In addition to providing free grief support to children, The Center is dedicated to serving as an educational resource for professionals and others in the community who interact with children. Since 1995, The Center has been a leader in grief training in the Philadelphia region, offering hundreds of programs. Training can be held at your site. Your organization can also reserve The Center's facility for a workshop specifically designed to meet the needs of your staff/volunteers.

#### WORKSHOP TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Grief Management in the School
- Grief in the Workplace
- The Needs of Children Facing Loss
- Effective Interventions with Teens
- Crisis & Children's Spirituality
- Foster Care: Multiple Layers of Loss
- Helping Survivors of Suicide
- Grief Support Counseling

*To schedule a workshop for your staff or organization, please call (215) 427-6767.*



## FOCUS ON: *Giving*

### A DAY ON THE GREEN GENERATES "GREEN" FOR THE CENTER!

The Center hosted its 6th Annual Golf Invitational at Island Green Country Club on June 18, 2007. The generous support of several lead sponsors generated \$35,000 for The Center's direct services. The Center is especially grateful to the event's wonderful sponsors, which include:

**Title Sponsor:**  
P. Agnes, Inc.

**Other sponsors:**  
Array Healthcare  
Capmark  
Herman Goldner Co.  
Schindler Elevator Corp.  
Spring Garden Construction  
Energy Products  
Francis Cauffman Architects



Each session at The Center includes time to reflect on the life of the loved one who died, using symbols and special objects. At the Candle Ceremony, children light a candle in memory of their deceased family member.



While participating in The Center's peer support group for middle schoolers, Jerome and Corey, work together to create a portrait reflecting one of their "many colored days." One child lies down on a large sheet of paper and the other traces the outline of his or her body. The child then paints within the outlined figure using different colors to represent the feelings they are experiencing. This form of artistic expression at The Center provides children with yet another positive outlet for their emotions.



Charles and Shamir spend time together at The Center's sandbox. During group sessions, children are given time to play. Children are encouraged to create stories about their deceased loved one and often name the stuffed animal, doll or action figure they are playing with after them.



The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families  
Nelson Pavilion  
Erie Avenue at Front Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19134

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
SOUTHAMPTON, PA  
PERMIT NO. 4

## The Center's Mission

The Center provides a safe and caring place where children, teens and their families grieving a death or other significant losses can find the support to grow through their healing process. In addition, The Center is dedicated to being an educational and supportive resource for professionals and others who interact with grieving children, teens and their families.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF THERAPIST:**

Rob Sheesley, M. Div., CT

**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS:**

Judy Daniels

**STAFF THERAPIST:**

Rebecca Thut Witmer, MSW

**e-mail: [grievingchildren@aol.com](mailto:grievingchildren@aol.com)**

**[www.grievingchildren.org](http://www.grievingchildren.org)**

**Nelson Pavilion**

**Erie Avenue at Front Street**

**Philadelphia, PA 19134-1095**

**(215) 427-6767 fax (215) 427-5971**



At The Center, children find support by hearing each other's story and know that they can trust one another. Group participants also benefit by sharing hugs!

*The Center Connection* is a periodic newsletter of The Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families. Articles or excerpts may be reprinted with permission and with credit to The Center.  
2007 All Rights Reserved