



Peter's Place

A Center for Grieving Children and Families

Comfort. Hope. Healing.

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Fall 2010

A Decade Ago, a Seed Was Planted

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

If you are reading this, you're helping to fulfill the mission of Peter's Place. You may be a grieving family member, a volunteer, a supporter, or a friend of someone who is involved here. But you have chosen in some way to face with courage the difficult subject of death and grief. In doing so, you are making the world a safer place for grieving children and families.

When I tell people of my work at Peter's Place, the most frequent response is, "Oh, how sad," or "I don't know how you can do that." If you speak of this place, you likely hear the same thing. Sadness is an enormous part of grief, but there is much, much more.

A decade ago, the Morsbach family experienced the tragic death of 10-year-old Peter. In the midst of the agony, there was something else. There was courage. Instead of turning their backs, some close friends had the courage, with the support of the family, to wade into the depths of what loss means to children and adults. Out of that Peter's Place was born. It's been almost 10 years now, and the small seed that was planted then has flourished.

We have an instinct to avoid pain, to turn away. Turning toward it is a conscious and active process. We steel ourselves and we face it, and when we look we see a richer and sometimes more beautiful landscape than we could have ever known was there. That landscape can reveal to us a meaning, a lesson about living and dying. And while that meaning will not take away the loss, it can show us a small gift within it.

Ask anyone who has spent time in grieving communities what treasures of the human spirit they have unearthed. At Peter's Place, light shines into closed-off places, previously unexplored. Ask the kids at Peter's Place if they've learned something positive about themselves and the world through their grief. You won't have to wait long before a small child affirms that she has become a much better friend, that a teen boy says he's learned about a sort of empathy or compassion he never knew existed.

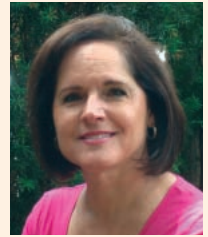
"Like all explorers, we are drawn to discover what's out there without knowing yet if we have the courage to face it."

-Pema Chödrön



Cherish the Memories

Denise Paul, MA, CT
Group Coordinator



Memories are treasures that we hold dear to our hearts. In his book *Tuesdays With Morrie*, Mitch Albom quotes Morrie as saying, "Death ends a life, not a relationship." When an important person dies, one of the tasks of mourning is to convert the relationship with that person from one of presence to one of memory. Even though death is an unavoidable part of all our lives, it is a taboo subject. Historically, it has been easier to avoid the pain of death by brushing it under the rug and "moving on" with our lives, rather than dredging up past memories. However, not thinking or talking about it doesn't remove us from its power. Grief research has taught us that it is our precious memories that will sustain us as we navigate through life without the person that we love. Memories may elicit both happy and sad feelings, but if we allow ourselves to embrace a variety of emotions, including those that are painful, we will slowly begin to heal. Memories are valuable links that allow that special person to live on in our hearts.

At Peter's Place, children engage in activities in which they are gently encouraged to share memories of the special person who died. In doing so, they are affirming the value of the life that was lived and honoring the connection they had with that person. If a child is very young when their parent or sibling dies, they

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***Cherish the Memories:
Continued from Front Cover***

may only have a few short years of memories to recall, so it is up to the adults in their lives to provide valuable information about the person who died. Children delight in hearing as many details that a loving parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent or older sibling can provide for them after the death of someone special. Relatives with a lifetime of memories can enrich a child's concept of the person who died by telling stories about the person that occurred even before the child was born.

There are several ways in which memories can be stimulated for children. Here are a few examples:

- Model the expression of your own feelings and memories.
- Encourage the child to teach you about some of his/her own memories.
- Provide the child with keepsakes that belonged to the person who died. Make a Memory Box for those treasures.
- Include the child in the funeral ritual.
- Talk about experiences the child had with the person who died.
- Display photos of the person who died and look through photo albums together.
- Visit places of special significance that stimulate memories.

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.

Letter from the Director: Continued from Front Cover

This year, a child in Chester discovered that he could have a closer bond with his mother by bravely deciding to talk openly with her about the death of his father. Bereaved parents affirmed for one another that their children's memories lived on through the concerts, golf outings, photographs, scholarships, fundraisers, and conversations. Teenagers whose parents died learned that they had the power within themselves to overcome obstacles they would never choose to take on. But they have done so, and in the process discovered wisdom about themselves and the world that will serve them throughout life. By the time you read this, a few will have traveled out west to literally climb a mountain with other grieving teens.

In these pages you will read from Tony Morelli about how grief and people are transformed in the safety of Peter's Place. You will hear from Denise Paul that attending to memories, rather than pushing them away, can allow us to continue our cherished relationship with someone who has died. A piece from Cara Magrogan celebrates a student in a school outreach group who empowered his grieving peers by telling his own story.

When the founders of Peter's Place chose, in 2001, not to turn away from Peter's death, but to turn toward it and help others in his memory, a seed was planted. That small seed of courage has flourished, with the nurturance of thousands of friends. Thank you for being one of them.

*Carrie Miluski, MS, CT
Interim Executive Director/Program Director*



In Their Own Words: Outreach

Q: Why did you want to join this group?

- "Because I needed to share the death with someone. I couldn't just hold it in." **-Diamond, 10**
- "Because we love our mom and dad." **-Angel, 7**
- "So I could get my feelings out and be around people who feel how I feel." **-Rose, 12**
- "I realized without help I was always going to feel alone." **-Stephanie, 11**

Q: What did you like about the group?

- "We do activities that take away the sadness." **-Marissa, 7**

Peter's Place By the Numbers Outreach Program Highlights 2009-2010

- **152 grief support programs at area schools** and community agencies established through our Outreach program (nearly double the programs from the previous year)
- **13 eight-week support groups** in local schools
- **1359 children** received off-site grief support programs and **489 professionals** received training in children's grief support (a 300% increase in numbers served from the previous year)
- Average rating of in-school peer support groups: **9.8/10**
- **100% of children felt better** at the completion of their in-school group: 66% reported feeling much better while 34% said they felt a little better

Helping Grieving Children Find Their Voice (and sometimes inner author, too)



Cara Magrogan, LSW, CT
Outreach Specialist and Intake Coordinator

On this page's sidebar, you'll find a story written by Tre'Quan, a 5th grader who participated in a Peter's Place in-school grief group in Chester. When reading "My Worst Day Ever" some readers are overcome with sadness and can't finish reading without wiping away tears. Many people sit quietly, unable to speak for a few moments. But when Tre'Quan read his story aloud to his group last spring – a group of 10 other students from his school who had also experienced the death of someone significant in their lives – no one cried or felt sorry for him. What they felt was a sudden awareness that they were not alone. Relieved. Less confused. They were empowered to find their own voice, to speak aloud the thoughts and feelings that they had held inside. And so they did.

It was the third session of our eight-week group. Our graduate intern Tony Morelli and I realized that no matter what we tried, the group wasn't really opening up. We'd tossed the question ball around, made grief pies (paper plate "pies" made up of different-sized "slices" of feelings) and played the homemade Grief Candy Land. While the group seemed to enjoy and participate in the activities, there was a palpable feeling that there was so much more waiting to be said.

Suddenly, Tre'Quan asked his counselor, "Can I go get my story?" and as he darted out of the room to his class, she turned to us with a brace-yourself-wait-until-you-read-this look on her face. When Tre'Quan returned, he stood in front of the group gripping his paper with both hands, his trademark smirk/smile on his face, and began to read aloud bravely. When he finished, he simply sat down, and for a few moments everyone held the silence, staring at the floor or their desks. Then, one by one...

"My little sister died when our house caught on fire. I was scared and ran outside. I would give anything to run back inside and save her."

"My brother died of cancer. He was so thin when he died, he didn't look like himself at the funeral."

"My dad was shot."

...the group members started to find their own voices, sharing things that they had never uttered aloud to anyone before. Feelings of guilt, shame, anger or embarrassment that nearly all grieving children too often hold inside. There is no way to describe the power and energy in the room during times like this. As a clinician who lost her mother at age 10, it's not a sad or shocked feeling that comes over me, but an immense feeling of pride, awe and continuous amazement at the strength and resiliency of grieving children.

There is no special secret to the Peter's Place in-school groups. Through games, art projects and other creative activities, the goal is to normalize an experience that's more common than we are comfortable with. We don't try to take away the pain and sadness of a child's loss, but rather remove the stigma and shame that prevents them from talking (or writing) about it. And once we are able to accomplish this, once a child is able to find the voice that was always in them just below the surface, the healing begins.



My Worst Day Ever

By Tre'Quan



*Too soon my daddy,
you had to go
We search our hearts
but we don't know.*

My name is Tre'Quan and my father died when I was 10 years old. When he died it was hard for me to understand. The day started by riding in the funeral car. Everybody was very sad including me. It was so hard for me that day. It was raining and cold. The world was different after that day.

When we got there my mom was already there. The casket was black. The suit my dad was wearing was black, with a red tie. I didn't want to go up to the casket but I had to tell him I love him. The preacher prayed for me and my sisters.

After the ceremony we all got in the car and went to the cemetery. When we got to the cemetery, we all told him we love him. When they lowered him in the grave I started crying harder.

After the funeral we had a big dinner. We had chicken, mashed potatoes, rice and ham. But my mom was still crying so I went up to her room and tried to make her stop crying. After dinner we all sat around his bed and prayed for him. Me and my sisters wrote a poem called too soon my daddy. That is why it was my worst day ever.



Tre'Quan poses after making a memory box during his Peter's Place in-school group.

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Nancy Dever	Kristen Prachar
Dragon Divas	Jane Preston
Mr. Craig Edfort	Elana Rudnick
John and Billie Jean Fisher	Sally Schwabe
Mr. and Mrs. J. Gdowik	Gordon and Barbara Shelton
William E. Gericke	Scott and Evelyn Shreve
Andrew Gillis	Bryn Smythe
Allie Hoffman	Christine Stoddard
Melissa Ingersoll	Mr. and Mrs. Jim Vaules
Ruth Leach	Stephen and Vicki Ward
Robert and Rosemary Montgomery	Ray and Betty Weirauch

Gifts made in Kind

333 Belrose	Meridith's Bistro
ADAM	Scott and Karen Moon
Bar Ferdinand	Eleanor Morsbach
Blue Horse Boutique	Neuropharm Group
James and Elinor Buck	Patrick O'Banion
Buckman's Ski Shop	Suzanne Olson
Tory Burch	James and Denise Paul
Club La Maison	Thomas J. Paul, Inc.
Oron Daskal	Daria Pew
Glenn and Nancy Dever	Robin and Glenn Pew
El Camino Real	Play It Again Sports
Focus Fitness	Bob and Kristen Prachar
Dodi Fordham	Prestige Salon
Debbie Geffken	John and Lauren Royer
Leila Gordon	Kelvin Scenica
Jeff and Jane Hall	David Silvera
Brooke Hayward	Peter Smith
Allie Hoffman	Bryn Smythe
Katrina Hottenstein	Allison Sobel
Dietrich Kessler	Stephanie Thompson
Jack Ladden	Viking Cooking School
Michael Ladden	Vino Restaurant and Lounge
Ted and Lindsay Leisenring	Andy Walsh
Liddy Lindsay	Whitford Country Club
Julie Manning	Libby Yarnall
Jane McNeil	Yaupon Therapeutics, Inc.



Peter's Place helps out at Camp Erin—Philadelphia 2010. L to R: staff member Carrie Miluski, volunteer Pat Miller, staff member Cara Magrogan, graduate intern Tony Morelli, volunteer Kathy Sheffler-Collins.



A group of 11 to 13 year olds on their last night of the year at Peter's Place.



Staff member Cara Magrogan presents "A Father-Daughter Perspective on Loss" with her father Frank (also a social worker) at the Association for Death Education and Counseling's 2010 annual conference.

With Gratitude...

Peter's Place is an organization with a small staff but a huge impact. Our broad reach is made possible by the incredible outpouring of support we receive from the community. Here are some of the special people and groups who've helped Peter's Place this past year:

- In honor of her late husband, Ethan Halberstadt, Missy Halberstadt and friends hosted The Beach Chair Wiffle Ball Classic on Saturday, June 12, 2010. The Wiffle Ball Classic graciously donated \$7,000 in proceeds from the event to Peter's Place. **(See photo)**
- John Kelly and his family hosted their Fifth Annual KelMoga Golf Tournament, for which Peter's Place was one of the beneficiaries. Our thanks to KelMoga for their \$1,164 donation to Peter's Place.
- In December, Allison Henderson hosted a dessert auction for 24 friends with help from Lauren Forman and Whitney Ebmeyer. They generated a \$2,650 donation for Peter's Place.



- Allison Holmes of Oranges and Lemons, LLC graciously donated \$350 after a Heather Moore jewelry sale held at the home of Jane McNeil.
 - General Wayne Elementary School raised \$2,250 as students designed and sold homemade greeting cards, each representing a "pillar of character".
 - The Dragon Divas boat team donated \$915 – the Divas have been rowing on the Schuylkill for Peter's Place in the Philadelphia International Dragon Boat Festival for years!
 - Kids from Sarah W. Starkweather Elementary School, supported by their PTO, raised \$250 through their fun run. **(See photo)**
 - ADAM of Bryn Mawr donated 15% of their proceeds for the month of May to Peter's Place. We're very grateful for their \$2,500 donation.
 - Garretford Elementary School donated \$585 they raised selling holiday cards.
 - The NFL Cheerleader Alumni Philadelphia Chapter donated proceeds from the sale of T-Shirts and PomPoms as they prepared for their Susan G. Komen Walk for the Cure.
- Thomas J. Paul, Inc. has not only donated their services in the preparation of our annual newsletter; but they assisted in the development of materials for **An Affair of the Arts** and financially support Peter's Place through event sponsorships.

Thank you to Melissa Ingersoll. We wish to thank Melissa for her service to Peter's Place as our Executive Director. We wish her much luck in her future endeavors.

Thank you to our Volunteer Facilitators. Peter's Place on-site peer support groups could not exist without the commitment of over 45 trained volunteer facilitators. Each year, these amazing people give over 2500 hours.

Thank you to our Event Chairs and Committee Members. Event Fundraising is critical to maintaining the fiscal security at Peter's Place, and we could not do this without the tireless hours of volunteer Event Chairs and dedicated committee members. Special thanks to Debbie Mohr Geffken, Allie Hoffman, Katrina Hottenstein and Kristen Prachar.

Thank you to our Board of Directors. We are stronger because of their commitment and dedication to our mission.



Thank you to Chiru and Kui Murage for volunteering to archive the history of the Jimmy Anderson mosaic at Peter's Place. The sisters and their mother, Mondo, attended Peter's Place after the death of the girls' father 8 years ago.

For more information on how you can host your own event to support Peter's Place, please contact Nancy Dever at 610-687-5150 or ndever@petersplaceonline.org.

The Alchemy of Peter's Place

by Tony Morelli, Jr., MSS Candidate
Graduate Intern

I felt instantly comfortable as I started my year at Peter's Place as a graduate social work intern. Much like the children and families that come to Peter's Place, I was led gently but powerfully on my own personal journey. For me, this intense and inspiring journey became one full of searching, seeking and eventually softly unearthing the ever-elusive "secret" of what Peter's Place actually offers grieving children and families: the opportunity for transformation.

Transformation: A slight, sheepish 4-year-old reluctantly enters the Peter's Place circle at first and remains wide-eyed and silent for weeks. She begins to blossom, however, as a proud, self-assured, affable group member, shedding her blanket and eagerly opening the circle... Transformation: A pre-teen grieving the death of a sibling is able to share the intense guilt he feels with the support of his other group members... Transformation: The flawless honesty of a grieving husband who lovingly expresses his struggle to be both a mother and father to his children... Transformation: A teenager just coming to grips with her own deep grief reaches out in support to a newcomer... Transformation: The openness of a teen girl who, after eight weeks, felt safe and secure enough to share the trauma related to her parent's death... Transformation: A sensitive young boy learns that joy and happiness are not only appropriate to express while grieving, but that these emotions are a natural and normal part of his own grief process.

Medievalists would call this mystical transformation alchemy. The alchemy that happens at Peter's Place – the seemingly magical internal transformation of the self and one's grief – doesn't depend upon ancient elixirs. In fact, the "secret" alchemical recipe of Peter's Place, while a rare one, is actually not a secret at all:

- Step 1.** Mix a healthy dose of a safe and secure environment for healing with the belief that those who seek services are already whole and complete.
- Step 2.** Carefully titrate in a heaping serving of acceptance – acceptance that grief is a natural and normal process, and that it looks different for everyone.
- Step 3.** Combine equal parts belief that individuals possess an innate capacity to heal themselves with belief that support and understanding facilitates the healing process.
- Step 4.** Allow all who come to Peter's Place to marinate in this healing recipe and take it with them to share with others.
- Step 5.** Repeat often: grief is an ongoing process.

As I somewhat reluctantly and rather sadly relinquish my role at Peter's Place, I come to understand even more poignantly the issue of loss. I take all of the experiences, all of the lessons, all of the stories and all of the love offered by staff, volunteers, children and families alike into my heart and continue to honor and cherish them. I believe that the door remains open for me, as it does for all who are or ever have been transformed by this community. For just as Peter's Place has created a space for all of us within it, so we too have created a space for Peter's Place within ourselves. You have all changed me...and I am ever-grateful. Thank you!

In Their Own Words

Q: What's the best thing about Peter's Place?

- "It lets me know others have been through the same thing."
– **11-year-old boy**
- "The group of kids and counselors and the common bond we share."
– **Teen boy**
- "Talking about the person who died with people who understand and care."
– **Teen girl**
- "This place has helped my children and me heal our hearts and deal with the grief."
– **Peter's Place parent**

Peter's Place By the Numbers On-site Program Highlights 2009-2010

- **21 ongoing support groups** at our site in Radnor
- **12 new volunteer** grief facilitators trained
- **148 children and 136 adults** participated in on-site peer support groups
- **2500 hours** of Volunteer Grief Facilitator time donated to on-site peer support groups
- Average rating of on-site peer support groups: **9.8/10**

Partying with Peter's Place



October 24, 2009

Over 140 compassionate supporters attended **An Affair of the Arts**, an unforgettable evening graciously hosted by the Baltzell Design Center in Northern Liberties. VINO Restaurant provided the food, and guests mingled and enjoyed the eclectic works of more than a dozen artists who donated 15% of their sales for the evening to Peter's Place.



January 23, 2010

Philadelphia Skating Club hosted more than 250 guests of all ages for **Twizzle and Swizzle**, an evening of skating and food by the fire.



May 5, 2010

We ended our Program year by celebrating Cinco de Mayo with over 130 guests at the Viking Cooking School for our second year of **Eat*Laugh*Love**.

DONATE: Comfort. Hope. Healing.

We've all witnessed the current financial struggles in our country and the world. Many families attending Peter's Place face this same uncertainty at home after the death of a family member. The death of a parent or child can leave a family not only with emotional needs, but with financial needs as well. Peter's Place helps families during this time by not charging for our services, but instead requesting they donate what they are able.

With only a small paid staff working with over 45 volunteer grief facilitators, Peter's Place serves hundreds of children and families every year. We also provide support to kids and staff in area schools. 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.

How to Donate

- Donate today using the attached donation envelope.
- Visit our website www.petersplaceonline.org and click on "Donate."
- Designate Peter's Place for your United Way contribution: our donor number is 14576.
- Donate in Memory of Someone: Remember someone special or give comfort to a family by making a contribution.
- Donating in Honor of Someone: Pay tribute to someone by making a donation to Peter's Place in their honor.



Go to our website
www.petersplaceonline.org
for a link to our Facebook page.



We have a Wish List on
Amazon.com!

To locate our Wish List, go to Amazon.com and click on Gift and Wish Lists. Under Wish Lists and Registries, type in "Peter's Place."

How You Can Help

- \$1,098 allows one family to attend Peter's Place for a program year.*
- \$800 allows up to 10 grieving students to attend an 8 week support group in their own school.
- \$350 purchases a year's supply of children's story books about grief for our lending library.
- \$122 provides a month of services for a grieving family at Peter's Place.

*Program year is 9 months

Peter's Place Board of Directors

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Karen Moon, LCSW
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Page 7 Showing our gratitude to friends of Peter's Place

Many thanks to The Davenport Family Foundation for generously funding the printing of our publications.

Save the Date 2011

Peter's Place will celebrate our 10th Anniversary with a Gala on May 14, 2011.



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