

Our Mission

To provide loving support to grieving children, teens, families, and the community through peer support, outreach, and education. We honor and encourage the safe expression of grief and loss.

We provide a loving community to foster the discovery and development of each child's own resiliency and well-being.

Bill Hemmens (1945-1998) Founder



RUN FOR THE CENTER

Do Good and Feel Good when you run for the Center. The CGC running team is forming now for the Seadogs Mother's Day 5K. Team members enjoy their own fundraising page on our website, fundraising tips and team camaraderie.

Ready to go the distance?

Plan ahead and run the Maine Marathon or Half Marathon with The Center running team in October.

To sign up call 207-775-5216
or visit our [website](#)

Spring Newsletter 2011

Elizabeth Trask Interview

"Running for The Center"

Elizabeth Trask, a past participant at The Center for Grieving Children, has undertaken the challenge of running 50 marathons in honor of her father, William Trask, who passed away suddenly in 2006. Elizabeth writes about her experience in a blog entitled "50 for Billy." We sat down with Elizabeth to find out more. Here is what she had to say:



Tell us about your experience at The Center

"After my Dad died I remember thinking, 'I will never be able to get through this.' The Center helped me put everything in perspective and be thankful that I had my Dad for twenty years and had such good memories with him. It's a judgment free zone, you go there and if you cry, everyone understands. Hearing that others felt the same way made me feel a part of something. I no longer felt alone in my grief. In the beginning I didn't want to talk, and that's okay. No one pushes you to do anything you're not ready for, they encourage you to sit and just listen. After only a few months, I realized how much The Center had helped me."

What is "50 for Billy" and how did you come up with the idea?

"My blog is called "50 for Billy" because I am running 50 marathons, all across the country in his honor. It's the best way for me to talk about losing my Dad and this is my way of grieving, going out and running 26.2 miles. I don't think of it as a race but a journey through life. I've met different people along the way that have been very supportive, and have said, "I'm running for my daughter" or "I'm running for a friend" etc. For me, hearing that other people are running for family members puts it all into perspective. No matter what the story, you aren't alone."

Why choose The Center to donate all of your proceeds to?

Knowing that I'm running for The Center makes me want to keep going, it makes me feel really good. I'm amazed that it's a free service; I don't know how I would have been able to pay otherwise. The last thing on my mind after losing my Dad were my finances. I want people to know how far The Center goes for your family, and how caring, helpful and sincere everyone is.

20th ANNUAL PET & PEOPLE WALK!

Mark Your Calendars!



Saturday, June 11, 2011: The Center will be hosting the 20th Annual Pet & People Walk at Payson Park in Portland with a walk around Back Cove. After the walk we will be having fun in Payson Park with music, food, contests, and activities for all ages!

Visit our [website](#) to register for the Pet & People Walk or to sponsor a participant. Online you can register, send emails to potential sponsors, create your own Pet & People Walk web page and track your pledges. Now is the perfect time to start thinking about starting a team to walk. Team prizes will be awarded to top teams! There are great prizes for every pledge level you reach, including dog toys, t-shirts, gift certificates and a special raffle prize!

If you have any questions, please contact Diane at diane@cgcmaine.org

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SPRING INSTITUTE

Please join us for The Center for Grieving Children's Spring Institute. This series of workshops focuses on the use of expressive activities to nurture the spirit and awaken the mind.

It is designed for volunteers, parents, therapists, caregivers, teachers and other adults who are helping children and families through the multitude of feelings resulting from loss, death and illness.

WRITING TO HEAL:

Joan Lee Hunter teaches a simple writing practice for self-exploration, creative expression and personal healing. (May 15th, 9AM - 4PM)

DIVING AND EMERGING:

Helping children heal from grief and loss through storytelling National award winning storyteller, Regina Carpenter helps us experience storytelling as a pathway for self-discovery and personal growth. (May 21st, 9AM - 1PM)

VISIONING THE SELF:

Art therapist Mary Fibich uses collage and journaling to help participants find new meaning in their work, renew their energy and rediscover their personal strengths.

Visit our website
for more information

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S VIEW POINT



Writing this letter is an opportunity to reflect on the work that has been done at The Center over the past year, the successes that we have achieved, and the people who have helped us deliver our mission. This newsletter is dedicated to recognizing the many ways that volunteers and the community support the work of The Center. I hope you will be inspired to join our efforts by the stories that you read here.

These are challenging times in our community and I am humbled when I see the strength and grace of our families who are dealing with the added stressor of the economy when illness or death is impacting their family. We have seen a marked increase in people contacting us for services, knowing they can attend free of charge for as long as needed.

We know that children who are supported through their grief are less likely to attempt suicide, less likely to abuse alcohol and drugs and more likely to do well in school. The Center for Grieving Children has always provided support for the whole family since we know that supporting the family will better support the grieving child.

We have grown to provide services to more than 4,000 children, teens and families each year. The Center operates on a very tight budget with a small, energetic staff and over 150 volunteers. The Center looks to our old and new friends; our individual, corporate and foundation donors to help us maintain the quality of services and meet increased demand ensuring that grieving children, teens and families receive the support they need. Our commitment to our core values and our mission has helped us as we have grown. Those committed to supporting us have held us safe during challenging times. Please join us and show your support for grieving children, teens and families.

GET CONNECTED: *Young Adult Group*

Young adults who have experienced the death of a family member or friend can meet at The Center every Tuesday evening from 7-8 PM. There is also a Young Adult Group that meets Monday evenings for people with a family member who is facing a serious illness.

The Young Adult Group helps connect people of ages 19-30 in a safe and comfortable environment.

It's easy to get connected and it's free.

Email cgc@cgcmaine.org or call 207-775-5216 to find out more, and set up an orientation.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

There are many ways people find to support the work of The Center. We are grateful to all who donate their time, services, and resources to help the families we serve. Thank you to everyone who helps us carry out our mission.



Volunteers helped keep The Center looking nice and feeling like home inside and outside.

SAVE THE DATE:

Volunteer Appreciation
Reception

Friday, April 8th
5-7 PM



Schools, individuals and businesses organized fundraising events to benefit The Center.

A CGC Volunteer Looks Back

By Sunny Bradford

January 29, 2005 — My first day in the 30-hour training program for new volunteers at The Center for Grieving Children. I was about 26 hours from completion and approximately 2 ½ years from the sudden, devastating death of my life partner. He collapsed on a seemingly ordinary Saturday morning from a massive heart attack at age 46. At some point during those first grueling years after his death, I decided that I wanted to volunteer at CGC, even though I had been unable to attend The Center myself because we'd had no children. Shortly



after I completed the training, a facilitator position opened in an adult bereavement group on Thursday nights. At the beginning, I didn't fully realize that, not only was I moving into a volunteer role, but I was also building a special partnership with my co-facilitator and joining a supportive circle of other dedicated volunteers.

I loved co-facilitating an adult group. Feeling that I understood much of what our families were going through, I wanted to help offer a safe, judgment-free place for them to experience and express their grief in whatever ways they needed. Of course, I soon discovered that by giving in these ways to others, I was also receiving. I was facilitating my own healing journey. A few years later, a team coordinator (TC) for our night needed to leave The Center, and I was invited to step into the team coordinator role. For the first months, I deeply missed being in the adult room. But over time, I came to truly enjoy the added responsibility that the TC role offered— knowing more about how The Center operates, helping new volunteers adapt and flourish in their roles, doing my best to ensure the emotional and physical safety of both families and volunteers on Thursday night. During my time at The Center, I've also helped with the training program for new volunteers, the Pet and People Walk, the annual fundraising auction, and various other activities. In 2009, I was honored when asked to co-facilitate the first ever Widow and Widowers group, for those who had lost a spouse or partner, whether or not they had children. That felt like coming full circle to me. I'd longed for such a group when my life partner died. With The Center, it's never been a case of being unable to say, "No." It's been a case of wanting to say, "Yes."

What has volunteering at The Center meant to me? It's given me the opportunity to bear witness, with deep compassion, to the pain of children and their caregivers, but also to bear witness to their remarkable growth and healing as they move through the rugged terrain of grief. It's meant having the opportunity to deepen my own healing, not just from my life partner's death, but from all of my life's losses. It's added texture to my understanding of partnership and depth to my experience of community. It's been an unparalleled journey, one I cannot imagine duplicating at any other time, in any other place. Before volunteering at The Center, I certainly would have said that "love really counts." After being at The Center for six years, I know it does.

14th Annual Auction & Dinner Gala

On Friday, February 4, 2011, 425 people gathered at the Holiday Inn by the Bay for the 14th Annual Auction and Dinner Gala. The event raised \$150,000 to help support the more than 4,000 people The Center serves each year. The Auction and Dinner Gala was chaired by Center Board Member, Scott Whytock and Community Volunteer Destiny Cook and was sponsored by Lead Sponsor *Re/Max by the Bay* and Major Sponsors *Wright Express* and *Spectrum Medical Group*.

Cindy Williams of WCSH Channel 6 served as emcee and the auctioneer for the evening was Bill Zafirson. Special guests during the LIVE auction included Dave Eid, Erin Ovalle, Kathleen Shannon, Miss Teen Maine, Jared Payton and Brant Dadaleares of Fore Street.

York County Outreach Initiative



Since its beginning 24 years ago, The Center has supported families from York County. In fact, about 20 percent of the families attending services at any given time are from York County. Despite these efforts, not all grieving children in York County are getting the support they need. There are no children's bereavement services available there and not everyone can travel to The Center for support.

The Center is working to change that. Support from Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation, A Little Hope Foundation and the Maine Community Foundation York County Fund allowed us to expand our education, outreach and crisis response services in York County. We provided more than 26 trainings to schools and other organizations in York County. Now adults who work with children are better prepared to help grieving children and are more familiar with our resources. The grant funds were also used to conduct a needs assessment and answer the question:

How can we best serve more children and families in York County?

We learned people want services that are close to home and easy to access. We also learned there are many community partners who are *motivated to start services with our help*. Our next step is volunteer training and program development.

Auction Snapshots:



...and the bidding competition begins.



Sally Vamvakias along with Board Members Amanda Rand and Julie Tselikis enjoying the evening.

Pictures by Jane Berger Photography

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Serengeti's Summer Adventure



Most of you have seen Serengeti, the giraffe, standing sentinel in the lobby of our many homes throughout the years. We vividly remember his ride in the moving truck from York St. to our present home at 555 Forest Avenue four years ago.

Serengeti came to us in the 1990's as a gift from Small School in South Portland and has greeted the children and families and all who have visited The Center ever since.

Being constructed only of papier-mache, our friend was beginning to show signs of wear and tear and seemed in need of spa treatment. Last year while groups were on their summer break, Stan Colburn and Tory Tyler-Millar, two art teachers from Portland High School, volunteered the help of their students and themselves to conduct a makeover.

Serengeti was gently transported by the good folks at Oakhurst Dairy from The Center to the high school. Upon seeing the giraffe emerge from the back of the truck, (Stan) jokingly remarked, "Wow, and I always thought milk came from cows." While at the school, Serengeti underwent a routine of strengthening and toning exercises, a few lifts and tucks here and there, and received an updated hair and tail-do and some sassy new eyelashes. S/he returned to us refreshed and restored in time for groups to resume in the fall.

Many thanks to the art students, teachers, and the Oakhurst team for their care and kindness in carrying out this project.

SAVE THE DATE

- 4/8 Volunteer Appreciation Reception
- 4/14 Volunteer Orientation
- 5/8 Seadogs Mother's Day 5K
- 5/15 Writing To Heal Workshop
- 5/20 Children's Storytelling
- 5/21 Storytelling Workshop
- 6/11 Pet and People Walk
- 6/23 Volunteer Orientation
- 7/14 15th Annual NAGC
thru 7/16 Symposium Boston

If you are interested in creating a **Lasting Legacy** through our Planned Giving Program please call The Center at (207) 775-5216.