

goodwords

news from the **good grief center for bereavement support**

Support Groups

A woman whose husband died called GGC reeling from the intensity of her pain. We suggested a widow's support group meeting close to her home that very afternoon. She called back later to say the group was "a lifeline." She no longer felt alone in her grief because she found people who understood and supported her.

A *lifeline*. This caller is not alone in describing the help she received from attending a support group. Most of our callers have never been to a group, but because of their pain, they are willing to try.

How They Work

Support groups bring together people who share a similar challenge and provide an open and safe setting for members to share and learn from each other. They are facilitated by a trained leader whose role is to guide the group, not solve anyone's specific problems.

Groups open by reviewing simple guidelines about respecting each member, allowing everyone the opportunity to share—if they so desire, and maintaining strict confidentiality. Some start with a question or topic for discussion; others allow members to bring forth their own issues for group consideration. However they start, all support groups are about people sharing and listening to each other's stories.

The Good Grief Center maintains an extensive list of support groups and organizations. Some are open to all while others are more specific about who they serve—widows, young adults, parents, etc. GGC can usually help find groups to suit any caller's needs near their homes. And if the first group doesn't feel right, we suggest people try another as each group can have its own personality.

How They Help

Living in our culture, which avoids topics relating to death, grief is usually a mystery—until it happens

to us. The strong feelings it evokes can be unexpected, misunderstood and isolating. For these reasons, support groups offer great comfort and an opportunity to be with others who are also dealing with the pain of grief.

Though each person's grief is unique, many experience similar physical, emotional and spiritual reactions. At a time when most feel they are "going crazy," it can be reassuring to learn just how natural their emotions actually are. When people stop worrying about or fighting their feelings, healing can begin.

Support groups combine the experiences of their members to offer collective wisdom. Listening to how different individuals cope with similar situations offers a helpful range of perspectives. As family and friends increasingly avoid the topic over time, it can be a great comfort to know one has a place where all feelings of grief are not only allowed, but supported. Often the helped become the helpers as people listen and learn from each other. Support groups are a lifeline for many and exemplify a wise Swedish proverb: Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.



Bereavement Support Groups

Meeting at the
Good Grief Center

Open Group
2nd & 4th Thursday
of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

**Daughters without Mothers
Group**
1st Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

**Parents who have suffered
miscarriage, stillbirth or
infant death**
1st Monday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Meeting at the
North Hills Youth Ministry
Counseling Center
802 McKnight Park Drive, North Hills

Young Spouse/Partner Group
1st Saturday of each month
9:30-11 a.m.

Young Adult Support Group
1st Saturday of each month
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

GGC maintains a comprehensive listing of support groups throughout the region, please call 412-461-1776 for information.

Family Support Program – Coming Spring 2007

Starting this spring, we will launch our family support program at the Ross Community Center. The Good Grief Center is proud to partner with North Hills Community Outreach for this first program. Please call Jan McCarthy, GGC Program Manager, at 412-461-1776 to learn more and register.

GGC Receives Grant to Start Family Support Program:

The Staunton Farm Foundation awarded a grant to fund the creation of the Good Grief Center's new Family Support Program. As the region's only comprehensive grief resource, GGC is in a unique position to understand the needs of the community. In response to many calls from grieving families being torn apart following a death, the Good Grief Center is launching a program aimed at helping families come together in their grief.

Families are the basic building block of our community. Children grow and adults thrive in strong families. A death in a family forever changes that family. While the surviving adults and children within the shattered family need individual attention, the needs of the family itself must not be overlooked. Reconnecting those who remain into a new cohesive unit is vital to restoring the well-being of each member.

Pittsburgh is most fortunate to have two outstanding programs for grieving children: Highmark's Caring Place and the Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents. Conversations with representatives from both programs, confirm the need to support families. GGC's Family Support Program is designed to complement their services.

The Program's primary focus will be to provide opportunities to participate in shared activities that re-establish and strengthen family bonds. Information about the grieving process and practical tips to help families will also be presented. The Program is open to families free of charge. The Program can benefit the newly bereaved as well as families who are continuing to work through their grief. To better serve those attending, registration is required.

GGC Offers Care Package with *Tear Soup* Book to Send to Grieving Families

In response to many requests from people seeking a way to express their sympathy to grieving families, GGC now offers the option of sending the book, *Tear Soup*, along with our signature Care Package. This sensitive book about grief, a recipe for healing after loss, is written especially for families. One family explained how comforting the book was, "Our family gathered the night before Grandmother's funeral. It was so comforting to read the book together—it gave the children an understanding of the many feelings of grief and helped the parents see how this most difficult subject can be discussed with children. And best of all, Grandmother, who always read to the children, would be so pleased to see her tradition continuing."

Please visit www.goodgriefcenter.com for easy online ordering.



message from the executive director

Dear Friends,

Another tough holiday season has come and gone. Our phones were especially busy this year with more and more people reaching out for support. More individuals now realize it is not a weakness to feel the pain of grief. It shows real strength at an especially poignant time of year to say, "I can't do it alone." That's why we are here, so nobody has to do it alone.

Fortunately, GGC is not alone either! We have a truly committed staff and Board and now are thrilled to announce our newest ambassadors: The Good Grief Center Honorary Council. I want to acknowledge and thank each and every one of them for their willingness to work with us at this important milestone—our 5th anniversary. You will see their names listed on the back of this newsletter. With the support of these community leaders and each of you, we are sure to have many more successes in the months and years ahead.

During the last several months, there has been much discussion about GGC's future. The family program described on the previous page is one part of five integrated initiatives. Expanding our core services, extending our Community Outreach, further implementation of Grief in the Workplace and strengthening our financial sustainability round out the other four initiatives. Everyone at GGC shares the commitment to accomplish all five!

We have put a lot of thought into what lies ahead for GGC—all of it stemming from valuable feedback from people in the community—be they professionals, family members or grieving individuals, we focus on what is needed. Please don't hesitate to call or e-mail if you have ideas for needs that aren't being met for the grieving in this region or if you want to become involved in this most rewarding work as a GGC volunteer. It truly is an honor and a privilege.

Many thanks,



*Comments? Suggestions? Send us an email at
support@goodgriefcenter.com
or visit our website at www.goodgriefcenter.com
412.461.1776*

goodnewsgoodnewsgoodnews Melissa Grant Joins GGC for Internship

Melissa, a master's level counseling student at Chatham College, began a Spring internship at GGC to work with the peer support program and co-facilitate our support groups. Melissa is one in a long line of interns not only from Chatham, but also Carlow, the University of Pittsburgh, Indiana University of PA and several other colleges and universities in the region. "Internships are a win-win proposition—GGC is pleased to support the education of future professionals and, in turn, the interns increase the capacity and enhance the outreach of the Center," notes Jan McCarthy who supervises our interns.



Dan Onorato Announces Grant to GGC

GGC was awarded a grant from the proceeds of the Eckerd Celebration of Lights. Onorato described the donation as a symbol of appreciation to organizations that make Allegheny County a truly special place to live. GGC, which did not solicit this support, is not only grateful for these unexpected funds, but also very proud of the endorsement the grant demonstrates of GGC's work in our community.

GGC in the Community

The following list, a sampling of the kinds of organizations who have sought expertise from GGC in the past three months alone, reveals the diversity of GGC's reach:

Contact Pittsburgh: Training session for volunteers

Chatham College: A speaker and resource for their post-graduate counseling program students as well as their undergrad program

Helping Hands Healing Hearts: Workshop on journaling

Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science: Class about grief and GGC as a resource for future funeral home directors

Greater Pittsburgh Non-Profit Partnership: Reception to unveil "Idea Deck" featuring the \$1,000 winning entry from GGC

Funeral Home from Baltimore: Two representatives made a site visit to GGC to learn how to start their own bereavement center in Maryland

As the region's only comprehensive resource for grief, we try to honor the many requests GGC receives for information and support. You may contact Marilyn Chapla, Associate Director at 412-461-1776 or at marilyn@goodgriefcenter.com to learn more.

Honorary Council

James Armstrong
 Esther Barazzone, Ph. D.
 Suzy Broadhurst
 Ellen Brooks
 Jerry Fedele
 Mary Louise Gailliot
 Phillip B. Hallen
 Dorothy Hill
 Elsie Hillman
 David A. Kahley
 Peter F. Mathieson
 Loren H. Roth M.D., MPH
 Father Regis Ryan
 Lisa Schroeder
 Edie Shapira
 Walter Smith
 Merrill Stabile
 William Strickland
 Aaron A. Walton
 Barbara Widdoes
 Margot Woodwell

Good Grief Center Forms Honorary Council

As we celebrate our 5th anniversary, we remember and recognize this milestone is the culmination of the tremendous effort of the many who have helped to establish GGC. Led by a committed Board, dedicated staff and its loyal fiduciary partner, the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, GGC has experienced remarkable growth in its first five years. To launch the next five years, GGC is proud to have earned the endorsement from this list of respected community leaders. Representing each sector of the Pittsburgh region: healthcare, education, corporate, non-profit and individual volunteer leaders, the Honorary Council shows the depth and breadth of GGC's outreach in our community. Explains Lulu Orr, Executive Director, "Each member has *honored* the Good Grief Center with his or her participation."

"I came to appreciate how vital a resource like the Good Grief Center is when my father died. Though everyone grieves in their own way, one thing is true for us all—we need support and comfort. GGC provides just that and so much more. Joining the Honorary Council had an added appeal to me because of the partnership GGC formed with the Drew Mathieson Horticultural Center, named for my father."

Peter Mathieson

President, Guyasuta Investment Advisors

The Good Grief Center operates as a non-profit under the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, a 501(c)(3) organization, which serves as our fiduciary agent.



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 munhall, pa 15120

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