



March 2006

SUPPORT GROUPS

**Why We
Don't Walk
Alone**

INDIVIDUAL
COUNSELING

**Someone Is
Listening
to Me**

PERSPECTIVE

**Our New
Look**



BRIAN THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHY

Jennifer Stevens, Bereavement Specialist, and Cindy Brown, Grief Center Director

This, our first issue of *Perspective*, focuses on our Grief Center, which assists individuals living with the confusing emotions following the death of a loved one.



Support Groups

Why We Don't Walk the Path Alone: Support Group Defined

By Jennifer Stevens, Bereavement Specialist



People often ask, "What is attending a group and listening to a bunch of other people's problems going to do about my broken heart?" Or, "Who wants to hear a bunch of people go on and on

about their problems when I have enough to deal with myself?"

At Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center, we accompany people on their grief journey. The group setting provides this companionship for bereaved family members and people in the community who are grieving the loss of someone close to them.

Sharing our stories, the painful and the inspiring, help us to connect to others who are on a similar journey...the grief journey. We can see how someone else got through the first painful holiday that we have not yet gone through. Or we listen to what we may have felt on the anniversary of our loved one's death in the experience of someone else and can now reflect that we are in a different place.

Sometimes those around us don't have the life experience or knowledge to be the ones to support us during our grief journey. Family and friends are grieving their loss and may feel like they don't want to hurt us (or themselves) by being open and supportive. Or we may feel like we are burdening them with our constant sorrow.

In group, we come together to share, and that is our only purpose. We share our sorrow and tears, but we also share our time, our love, our joys, and our ability to honor someone else who is hurting. Over

ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS

Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center offers ongoing support groups for individuals dealing with the death of a loved one.

The following groups will be offered beginning in April. All groups are held at Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center, 4215 Newburg Road, unless otherwise specified.

Trek and Expedition, Mondays

6-7 p.m., April 17 through May 22

Trek is for children in first through eighth grade; Expedition is for high school youth.

Saturday Adult Support Group

April 15 through May 20
10:30 a.m. to noon

Friday Adult Support Group

April 7 through May 12
1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Monthly Movie and Discussion Night for Adults

5:30 to 8 p.m.

- Monday, April 10: The Five People You Meet in Heaven
- Tuesday, May 23: Stepmom
- Monday, June 5: Shadowlands

Friday Monthly Social Group

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 10, April 14, May 12

Friday Keen Age Center Group

10-11 a.m.
March 17, April 21, May 19

Registration should be made at least one week prior to the start of group. Child care is not provided. In the event of bad weather or emergencies, leave a message for Jennifer Stevens, Bereavement Specialist, at 815.398.2893, ext. 23. For information, or to register, call 815.398.0500.

time, we learn that we have a lot to teach others about grief, if they are open. We learn that although we walk our journey alone, it is a path well worn by others who have faced the darkness and have shown us that there is light if we are willing to embrace our own expedition of grief and healing. ■



Programs for Children and Teens

Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center offers support groups for children who are grieving the death of a loved one. Trek group is for children in grades one through eight, and Expedition is for high school aged youth. The groups meet for six weeks, two times a year.

Trek Camp, a three day, four night camping experience, is held each summer. The camp offers an extended time period for youth to interact with other children who are going through similar situations.

What Is It Like to Be a Trek Volunteer?

By Kathy Ayling, Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center Volunteer

First of all, you may be asking, "What is Trek?" Trek is a support group for children in grades one through eight who have experienced the death of a significant person. The group meets once a week for six weeks. Both spring and fall sessions are offered. The groups are a safe place where children who have experienced the death of someone they know, come for support. They share stories, bring in photos, play games, and remember.

I have been a Trek volunteer for two years. Why did I choose to do this? First and foremost, I wanted to give something back to Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center because of the help they gave me after my mom died. Also, I have always enjoyed working with kids.

The first night of the six-week Trek session, we are all nervous. The kids don't know what to expect or say. They may be afraid or start to cry. We normally go around the room and say the name of the person who died. The adult volunteers do this, too. I think it is good for the children to see and hear that we have also had someone we love die, and that it was difficult for us, too.

I have heard so many stories...one girl talked about her older sister and the things they did together. Another shared how she always used to have breakfast with her dad, and how much she misses that now. I learned how much it hurt one young man when his brother died.

Helping a child know that it is ok to feel sad, to cry or yell if they need to, to listen to their stories about grandma or grandpa, mom or dad, that's what being a Trek volunteer is like. ■

WAYS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE IN GRIEF

- Allow the child to be angry, but not destructive or violent.
- Use terms like "dying" and "death" instead of "passing on" or "going to sleep."
- Let the child express feelings of guilt; this is normal for grieving children.
- Do not insist the child "be brave;" this denies his/her the right to express real feelings.
- Talk about the deceased person, as this reassures the child that "dead" does not mean forgotten.
- Do not rush the grieving or healing; this is a process that needs to move at its own pace.

CONTRIBUTIONS

September 2005 through December 2005

Over the years, our newsletter has been used as a way of recognizing donors to our organization. Typically the March newsletter issue would list the persons (providing they were not anonymous) who had made contributions between September 1 and December 31 of the previous year.

We will now be producing the 2005 annual report in May 2006, and that report will name the donors for the whole of 2005. The annual report will also include information from the clinical and administrative teams, and a financial summary of our year. It will be mailed to you around the end of May 2006. This report is another way we hope to inform you of the work of Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center.

Helping Hurricane Katrina Survivors

Last November, Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center had an opportunity to help children affected by Hurricane Katrina. Grief Center Director Cindy Brown, LCSW, and Joan Brown, former Bereavement Specialist, traveled to Baton Rouge, Louisiana where they worked with children coping with an incomprehensible situation.

Cindy and Joan's destination was Renaissance Village, a community of hurricane survivors, still reeling from their losses. The families were attempting to put order back into their lives by finding employment, locating family members, reestablishing housing, and dealing with their grief. In this flurry of stressful activity, the children were often unintentionally forgotten. As parents tried to regain a sense of balance, children were holding in large measures of pain and fear.

On the Ground

Three months after the disaster, Cindy and Joan were shocked to see disarray and devastation still so apparent. A barren field had been converted into temporary housing for 2,000 displaced persons. Almost 600 makeshift trailers, provided by FEMA, were scattered throughout the area.

People milled around between their new 'homes' and a mobile food center placed in the center of the field. With no cooking facilities in their trailers, families depended on food center volunteers to provide their daily meals.

Families unknown to each other before the hurricane were now neighbors, their boxed-in trailers casting shade on the grassless ground where their children played. The scene was reminiscent of the 1930's dust bowl warriors who traveled miles to escape devastation, setting up camps along the way.

A large canvas tent had been pitched in the center of Renaissance Village. This tent, donated by a sister from a local Catholic parish, was a symbol to everyone in the community... it represented hope, purpose, and continuity in the midst of chaos. The tent, full of children ages six to fourteen, was a school.

Establishing Familiar Routines

Knowing how important it would be for children to have something to focus on, two teachers from New Orleans established the

school almost before the housing trailers were brought in. They wanted the children to have a sense of familiarity that would carry them through a difficult time.

Cindy and Joan spent two weeks with the children. They listened to stories of family members still missing, and pets who might never find their way home. They sat quietly by as the children drew pictures of toys they no longer had, or of the helicopter that had rescued them from the rooftop of a home, no longer there.

Hours each day, Cindy and Joan were a sounding board for voices of confusion, frustration, and fear. Their presence and willingness to listen gave comfort to the children who were trying to grasp a new version of reality. As their time in Baton Rouge drew to a close, Cindy and Joan asked the children what parting gift they might like to have. It was a unanimous response.

The following day, the children got their wish... a table piled high with turkey, stuffing, potatoes and gravy, casseroles, pies, and a dozen other dishes. It was a Thanksgiving dinner the children will never forget. And neither will Cindy and Joan.

Loss Is Not Measurable

Unlike many things in life, grief has no timeline. After the hurricane blew its last gust, after the waters receded, after the homes dried out, and the people came back, it started to look better on the outside. But on the inside, the people affected will never be the same. They have lost too much.

However, with help from people like Cindy and Joan, it may be possible for these survivors to rebuild their lives, to allow their losses to shape the future in a positive way. Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center is proud to have helped these children, and we are honored to have staff members who go above and beyond for individuals in need, both in our community and beyond.



Children drew pictures of toys they no longer had, or of the helicopter that had rescued them from the rooftop of a home, no longer there.

Someone Is Listening to Me

By Cindy Brown, LCSW, Grief Center Director

People who experience the loss of a loved one through a death or relationship, or who face significant changes in their lives often find themselves with a multitude of emotions they have not felt in the past. Some say they feel like they are 'going crazy.'

These emotions can feel overwhelming, and individuals may seek ways to relieve these feelings. Many learn that talking to someone or writing in a journal helps to lessen their sadness, loneliness, anger, or various feelings of grief.

However, some people feel protective or uncomfortable and decide not to talk about their grief to family or friends. Others are unable to attend support groups, as listening to other stories creates more



emotions. Some feel that it is not in their nature to talk in a group setting.

These are a few of the reasons why many decide to begin individual

counseling at our grief center.

A grief counselor's goal is to provide a safe and confidential environment where a person feels that someone is listening to them. Along with being listened to, the individual may discuss the aspects of their grief journey with a counselor. It can be very helpful for a person to know his or her feelings are a natural part of the grieving process. ■

Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center offers individual counseling to children, teens, and adults. Fees for sessions are based on a sliding scale, although no one is turned away because of inability to pay.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What Is the Grief Counseling Center?

Our Grief Center was established in 1994 as a response to an unmet need in the community. At that time, there was no existing grief center in the area to assist individuals who were dealing with the confusing emotions that follow the death of a loved one. Because of our expertise in death and dying, the community looked to us to provide help. The grief center currently draws people from all over our community who are seeking help with their feelings of grief.

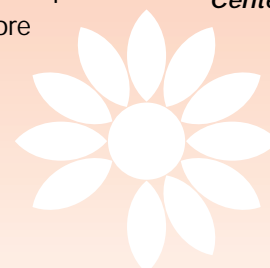
Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center now works with children in many of the public and private schools. We also augment the work of other organizations who serve children. Our Trek and Expedition youth support groups grow annually, as do the calls we receive from individuals.

In order to meet this growing need, we created the position of Grief Center Director. Cindy Brown, LCSW, has taken on this awesome responsibility. Since January, 2006 she has been researching ideas and making plans to expand the center in order to meet the growing needs of the community.

Our grief center is a reality because of this community's ideas and support. We continue to value that input. We will be assembling an advisory board comprised of community members to help us plan the future of our center. For more information about the Grief Center, contact Cindy Brown at 815.398.0500. ■



Carol Bennett
*Executive Director,
Northern Illinois
Hospice and Grief
Center*





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AWARDS

**1987 Governor's
Home Town Award**

1989 Excelsior Award

**1990 J.C. Penney
Golden Rule Award**

**2004 YWCA Leader
Luncheon Nonprofit
Recognition Award**

Perspective

***Perspective* – The New Look**

We hope you will find this, the first issue of *Perspective*, a piece that is both educational and a pleasure to read. This newsletter takes the place of what was previously known as *From the Heart of Hospice*, and like that newsletter, we will publish it three times a year. Our goal is to use this newsletter as a way of presenting you with the latest information on our hospice, as well as our perspectives on end-of-life and grief issues.

Not only is *Perspective* new, but our look is, too. After serving Winnebago and Boone Counties for over 26 years, we have chosen to modify our agency's name, and restate our image with a bright new logo. The graphic designer who has created this new look for us is Lynne Koenigsberger, a long-time friend of our organization.

Northern Illinois Hospice and Grief Center has been built on our experience, on referrals from those we have served, and occasionally we have used advertising as a way of telling the community our story. With more hospices than ever in the Northern Illinois region, we find ourselves at a critical junction.

For the rest of the year, you may hear our ads on the radio, see our commercial on television, and may notice our billboards. These communication vehicles, created for us by Roger Peterson and Brad Carlyle of Manifesto will, we believe, help more people in the community recognize our name, and learn to know us as the most experienced hospice, the one that helps people "*live every moment.*" ■