



# Mourning HOPE

grief center

## 2008/2009 ANNUAL REPORT

### A Message From the Executive Director

Death does not discriminate and tragedy can strike at any time. One in five children will experience the death of an immediate family member, and approximately 90 percent of youth will experience the death of someone significant in their lives before graduating from high school – this equates to over 56,000 children in Lancaster County. Many children's lives are forever altered by the death of a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or a friend.

Following the death of a loved one, finding someone who understands often makes the difference between going down the right or wrong path in life. Statistics show that children with unresolved grief are far more likely to drop out of school, engage in substance abuse, attempt suicide, commit crimes, or develop a psychiatric disorder. For 15 years, Mourning Hope has been supporting children and their families as they travel through their unique grief journeys, and with a 41 percent increase in service utilization during the last fiscal year, Mourning Hope is needed now more than ever.

Mourning Hope depends on our relationships with school districts, universities, community service organizations, health care providers, local and national foundations, businesses, faith-based organizations and the United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County. Our thanks go out to these organizations since their support and collaboration allows Mourning Hope to continue providing support services for grieving children and their families. Together, we ensure that all grieving children in our community are given the support and care they so badly need.

We can ensure that no child is left alone in their grief and that they find hope and healing for the future. Through peer support and the Mourning Hope staff and volunteers, our participants come together for only a brief time, but leave knowing they are not alone.

Warm Regards,

*Carly Woythaler-Runestad*

Carly Woythaler-Runestad, MHA  
Executive Director

## 2008/2009 Program At A Glance

**2,339 =** The total number of clients served in FYE 6/30/09,  
a **41 percent increase** over the last fiscal year.

### Support Group and Workshop Participants:

- Mourning Hope served 296 support group clients in aggregate
- 179 Youth; 117 Adults
- 19 percent participation increase was realized over FYE 6/30/08, prompting the addition of a 6-week Summer Family Grief Series

### Volunteers:

- 18 new grief support group facilitators were trained during the fiscal year
- Continuing education and enrichment opportunities were provided to 71 current volunteers
- 2,100 hours of service were reported by volunteers

### Grief Resources, Information and Referrals:

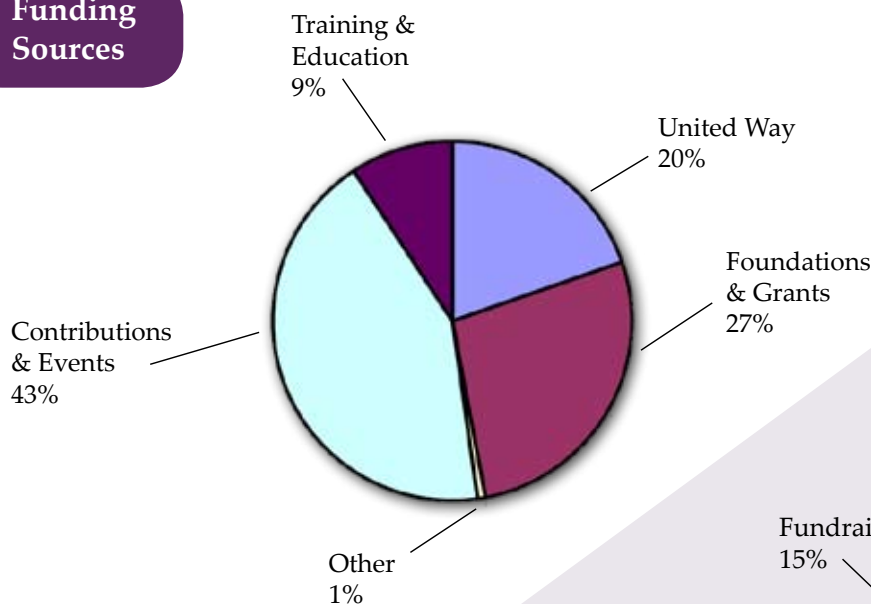
- 338 calls for grief resources and referrals were received by the center
- 58 percent increase over the last fiscal year

### Community Education:

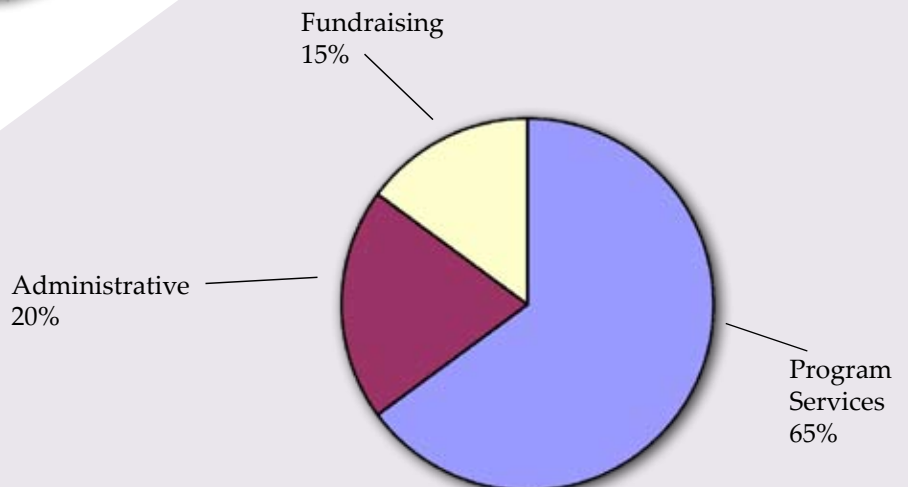
- 1,667 people attended Mourning Hope's community education offerings on topics such as: "Children and Grief," "Teens and Grief" and "Intro to Mourning Hope"

## 2008/2009 Fiscal Year

### Funding Sources



### Expenses





## MISSION

Mourning Hope Grief Center companions grieving children, teens, young adults and their families when someone significant in their lives has a serious illness or has died. Mourning Hope provides support groups, community education, grief resources and referrals.



## Mourning Hope Grief Center's 2008/2009 Leadership

### Board of Directors

President: Lindy Mullin, Former Administrator, Lincoln Public Schools  
President Elect: Nicole Hecht-Juranek, Dir. of Corp. Relations, Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Past President: Terry Hansen, Former School Psychologist, Lincoln Public Schools  
Treasurer: Sue Kittinger, Security Officer, World's Foremost Bank  
Secretary: Michelle Skala, Executive Assistant, Gallup Organization  
Founder: Pam Fuhr-Dinneen, Counselor, Lux Middle School  
Deb Buhro, Chief Operating Officer, Oxbow Enterprises, Inc.  
Sandi Carrington-Robertson, Principal, Pyrtle Elementary School  
Ross Dirks, Assistant Principal, Pound Middle School  
Pam Ganz, Volunteer Coordinator, HoriSun Hospice  
Tom Grafton, President, Grafton and Associates  
Susan Hansen, M.D., Oncologist  
Brian Hoffart, Assistant Branch Manager, Westgate Bank  
Ida Lim, Former Vice President, Bank of America  
Roger Lipson, Ed.D., President, The Lipson Group  
Roger Millnitz, Insurance Agent, Foundations Financial Group  
Gayla Nelsen, Former Elementary Teacher, Lincoln Public Schools  
Jeff Patterson, Sr. V.P., Director of Public Relations, Swanson Russell Associates

### Staff

Carly Woythaler-Runestad, MHA, Executive Director  
Jennifer Bass, M.Ed., Program Director

## VISION

Mourning Hope Grief Center will be recognized as the most effective provider of grief support services for youth and their families in Lincoln and surrounding communities. Mourning Hope will serve as a safe haven of support and hope and as the most knowledgeable source of information and companionship for the entire community.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mourning Hope envisions a society where all grieving children are embraced, listened to, understood and effectively supported by their families, teachers, caregivers and others significant in their lives.

We envision that within each grieving family, parents and caregivers model healthy grieving strategies, while understanding the unique needs of their youth.

We envision a society which values and encourages healthy grieving practices such as openness to talking about loss, embracing the pain of loss, remembering those who died, searching for meaning and giving and receiving ongoing support.

Through best practices, education and innovation, we will measurably improve the lives of individuals in the communities we serve.

We acknowledge that bereavement practices vary in profound ways depending on cultural background. The Center will create an environment that honors the culturally distinct mourning rituals, traditions, and behavioral expressions of grief experienced by program participants.

In partnership with our staff and volunteers, and in collaboration with other organizations that share our goals, we will commit our resources to programs that are ethically, socially and financially responsible.

With patience, empathy, openness and a willingness to listen with our hearts and minds, Mourning Hope humbly companions each person who seeks support.





# Mourning Hope Hosts 1<sup>st</sup> Annual "Healing the Family Heart"

Mourning Hope Grief Center's first overnight family retreat gave children and their caregivers the opportunity to build relationships and meet others grieving the loss of a loved one.

Healing the Family Heart retreat was held on October 11-12, 2008 at the 4-H Camp in Gretna. Twenty-six children and adults from eight families attended.

Healing the Family Heart was designed to support grieving children in a compassionate environment where families could share experiences and participate in a variety of nurturing activities. Each scheduled activity at the retreat was intended to foster emotional healing and encourage individual and family creativity.

The children and their families took part in activities including music, art projects and creating family flags to honor the person who died. They also participated in outdoor activities such as a zip line and a low ropes course which promoted trust building among the families and reliance on each other.

"When I think of the family retreat, I think of the caring that Mourning Hope facilitators showed the families...the joy that the families experienced...the understanding of others who have experienced the death of a significant person...the willingness of the participants and facilitators to step out of their comfort zone...the laughter by everyone...the sound of people calling others by their first names indicating a familiarity and comfort...the obvious looks and actions of the participants as they held the memories in their hearts and heads," said Gayla Nelsen, a Mourning Hope volunteer who attended the retreat.

The retreat was made possible thanks to a grant from the Lincoln Community Outreach Foundation.





## Thank You to our Wonderful Volunteers!



*"Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light."  
~Norman B. Rice*

Dear Volunteers,

During the last fiscal year, Mourning Hope volunteers generously and compassionately reached out to grieving youth and their families in our community. Only through the dedication of our volunteers was Mourning Hope able to provide healing and hope for nearly 300 support group participants.

Last year, nearly 60 individuals dedicated over 2,100 hours to companion grieving children and their caregivers. Our volunteers carry out Mourning Hope's mission in many different ways, but all play a vital role in the high-quality grief support programming provided to Lincoln and surrounding communities.

The Mourning Hope staff is forever grateful for the dedicated volunteers who give so unselfishly of their time, their talents, and their hearts to companion those searching for hope.

With sincere thanks and gratitude,

*Jennifer Bass*

Jennifer Bass, M.Ed., Program Director

*"No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others.  
The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude."  
~ Author unknown*

## Partners in Hope

In February 2009, Mourning Hope's first "Partners in Hope" award was presented to Swanson Russell, a local advertising and public relations firm, which has donated tens of thousands of dollars in services during the past two years. Since 2007, when they first started working with us, the agency has invested over 500 hours in various projects, meetings, and marketing-related activities. At an average billable rate of \$100 per hour, this results in over \$50,000 of donated resources.

While this financial contribution has been amazing, Swanson Russell transcends mere monetary contributions. Their endless dedication and hard work to support

Mourning Hope's vision makes us forever indebted. Thank you to Dave Hansen and the entire Swanson Russell team. Receiving this type of work from a national agency that offers knowledge and expertise from nearly 50 years in the business is a true blessing for Mourning Hope.

swanson • russell



# Our Supporters

## Grants

A Little Hope, Inc.  
Building Strong Families Fund  
HoriSun Hospice Community Foundation  
Jewish Federation of Omaha Foundation  
Lincoln Community Foundation  
Lincoln Community Outreach Foundation  
Vine Congregational Church Foundation

## \$1000 - \$2500

Abel Foundation  
Acklie Charitable Foundation  
Ameritas Charitable Foundation  
Dave & Terry Hansen  
Gallup Organization  
Grafton & Associates  
Harris Charitable Foundation  
Kent & Ann Seacrest  
Lindy Mullin  
National Research Corporation  
Nebraska Wesleyan University  
Roper & Sons  
Runza Restaurants  
Southeast Nebraska Cancer Ctr  
Swanson Russell Associates  
World's Foremost Bank – Cabela's

## \$500-\$999

Alan Berg & Susan Hansen  
David & Anne Frye  
Deb Buhro  
Home Services of Nebraska  
Hoppe Lumber Company  
Lincoln Benefit Life Insurance  
Madonna Rehab Hospital  
Mary Reckmeyer  
Orv & Jami Utter  
Pam & John Dinneen  
Ron & Chris Harris  
St. Anthony Foundation  
State Farm Companies Foundation  
Sue & Vern Kittinger  
Tom & Sue Tallman  
Union Bank & Trust Co.  
Universal Surety Company

## \$250 - \$499

Advantage Personnel and Employment Services  
Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority  
Bailey Lauerman  
Brad & Dianna Korell  
BryanLGH Medical Center  
Jack Guggenmos  
Jeff & Sarah Peetz  
Jeff & Lori Patterson  
John & Beatty Brasch  
Keith & Kathryn Stewart  
Krieger Family Foundation

Larry & Patricia Ruth  
Frank and Elizabeth Hilsabeck  
Lux Middle School  
Nebraska Hematology Oncology, P.C.  
Pat Gaydusek  
Richard Stevens  
Shannon & Mike Urbanovsky  
Unico Group, Inc.

## \$100 - \$249

Alan and Susan Saathoff  
Arizona Prevention Research Center  
Barry and Susan Gourley  
Bison, Inc.  
Bob & Stacie Bleicher  
Bouwens Buggies  
Brian & Amy Baxter  
Cathy Petersen  
Charlene & Mike Maloney  
Chester & Ida Lim  
Christie & Clifford Schroff  
David & Teresa Schmidt  
Diane Lerch  
Eric & Linda Hemmingsen  
Garner Industries  
Gayla Nelsen  
Interstate Insurance Services  
J.B. & Susan Burkey  
Jane Monnich  
Jen Hoelsing  
Jim & Meg Lauerman  
John & Jan Blumer  
John & Diane Tritt  
Jon & Jill Johnson  
Jon Borton  
Julia Larson  
Julie & Kevin Horne  
Keith & Jan Prettyman  
Keith & Judy Bouwens  
Kim Russel  
Knox & Julie Jones  
Larry & Janice Dlugosh  
Larry & Nancy Bare  
Matt Kutscher  
Michelle Skala  
Norma & Gordon Fuhr  
Patricia Clements  
Roger Lipson  
Roger Millnitz  
Ross & Colleen Dirks  
Russell & Janice Johnson  
Shane & Allison Lopez  
Sigma Theta Tau International, Inc.  
Honor Society of Nursing  
Sonia Harford  
Steve & Diane Brestel  
Steve & Jan Thelen  
Sue and Duane Gabriel  
Sue Dutton  
Theodore & Cheryl Anne Parent  
Tony & Lisa Dresbach  
Vicki Ortmeier  
Wesley & Nicole Hecht-Juranek  
West Gate Bank  
William & Eloise Kloefkorn  
William Stiles

## Other

Alice & Scott Skultety  
Allen & Kathy Moore  
Amy Lipins  
Ashley Erickson  
Becky & Gordon Shupe  
Bernard Heier  
Bev & Michael Swanson  
Bill & Debbie Anstine  
Bonnie Rediger  
Brad & Sara Ewerth  
Brett & Jan Harris  
Brian & Karen Helmberger  
Bruce & Cindy Sellon  
Carly & Kurt Runestad  
Carol Knolle-Faulkner  
Carolyn Panasiuk  
Carolynn & Chris Reed  
Catherine M. Hietbrink  
Catherine Wooldrik  
Charlene Schmitt  
Christine & Michael Dinneen  
Christopher & Julie Heinrich  
Constance Micek  
Craig & Becky Lamb  
David & Susan Pleiss  
Dean Way  
Deborah Forshee-Sweeney  
Diane & Con Reha  
Dick & Kathy Janda  
Donna Semin  
Frederik & Rosemary Ohles  
Gale & Julie Pokorny  
Gary & Jaci Ashmore  
Gary Herr  
Gaylene Skorohod  
Gloria Stingley  
Hal & Barb Anderson  
Harry & Ione Hieter  
Heidi Hoffman  
Herbert & Noreen Amend  
Jackie & Ron Smith  
Jan & Don Sheridan  
Janet Hansen  
Janine Stearns  
Jeanette Maas  
Jeanette Thomsen  
Jeanne Johnson  
Jeanne Riha  
Jennifer Bass  
Jennifer Connelly  
Jill & Clark Hoover  
Jill Staberg  
Jim & Cheryl Keyser  
JJ & Judy Dinneen  
Joan & Sean Campbell  
John Doron  
John Kvasnicka & Solveig Hansen  
Jolene Sell  
Joseph Meduna  
Judith Muyskens  
Judith Runion  
Karen & Richard Sonderegger  
Karin Kelley  
Kathleen Thaden  
Kathryn & Kirk Down  
Kay Maxwell

Kent & Rochelle Forney  
Lana Peterson  
Laurie Hansen  
Lee Glaser  
Lela Steinkruger  
Lesia Christiancy  
Leslie Gibbens & Brian Hefner  
Lincoln Education Association - Retired  
Linda Ashelford  
LuAnne & Richard Montgomery  
Lynette Von Minden  
Maria Eisenhauer  
Maria Lozoya  
Matt & Stacy Gutschenritter  
Michelle Fowler  
Mike & Peggy Rasmussen  
Nancy Ann Philipps  
Nancy Hanshaw  
Neal Thomas  
Nettie Peitsch & Judy Bouwens  
Pamela Lowrey  
Pamela Prater  
Patrick Bracken & Geraldine Cotter  
Paul & Christine Read  
Paul Koerner & Janet Schiefen-Koerner  
Phila M. Clark  
Pinnacle Bank - Gretna  
Richard & Lynne Schroeder  
Richard P. Stibor  
Rick & Denise Winters  
Rick & Rebecca Williams  
Robert & Billie Carole Bussmann  
Roger & Janet Meints  
Russell Svoboda & Amy Scholtz Svoboda  
Sandi Fabry  
Scott & Nancy Stuckey  
Shannon Smith  
Sharon & Glenn Bennett  
Shawn & Mary Labadie  
Sheree Bacus  
Silvija Augstums  
Steve & Claudia Russell  
Sue Outson  
Susan Dinsdale  
Thomas & Becky Hanna  
Tom & Deb Hershberger  
Tom & Karen Zegers  
Tonya Shipley  
Troy & Schawn League  
Vickie & Dallas Benjamin  
W. Maxine Wolf  
Wendi Mandl  
Women's Auxiliary LAPHCC

Proud Agency of the:





## Become a Friend of Mourning Hope

Mourning Hope exists because every child deserves the opportunity to grieve in a supportive and understanding environment. Because the death of a family member brings financial instability, along with other life-altering changes, our services are available at no cost to the participants, and no family is ever turned away.

☐ Yes! I would like to help grieving children through Mourning Hope.  
Enclosed, please find my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is given in remembrance of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail donations to: Mourning Hope Grief Center  
4919 Baldwin Avenue  
Lincoln, NE 68504

*"When I lost my aunt and two young cousins in a car accident, I felt like I had nowhere to turn. Then I came to college in Lincoln and found Mourning Hope. I really felt like my group was meant for me. The program turned my life around and gave me the sense of direction that I so badly needed."  
~ Brittany Gunther, Nebraska Wesleyan University Student*

*"I wish every night were Tuesday night." ~ Adult participant commenting on the Tuesday evening, 10-week Family Grief Series*

*"I just want to thank you for everything. This really was a life-changing experience that taught me a lot. Before this, I did not want to deal with my dad's death, but now have come to terms with it. Now I can move on but still never forget my dad. Mourning Hope taught me how to have grief and still do everything—before, life kind of just went and I was along for the ride. I learned so much from everyone there, and I just want to thank you all again. I am so glad I got to meet you all. I will never forget you."  
~ Catelyn Petersen, Teen 10-week Grief Series Participant*

because grief is the hardest work there is,  
hope is a wonderful thing



# hope



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Lincoln, NE 68504