

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nebraska Children's Grief Awareness Week – September 21 – 27, 2009

LINCOLN, Neb., (September 10, 2009) – The last week of September marks Mourning Hope Grief Center's 15th year of offering hope and healing to grieving youth in the community. In honor of this momentous occasion, Governor Heineman will proclaim the week of September 21-27, 2009, as Nebraska Children's Grief Awareness Week.

Founded in 1994, 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. What started as the vision of two local school counselors developed into a passion for many and is now a comprehensive grief support network for youth and families in Lincoln and surrounding communities.

One in five children will experience the death of an immediate family member, but 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. 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.

“Given the sizeable number of children facing the death of a loved one, it is critical for Mourning Hope to reach out to those youth in our community who are at risk of experiencing unresolved grief,” stated Carly Runestad, executive director. “Since the first support group was held 15 years ago, Mourning Hope has worked with thousands of children, teens and their families, both through personal crises and through public, local tragedies.”

If you are old enough to love, you are old enough to grieve. However, children and teens often lack the means to express their grief or to honor and remember the person who died. At Mourning Hope, families are provided these opportunities through a variety of activities such as arts and crafts, creative writing and physical activities; children and their caregivers are encouraged to express their feelings while memorializing their loved one.

“All grieving children need to be embraced, listened to, understood and effectively supported by their families, teachers, caregivers and others significant in their lives,” stated Pam Fuhr-Dinneen, Mourning Hope Founder. “When Mourning Hope was started, the goal was to create an accessible, honest and open culture for grieving youth and their caregivers. Although our families may cry while at Mourning Hope, they will also laugh – and while they will mourn, they will also find hope and begin the healing process. And most importantly, they are understood and accepted by their peers going through similar experiences.”

In addition to the Governor's signing ceremony, Mourning Hope will host the annual Family Reunion on Sunday, September 20, from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m., to reunite families and volunteers who have attended any of the Center's grief support groups in the past. Memories will be shared, quilts from sessions will be viewed, and balloons with special messages to loved ones will be launched.

Mourning Hope is located at 4919 Baldwin Avenue. For more information or to register for the upcoming grief session starting on September 14, call (402) 488-8989 or visit the Web site at www.mourninghope.org.