MOURNING HOPE GRIEF CENTER 2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

"IF I COULD TELL YOU ONE LAST THING ... "

Throughout Mourning Hope's group sessions, activities often involve some level of artistic expression. One project completed during Mourning Hope's weekend-long, overnight camp for bereaved youth - Camp Erin Lincoln - was a group graffiti board with the tag line: "If I could tell you one last thing..." Under the guidance of Lincoln Public School art instructor, Adam Schwaninger, the children spent a great deal of time determining what they would say to their deceased mother, father, brother, sister, grandparent or friend if they could have one more conversation with them, followed by very carefully crafting their words and images on the group board to honor and remember their loved one. Words such as "I love you," "I'm sorry," and "I miss you" burst off the canvas in a vivid spectrum of color. Once finished, the board provided a visual representation of each child's heartache, and served as a reminder that all children are connected in their grief.

In 2016, Mourning Hope translated this activity into a community art project to bring awareness to the issue of childhood grief. Ten boards – each 8 feet by 4 feet in size – were placed throughout the Lincoln community with the tag line: "If I could tell you one last thing." The boards were tagged by talented, local artists, and were located in disparate settings throughout the community. Each of these locations asked



their clients, congregants, students or personnel to write or draw their sentiment on the board if given one last opportunity to speak with their loved one. During July 2016, the completed boards were all merged together in a collective, poignant exhibit at the Rocketship Gallery in Lincoln.

Mourning Hope would like to offer a heartfelt thank-you to the numerous people who contributed to the development of these community art boards.

Adam Schwaninger for his

original board creation

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- Ryan Holt for his creativity, talent and project coordination
- The local designers who uniquely tagged the boards with their stunning artistry - Adam Schwaninger, Ryan Holt, Ben Swift, Dan Dunbar, Peter Worth, Matt Anderson, Emily Yoble, and Jack Christie
- The volunteers who graciously helped move the oversized boards from location to location: Steve Brestel, John Dinneen and Jim Brestel
- Rocketship Gallery for displaying our public exhibit in July
- The numerous organizations who hosted the boards in their work places: AseraCare Hospice; Bryan Health; First Plymouth Church; HoriSun Hospice; Mourning Hope Grief Center; Nebraska Wesleyan University; South Street Temple; Southeast High School; Southwood Lutheran Church and Tifereth Israel Synagogue

It takes a village to bring awareness and support to the field of children's grief. And what a compassionate village we've created right here in Lincoln!

Some heartfelt quotes gleaned from the boards:

- Thank you for making it impossible to forget you.
- Your time, attention, and love shaped me more than you know. I do my best to honor you and the wonderful children you raised each day.
- Thank you for believing in me, telling me that you were proud of me, that you thought I was beautiful. You made such a difference in my life at a time when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you for loving me for me.
- I just want you to know how honored I am you picked me to be your mommy! I love you, Peanut.
- I love you and if I could say one last thing I would say that you have filled my heart with wonder, love and kindness.
- Thank you for stopping by if only for a little while. Your daddy loves you.
- Your children live through you and you are alive through them. Every minute of every day, I hear your music.
- I am so glad I got to be your mom for as long as I did. I just wish it could have been longer than 15 years. I am a lucky lady. I love you.

MOURNING HOPE'S 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.

To learn more about Mourning Hope or to watch the video "Hope is a Wonderful Thing," visit Mourning Hope's website: www.mourninghope.org. For more information, call 402.488.8989 or email hope@mourninghope.org.



2015/2016 PROGRAMS AT-A-GLANCE

5,183 people were **directly impacted** by Mourning Hope by FYE 6/30/16. This represents a **26% increase** in service utilization over the last fiscal year.



SUPPORT GROUPS

- 345 unduplicated participants attended Mourning Hope's grief support group programs.
- Represents an **18% aggregate increase** in attendance over the last fiscal year.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- 3,810 people attended the community education presentations.
- Represents a **53% increase** in the number of presentations that were made.
- Represents a **32% increase** in the number of attendees over the last fiscal year.

GRIEF RESOURCES & REFERRALS

- 1,028 calls/contacts were addressed.
- Represents a nearly **10% increase** in requests for grief resources and referrals over the last fiscal year.

"PAT CLINCH PEACE PROJECT" SUPPORTERS DONATE \$13,625 TO MOURNING HOPE GRIEF CENTER

When life altering events occur, life itself is changed and perspective is shifted. That is what occurred when Pat Clinch was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer in 2015, a month before the birth of his second child. The community rallied to support Pat and his family as they struggled with rising medical bills and accepting the reality of an aggressive cancer. It was during a fundraiser on behalf of the Pleskac-Clinch family that Pat made it known that his wish was to dedicate his life to serving others, living fully by giving back. Ultimately, the cancer took his physical life. But the spirit of his intention, to return the love and generosity that his family received, remained alive. Greg Joyce, longtime friend, kept this intention alive by initiating the Pat Clinch Peace Project (PCPP).

The Pat Clinch Peace Project formed as a conduit to "give back" by connecting community and creating a positive impact in the lives of others. At a 2016 fundraiser the PCPP raised \$13,625 for the Mourning Hope Grief Center. Maggie, wife of Pat Clinch and mother of their two children, has been attending Mourning Hope's 10-week sessions to support their daughter Iris, age seven, who continues to process the grief of losing her dad. "Mourning Hope has been our lighthouse in our grief storm," Maggie stated. "The staff and volunteers have been our beacon, helping us navigate the rough waters."

Iris began attending Mourning Hope last year at age six accompanied by her mom who also receives caregiver support to help understand the face of grief on children like Iris. Children process grief in very different ways than adults; a fact that family caregivers are taught to recognize and support when it surfaces. "Iris continues to gain tools she needs to feel a sense of 'normal,'" Maggie noted. "We are settling into a new dynamic of what it means to be a family without dad. Iris still has grief bursts, but what was once a raw wound has developed into a tender scar. It's like pulling back the Band-Aid and what is there now is far more healed. We check in with our grief and make peace with it."



Mourning Hope and the Pat Clinch Peace Project would like to recognize the following event sponsors: Eagle Printing & Sign, Chez Hay, Legacy Retirement Communities, Good Life Provisions, Red Rebel Media, Rivers Metal Products, Scrap Central Inc., Maggie's Vegetarian Cafe, KZUM, Screen Ink, On The Go Convenience Store, Ceresco Bank, Sysco, Cornhusker Bank, and Business Computer Consultants, as well as the countless volunteers, raffle and food donors that made the event possible.

"This is what it means to be community. We stand strong and support one another. Our lives are brief on this planet, let's make it purposeful!" says Maggie.

MOURNING HOPE PARTNERS WITH SOUTHWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH TO OFFER "SPIRIT OF GIVING"

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan, Kwanza and New Year's Day are annual holidays that can prove very difficult for people who have experienced the death of someone significant. Holidays are clearly some of the roughest terrain we navigate after a death loss.

When a parent or caregiver has died, how does a child find the means to purchase and wrap a gift for their primary caregiver? Many of the bereaved youth that participate at the Mourning Hope Grief Center want to put a smile on their loved one's face, and celebrating the spirit of giving brings the child great joy during a season that can be emotionally challenging for the whole family.

In 2016, Southwood Lutheran Church teamed up with Mourning Hope for the first time to support children in this giftgiving endeavor. Southwood congregants were invited to select a family from one

of their many giving trees, and donate holiday gifts for bereaved caregivers. The donated gifts included jewelry items, movies, family games, perfumed lotions, scarves, hats, purses, coffee mugs and many other items contributed by the generous Southwood families.

Everyone who had attended a past grief group at Mourning Hope following the death of a loved one was invited to participate in this special event sponsored by Southwood. After a dinner was served by Southwood to the whole family, youth of all ages had time to select a gift for their caregiver(s), participate in a craft project, and wrap those special presents for their loved ones.

"Southwood was blessed to host the families of Mourning Hope, one of our local mission partners," stated Nicole Mroczek, Southwood

> Mission Director. "Our volunteers enjoyed the children's energy and holiday spirit. A favorite activity was getting to know the kids and helping them select the perfect gift for their caregiver. It was an honor to provide the children and their families a fun night out during the holidays."

While the kids were shopping, caregivers were treated to helpful information about how to care for themselves while navigating the stresses of the holiday season, along with chair massages from local massage therapists.

"It was an amazing opportunity to support families during this time of the year," stated Carly Runestad, Mourning Hope executive director. "Shopping for their caregiver is a rewarding and emotionally satisfying part of the holiday season for these kids. We are filled with gratitude for Southwood Lutheran Church, their amazing staff, volunteers and congregants for the time, energy and resources they put into making this event such a wonderful and comforting evening for the Mourning Hope families."



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LEGACY OF HOPE

Several years ago, Mourning Hope implemented the Legacy of Hope Society, which requests donors commit to a monetary pledge of \$1,000 or more annually for five years. Through the Legacy of Hope Society, Mourning Hope is able to better plan resources, serve more children through new and expanded programming, and encourage other community members to donate as well. This additional financial stream greatly contributes to the enduring sustainability of our programs and services.

For more information on how to become a Legacy of Hope Society Member, contact Mourning Hope at hope@mourninghope.org or call 402.488.8989.

Mourning Hope expresses deep appreciation to the following Legacy of Hope Society Members:

Joyce & Sam Baird John & Beatty Brasch Dr. Jeff & Sarah David John & Pam Dinneen Darin & Jessica Erstad Susan & Barry Gourley Terry & Dave Hansen Ron & Chris Harris Chad & Stacy Horsham Lindy Mullin Tonn & Holly Ostergard Bill & Judy Roper Pat & Larry Ruth

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 can bring 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.

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

Please consider making a monthly or recurring gift to the Mourning Hope Grief Center. These regular investments help establish a reliable revenue stream, allowing the Center to better plan resources.

| Name: | | |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Address: | | |
| City, State, ZIP: | | |
| Phone: | | |
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Mail donation to: Mourning Hope Grief Center, 4919 Baldwin Avenue, Lincoln, NE 68504. Donations may also be made online via credit card at mourninghope.org.

MOURNING HOPE STAFF

Carly Woythaler-Runestad, MHA, Executive Director Caitlin Mason, MTS, Program Director Sandi Fabry, Community Outreach Coordinator Lauren Eynon Patton, Program Resources Coordinator Alyssa Christensen, Community Program Coordinator Amy Lipins, School Program Coordinator Pam Fuhr-Dinneen, MS, LMHP, FT, Camp Erin Program Director Kristal Flaming, LMPH, PLADC, Camp Erin Clinical Director Kaycee Greenfield, Nebraska Wesleyan University Work Study Student Kacie Tremain, Nebraska Wesleyan University Work Study Student

2016 WONDERWOMEN

Three years ago, several Mourning Hope volunteers created a new fundraising event for the Center. We wanted this new fundraiser to have very little overhead whereby the majority of the proceeds would go directly back to the grieving families who attend Mourning Hope. We know "little overhead" is important and this novel concept was created to eliminate most of these traditional fundraising obstacles.

As a Mourning Hope WonderWoman, individuals were asked to donate \$100 on an annual basis. This group has provided our organization with significant operating funds dedicated toward the bereaved youth and caregivers served by the Center. Families are not charged for grief support services at Mourning



Hope and the WonderWomen donations ensure these programs and resources are available for everyone in our community!

As a "thank you," participating WonderWomen are annually invited to join forces for a cocktail party—generously hosted by Judy Roper and Elizabeth Hilsabeck—to celebrate friendships and a legacy of charitable giving.

Interested in becoming a 100+ WonderWoman?

Contact Carly Runestad at crunestad@mourninghope.org or call 402.488.8989.

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is a safe place for all members of our community who are grieving.

We welcome

ALL races ALL religions ALL countries of origin ALL sexual orientations ALL genders ALL abilities

We come together

in this home to share our stories and support one another in our grief, and all are welcome here.



ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016





