

# HORIZONS

a Publication of Hospice of the Piedmont's Grief and Healing & Kids' Grief and Healing Programs

Dear Friend,

*Whether you are grieving the death of a loved one, anticipating loss, or working with those who are grieving, we invite you to reach out to us for support.*

*Hospice of the Piedmont, the oldest and most experienced hospice in the region, has provided compassionate, expert care and symptom management for tens of thousands of terminally ill patients since 1980.*

*Our Grief and Healing teams have created a continuum of care that supports the entire family on the end-of-life journey. We offer ongoing grief and healing support for everyone during challenging times.*

*We hope you'll take advantage of the advice and support included in this publication.*

Sincerely,

The Grief & Healing Staff at

**HOSPICE** OF THE *Piedmont*

Email: [grief@hopva.org](mailto:grief@hopva.org)

## NAVIGATING GRIEF IN THE FALL

As the warmth of summer fades and leaves begin their descent, we welcome the season of fall—a time of transition, harvest, and reflection. Just as nature finds balance during this season, those on a grief journey might seek equilibrium in their own hearts.

As summer turns to fall, it can be a poignant reminder that loved ones are no longer present to witness nature's transformation.

The cooler weather invites moments of introspection, even as we may gather with loved ones for holidays like Thanksgiving. And, for those of us touched by grief, the challenge of finding gratitude after loss can be particularly challenging.

Grief, a natural response to loss, affects every facet of our being—body, mind, heart, and soul. There is no prescribed way to grieve, no right or wrong method, only the individual path that unfolds.

During these months of change, reaching out for support is an act of courage, and Hospice of the Piedmont is here to offer help. Our grief and healing services are available to adults, children, and families across our 12-county area (Albemarle, Augusta, Buckingham, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, and Rappahannock).

Thanks to the generosity of our community, these services are provided free of charge. If you wish to contribute, visit [hopva.org/give](https://hopva.org/give).

As fall paints the world with its hues, consider it a canvas for healing. Memories endure, and though seasons shift, the love we hold remains constant.

At Hospice of the Piedmont, we hope we can help guide you through this season of change, as you find balance between cherished memories of the past and the promise of tomorrow.

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## THE GRIEF & HEALING TEAM



**JORDAN PHILLIPS, MA**  
GRIEF AND HEALING COUNSELOR /  
MANAGER  
Prior to joining HOP, Jordan was an outpatient counselor with residents at Bridgewater Retirement Community and the Arrow Project. She has worked with clients with multiple needs, including crisis, substance use, trauma/PTSD, anxiety, depression, family conflict, death and dying, meaning-making, loss of autonomy, and interpersonal relationships. She enjoys working with all ages but is passionate about working with elders. She focuses on collaborating with clients to individualize their treatment and goals.



**CRAIG WILT,  
MA, MED, CT, CBT, CECR**  
GRIEF AND HEALING COUNSELOR /  
COORDINATOR  
Craig Wilt has been a member of the HOP team for over twenty years. Previously, Craig worked in human services and as a missionary. He has been blessed by his life experiences, which, he believes, helped prepare him for his work in grief-care counseling. For Craig, grief care is about hope and finding renewed meaning and purpose. He is routinely awestruck by the strength, courage, and faith of those journeying through the healing-grief process.



**KRIS SHAFER, MA**  
GRIEF AND HEALING COUNSELOR  
Kris interned with HOP in 2020 and is now a volunteer member of the HOP counseling team. She is an Army Veteran, and when she left military service, she and her husband moved to Charlottesville, where they raised their two children. Both of her parents were hospice patients, and Kris feels honored to work with HOP families and provide a safe space to navigate grief. Kris uses a collaborative and compassionate approach to foster resilience, healing, and hope for finding renewed meaning and joy in life.



**TERESA HAASE, PHD, LPC, ACS**  
CLINICAL SUPERVISOR  
Dr. Teresa J. Haase is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Clinical Supervisor of Residents in Counseling for Grief and Healing Services at Hospice of the Piedmont. Teresa has been working in the mental health field for over twenty years, specializing in grief and loss, the integration of the humanities in counseling, and adolescent development.



**JEFFREY C. FRACHER, PHD**  
VOLUNTEER GROUP FACILITATOR  
Jeff is a retired Clinical Psychologist. He practiced clinical psychology for 44 years in NJ and VA. A native Virginian, he lives in Charlottesville with his wife of 50 years, Kay, and his two beloved rescued Golden retrievers, Kaiya and Khema. He has two adult sons. In addition to volunteering at HOP as a group facilitator, he is a clinical assistant professor in Clinical Psychology.



**FRANCES PRYLUCK**  
VOLUNTEER GROUP FACILITATOR  
Fran is from the Hudson Valley in New York, where she attended school, raised a family, and enjoyed a 40-year career as a Registered Nurse. After the death of her parents in 2005, she found herself searching for a better understanding of her grief. She enrolled in Pace University in Westchester County, New York, completing a Masters's degree in Grief and Loss Counseling. During her internship, she did palliative care work and facilitated bereavement groups at Orange Regional Medical Center in New York.



**MARNITA SHEPHERD**  
VOLUNTEER GROUP FACILITATOR  
Marnita is an Albemarle County native. She has four awesome sons and three cherished grandchildren. The time spent with them is the most priceless thing in her life. She loves the outdoors. Providing bereavement support and engaging with our grief support group is an added bonus.



# HOSPICE OF THE *Piedmont* GRIEF AND HEALING

FALL 2023

## ZOOM GROUPS

### Drop-In Support Group for General Grief

*Wednesday from 3:00–4:00pm  
September 6th to November 29th*

Grieving the loss of a loved one is a painful, yet natural part of healing. We are here to help you navigate through that process. Please join this drop-in support group where grief due to any loss by death will be shared and supported.

### Drop-In Loss of Spouse/Partner Women's Group

*Mondays from 4:30–5:30pm  
August 7th to November 27th*

This will be an open drop-in group specifically for women who have lost a partner or spouse to connect with those who have experienced a similar loss.

### Yogic Healing

*Fridays from 6:00–7:00pm  
September 22nd to October 27th*

Yoga can ignite our ability to cope with grief and trauma, tapping into our inner resilience, growth, and healing. Open to all bodies and identities, this open-variation, no-levels, trauma-sensitive yoga offering is a space to connect with your breath and body, honor your healing, and relieve the exhaustion and fatigue of grief. Sessions will include guided, gentle vinyasa flows and restorative shapes to soothe the nervous system and process emotion.

### Holiday Workshop

*Monday from Noon–1:00pm  
November 13th*

Grief can occur in spite of or even because of the Holidays. As we head into the Holiday season, those of us who have experienced loss may feel a wide range of emotions. This is normal. Join us as we discuss the struggles particularly related to grieving during the Holidays and how to best care for ourselves during that time.

## IN-PERSON GROUPS

### General Grief Group

*Thursdays from 5:30–6:30pm  
September 7th to October 26th*

A facilitated eight-week support group offering participants an opportunity to explore grief themes and share strategies for navigating grief in a community of trust. A book will be provided.

### Women's Spouse/Partner Grief Group

*Tuesdays from 3:30–4:45pm  
September 5th to October 10th*

Join our women's group for practical guidance and emotional support as we share, heal and find hope. *There will be no class on September 26th*

### Loss of Spouse/Partner Women's Group

*Tuesdays from 3:30–4:45pm  
October 17th to December 12th*

Our loss of a spouse or life partner support group provides a safe place to connect with other women who have experienced a similar loss. This group will be structured with guided reading. A book will be provided. *There will be no class on September 26th*

## HYBRID GROUP

### Remembering Our Children (Zoom and in-person)

*Mondays from 5:30–6:30pm  
First Monday of Every Month*

If you are a parent who has experienced the death of your child (of any age), we invite you to join us for grief education, support, and healing.

Pre-registration is required for all groups.

Please call  
**434-817-6915**  
or email  
**register@hopva.org**



## KIDS ART PROJECT: MEMORY STONES

This activity is great for the whole family to do together. It is a lot of fun and a wonderful way to hold onto and share memories.

Stones can be collected to record memories of a loved one that has died. If the stones are displayed in a special jar in a prominent place, they can serve as a way to have conversations within your family about your special person. It is important to continue to share memories and talk about the person who died to help maintain a connection with them.

### **Supplies:**

- Stones, the flatter and smoother the better
- Sharpie markers
- Paint pens or acrylic paint
- Mod Podge
- Brush for paint/mod podge
- Small photographs
- Magazine images
- Scissors



### **Instructions:**

1. Gather small flat stones that would be easy to write on and decorate.
2. Protect the table surface with newspaper or freezer paper. Choose a rock to decorate. On one side, draw or paint an image that represents a memory with the loved one. Alternatively, a small photograph or magazine image could be applied with mod podge. On the other side, write the date and a title for the event with a paint pen or Sharpie marker.
3. Once the painted or attached artwork is dry, you can cover both sides with mod podge to preserve the image on the rock.
4. Place the dried rocks in an old Mason Jar or bowl. Place the container in a special place, maybe next to a photograph of the loved one.

(Ideas for images: a special outing with a loved one, a holiday gathering, a favorite food or drink of a loved one, an outside memory, a store that was visited frequently, a favorite activity done with a loved one)





# HOSPICE OF THE *Piedmont*

## KIDS' GRIEF AND HEALING

FALL 2023

### JOURNEYS FALL GRIEF CAMP

Saturday, October 14th  
9:30am–4:30pm  
Millington Stables in Free Union

Children and teens ages 5-17 (18 if still in high school) who have lost a person close to them are invited to attend this full-day camp that will be hosted by Living Earth School in a beautiful natural setting. Children and teens will be involved in nature-focused and expressive activities to promote grief healing. Campers will have fun, see that they are not alone, and understand that their feelings of grief are normal.

### KIDS GRIEF FAMILY WORKSHOP

Thursday, September 14th  
Thursday, November 9th  
Thursday, December 14th

5:30–7:00pm (In-Person)  
HOP's Charlottesville & Culpeper Offices

Families of all kinds are invited to come together and honor their loved ones who have passed away by creating unique art projects. Please bring a photo to introduce your special person.

While kids are busy with their art, adults can join a support group to share their experiences and find comfort in connecting with others. Plus, we'll keep everyone fueled with some delicious pizza! All families with children ages 5 to 18 are welcome.

### OASIS GRIEF SUPPORT FOR TEENS

Tuesday, September 19th  
Tuesday, October 17th  
Tuesday, November 21st  
Tuesday, December 19th

5:30–7:00pm (In-Person)  
HOP's Charlottesville & Culpeper Offices  
(To participate via Zoom, please contact us)

Teens who know what it is like to experience the death of someone they love are invited to this monthly gathering. Oasis meets in person for discussion, art, and support. We will connect with each other, do expressive activities, and share our joys and concerns. Unique grief topics will be explored, and each teen will find that they are not alone. Groups facilitated by Master's Level Counselors. Ages 13-17 welcome!

**Individual art therapy sessions  
and school groups are  
available upon request.**

*The Kids' Grief and Healing  
program is made possible thanks to  
generous community philanthropy.*

Pre-registration is required for all groups.

Please call  
**434-817-6915**  
or email  
**kids@hopva.org**



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## THE KIDS' GRIEF & HEALING TEAM

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**KACIE KARAF**

**ART THERAPIST AND KIDS' GRIEF AND HEALING MANAGER**  
Kacie has been building the Kids' Grief and Healing program at HOP for two decades with her co-workers. She is a board-certified and registered art therapist who earned her master's degree in art therapy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Kacie is happiest while helping others, spending time with children and teens, playing with art materials, knitting, drawing, and exploring nature.

**ALLY LOTHER**

**KID'S GRIEF AND HEALING COUNSELOR**

Ally is passionate about working with grieving children and guiding them through their grief journey. She received her bachelor's degree in Social Work from Marshall University and her master's degree in Social Work from Radford University. She has been working with grieving children since 2015. She has volunteered at children's bereavement camps around the country and worked in Baltimore City as a social worker at a family grief center. Ally wants all children to feel supported during their grief journey and know their feelings are normal and valid.

**DARLENE GREEN**

**ART THERAPIST**

Darlene came to the Hospice of the Piedmont in 2016. She is a board-certified and registered art therapist who received her degree from Saint Mary of the Woods College in Indiana. Darlene loves making art with children and their families and helping them in their grief journey. She enjoys spending time with her husband and boxer, gardening, traveling, fiber arts, and exploring new art techniques.

**AMANDA HUMPHRIES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR**

Amanda spent five years in the US Navy as an Aviation Maintenance Administrationmen. She worked at Rockingham Memorial Hospital for almost eight years, caring for surgical, acute, and COVID patients. She has three children and enjoys spending time with her family and traveling to explore new places.

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## A DEATH STORY

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by Susan Thesenga

Like all those who have lost a spouse of over 52 years, I grieve, often and deeply, the physical loss of my life partner, my spiritual partner, my husband, Donovan.

But at the same time, I am deeply grateful for his death,

- for his leaving exactly when and how and why he did, and
- for all the spiritual teaching that came with the dying.

This is our story.

In April 2022, after two falls and a high fever, Donovan was hospitalized with pneumonia. He did not know where he was or why he was there. He was almost completely without orientation in time and space.

And he was OK with that.

He was simple, present, accepting, childlike. Only one thing he knew for sure. He knew who his daughter Pam was and who I was.

When the hospital nurse came into his room saying she was there to "take his vitals," he looked at her and, pointing to Pam and me, said, "You can't take my Vitals; they are right here." He never lost his sense of humor, nor did he lose recognition of both of us.

After we brought Donovan home from the hospital, he kept asking when we were taking the trip down the river – a classic expression of those near death. We believed he was dying.

He was ok with that.

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# A DEATH STORY

(continued)

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The only thing that concerned him greatly was that, before he left us, Pam and I should know what he knew – He wanted us to receive the truth that had been revealed to him - about who we are and what is Real.

He held our hands, he implored us, he wept with us – to receive the Truth – the gift of the ONE Presence that was the only real Reality – the truth of God, or Source, or, the One Life, or what he finally simply called Love.

I was totally unprepared for his dying. Finally, in desperation, I said to him, “I can’t do this without you. Come back and help me. I’ll let you go as soon as I am able, but not now. Please.”

He did. He went to physical therapy twice a week. For five months, he got steadily better. Better balance, no more falls, more clarity of thought.

He struggled to come back, but he gave it his best.

He said the journey back to more normal consciousness felt like walking underwater toward a shore that kept receding.

In October 2022, we got the diagnosis of Alzheimer’s.

He started rapidly losing orientation in time and space. He was in a timeless state much of the time.

I read an account of Alzheimer’s as a passageway from material to spiritual existence – a preparation for bodily death.

That’s how it seemed for Donovan. His personality softened. He was humble and vulnerable. He was filled with gratitude and with love. We looked for the right way for him to die.

We settled on the only fully natural and fully legal way to hasten his inevitable death. We learned about Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking, VSED. We learned that by stopping all intake of food and fluids, the body would shut down within two weeks.

VSED is not an easy choice, and it is sometimes controversial, even in Hospice circles. But we finally got admitted to Hospice by a wonderful doctor who believed in his patient’s right to choose VSED as a way to cooperate with the body’s decline and death.

Donovan started spending hours every day sitting quietly at his spot on the couch: no music, no movies, no chit-chat, no distraction of any kind.

He was not spacing out. He was in a continuous process of in-depth life review and inner alignment with moving consciously toward his death.

While his mind did not function in normal time/space reality, awareness was always present. Whenever I asked, he could tell me, in the moment, what was happening in his experience. He was acutely aware of his mental and physical decline. Most poignant was his review of every mistake and unkind act of a lifetime, feeling regret and deep remorse.

After feeling the pain of remorse, he would go to the picture of Jesus we have in our living room.

Donovan wept, and received forgiveness. The air sparkled with freshness and new life. He badly wanted to leave this life completely “clean” of accumulated pain from this lifetime.

His awareness of his mental decline sometimes brought macabre humor. He made up a job resume for himself:

“Need work.

“Can’t drive a car, but can still run the dishwasher,

“Wobbly on feet, but can sit happily for hours,

“Hire at your own risk....”

Finally, on Donovan’s 87th birthday, we signed the last of the legal papers, and we were ready.

From then on, it was a steady, deliberate march toward death. He wanted a “quiet exit.” He entered a state of profound “not-knowing.” He knew he was going toward death, but he had no preconceptions of what that would be. He was open, empty, ready.

Once we started VSED, someone was always with Donovan. For nine days and nights, we held vigil.

Giving the hospice medicines. Spraying his mouth with water from a spray bottle. Massaging his cramped leg muscles.

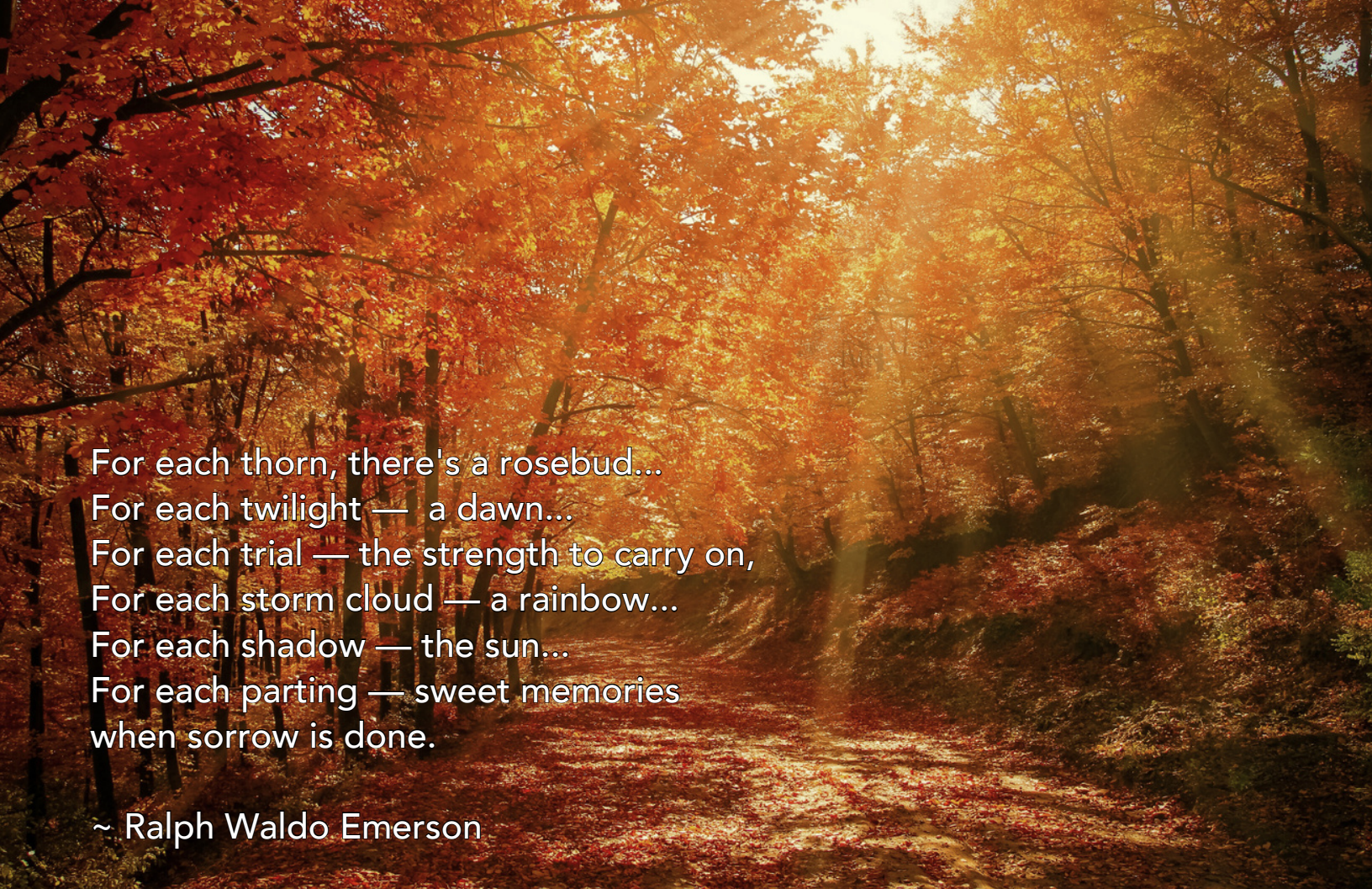
During the last visit from the Hospice doctor, he rallied long enough to look deep into my eyes and to ask me one last time: “Are we ok?” I answered, confidently, “Yes.”

That was our last verbal exchange.

After the last time we spoke, the only word he spoke was “Wow.” I asked him to say more. He couldn’t.

He just said, “WOW.” And, he said it often in the last few days after all other words vanished. Whatever was going on was, well, just WOW.





For each thorn, there's a rosebud...  
For each twilight — a dawn...  
For each trial — the strength to carry on,  
For each storm cloud — a rainbow...  
For each shadow — the sun...  
For each parting — sweet memories  
when sorrow is done.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

[www.hopva.org](http://www.hopva.org)

YOUR PEACE  
OUR PURPOSE

Hospice of the Piedmont  
675 Peter Jefferson Parkway  
Suite 300  
Charlottesville, VA 22911

