



# Buddy's Place

A Program of Pillars  
333 N. LaGrange Road, Suite 1  
LaGrange Park, IL 60526-5653

Nonprofit Organization  
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# Buddy's Place

## Fall 2011

Mike Minnis' wife, Debbie, died when their daughter was only 9 years old. "Devastating" is how Mike describes the experience of sitting in the hospital room when his wife's heart stopped beating, yet that "pales in comparison" to how he felt when he had to tell his daughter, Kelly, her mom was dead.

Mike and Kelly struggled tremendously to deal with their almost unspeakable loss and the whirlwind of emotions. Mike looked for support and found Buddy's Place.

Reflecting on that painful time, Mike recalls that Buddy's Place helped him better understand Kelly's needs and what he could do to help her get through her grief. When he asked his daughter what she liked most about Buddy's Place, Kelly said, "At Buddy's Place I felt like I wasn't alone. Knowing there was somebody there for me gave me great comfort while coping with my grief." Kelly had found a safe, comforting place to grieve. For this, Mike is most grateful.

Mike shared his heart-wrenching yet inspiring story with many of us on May 11th at our annual Caring Circle Celebration. During the evening we also honored Don and Valerie Holton with the *Linda Moran Buddy Award* and recognized our wonderful volunteers.

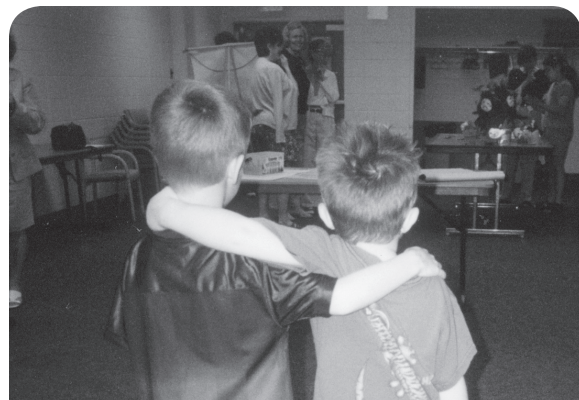
A strong, vibrant and steadfast program needs a passionate and knowledgeable leader, so to ensure the continued success and growth of Buddy's Place, I completed the Nonprofit Business

Excellence Certificate Program with the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business this past spring. I learned a tremendous amount about such things as strategic planning and budgeting and am hopeful this added education will strengthen our ability to meet the needs of grieving children and families in our community both now and in the future.

With the help of Buddy's Place, families are able to heal and feel hope. This would not be possible without the generous support of our donors. I am hopeful that reading our newsletter will strengthen your connection to us, touch your heart and cause you to consider investing in our work with a gift to Buddy's Place. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

If you have any questions, would like to volunteer, or would like more information about our services, please call me at (708) 995-3751 or email me at [khuggins@pillarscommunity.org](mailto:khuggins@pillarscommunity.org).

Kindest regards,



## Buddy's Place Services

### Family-Based Support Groups

Our core program includes eight-week sessions, monthly gatherings and peer-support groups for families with children ages 4 to 18 grieving the death of a parent or significant caregiver.

### Presentations and Consultations

The Buddy's Place staff is available to make presentations and consult on children's grief to anyone influential in a child's life.

### Individual Counseling

The Buddy's Place clinical staff, as well as other Pillars' staff, is available for individual or family counseling for people of all ages who are grieving the death of a loved one. This service is provided on a sliding fee scale.

All of our services require advance registration. Please call us at (708) 995-3750 for more information or to register.



*They come as strangers and leave as buddies.*

## Buddy's Place Staff

### Director

Kelly Huggins, LCSW

### Founder and Director Emeritus

Linda Moran, MS, LCPC, CT

### Trained Facilitators

Rebecca Bensfield

Louise Bontrager

Nancy Brown

Carly Capulli

Mollie Carroll

Tom & Nancy Conforti

Teresa DeLeon

David Denson

Nancy Dunn

Meg Eifrig

Sue Episcopo

Sharon FitzGerald

Beth Gilfillan

Rayya Ghusein

Michelle Halm

Tracy Hough

Dana Jaramillo

Katie Konieczny

Mary Lee Larson

Crisol Navar

Stacy Nalley

Angela Olson

Angelica Parker

Nellie Pearson

Marnie Rourke

Kathy Ruffulo

June Scott

Jen Stansbury

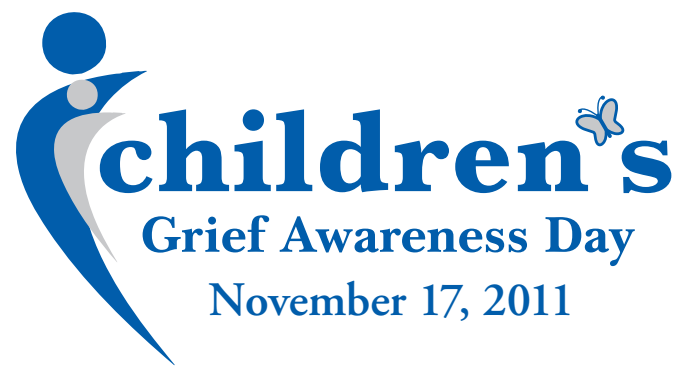
Sandra Steier

Cindy Thelen

Rachael Villasenor

Joy Wallace

Denise Wilson



One in 20 children will experience the death of one or both parents by the time they are 15, which is approximately 3 million nationally. Many people don't realize that it takes most children much longer to deal with their grief than we expect and that the amount of inner turmoil, invisible to most, is much more intense than we think.

Illinois is one of the states leading the country in the process of passing a resolution to recognize Children's Grief Awareness Day on a statewide basis. Beginning in 2008, Children's Grief Awareness Day has been observed on the Thursday before Thanksgiving. This year it is November 17th. Children's Grief Awareness Day is focused on bringing to mind the children all around us who have experienced the death of a loved one. Children's Grief Awareness Day is an opportunity to let

grieving children know that they aren't alone or forgotten in the midst of their grief. We encourage you to wear blue to show your support and raise awareness on November 17th.

By wearing blue, we raise awareness so that people will realize that even if there aren't any outward signs of inner turmoil, those storms can still be raging inside a grieving child's heart. By wearing blue, we raise awareness so that people will understand that a grieving child can't just "get over it" – not in any set time period and not by any act of their own will – and that there's no reason that they should just "get over it." We raise awareness in order to help people learn ways they might help a grieving child they happen to know, now or in the future. For more information, go to [www.childrensgriefawarenessday.org](http://www.childrensgriefawarenessday.org).

## It Takes a Village ...

### Holiday Remembrance

The Hinsdale Junior Women's Club Health Committee, headed by Kristen Miazga, helped with our annual Holiday Remembrance Gathering last December. A group of 10 women worked together to make this remembrance gathering extra special. They decorated beautiful glass ornaments for each family inscribed with their loved one's name. These women prepared a wonderful buffet of hot hors d'oeuvres and desserts, which was enjoyed by all.

The Senior Choir of the Lyons Township High School Madrigals performed for our families at the Holiday Remembrance Gathering. Directed by Connie Lyda, the Madrigals create a sacred space for the families that lets them know that their grief is understood and shared.

A family remarked that honoring their loved one during the holiday is often times very painful but also incredibly meaningful and knowing that their community supports them helps them to cope.

### Outreach – Teaching at St. John of the Cross

This summer, Kelly Huggins had the opportunity to work with the children attending the St. John of the Cross Vacation Bible School. Each week the children learned a specific value. Kelly was asked to discuss compassion. After reading the book *Makayla Cares About Others* by Virginia Kroll, the children shared how they can show compassion to their friends who are grieving. Each child created a beaded bracelet to be given to Buddy's Place children. The bracelets were given out during our annual Summer Picnic in July. The Buddy's Place children spent time looking at all of the bracelets and carefully chose one that called to them. They proudly wore them all evening, feeling the compassion shown to them by children in their community.

### Planting Seed for the Future

This summer we were fortunate to have Kate Minella, who is interested in a career in social work, intern with us. She helped behind the scenes by organizing and inventorying our supplies, updating all the volunteer manuals, and mailing out our satisfaction surveys in addition to countless other tasks. Her hard work will help Buddy's Place to run even more smoothly and is deeply appreciated. Thanks, Kate!

## Volunteer Introductions

This winter brought blizzards, ice and 10 wonderful, empathic caring souls to our doors. These 10 volunteers completed 24 hours of training in areas of children's grief, empathic communication, group facilitation and expressive therapies. They joined our current incredible team of volunteers which is now 34 strong! Below are introductions of the new volunteers.

### Rebecca Bensfield

I was looking for a volunteer opportunity that would match my passion in life, and Buddy's Place seemed to fit perfectly. I am eager to be a part of this program and help support children and their families through their grieving process while simultaneously giving back to the community in the most meaningful way possible. I am honored to be a part of such a wonderful and highly respected program within my community.

### Carly Capulli

I have always had a passion for supporting grieving families after my personal experience with death. I had known about Buddy's Place and have always wanted to be a part of it. The opportunity to volunteer came at a perfect time in my life for which I am very excited and thankful. Being a support to children during such a traumatic time of their lives is something I feel so privileged to do.

### Rayya Ghusein

Giving back to the community has always been a priority to me. I chose to volunteer at Buddy's Place because I love working with children and adolescents and I believe it is extremely important that they have support systems in times of grief.

### Dana Jaramillo

I am a stay-at-home mom to a beautiful, smart and active 4 year old boy. Throughout the training, I have been impressed with the loving and caring environment of Buddy's Place. It is such a wonderful resource to help educate, support and journey with children and families experiencing grief. I am excited to be a part of Buddy's Place as I help support those children and families.

### Katie Konieczny

I love working with children and I think this would be a special opportunity to provide support and help in one of the most difficult times a person faces.

### Crisol Navar

The idea of being a part of a support system where a child can feel safe to speak what is on his or her mind and address the family as a whole is what really attracted me to Buddy's Place. I am looking forward to great experiences that come with this program!

### Angelica Parker

I want to volunteer at Buddy's Place because I want to make a difference in the lives of both the children and their families.

### Jennifer Stansbury

I am excited to be a member of such a fantastic organization. Buddy's Place has an amazing reputation in the academic community as being an effective resource that offers education and support not just to the children, but to entire families. I truly look forward to working with the facilitators and families that make up this fantastic program.

### Rachael Villasenor

I love working with children. I was faced with loss at an early age and went through a similar program and looking back now I see how much it helped me as a child. To work in the program would be like a full circle, to give a child what someone gave me.

### Denise Wilson

I am a former elementary teacher and am now a stay-at-home mom of two children. I love working with children and thought Buddy's Place was a great way to give back to my community. I think this is a unique program that makes a big difference to everyone involved.

## Pillars



**Mission:** Pillars aspires to build healthier communities by making connections and changing lives.

**Philosophy:** We help build healthier communities by providing quality mental health services, social services and education for people of all ages.

Buddy's Place is a program of Pillars.