

No Child or Teen Should Have to Grieve Alone



We're here for YOU.
Support ♥ Connection ♥ Healing
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1st Quarter 2023 Newsletter

YOUR Newsletter Includes:

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Peer Grief Support – Program Updates

Winter 2023 Programming

This winter (with the exception of a few snow days!), Ele's Place Ann Arbor offered **weekly** peer support groups Monday through Thursday evenings for grieving children and teens ages 3-18, and their adults. Evening support programs help children and teens understand that they are **not alone** in their grief and provide an opportunity to connect with others who have experienced the death of a person in an **emotionally safe environment** that supports the sharing of feelings, thoughts and experiences.

Peer support groups are divided by age/grade: Preschool/Kindergarten, Early Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School and High School. Trained volunteers facilitate the children and teen groups with oversight by Ele's Place Ann Arbor Program Staff. Support groups for the parents/guardians of enrolled children and teens are also available. Licensed mental health clinicians facilitate the adult groups.

Family Night

Children, teens and their families who are grieving come to our healing center and attend weekly individual peer grief support groups, and periodically throughout the year, family-centered programming is offered to enrolled families. **Family nights** are designed to provide a safe space to come together and increase communication and understanding about their person who died.

In February, we offered family nights where families created a heart wreath. Each family worked together to write or draw the things that make them feel love, the ways they express their love to others, things that are helping their hearts to heal, and how each person's



heart remains connected to their person who died. At Ele's Place Ann Arbor, we recognize each person's heart reacts differently to the loss, which means each person grieves in a unique way. ♥

School-Based Programs

The Ele's Place Ann Arbor school-based staff and volunteer facilitators support our school partners and their students through **Ele's Group**, our school peer grief support groups, as well as through consultations with school staff members. Working in partnership with school clinical staff to provide 8-week peer support groups in many area middle and high schools, we strive to remove barriers and meet grieving students where they are – at school! We are thrilled that almost all nine of the Winter Ele's Group sessions are complete, and many of the nine Spring Ele's Group sessions have started!



Grief Toolkits for Middle and High Schools

We're helping local schools prepare to support students when someone in their life dies. Thanks to 2022 grants from the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor Foundation and the Detter Family Foundation, Ele's Place Ann Arbor has purchased a lot of "tools" and is creating **50 Grief Toolkits** that can be distributed to middle and high schools throughout the surrounding southeast Michigan area.

These Grief Toolkits provide useful grief tools and resources to help school clinical staff support their students about understanding the grieving process, coping with death, and how to provide grief support to middle & high school students.

National Reading Month

March was National Reading Month! Reading **books about grief and loss** can be a helpful way to explore grief with children and teens. We're sharing the following book lists that were recommended throughout the month of March by the Bereavement Coordinators at Ele's Place Ann Arbor! ♥

CHILDREN

Grief is a Mess by Jackie Schuld – Grief is a Mess is an illustrated book for grieving children and adults who need a healthy dose of understanding, comfort, and laughter. Another favorite of ours- this is great for all ages!

I Know I Made It Happen by Lynn Blackburn – Gives kids support and understanding during a difficult time. Excellent for younger children who often believe they somehow caused bad things to happen.



When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death by Laurie Krasny Brown - Straightforward and compassionate, *When Dinosaurs Die* explains death, dying, and coping with grief and loss in simple and accessible language for young kids and families. This is one of our favorites - it's great to read out loud with your kids.

Rafi's Red Racing Car by Louise Moir – This book helps young children to understand suicide and grief. Rafi is young kid whose father died by suicide. This book does a wonderful job addressing tough subjects for kids in a way that is sensitive to their developmental needs.

What Do You do with a Problem by Kobi Yamada – A young kid has a problem they don't know how to deal with. At first, they run away from their problem, but then they confront it and see that they can address it. The book illustrates for children that there can be many opportunities for learning when facing a problem.

TEENS

Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love by Earl A. Grollman – Written for a teenager, to know what to expect when someone you know has died.

Love, Lucas by Chantele Sedgwick – When Oakley Nelson loses her older brother, Lucas, to cancer, she thinks she'll never recover. Then, Oakley receives a notebook of letters addressed to her from her brother. As she reads one each day, she realizes how much he loved her, and each letter challenges her to be better and to continue to enjoy her life.

The Last Time We Say Goodbye by Cynthia Hand – Since her brother, Tyler, died by suicide, Lex has been trying to keep her grief locked away, and to forget about what happened that night. From New York Times bestselling author Cynthia Hand comes a stunning, heart-wrenching novel of love and loss.

Weird is Normal When Teenagers Grieve by Jenny Lee Wheeler – Teens grieve differently from adults and often get lost in the shuffle after the death of a loved one. *Weird Is Normal When Teenagers Grieve* is unique because it is a self-help book for grieving teens written by an actively grieving teen. Author Jenny Lee Wheeler lost her father to cancer when she was fourteen and validates for her peers that they have the right to grieve in their own way and according to their own timetable.

It's Okay That You're Not Okay: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture that Doesn't Understand by Megan Devine – This book is written through the perspective of Devine's own grief journey losing her partner. The book reads as advice from an older sibling or friend who has been in a similar experience. Devine dedicates a piece of the book to those who are supporting someone through their grief which makes this book great for people who have experienced the death of someone as well as the people who are trying to support them through this experience.



Winter 2023 Volunteer Training Congratulations

Please join us in congratulating the **Winter 2023 volunteer training class** on their completion of training! We appreciate the warmth, compassion and dedication this group expressed in supporting grieving children and teens in a peer-to-peer setting. We're always honored to add new Support Group Facilitator Volunteers, Activity Room Volunteers, Kitchen Volunteers and Clinicians to our programming team! Thank you all! ♥

Program Volunteer Training

One in 11 children/teens in Michigan will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. LET US REPEAT. One in 11. Make an Impact! Consider learning more about volunteering at Ele's Place Ann Arbor, and about this unique opportunity to give back to our community! ♥

Ele's Place Ann Arbor relies on trained volunteers to provide compassionate bereavement support services to grieving children and teens, ages 3-18, through a peer support group model. Volunteers have an opportunity to support children and teens in their grief, while building their understanding of childhood and adolescent bereavement.



For more information about becoming a Volunteer please [CLICK HERE](#) to visit our “Volunteer at Ele’s Place Ann Arbor” webpage. Questions about our **Volunteer Training Program** ? Please reach out to **Meghan Thiel, LMSW** , Associate Program Director at mthiel@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2207.



April is Volunteer Appreciation Month

Our volunteers help us GROW and serve more grieving children, teens and their families throughout the southeast Michigan area! Sending LOTS of LOVE to all of our wonderful, dedicated and committed **Ele’s Place Ann Arbor volunteers!** Thank you for all you do. Every day we rely on trained volunteers to assist with our peer grief support groups, operations and fundraising events. We could not do what we do, without our amazing volunteers!



In Their Own Words – Quotes from Children, Teens and Families

“Having Ele’s Place to help us process the grief, to understand how it worked and really to see that everyone deals with grieving in their own way, in their own time and doing their own thing was incredibly helpful. We didn’t feel alone. We appreciate your organization so, so much.” ♥

~ A Grateful Ele’s Place Ann Arbor Former Family

“HEARTS of EPA2” Stories

Have you had the opportunity to read our recent **HEARTS of EPA2** stories? This series features HEART stories shared by Donors, Volunteers, Staff, Former Families, Community Supporters, Board Members and Sponsors. Every shared heart story fills the HEART of Ele’s Place Ann Arbor. ♥

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the Ele’s Place Ann Arbor **HEARTS OF EPA2** webpage and read all of the stories from those who are sharing their HEARTS with us!

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to our **February 2023 HEARTS OF EPA2** story sharers, **Mark & Amy Blaufuss**. We are so grateful. ♥



February 2023 “You Heal Grieving Hearts” Appeal – Wrap-Up



We met our \$25,000 MATCH, exceeded our goal, and raised over \$58,000 during our **February 2023 Appeal!** Thank you! We are forever grateful for you, our donors and supporters – AND – for our amazing match donors – **Mark & Amy Blaufuss!** YOU filled our HEART! ♥

Thank you for healing grieving hearts! You stand by children, teens and their families who are grieving in our community by supporting Ele’s Place Ann Arbor! Your generous gifts during the month of February help ensure that our peer grief support groups remain FREE OF CHARGE, for as long as a family needs. ♥

2023 Derby Day Soirée – Saturday, May 6, 2023

Derby Tickets are SOLD OUT!

You helped us set the race lineup for the **2023 Derby Day Soirée**! By mid-March, all 350 Derby Tickets were SOLD OUT! Thank you to everyone who purchased Millionaires Row Tables and Grand Stand Tickets! To be added to our wait list, please contact Stacey Bodner, Events Coordinator at sbodner1@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2211.

♥ Our 6th Annual Derby Day Soirée will be back at the **Historic Earhart Manor at Concordia University** on Saturday, May 6, 2023 from 5:00 – 10:00 PM!

♥ Returning to the 2023 Derby Day Soirée for your entertainment pleasure: Emcee, **Chuck Colby**; AV Experts, **Elysium Experience**; DJ, **Nicole Myint**; and, Auctioneer, **Jim Alban**!

♥ We're looking forward to an evening of entertainment, engagement, big hats, bow ties, mint juleps, southern-inspired food stations, Derby wager raffle, Derby dance party, and LIVE coverage of the 149th Kentucky Derby!



Derby Video Filming – That's a Wrap!

From the bottom of our hearts, we want to thank the six wonderful humans who generously offered their time to be a part of our 2023 Derby video! Thank you **Mia Jakubik, Kate Telios, Becky Stirling, Abby Spickard** and **Beth & Matt Jakubik** for sharing your heartfelt Ele's Place Ann Arbor stories and healing journeys with all of us! And, thank you to **Elysium Experience** for producing the videos and providing AV for the 6th Derby in a row! We are so grateful, and can't wait for the video to premiere at the event! ♥



Volunteer Committee Shout-Outs

Thank you to our **Derby Host Committee**, including Event Chairs, Kathy & Toby Brzoznowski, and Host Committee Members: John & Lindsay Bogdasarian, Chris & Robyn DeRuyver, Al & Marilyn Gileczek, Chris & Sierra Imwalle, Ben Jeffers & Laurie Tuschen, Henry & Hallie Jewell, Shawn & Kris Kerns, Kirk & Michelle Loveless, Kelly Muldoon, Bryan & Julie Muthig, Frank & Lynne Rademacher, Tom & Shirley Randall, Christina Restricks, Dean & Tracy Rose, Woody & Betsy Stover, and Andy & Jennifer Tankanow. AND, thank you to the **Derby Planning Committees & Chairs**: Sponsorships – Tom Randall; Logistics – Kathy Gaines; Décor – Leyla Conlan, and the

entire Auction Committee! Since we kicked off in January, they've all been engaged, enthusiastic, and working in full stride to make the 2023 Derby an amazing (and successful) event! ♥



Derby Sponsor & Underwriter Gratitude

We are so grateful for the generosity of our 2023 Derby Sponsors and Underwriters! Thank you all for helping us make it happen! ♥

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Cornerstone Real Estate
Joe's Pizza
Leyla
Sesi Lincoln



Looking for Derby "DAY OF" Volunteers!

There are several "DAY OF" volunteer opportunities available for our Derby Day Soirée fundraising event! Join in the volunteer fun, and make an impact in our community by supporting our efforts to provide peer grief support programs for children, teens and their families, free of charge, for as long as the family needs.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the SignUpGenius webpage for a detailed listing of all Derby "DAY OF" Volunteer Opportunities, and to sign-up to volunteer! ♥

All volunteer shifts occur on Saturday, May 6, 2023 between 10:00 AM and 11:30 PM, and are 2-3 hours in length: Event

Set-Up, Silent Auction Butler, Wager Raffle Sales, Guest Check-Out, Sweet & Savory Station Attendant, Good Night Station Attendant, Floaters and Breakdown/Clean-Up. Please note, several volunteer shifts REQUIRE a one-hour evening training on ZOOM scheduled during the week of April 17, 2023!

Volunteers working during the event – 4:15 PM - 10:15 PM – are encouraged to dress in Derby attire – Ladies...Big Hats! Men...Bow Ties!, AND to join in the fun before/after their volunteer shift!

Questions about the **Derby Day Soirée**? Please contact **Stacey Bodner**, Events Coordinator at sbodner1@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2221.

2023 Healing Hearts Family 5K Walk/Run – Saturday, June 24, 2023

Register Online Today!

Join us at the **2023 Healing Hearts Family 5K Walk/Run** ! Former AND Current Ele's Place families PLUS the ENTIRE community are invited to participate in this family-friendly event to honor, celebrate and remember someone who has died. Put "one foot in front of the other" to help fund our peer grief support programs and ensure they remain **FREE OF CHARGE** for grieving children, teens and their families **TODAY, TOMORROW and ALWAYS.** ♥

The first 250 people who register for the 5K will also receive a 2023 Walk/Run Drawstring Backpack and Water Bottle! Grab your walking OR running shoes and **REGISTER** to join us for our 3rd Annual Healing Hearts Family 5K Walk/Run on Saturday, June 24, 2023!



Registration Fees:

♥ **Ages 13+: \$25** ♥

(Race T-Shirts are guaranteed if registered on or before Tuesday, June 6, 2023!)

♥ **Kids (12 & Under): FREE** ♥

♥ **Virtual - Ages 13+: \$20** ♥

Register EARLY – Registration Fees INCREASE on 6/1/2023!

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to REGISTER online for the Walk/Run.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to sign-up online to VOLUNTEER at the Walk/Run.

Once again, the race course will be at our Presenting Sponsor's amazing location: Thomson Reuters Ann Arbor Campus, 6300 Interfirst Dr., Ann Arbor, MI! Thank you Thomson Reuters!

Interested in becoming an **Event Sponsor** for our 2023 Walk/Run? Questions? Please contact **Stacey Bodner**, Events Coordinator at sbodner1@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2221.

Tours of the Heart – Schedule a Tour & Visit Our Peer Grief Support Center



Tours of the Heart are an inspirational opportunity to learn more about Ele's Place Ann Arbor, and to visit our dedicated healing space for grieving children, teens and their families.

We welcome scheduling in-person tours of our program facility. A Tour of the Heart provides you with an opportunity to learn about our peer grief support programs, meet our staff, and find out ways you can help support our mission.

PLEASE NOTE, these tours are NOT intended for families seeking grief support. If you need assistance or have questions about grief support for children and teens, our Clinical Program Staff is available to help! Please call Ele's Place Ann Arbor at

734.929.6640 or annarborinfo@elesplace.org.

Questions? Or, to schedule a Tour of the Heart, please contact **Lindsay Clark**, Director of Development at lclark@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2220.

Grant Funders Supporting Ele's Place Ann Arbor

Thank you to the **Children's Foundation** for presenting Ele's Place with an impactful grant award to support the expansion of a virtual peer grief support program with the goal of reaching students in remote areas of Michigan who do not have access to in-person programming. We appreciate that you stand by children and teens who are grieving in communities throughout Michigan, by standing with our branches located in Ann Arbor, Flint, Grand Rapids and Lansing!

Thank you **James A. & Faith Knight Foundation** for presenting us with an impactful grant award to support our ongoing general operating needs. This unrestricted grant is so important for our regular day-to-day needs – so grateful!

♥ Together we make it happen! ♥

We are grateful for our **Grant Funders!** Their investment in Ele's Place Ann Arbor helps us accomplish our goals and serve the children, teens and their families who are grieving in Ann Arbor, and the surrounding southeast Michigan area.

Are you a **grantor organization** wanting to learn more about the Ele's Place Ann Arbor mission? We LOVE our grantors! Please reach out to **Lindsay Clark**, Director of Development at lclark@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2220.

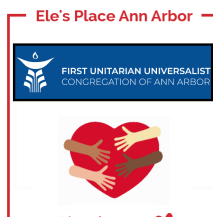
Community Partners & Friends GIVE BACK



Thank YOU! ♥

We were proud to be a part of the **University of Michigan Ross School of Business Community Case Competition (CCC)** program last fall. We look forward to implementing the CCC team's

suggestions! As part of the program, our CCC team won the competition, and we received a generous donation of \$1,000! ♥



Thank YOU! ♥

Thank you to all the members of **First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUA)** who donated to us during a December collection! We were honored to be chosen as one of the UUA beneficiaries during the holidays! Thank you for presenting us with a \$2,000 check! ♥



Thank YOU! ♥

Thank you to the high school students who reviewed **The Generosity Project's** "Cash for Your Cause" entries, learned more about our peer grief support programs, and selected us as one of the

beneficiaries! We were honored to be presented with a check for \$2,000 to help fund more Grief Toolkits for local area schools. ♥



Thank YOU! ♥
Birthday Fundraiser

Thank you **Hallie Jewell** for serving Ele's Place Ann Arbor as a peer grief support group volunteer facilitator, embracing your sister Ele's legacy, and for celebrating your January birthday with a

Facebook fundraiser! This beautiful human - and those who celebrated her with a donation - raised over \$560! ♥



Thank you to **Dexter Community School** students and families! Earlier this month, incredibly excited and talented orchestra students from 5th - 12th grades performed in the

Dexter All-Orchestra Benefit Concert to a full house! We are forever grateful to be the recipients of this benefit concert with a donation of \$2,848 (and counting!) ♥



Thank YOU! ♥

So grateful to **Catching Fireflies** and their customers! During the month of February, everyone rounded up their purchase totals and the spare change added up to \$832, and Catching

Fireflies matched their customers round ups for a total donation of \$1,665! One coin at a time, you did it! ♥



proceeds (\$1,000+) were donated back to us! ♥

Thank you to **Leyla** for hosting another generous shop for a cause Valentine give back in February, and thank you to everyone who came out to shop! We're very grateful that 20% of



Thank YOU! ♥

After presenting to the members of the **Exchange Club of Dearborn** early in February, we were honored to receive a gift of \$1,000. Thank you for reaching out and asking

us to share how we support children, teens and their families who are grieving. ♥

Thank you to everyone who visited Ele's Place Ann Arbor in February for our **Blood Drive!** We are grateful for the blood donors and the American Red Cross Washtenaw County staff and volunteers! Together, we collected 25 successful blood donations! Ele's Place Ann Arbor helps heal grieving hearts every day.



Thank you for standing with us by donating blood and making an impact in our community! ♥

Do you have a **Third-Party Fundraising Event** idea that would support the Ele's Place Ann Arbor mission? We LOVE our Community Partners & Friends! Please reach out to **Stacey Bodner**, Events Coordinator at sbodner1@elesplace.org or 734.929.6640, Ext. 2221.

Ele's Place Ann Arbor Spotlight

In January, we thanked two of our amazing Ele's Place Ann Arbor Community Board Members for taking on new leadership roles for 2023! We welcomed **Ann Hollenbeck** as our Community Board Chair, and **Jeanne Cooper, LMSW ACSW**, as our Community Board Vice-Chair. ♥

Congratulations to the entire **Ele's Place Ann Arbor Clinical Program Staff**, led by **Meghan Thiel, LSMW**, Associate Program Director, for successfully completing the Winter 2023 Volunteer Training Program. ♥

Thank you to **Bree Arvai, Hannah Brown, LMSW, Lindsay Clark, Karen Kohn, LMSW, Alexa Schrock, LLMSW** and **Meghan Thiel, LMSW** for reaching out into our community and recently presenting to groups at: Camp Kesem, Chelsea Rotary, Dexter Community Schools Orchestra, Dexter Rotary, The Dying Year, Wolverine Support Network at University of Michigan, and University of Michigan School of Social Work. ♥

Earlier this year we bid farewell to **Charles Ramsey** and **JPaul Dixon** as Ele's Place Ann Arbor Community Board members. We appreciate their dedicated volunteer service as advocates for the grieving children and teens we serve, and know they will always be forever friends of Ele's Place Ann Arbor. Thank you, Charles and JPaul! ♥

In February, we welcomed **Lauren McGillicuddy** to our team as the Special Events Assistant. Thank you Lauren for taking the reins and leading the Derby Auction Committee to the starting gate – our Derby Day Soirée guests will have a blast with the Silent/LIVE Auctions this year! ♥

Thank you to **Bree Arvai, Doug Barber, Leyla Conlan, Jeanne Cooper** and **Betsy Stover** for creating special social media fundraisers in connection with the February 2023 Appeal. Their extra efforts helped us meet our match! ♥

During the month of March – National Social Worker Month – we celebrated the **Ele's Place Ann Arbor Clinical Program Staff**. Whether in evening peer grief support groups or at our school partners, our social workers create a safe space for grieving children and teens to share their stories and memories, explore their feelings, learn coping skills, and meet new friends who understand them. Social Work Breaks Barriers! ♥

Shout-out to **Stacey Bodner** for leading the Ele's Place Ann Arbor Development Staff, Community Board and Derby Host Committee to the earliest ticket sell out of the Derby Day Soirée fundraiser event, ever! Amazing accomplishment! ♥

Shout-out to **Lindsay Clark** and **Alexa Powell, LMSW** (Ele's Place Capital Region) for the extra time, care and effort they are giving to move the DEI efforts of the organization forward. Thank you for the commitment you have made to this important work for Ele's Place throughout the State of Michigan. ♥

Shout-out to **Gail Hullstrung** for consistently going above and beyond to ensure that our Home for Healing Hearts is welcoming and safe for our families, staff, volunteers and guests. You make our building sparkle, inside and out! ♥

Shout-out to **Alexa Schrock, LLMSW, Lindsay Clark, Zoe Hilbert, LSMW** and **KaDerrick Robinson, LMSW** for spearheading the funding and creation of 50 middle and high school Grief Toolkits for local schools. The Ele's Place Team has worked hard to make these resources and tools available for schools, when needed. Thank you to our MSW Interns **Hannah Abdelhady, Eunice Rocha** and **Allison Stone** for packaging each Grief Toolkit with care! ♥

YOU make the difference! ♥ THANK YOU for standing by Ele's Place Ann Arbor as we stand by grieving children, teens and their families in Ann Arbor, and the surrounding southeast Michigan area. YOUR gift to Ele's Place Ann Arbor ensures that our peer grief support groups remain FREE OF CHARGE. PLEASE click on the button below to make a secure online donation today! ♥

DONATE NOW!

Amazon WISH LIST

Help us fulfill our mission of creating awareness of and support for children, teens and their families who are grieving in our community. Items on our Amazon WISH LIST allow us to:

- ♥ Create activities for our peer grief programs
- ♥ Fill the shelves of our grief library
- ♥ Provide supplies for our work behind the scenes and around our building

IF you'd like to browse our Amazon WISH LIST, please [CLICK HERE](#). When you order, the items are shipped directly to us. Please be sure to include your contact info so we may express our gratitude for your purchase. Thank you! ♥

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Ele's Place is committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
TOGETHER WE ARE BETTER

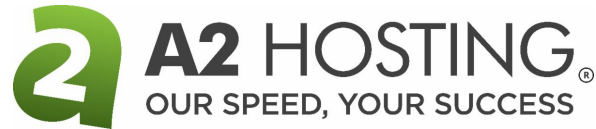


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