

FRIENDS INDEED



National Centre
For Childhood Grief

EDITION 1 FEB 09

Newsletter of the National Centre for Childhood Grief

WELCOME WELCOME WE


CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

By Sylvia Kanavaros, the NCCG Executive Officer


Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Friends Indeed*, the National Centre For Childhood Grief's newsletter. It's my absolute pleasure to tell you about what we achieved in 2008 and our plans for 2009.


During 2008, the NCCG continued to provide its core services – individual counselling and group counselling programs, advocacy in schools and support via telephone, email and SMS for bereaved children aged from 3 to 18 years and their families. These services are provided by our 14 wonderful volunteers, who have all undergone intensive training (ranging from a 6-day course for Group Support Workers, through to a 2-year Postgraduate Diploma for Counsellors – all at their own expense).

In addition to our day-to-day services, we held several extra events in 2008:

 **Bereaved Daughters' Day.** Held at the Centre in January '08, this was a lovely "girls" day where we discussed what it's like for girls growing up without their Mums. A beauty therapist provided skincare and mini-facial advice. They then had great fun practising on each other.

 **The Magic Of Memories.** Our exciting new CD was officially launched by our Patron, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of N.S.W. This was a gala event, held at the Ensemble Theatre and attended by over 100 people (including counsellors, teachers, representatives from many community sector organisations, government departments and members of the media).

 **Community Education.** "Understanding Children's Grief" hosted by the Southern Highlands Bereavement Care Service was very popular and filled to capacity which shows the demand for this information. Two workshops were also held on "Understanding death & explaining it to our children" in Summer Hill and Baulkham Hills for Motherless Mothers' Support Groups. Robust discussions were held during all workshops highlighting the importance and value of these seminars.

 **Bereaved Sons' Adventure Weekend.** Held in the Blue Mountains, this weekend was a major achievement as it was the first time the Centre held an overnight event. The boys had a fantastic couple of days participating in activities such as rock climbing and abseiling while reflecting on their experiences growing up without their dads.

Outside the NCCG's usual activities, Peter Coupland and I presented a paper on the Centre's programs and services at the Association for Death Education and Counselling's Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada and another paper on our group counselling program at the 8th International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society in Melbourne. Last year was extremely busy and it looks like 2009 will be similar! In addition to continuing with our core services, the special programs and community education, we are introducing a "Family Picnic Day" for all those who attend our service. We look forward to your ongoing support enabling us to provide these important and highly valued services and programs. ■



childhoodgrief.org.au





National Centre For Childhood Grief



Whether it be your time, your skills or your generous financial contribution, we acknowledge and value your commitment to "A Friend's Place"

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

By Rick Taylor

We are excited to be able to publish *Friends Indeed* for the first time and hope it will help you learn more about the NCCG and the work we are doing*. Each year many people and organisations are very generous in providing love and support to the NCCG. We hope *Friends Indeed* will help you understand who we are and what we do. Our aim is to give you a clear understanding of the methods our volunteers use to provide a loving and safe place for children learning to live with grief.

Whether it be your time, your skills or your generous financial contribution, we acknowledge and value your commitment to the NCCG, commonly known as "A Friend's Place".

Your contributions sustain us and ensure continuity for our programs. In turn, this helps to create stability and reassurance for bereaved kids during a time of major change and chaos.

On the back page we have listed the names of organisations and individuals we would like to thank who have provided great support over the past few years. Without their help, the NCCG would not be able to operate.

We would like to make a special mention of the significant donations from **Angus Coupland, Graham Wood and Lynda and Greg Hutchison**. Also the ongoing support we receive from companies such as **Kimberly-Clark Australia, National Council for Jewish Women of Australia and Maxxium Australia** is gratefully appreciated. In addition, some of the parents whose children are involved in the group programs have been very resourceful by organising events and raising funds. We use your money to keep our doors open and to provide individual and group counselling sessions to children going through the worst time in their lives – the death of a loved one.

When the kids come to us, they are often "paralysed" by grief – not a euphemism but an actual physical and mental state where the loss and grief overwhelms them. Through our counselling and your support we take the kids from this awful position to one where they can learn to live with grief. Because the NCCG is a comparatively small charity, every donation you make has a huge impact. Your kind donations not only enable us to pay the bills but also shows the kids that the wider community cares about them and wants to make a difference. 2009 plans to be a great year for all at the NCCG.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT!

* Donations have not been used to pay for this publication. Printing and artwork have been generously donated.



WHAT DO WE DO?

The NCCG (A Friend's Place) provides free individual and group counselling for bereaved children and young people (up to the age of 18 years) and their families.

The philosophy of the NCCG is based on the following 4 principles:

- 1 Grief is a natural response to loss
- 2 Children, like adults, grieve when someone close to them dies and they need opportunities to express this grief in an understanding and supportive environment
- 3 The duration and intensity of grief are unique for each child
- 4 With support, children have the capacity to integrate grief into their lives if the environment provides acceptance, compassion and safety

Parents' support groups are run simultaneously with the children's groups. We also act as advocates for individuals and families to assist them in overcoming specific challenges. Additionally, we provide community education seminars and workshops.

Counselling services are provided for children and families in specific situations. This helps to identify and assess the most appropriate and effective response to those who have experienced traumatic deaths including suicide, homicide or terrorism.

For more information about the NCCG, or if you would like to put a friend in contact with us, please visit www.childhoodgrief.org.au or phone us on 1300 654 556 or email info@childhoodgrief.org.au

As parents, we get an insight into what our kids are experiencing, so we are better equipped to manage situations as they arise and before they get out of hand.



IN PROFILE: DIANNE McKISSOCK OAM

By Nick Backo, Trainee Support Worker



Dianne McKissock was one of the founders of the NCCG. She has been a key person in the Centre’s formation and development, and has continued over the past 14 years to play a crucial role in the Centre’s services.

Di developed an interest in counselling from an early age, often finding that those around her would go to her for help, advice and comfort. This led her to study sociology, psychology and philosophy followed by clinical training in relationship counselling. Di’s work

began with her own psychotherapy practice and then moved on to specialise in bereavement counselling for children. This became her passion and life mission for the past 25 years.

Di’s interest in childhood grief originated from her work in relationship counselling. Grief was a common theme in relationship problems as well as general social problems, yet there were no special services for children experiencing grief. Di tired of people not understanding the specific needs of grieving children and in particular hearing comments like “... kids are resilient, they’ll get over it won’t they?”. Di knew they wouldn’t. It was because of this that Di decided to do something about it.

It was with this experience that the seeds of the NCCG were sown. Di and her husband, Mal, developed an intensive training course for specialised volunteers to run individual and group counselling sessions for children.

Di found the difficulty of finding support for the Centre as “bloody hard work”. One of the problems she had to overcome was that a fair percentage of the population are still convinced that children and young people don’t really experience grief in the same way adults do. They think that young people will just get over it. However with figures from the USA and UK indicating that 6% of children, aged between 16-18 years, will experience the loss of a parent and therefore will need care and ongoing support in some form or another, means the Centre is certainly in high demand.

Di sends a big thank you to all those who have provided support. Even the smallest gesture or donation sends a buzz through all volunteers at the Centre. It makes the volunteers feel like they’re making a difference and they’re appreciated. ■

WHO’S WHO AT THE NCCG

- Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO – Patron
- Henri Szeps OAM – Ambassador
- Mal McKissock OAM – Co-founder & Clinical Director
- Dianne McKissock OAM – Co-founder & Clinical Director
- Rick Taylor – Director and Chairman
- Alison Turner – Director
- Peter Coupland – Director & Senior Counsellor
- Sylvia Kanavaros – Executive Officer & Senior Counsellor
- Anne Mulheron – Senior Counsellor
- Mary Ashton – Senior Counsellor
- Lil Markovic – Counsellor
- Kristy Jeffcoate – Post Graduate Trainee
- Ada Stanton – Support Worker
- Christine Walker – Support Worker
- Cherri Southerton – Support Worker
- Caroline Dale – Support Worker
- Nick Backo – Trainee Support Worker

Coming to the Centre changed my life because I learned to express my feelings about my Dad.



Henri Szeps OAM

Because “Shhh, not in front of the child” is no way to deal with childhood trauma.

Trust me.

AMBASSADOR’S MESSAGE

By Henri Szeps OAM

Every human has felt pain. The deepest and most scarring tends to be pain suffered in childhood, pain experienced in our early, formative years.

Grief, loss, loss of love, loss of continuity, of the familiar, of stability – these are all states I am acquainted with, through the luck of the draw, by being born in Europe during World War 2.

My own grief came not from the deaths of people around me but from having to leave them, rejoin them and leave them again and again. Wounds were being constantly healed and reopened.

For reasons too long to explain here, I was born in a refugee camp in Switzerland to a Polish mother, fostered out to a wonderful staunch Lutheran Swiss family at 11 months (they effectively saved my life); returned to my mother, by then in Paris, at the age of 3; returned to my Swiss family at 4½; back to my mother at 6; to a Rothschild’s orphanage outside Paris at 7; and to Australia with my mother and sister at age of 8. People, language and culture, were constantly swapped out from under me. I know displacement and grief. Maybe that’s why I learnt to make people laugh.

My heart melted when I became aware of what the founders of the NCCG (Mal and Di McKissock) were doing with children in grief and I had to try to join in and do something. This note is to thank everyone involved in supporting the wonderful work they do. ■

BEREAVED SONS' ADVENTURE WEEKEND

OCTOBER 2008 – BLUE MOUNTAINS

By Peter Coupland, the NCCG Director

With generous funding from those listed below, we ran our first ever Bereaved Sons' Adventure Program in October 2008. Ten boys, who have been involved with our normal group program, and four leaders attended a weekend full of fun activities, adventure and reflection. The Grange, located at Mt Victoria in the Blue Mountains, was the ideal venue. Barker College generously donated the use of the Grange and it was the perfect setting for this highly successful weekend.

Challenging team activities, rock-climbing, abseiling and helping out with meals were great ways to build confidence, teamwork and communication skills. A memorial service was held in the Bush Chapel and this allowed for a unique and poignant connection with their Dads.

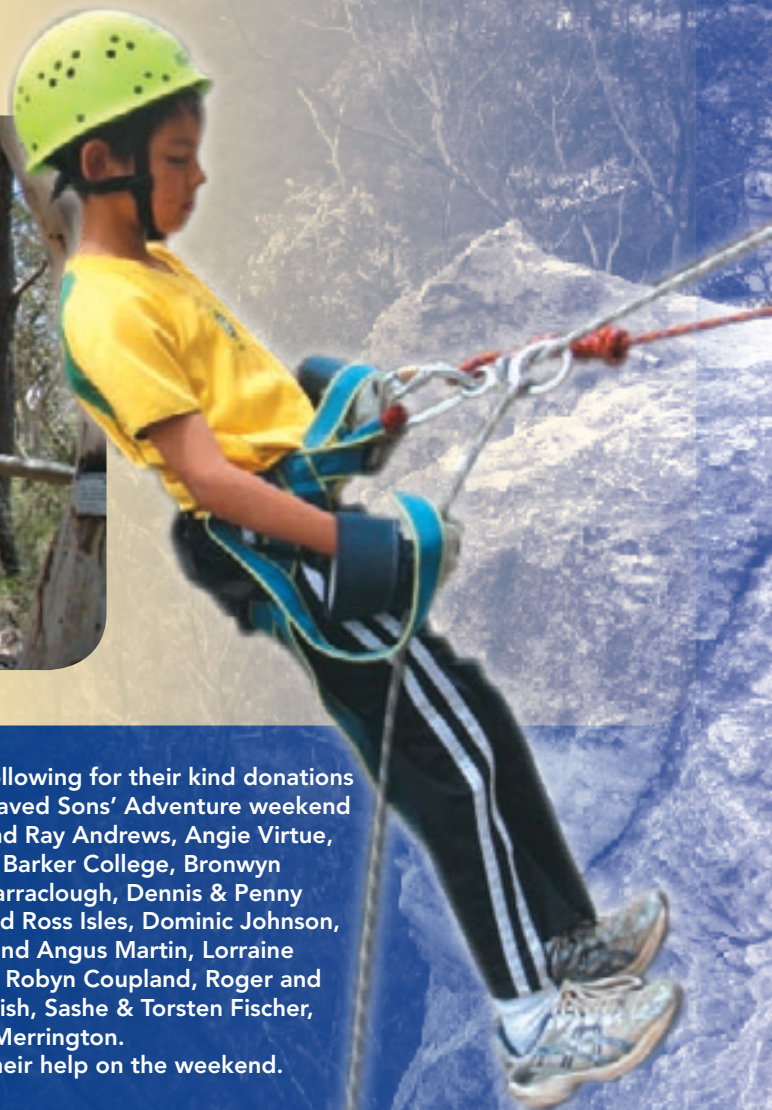
Our intentions were to help the boys cope in constructive ways with their grief and this program, alongside our core child and family support services, has made a real difference. Being a shared experience, they also have a strong bond with each other and we believe this will help them cope with various challenges throughout adolescence and young adulthood in the years to come. Due to its success, this event will run again in October 2009. ■

The weekend helped my son to have such a sense of achievement and independence. It also allowed him to have some time for reflection. His Dad loved the Blue Mountains, bush walking, canyoning and the natural environment. He would be so proud of his son.



We had lots of fun and laughter doing all of the activities and getting to know each other. Most of all it was a special time for me to remember and think about my Dad. He would have really loved a weekend like that. I will never forget it.

Thank you to the following for their kind donations who made the Bereaved Sons' Adventure weekend possible: Annalise and Ray Andrews, Angie Virtue, Andy and Beth Bailes, Barker College, Bronwyn Dowling, Bruce & Bev Barraclough, Dennis & Penny Merrington, Denva Scott and Ross Isles, Dominic Johnson, Edward & William Bailes, Jenny and Angus Martin, Lorraine Merritt, Mark and Carolyn Whitfeld, Paul Foster, Robyn Coupland, Roger and Betsey Whitfeld, Sarah Elliot & Mal Noble, Sarah English, Sashe & Torsten Fischer, Steve and Mara Klemich, Teresa Scott, Tony & Sigrid Merrington. A special thankyou to Tony High and Rick Taylor for their help on the weekend.



4 WAYS YOU CAN HELP

The NCCG is a registered charity and provides free of charge services to bereaved families. We are fully dependent on donations from the community to sustain our organisation.

There are so many ways you can help:

- 1 Volunteer your **TIME OR EXPERTISE**
- 2 Offer the NCCG access to any **RESOURCES** you may have
- 3 **DONATIONS** (even the smallest amount can make a difference)
- 4 **SPONSORSHIP** of a special project or a core service.



CORE SERVICES

Our core counselling program requires approx. \$1,250 per year to support a grieving child.

You can contribute in the following ways:

\$50	=	Support a child for one group session
\$100	=	Support a child for one month
\$300	=	Support a child for three months
\$625	=	Support a child for six months
\$1,250	=	Support a child for one year
\$2,500	=	Support 2 children for one year
\$5,000	=	Support 4 children for one year
\$18,000	=	Support a group for one year

NB: Children's details are kept private

What helps

coming here + talking about your parent
 keeping their memory alive
 people who know
 Memories
 keeping special things
 knowing what happened
 visiting places they loved
 nice food made by friends
 trustworthy people

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The NCCG are looking for sponsorship and donations to help run the following projects in 2009. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

FAMILY PICNIC DAY

Donations are needed to run a day of fun and reflection for all families (approximately 50) currently involved with the Centre.

BEREAVED SONS' ADVENTURE PROGRAM

Donations are needed to organise an action-packed weekend mixed with adventure learning and personal reflection.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Donations are needed to run local community seminars designed to build awareness of the need to support kids through their grief. You may like to support your local school or community centre.

TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY

Donations are needed to compile a high quality television production to profile the NCCG and its services. It is essential to obtain community awareness to highlight the needs of bereaved children and their families.

If you would like to help with any of these projects please contact:
peter.coupland@acenet.com.au

What doesn't

not being told the truth
 teasing
 people telling people you don't want to know
 people who don't care
 being bossed around about your feelings
 people bagging out their parents
 bullying
 when people forget
 when you remember bad times
 lies

DONATE TODAY

Visit www.childhoodgrief.org.au and click on the "donate" button

or
 Email Peter Coupland or Rick Taylor at info@childhoodgrief.org.au

or
 Phone 1300 654 556



childhoodgrief.org.au

THANK YOU

THE NCCG WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTIONS:

ORGANISATIONS

Allco Foundation
Anagla Chitale of Jon Colet School
Arcadian Quilters Association
Aspect Capital
Avalon Public School
Beam Global Spirits and Wine
Bondi Lions
CBA Staff Fund (Charity Ball)
Colliers
Datacom
Ebsworth & Ebsworth
Excelsior Public School

Fantastic Furniture
Frucor
Kimberly Clark Australia
Maxxium Australia
Moser Bland & Co
National Council of Jewish Women in Australia
Parish of North Sydney
People Corp
Peter Lees and Associates
Rebel Sport
Red Communication
Temple Emmanuel
The Ensemble Theatre
The Furnace
The GPT Group

Trees for Mum
United Way Sydney
Westpac
(gift matching scheme)

INDIVIDUALS

Ada Stanton
Alan Reid
Angus Coupland
Ann and Barry Mauger
Annette Olle
Anthony Ammar
Barbara Spry
Bill Vanooi
Brent Ennis Brown
Christine Senior
Diane Openshaw

Glen Hunter
Graham Wood
Greg and Lynda Hutchinson
Henri Szepts
Jacqui Bundy
Jenna Dean
Jill Nickson
John and Anne Drinan
Kate Pointon
Kristy Jeffcoate & Heath Deetlefs
Liz Higgins
Marguerite Gazey
Michael McIntyre
Monique, Matthew and Paul Crawford

OP Philips
Paul Dickins
Peter Ansett
Ray Raper
Rick Taylor
Richard Fennell
Robert Suzz
Robert Southerton
Robert Spry
Sally Stobo
Simon Pettit
Sue Longstaff
Vanda Philips
Zeljko Milanov

Special thanks is extended to **Anna Lane** for volunteering her time and professional expertise to the design and production of this newsletter. We would also like to acknowledge the generosity of **Barbara and Stephen Penfold** for funding the printing of the first edition of *Friends Indeed*.

HELPING YOU HELP THEM TWO VERY USEFUL RESOURCES FROM THE NCCG



ONLY
\$66
PLUS P+H

KIDS' GRIEF

A Handbook for Group Leaders

By **Dianne McKissock OAM**

The essential resource for all those involved in the care of dying and bereaved children and their families.

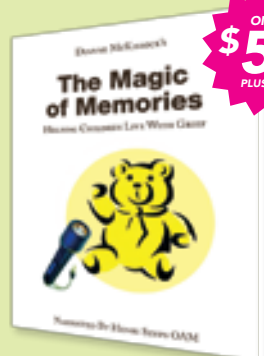
All proceeds of sales support the ongoing work of the NCCG.

THE MAGIC OF MEMORIES CD

By **Dianne McKissock OAM**
Narrated by **Henri Szepts OAM**

These 5 real life stories, narrated by Henri Szepts, are designed to help adults understand and facilitate children's grief.

All proceeds of sales support the ongoing work of the NCCG.



ONLY
\$55
PLUS P+H

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