

# FR*ENDS* INDEED



National Centre  
For Childhood Grief

Providing support to newly  
bereaved children and families  
[childhoodgrief.org.au](http://childhoodgrief.org.au)

National Centre for Childhood Grief • Newsletter

## The Magic of Memories

Mal And Dianne Mckissock – Clinical Directors

**As we celebrate the launch of the second of Di's trilogy around 'The Magic Of Memories', we find ourselves thinking about the significance, indeed magic, of memories created or shared at 'A Friend's Place'.**

The fear of forgetting important people, places, and experiences is familiar to all of us, even more so when we are bereaved. As many of you know, one of the important strategies we use to help children retain connection to those they love who have died, is to encourage them to share detailed memories with us via photos, stories, memory boxes, scrap books, or just 'chewing the fat' around a camp fire. We do everything possible to help them grab hold of those memories and 'fatten them', so they are more easily stored, retrieved and re-experienced. Those of us fortunate enough to work at the Centre are constantly touched by the stories children and young people share with us as they take us into their trusted circle. They are a gift to the environment, often poignantly sad, sometimes side splittingly funny, an almost tangible 'presence', creating an atmosphere that is safe, soothing, and uplifting. People feel and comment on this when they enter the building.

Adult clients make their contribution in much the same way and allow us to 'meet' the most delightful people who just happen to be dead. They all become part of who we are.

Counsellors, Board Members and office staff also contribute to the Centre's memory bank. For example, Peter Coupland, a special counsellor, group leader and ex Board Member, has been a big presence in every

sense of the word. Every time his name is mentioned people's faces light up as they remember what it has been like to work with him, to enjoy his intelligence, creativity, delightful laugh, and warm hugs. Sometimes now their faces show the concern they feel as Pete battles AML. His contribution to the atmosphere is invaluable.

Ella Bullen's struggle with cancer, and the return of her familiar level of energy, efficiency and creativity have also had a huge impact. You only have to look around the Centre to see evidence of that, but a warning, don't stand still for too long or she will redecorate you too! Valda Tucker adds her own special touch of good humour, efficiency and grace. The teamwork developed by both women facilitates the smooth running of the Centre and allows us to travel as the need arises, leaving everything in their capable hands.

Sylvia Kanavaros, now an ex counsellor, has brought new life to the Centre by producing and sharing with us her two beautiful sons, our fourth and fifth babies. Rick Taylor, Board Chair, and his wife Michelle produced our first three babies, Nina Olle; another Board Member is about to produce her first child to grace the Centre, soon after to be followed by Cath Maybury's latest contribution.

Those who support the Centre as very active Board Members, in practical ways such as volunteering, fund raising, donating, spreading the word, and many other important activities, all add to the heart warming memories that help to sustain us as we create a circle of care.

We share each other's joys, sadnesses, struggles and triumphs, making and sharing memories that are the stuff of life. These memories are treasured, magic indeed. We feel blessed to have enjoyed working with so many wonderful human beings – colleagues, bereaved children, and their families. And it's not over yet!

We'll end with a poem.

Life is a process,  
a moving tapestry of experiences.  
Of beginnings and endings...  
Joy and laughter, tears and sadness...  
Fears and uncertainties, hurt and anger...  
Guilt and forgiveness...  
The writing of a book of memories...  
a passionate gestalt.



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



**Rick Taylor**

Hi everyone and welcome to the fifth edition of 'Friends Indeed' – our newsletter.

The National Centre for Childhood Grief, 'A Friend's Place' provides

free individual and group counselling for bereaved children, young people and their families.

Our philosophy is based on 4 principles:

1. Grief is a natural response to death; it is not a mental illness.
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 is 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.

We are supported by a small team of loyal and generous people and we are all really grateful for their support. The money you provide is fantastic and really makes a difference. As important, is the message that the wider village helps care and supports those most in need, and that is a very powerful and motivating message.

Thank you; **Third Link, State Street, Macquarie Group Foundation, The Caledonia Foundation**, and many individuals who donate their time and money to support grieving kids.

Thanks also to Valda and Ella, who ensure that our whole operation runs smoothly and efficiently and in particular to Ella who has spent so much of her time compiling this newsletter. Special thanks to Nina for her professional editing skills whilst on maternity leave.

*Richard M. Taylor*

## UPDATE



**Ella Bullen**

*Co-ordinator of Counselling Services*

I joined 'A Friend's Place' four years ago. As Co-ordinator of Counselling Services, a pivotal part of my job is to create a safe and warm environment where counsellors feel protected and cherished, enabling them to utilise their excellent skills with compassionate

understanding whilst helping all clients to have their emotional needs met.

My desire is for everyone who walks through the door to feel as if 'A Friend's Place' is a home away from home. With the help of all our volunteers and staff I especially enjoy making sure the centre is organised and visually attractive to help calm the senses.

Many thanks to 'Watermark Search' for their kind donation of a much needed new foosball table.

We are very grateful to the members of 'Inner Wheel' for their generous donation of \$2,500.00.

Sincere appreciation to the Telstra Team who volunteered their time and energy to give the centre a much-needed facelift. The crafts/dining room has a whole new system to hold the multitude of craft materials we have for the children to use when creating memories of their loved one who has died.

In the front office we have a new merchandising display cabinet. This merchandise is now on sale and is also used to make 'made to order' "care packages" for bereaved children and families. A new bookcase in the balcony room is filled with resources, information and books for counsellors, volunteers and staff to ensure their continued learning and ongoing commitment to our "centre of excellence".

I am blessed and honoured to work with such wonderful caring people at 'A Friend's Place'.



**Team Photo**



# STAFF PROFILES

## Ada Stanton

*Co-ordinator of Creative Therapies and Research*



Ada finds her new role at the Centre exciting. She loves working in such a dynamic field which is enabling her to combine her Masters level research skills and considerable experience in this field with her love of art and other creative pursuits. In

her personal life she enjoys quilting, drawing, cooking, theatre and most creative art forms. Ada's family of origin is Italian and her mother, grandmothers and aunts all loved and were extremely proficient at handicrafts, especially sewing and lace work.

Ada is currently collecting, evaluating and collating a wide variety of resource materials to enable the Centre's counsellors to expand the strategies they use when working with bereaved children. Ada loves working with the dynamic team at the Centre who she describes as 'dedicated, caring professionals.' In turn, we all enjoy the way Ada contributes to the heart and soul of the workplace. She gives generously in every sense of the word and is an invaluable team member. In addition we all appreciate the fact that her husband Bernard and two adult daughters fully support her involvement.

## Liz Mann

*Bereavement Counsellor*



Liz grew up in Sydney, studied medicine at the University of Sydney and became a General Practitioner. She worked as a doctor for 20 years and enjoyed the challenge and fulfillment of caring for people's health. During this time she cared for many patients who were dying,

and also for their grieving families. Liz often felt frustrated that these bereaved people were hurting so badly, but medicine had little to offer them. She realised that no pill could fix a broken heart.

Liz heard about The Bereavement Care Centre and thought it might be helpful to attend a course and improve her counselling skills, particularly in relation to grieving people, never dreaming that she would love the work so much that she would end up switching careers.

Liz loves knowing that we offer an excellent service, which cares for the entire grieving family. She believes that the wealth of shared knowledge and experience that we have to draw on is exceptional and Liz enjoys being part of a very special team.

Liz says that while many stories and situations are extremely sad she believes that the privilege of being able to share in life and grief, with her clients is inspirational, not depressing. "There is much joy and hope mixed in with great sorrow."

Liz's personal life is equally fulfilling. Liz is married to Steve, has four children and absolutely loves being a mum. Liz's calm and insightful presence is an asset to the Centre – everyone loves working with her.

# PARENT STORIES

When I first stepped within 'A Friend's Place' I felt safe and reassured that this was somewhere that would truly be there for my three children, as well as supporting me.

My children's dad died 10 weeks after being diagnosed with aggressive small cell cancer in 2010. I knew that the best thing for me to do was to find somewhere that could help my children deal with life without their dad physically being here and that is exactly what they have learnt.

By going to 'A Friend's Place' my children have seen that they are not alone. There are many children who understand their sadness and who are there to support each other. That tears are there for sharing and don't need to be hidden and dad's name can be said freely.

'A Friend's Place' for me is a place of comfort, support and genuine love. My children and I have received support and non-judgment and the ability to express our grief.

I know 'A Friend's Place' will always be there for us and will always be part of our family. It is a place that has helped further our life journey and helped us see that memories last forever and that there is light on the other side.

– Rebecca Monaghan





# PARENT STORIES

I/we, first came into contact with 'A Friend's Place', in June 2001.

My husband Warren died suddenly, with no warning on the 17th June 2001. I was 37 at the time and our son Reece was 6.



Those first few days, weeks, okay even months were foggy, frightening, surreal, confusing and isolating. People surround you with meals and kind thoughts and condolences but when they leave, which they do – they have to – you are left alone.

I was a widow with a young child being told, "It will be alright". It certainly did not feel like it ever would be all right again, at least back then it didn't.

But, eventually it was and it is.

I contacted 'A Friend's Place' within days of Warren's death. To be honest I contacted several grief counsellors and they were the only ones who returned my call. That still amazes me to this day, some nearly 13 years later.

They helped me put some perspective into the chaos we were caught in – between organising a funeral, dealing with the Police, The Coroners Court, family, finances and a son whose father just died – they helped guide me with simple honesty and support.

Reece and I maintained an association with 'A Friend's Place' for many years, about 8 years. Reece joined the Centre's group sessions and I joined the parents on my favourite spot on the lounge – I had been there so long I viewed it as an entitlement!!

The support is in so many forms – individual counselling sessions, groups sessions, boys and girls weekends away, simple phone calls or emails.

We still go back every year to the 'End of Year Party' and it is a little like "going home". The warmth, love and respect the volunteers have at the Centre for all the children and their parent is abundant.

Today, many years on, both my son and I are okay. We still get sad, we still remember what happened, but we both also realise that life does follow death. 'A Friend's Place' certainly helped us believe it, they helped us move forward.

And for that, we will always be grateful.

– Chris and Reece Senior

# HELPING YOU HELP THEM

## THREE 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.

### THE MAGIC OF MEMORIES BOOK & CD

Book by Dianne McKissock OAM

Dianne's stories, based around real life experiences, have appeal and therapeutic value for people of all ages and many different cultures. They inspire hope, and affirm the power of loving relationships and caring communities.

The stories are designed to facilitate discussions between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, counsellors and their clients, teachers and their students, or for personal development and understanding.

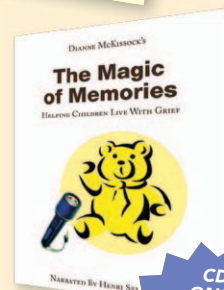
CD narrated by Henri Szeps OAM

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



NEW  
RELEASE

BOOK  
ONLY  
**\$25**  
PLUS P+H



CD  
ONLY  
**\$30**  
PLUS P+H



ONLY  
**\$30<sup>80</sup>**  
PLUS P+H

### THE GRIEF OF OUR CHILDREN

By Dianne McKissock OAM

When children grieve, their pain, curiosity and directness can force a confrontation of reality that we may prefer to deny. How can we provide answers to questions that we ourselves dare not formulate?

## ORDER NOW

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

[www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

Ph: 1300 654 556

Email: [afriendsplace@me.com](mailto:afriendsplace@me.com)

# Remembering Hearts®

Peter Ryan – RedCommunication.com

The inaugural *Remembering Hearts®* Day was held on a crisp Autumn evening at Eden Gardens in Sydney and the single most resonant and unifying connection to emerge from that encounter was that – no matter what background, socio-economic demographic, ethnic origin, creed, geography or lifestyle – every single person among us has felt the loss of someone important to us. In remembering how special people have left lasting memories and helped to shape our lives it was brought home to each of us how magnified this impact must be for children. It is our hope that by sharing *Remembering Hearts®* Day as an annual event that marks a special moment and a special way of honouring the memory of those people who are still to this day important to us, we will strive even more to help children all over Australia blossom beyond their grief.



Congratulations on a wonderful event on Saturday night – you put so much thought into everything and it went so smoothly it was lovely.

– Laurie Taylor (x child client)

We very much enjoyed the *Remembering Hearts* function.

Thanks.

– Glen

Raja and I enjoyed being part of such an amazing night. Please let us know if you need us in anyway to help this wonderful project reach its fruition.

– Anthea

Thank you for a great night at the fundraiser! I had a really enjoyable night and I'm excited about the future for NCCG. Thank you for everything you put into the night to make it such a success.

– Nick Backo

Saturday night was just wonderful. You are blessed to work with such beautiful, caring, willing people. I am now and forever will be a supporter of this wonderful charity. Thank you!

– Natalie O'Brien

Accounts, FMP Marketing ”



## STOP PRESS



Nina Olle (Board Member) and her husband Craig Bennett gave birth to a baby son – George Andrew – on Thursday the 11th April 2013. Congratulations Nina and Craig from everyone involved with the NCCG, and a warm welcome to George.

## SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 12th October, 2013

*Remembering Hearts®*

Twilight Picnic

Be part of history when we unveil our new yearly event; a ceremony involving a unique new concept to symbolize the memory of someone special to us who has died. Guests will be invited to participate in this very special ceremony to launch *Remembering Hearts®*. This ceremony promises to be a passionate, sentimental and a fun way for children and adults to remember our loved ones who have died.

All welcome, picnic boxes will be available for purchase or families can bring their own. This will be a glass and alcohol free event.

For more information contact 1300 654 556 or visit [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

When: Saturday 12 October 2013,  
5 pm to 7 pm at Pirrama Park in Pyrmont.  
Details to be confirmed.





# Girls Weekend

Valda Tucker

I was invited to attend 'A Friend's Place' residential weekend for girls who have had a parent die. I had been working for the NCCG for 2 years as Officer Manager, but this was the first time that I spent time with the children.

The venue was beautiful and very peaceful I was delighted to see how the older girls took care of the younger ones and see how all the different personalities added to the fun.

Over the two days there were a number of discussions around death and bereavement. The girls made a scrapbook page of their dead parent. It was an honour to be asked to accompany them on this weekend.

As a result of this weekend and also of attending the 'Working with Bereaved Children's' course run by Mal and Di I feel that I have a deeper understanding of grief and the impact it has on our lives and of the valuable work we do.



# Boys Weekend

Josh Patterson (aged 10)

My dad Steve died from cancer when I was four years old. I attended 'group' at 'A Friend's Place' for three years. In November 2012

I went on a boys camp run by 'A Friend's Place' at a fancy golf resort in Wyong NSW. Everyone had lots of fun doing things like swimming; playing golf and climbing mid air obstacle courses at a place called "Treetops".

Everyone had lots of fun, no matter what we did. We also watched two golfing movies, as we were at a golf resort. We all shared a room with one other person and the rooms were amazing and had a TV. The resort also had a buffet breakfast so you wouldn't go hungry. At golf we played 4 holes and had a great time. On the Sunday we had a memorial service for all our parents who died. Overall the camp was great and a privilege to be part of.



# 4 WAYS YOU CAN HELP

The NCCG is a registered charity and provides free services for bereaved children and their families. We are entirely 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.

## PLEASE DONATE TODAY TO CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE!

To join our monthly regular-giving program or to make a one-off donation via ezonebit:

visit [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au) and click on the "donate" button.  
OR email: [afriendsplace@me.com](mailto:afriendsplace@me.com)  
OR call us on 1300 654 556

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



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