

# FR*ENDS* INDEED

National Centre for Childhood Grief • Newsletter



National Centre  
For Childhood Grief

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

## Transitions

Mal And Dianne Mckissock – Clinical Directors

Anyone old enough to read this editorial will already have experienced many life transitions. Defined in the Collins dictionary as 'passage, crossing, change from one state to another', the word could easily evoke gentle images and subtle changes, like those we used to experience as the seasons changed from summer to autumn, autumn to winter, winter to spring and round the circle again. Those changes now seem to be less predictable and more chaotic, much more like the processes involved in bereavement – all over the shop. Some deaths are slow, timely and gentle, and do allow gentle transitions, while others are sudden, violent and traumatic, or far too early in the life cycle. Those transitions are understandably less gentle and more difficult.

Change from 'one state to another' in bereavement may mean that in an instant a wife becomes a widow, a husband a widower, a child an orphan, a younger or older sibling an only child, with no time to develop a psychological protective layer or to rehearse new roles. This 'passage' or 'crossing from one state to another' is not a transition of choice, meaning that the process of integrating a changed self into a changed world can be painfully long and complex. It is rare for any of us to be able to achieve this ultimate form of change without the help of understanding and supportive others.

Some transitions are by choice, others dictated by the passage of time and the inevitable changes that occur as part of the aging process. One such change is our proposed retirement, or semi retirement in January 2015. Because we are all sensitive to the potential negative impact of sudden change at 'A Friend's Place' we have been preparing the team and everyone involved at the Centre for the past two years. We want the hand over to be as gentle as possible, and to the right person, so that the service can change gradually into a 'shape' that will carry it into the next decade or so. Most of you already know that Liz Mann will become the new Clinical Director, supported by a great team of counsellors, support workers and office staff, all of them in turn supported by a great Board. We believe we will be leaving our 'baby' in good hands. The timing seems even more right because it will be the 21st birthday of 'The National Centre for Childhood Grief', known by most of you as 'A Friend's Place'. The Bereavement C.A.R.E. Centre, our adult service is of course much older.

At the end of this year we will leave you all with our vision for the future and will take with us countless precious memories of all the people whose lives we have shared. We consider ourselves fortunate indeed to have been able to work as a couple, and to enjoy work roles that have enabled us to express all that we are. In semi retirement, and later full retirement, we will continue to do all that we can to act as advocates for grieving children and their families.



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



## Richard Taylor

Hi everyone and welcome to another edition of our annual newsletter. Over the past twelve months we have continued to provide grief counselling for bereaved children, their families

and others who care for them. The counselling is provided both on an individual basis when the trauma is recent, and later, for some, in groups of about ten bereaved children. Usually, the children are aged between 4 -16 years, have suffered the death of one or both parents, a sibling, grandparent or best friend, and tend to come to us for about three years after parental death. However, there are no rules with grief and we provide our services to the children for as long as needed. During the past twelve months we were able to launch Remembering Hearts. This event, to be held in October each year, was a wonderful way to remember a loved one who has died. The highlight for me was being

able to place a paper heart on our beautiful harbour and think about those that I miss as I watched the heart slowly dissolve. Darren Percival provided songs of love and laughter, special moments for everyone. I'm really looking forward to this year's event on 11th October at Pirrama Park, Pyrmont.

We also enjoyed another intake of volunteer workers through our Spring school and thank you to our sponsors for helping to fund that training program. This year again we have enjoyed compassionate support from the teams at Macquarie Bank, Woolworths, Caledonia Foundation, Third Link Investment Managers, State Street Bank, Australian Catholic University and Turks Legal. We are also lucky to receive money and time from many individuals. Several of our team enjoyed going out to Woolworths' head office to help raise awareness and funds and talking to their staff about our work.

Thanks once again to all our counsellors. We have an amazing team who are able to provide help and support for so many bereaved children. They are able to teach the children how to manage and live with grief in their lives, surely one of the most painful things that can happen to you as a young child. Bereavement counsellors need special skills that we as a charitable organisation, and the wider community, greatly appreciate.

## NEW BOARD MEMBER



## Dr Liz Mann

Liz studied medicine at Sydney University and worked as a GP in Sydney for 20 years. Over these years, she increasingly

became interested in Palliative Care, and in particular, grief and bereavement.

Having heard about the Bereavement CARE Centre, and the National Centre for Childhood Grief, Liz decided to attend one of the training courses run at the Centre. As a result of this, she decided that she wanted to retrain as a bereavement counsellor. This involved completing both her general counselling training at University, and then her specialist bereavement training at the Centre and has now been working as a bereavement counsellor for several years. This involves working individually with adults and children, as well as doing group work with bereaved children.

Liz has recently joined the Board of the National Centre for Childhood Grief, to participate more fully in the ongoing running of the Centre.

## 'A FRIEND'S PLACE' CHARITY AMBASSADOR



## Darren Percival

Darren Percival's stage presence and charm, coupled with his warm and powerful voice, mesmerizes audiences everywhere. A graduate from a Sydney performing arts centre, Darren worked for a decade with jazz icon James Morrison, released several solo albums, and worked as a backing vocalist for many well-known Australian artists.

Best known these days for his phenomenal, soul stirring performances on the first season of 'The Voice' where Keith Urban coached Darren, he became the 2012 runner up. His album 'Happy Home' debuted at number 3 on the ARIA chart, followed by a sell out national tour. Darren lives in Queensland with his wife Amanda and two young children.

Few artists paint with sound, but Darren Percival has been described as someone who is 'art for the ears'. We are delighted to have him as an Ambassador for 'A Friend's Place' (National Centre for Childhood Grief) and as a special performer at our annual event - 'Remembering Hearts'.



## RECENT BOOK LAUNCH



***A heartwarming,  
positive book  
for the child  
in all of us ...***

Written by Dianne McKissock OAM  
Illustrated by Phoebe Bakker

***Hardcover, full colour and  
a massive 30x30cm in size!  
Includes an audio CD.***

# The Magic of Memories

*A Bedtime Story*

This timeless and magical story with its touchingly beautiful illustrations has been developed through the collaborative relationship of two creative women – Dianne McKissock and Phoebe Bakker. *The Magic of Memories* transcends barriers of age, race and belief systems, transporting the reader into a world that affirms the enduring and uplifting power of special moments of connection.



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



## HEART FELT THANKS

At our traditional end of year ceremony in November 2013, we sadly farewelled and warmly thanked Henri Szepts OAM for his outstanding contribution to 'A Friend's Place' and as a flow on, to the well being of bereaved children and their families. Henri fulfilled many roles in his long association with us, including Board Member, Ambassador, and MC at various fund raising events. He willingly contributed his time and skill in bringing to life five of Di McKissock's stories from 'The Magic of Memories' trilogy. Every time any of us listen to the CD, his rich and animated voice will ensure that his contributions will always be part of the magical memories we all create and re live at the Centre – an important and valued part of our history. Thank you Henri – from the bottom of our hearts.

## CLINICAL CORNER

### Dr. Liz Mann

I was fortunate to attend the inaugural National Conference put on by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement from 26th-28th March 2014 in Melbourne. The theme for the conference was the now familiar struggle 'Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice'.

The conference provided a great opportunity to hear up to date presentations from many well respected speakers of both Australian and international renown, catch up with colleagues, and meet new people.

One of the highlights for me was hearing Dr. William Worden speak about his Harvard child bereavement study and how that informs our work with grieving children. A point that particularly resonated with me was reinforcement of our understanding that bereaved children need consistent discipline and a regular, stable routine.

I also particularly enjoyed presentations by two of our own counsellors – Vera Russell and Peter Coupland – who are fittingly involved in, and were presenting, valuable academic studies that have great relevance to our clinical work.

Overall, the conference emphasised the value and importance of all the work we currently do at 'A Friend's Place' and inspired me to continue to strive to ensure that everyone who attends the Centre will always receive the best possible care.

**'A Friend's Place' is thrilled to share with you 2 of our promotional videos**

The latest video was funded through a grant from the St George Foundation and made by Trapdoor Productions it features children who attend groups at the Centre. In only a couple of minutes it manages to take the viewer on an unexpected, powerful journey.

Check it out at:

<http://youtu.be/q8Zw21m18x4>

<http://youtu.be/R0pUF5foF7o>





# Remembering Hearts® 2013

The 1st annual 'Remembering Hearts' twilight picnic on Saturday 12th October 2013 was a wonderful evening out for the whole family, with a focus on acknowledging grief and remembering and honouring loved ones who have died. Families arrived with blankets, chairs and picnic baskets to enjoy a beautiful evening of special entertainment on Sydney Harbour.

We were delighted to have had the talented and very entertaining Darren Percival (The Voice runner up 2012) join us to perform. Darren had us all smiling and singing and even doing the hokey pokey! As our Ambassador, we are delighted Darren will be performing again this year.

An incredibly moving, personal ceremony was hosted by 'A Friend's Place' (National Centre for Childhood Grief), enabling each guest to write the name of a loved person on a dissolving paper heart and release it into beautiful Sydney Harbour.

We were delighted to have over 300 guests at our 2013 event and hope to have around 500 people attend this year's event, which will be held on Saturday 11th October

Our very special thanks go to all our volunteers, Darren Percival, our event organiser Nikki Hunt, and our MC Rachael McLennon.



The National Centre for Childhood Grief  
presents

## Remembering Hearts®

Saturday October 11, 2014

5pm to 7pm

Pirrama Park, 22 Pirrama Road, Pyrmont

Grab the picnic blanket and come and take in the harbour views at our annual event! Join us for our symbolic and uplifting *Remembering Hearts®* ceremony to remember those we love who have died. Guests will have the opportunity to purchase environmentally friendly, water soluble *Remembering Hearts®* paper hearts on which they can write names of, and personal messages to, someone they love who has died. These will be released into the harbour, acknowledging that death does not end our relationships with people we love.

Our newest ambassador, 'The Voice' sensation **DARREN PERCIVAL** will be our guest artist.

Food and drinks will be available at the venue (note this is a glass & alcohol free event)

*Remembering Hearts®* packs will also be on sale from the Centre throughout the year. If you would like to hold this event in your area simultaneously, or for more information phone 1300 654 556 or visit [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au)

To register and obtain your free tickets go to:

[www.eventbrite.com.au/e/remembering-hearts-day-tickets-10305216179](http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/remembering-hearts-day-tickets-10305216179)



# SIOBHAN'S STORY

'A Friend's Place' – Wow what can I say. This place has changed my life forever. Without this amazing, welcoming place I wouldn't be the person I am today, without this place I would be scared to be different, I wouldn't have had the confidence to move schools, to make new friends and to pursue my dancing. The fortnightly support group has shaped me and changed me and I would never be able to show or repay my gratitude enough.

Hi my name is Siobhan I am 16 and have been part of this beautiful place for 11 years now. My mother Joan died when I was 3 years old from breast cancer. Growing up without a mother is hard but 'A Friend's Place' taught me that she is always with me in my heart and actions. Being a young girl without a mother was one of the most challenging things but with the love and support of my dad I have been able to become the person I am today. It has been hard but I have made it!

The support group taught me some of the most amazing lessons of my life, to always be you, to understand others, and most importantly, to never be embarrassed about a parent dying. This group offers you the tools to understand what grief is and how it can eventually make you stronger. My mum's death was the hardest thing I have ever had to go through but, after all, it has made me a stronger and better person. I can understand how to help other people to understand and manage their grief.

I thank Mal and Di for all the amazing time and effort they have put into the center and without you both I do not know what I would do or how I would function today. The time, money and effort you put into us and the center is the most generous thing that a person could do. I would also like to thank all the counsellors for all their love and support and always being there when we need them. These amazing people give their time and love to

help all of our families and us and ask nothing for it in return. That is the most amazing quality these people have.

To all the young and old children who have had a parent die, I really understand how hard it is and the fear that you will never be able to control the grief that goes with it. I am not saying that it just goes away but over time you understand that the parent that you have lost wants you to live a happy and healthy life and that they will always be there for you in your heart, soul and memory and that you will never forget them no matter what. I also want you all to know that I am here for you all no matter what, if you want to chat or just sit in silence and have someone that understands, I will be there. Maybe you know it now or have realized it since you have left or haven't quite understood it yet, but 'A Friend's Place' is such an amazing place and understanding what you get there is something you should never take for granted. I didn't realise till I left how much I love the people from the group and how much they have improved my life for the better and made me the person I am and I am thankful for that everyday.

But the most important thing and most important support system, is your living parent or guardian. They are amazing! Our parents or guardians are the ones who have to take care of our siblings, and themselves, as well as us while working and taking us to school, sports and friends places and even group. I am so thankful to my dad for doing this for me. Without him I would not be able to function. Always remember how much your parent does for you and always be appreciative of what your living parent does without complaints, because they love you. Again, I just want to say a huge thank you to Mal and Di and the Team. You guys have been there for me no matter what and I will never be able to show you enough appreciation. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.

## "TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIVING"

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$2.00

### THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

- 1 Monthly "direct debit". Decide the amount you wish to pledge and you can join or cancel at any time. Visit [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au) and click on the 'donate online' button.
- 2 To make a one-off donation our bank account details are:  
A/c name: NCCG: BSB 032524: A/C 152908
- 3 You can also help by providing craft materials or much needed equipment there is a wish list on our website [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au), under "How Can I Help" – "By Donating Goods" e.g. The Centre would love a new tennis table.

HELP CHANGE  
A CHILD'S LIFE  
DONATE TODAY!

- 4 The National Centre for Childhood Grief is now registered with [www.everydayhero.com.au](http://www.everydayhero.com.au) nominate us as your charity to fundraise for e.g. City to Surf, the Sydney Half Marathon or any number of activities nationally.

- 5 Call 1300 654-556 if you wish to make a donation from your credit card (Visa or MasterCard).



National Centre For Childhood Grief

ABN 79 098 660 130





# Would you like to know more about working with Bereaved Children?

Our next "Working with Bereaved Children" Course will be held October 22-29 2014.



Courses are held at the National Centre for Childhood Grief house at Denistone East, Sydney.

This 6 day course, prepares care giving adults to help children

understand death as a part of life and will provide skills in facilitating age appropriate expressions of grief in children who have had someone close to them die. This course will also increase the confidence of participants in extrapolating from bereavement focused concepts and skills in order to facilitate children's grief resulting from other losses.

Your investment in this course is \$1,663.00 and includes a DVD for pre-course viewing, 2 course books and a CD, lunch and snacks will be provided daily.

For more information and an application form go to our website [www.bereavementcare.com.au](http://www.bereavementcare.com.au) and click on courses.



## JACK'S STORY

I first encountered 'A Friend's Place' by way of recommendation from my school counsellor. I attended sessions with her every Friday at lunchtime, to try to help me ease into my new school. My past experiences with schools in Singapore did not help with my situation, as other kids, or at least most, did not meet me with the sympathy I needed after my mother's death. Counsellors there were strangely varied, ranging from a no-nonsense disciplinarian, who told me that a better posture and good exercise would make me feel better, to an affectionate, attentive listener, who provided me with nothing but a release. My school counsellor told me that 'A Friend's Place' provided support to another bereaved family at the school, and that they had a group where grieving children could attend, meet each other and learn to live with grief. What followed was having individual sessions with a counsellor, and then, after much convincing from my Dad, attending the group and meeting other kids who visit the centre.

This obviously was a big experience for me, as I had never met another kid who whose parent had died, but I was surprised to find that none of them had any signs or signals of being without a parent. In fact, their lack of immaturity and compulsion set them apart from any other kid I had met. Each listened quietly, obeyed the rules not because of fear of punishment but because of moral obligation, and supplied a smart and considerate response. The counsellors there aided, directed, taught and guided everyone on coping with grief, wrong-doings in the media, schools and general assumptions by unknowing people, and tackling events such as birthdays, mother's days and father's days, and spontaneous reminders of a life before the death. No strategy, or support, was overly simple, basic or a cop-out. They provided us with every tool available to them to make life a bit more bearable. The most valuable lesson I've been taught is that grief never truly leaves us, and as we grow older, we learn to accept it and live with it.

The friends I made the first year here have graduated, and I wonder if I should as well. As the average age in my group lowers, I count my days until I truly cannot provide anything else to the group, and it cannot provide anything more to me. It is made clear that it is important to graduate when ready, as you cannot come to the group simply to see friends. However fun or engaging, group is a very serious occasion. 'A Friend's Place' is the first place I have encountered that is truly focused, dedicated and educated on the support and guidance of my grief. When I leave the group, my bond with it will not be broken, as I hope to stay in touch with friends made there, and continue to support it in every way I can. It is important that the place remains, as this is an area, which is often forgotten, overlooked, and downplayed. And as 'A Friend's Place' grows and develops, I hope its' outreach grows to help others in their time of need.





I have met so many amazing people, from Ella and Valda, Liz, Ada and Mal & Di and of course the board. Each person as dedicated as the last, very inspirational.

My daughter thoroughly enjoyed her first group session. Thanks to all who make our connections with 'A Friend's Place' so special.

The service you offer really touches my heart and I can't tell you how much of a difference it makes during a most difficult time.... a HUGE thank you.

I want to say how impressed I am with the passion, enthusiasm and wonderful work you and the family/team at 'A Friend's Place' have achieved.

## BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO

We are delighted to have linked up with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Kingston Region California USA.

BFO provides compassionate non-denominational mutual aid support for families and individuals who have suffered the death of a significant person. Through BFO's affiliates, we offer support after the death of an infant, a child, an adult child, a parent, a brother or a sister, an adult sibling, a grandchild or a spouse.

Anyone wishing to know more about the range of services BFO offer can contact them on: [bfo@kingston.net](mailto:bfo@kingston.net) or [www.bfo-kingston.ca](http://www.bfo-kingston.ca)

We will have more details of their organisation in our next Newsletter.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

Our founders and Clinical Directors, Mal and Dianne McKissock attended a small, evening reception at Government House Canberra on the 24th of April to meet the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. They briefly discussed their mutual interest in the needs of bereaved children and plans for future events.



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Nikki Hunt, our events organiser, welcomed the arrival of her second son Jasper Thomas, brother for Ethan on 28/3/14.

~ • ~

George, son of our Board member Nina Olle, celebrated his first birthday in April.

## FEEDBACK ON RECENT SERVICE EVALUATIONS

The National Centre for Childhood Grief would like to thank all those parents and children who participated in their National Centre for Childhood Grief Survey in January, 2014. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to how the Centre is functioning and to the services provided.

The children stated that they found help managing their grief and would recommend the Centre to anyone dealing with grief. Counselling appeared to make things go easier at home and at school. Those children who had attended adventure camps found their experience to be fun, special, memorable and therapeutic. They found the experience at the Centre empowering.

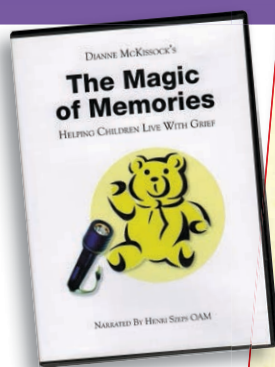
The adults attending the Centre found their counsellors and staff to be approachable, helpful, friendly and supportive. Adults whose children attended groups stated that they had experienced their children's behaviour change in positive ways as they learned to live with their grief and saw that they were not alone. They reported that their children were more settled and understood that their feelings were ok.

The results of the survey have shown that the Centre is providing the essential services required by bereaved families.

**Ada Stanton** – Research Officer and Creative Therapies Co-ordinator







## The Magic of Memories

Dianne McKissock

### BOOK & CD

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.

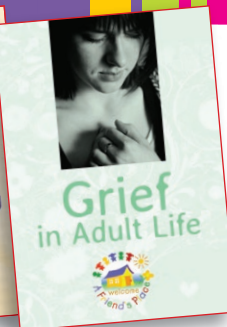
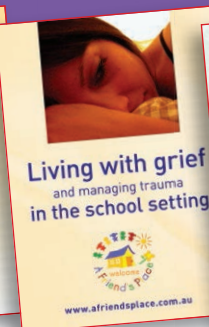
The book finishes with a series of questions for group discussion, or for deepening self awareness. It is a valuable resource not only for grieving families and those who support them, but for inclusion in training sessions for professionals involved in the care of grieving people of all ages – doctors, nurses, teachers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers and clergy.

### Kid's Grief

*A handbook for group leaders*

Dianne McKissock OAM

This handbook is designed as a resource for people involved in palliative care services, and for others involved in the care of the dying and bereaved. It will become a valuable resource for those who are currently leading, or planning to lead, support groups for bereaved children.



**Grieving Children : Guidelines for adults who care**  
**Living with grief and managing trauma**  
**in the school setting**  
**Grief in Adult Life**  
*Pamphlets*



## Care Packages now available

**Packages are made to order**

**Send something that lasts –**  
**information, comfort and nurture**  
**in a package**



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**Watch out for your complimentary Pets Magazine from Universal Magazines available at our Remember Hearts twilight picnic. And a big thank you for our advertising space in their next issue.**

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**Pets** magazine



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