



Bo's Place

## MISSION

Bo's Place exists to enhance the lives of those who have experienced the death of a loved one.

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# Healing Hearts

Where Children are Heard and Hearts are Healed

Fall 2011

## BACK TO SCHOOL: Grief in the Classroom

At the beginning of each school year, we invite the children and teens enrolled in the ongoing grief support groups to share with one another the struggles they face at school regarding their grief journey. We tell them the information they offer will be shared with school personnel that attend the Good Grief for Kids workshops held at Bo's Place. They love the fact that they get the chance to educate their teachers and school officials.

### What Children and Teens Want from their Schools

Kids tell us that they want the death of their family member to be recognized at school but in a private way. They appreciate caring staff who reach out to them sincerely, quietly and confidentially. Children tell us they want to talk to school counselors, principals and social workers. Several children and teens share that they experience support and comfort in very meaningful ways from various school staff members.

Some appreciate the distraction that school work provides from their grief, and others are spurred on by their tragic life events and make a concerted effort to achieve and do well academically. Teens share that their circle of friends becomes even more important to them, and the chance to socialize with their friends at school provides a great deal of comfort, especially when home can be a place of such sorrow.

### What Children and Teens Don't Want from their Schools

Children and teens do not want increased attention because of the death of their family member. Those that gain popularity or are recognized because of their family's tragedy share that this "fame" is hurtful. Some say that they would be willing to talk with a teacher or other staff member but are unsure who they can trust because they know that school personnel gossip. More than one child shares the experience of having talked privately to a school staff member about their family member's death, and learning their conversation was "leaked" not only to other school staff but to students. That is hurtful. Several children share stories of being teased and made fun of because a family member died.

### What Schools Can Do

Schools can support bereaved students and their families by providing structure and routine, a safe person for a child to talk to when the need arises and a safe place for that conversation. Children and teens will confide in an adult they trust, which may be a school counselor or other school staff member. Children will turn to someone they have a relationship with, which may be a favorite teacher, school nurse, coach or club sponsor. Teachers can prepare their classes for a child's return following the death of a family member by giving their students guidance regarding what is okay to say and not to say to their bereaved classmate. Schools can create a plan with the bereaved child and her parent(s) that addresses the child's academic and emotional needs so that she can be successful at school. School success enhances a child's self-esteem and sense of competency, two qualities often negatively impacted by grief.

**Elizabeth Cobb, L.P.C., L.M.F.T**

*Ongoing Group Coordinator*



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## Letter from Mary Beth

Next time you are at Bo's Place, please note the newest addition to our landscape – a beautiful expansion of the flower bed surrounding the tree given in honor of Robin Bush and new plantings in the memory garden. In addition, we have three new benches to enhance both areas.

John Mosele, a senior at Strake Jesuit, contacted us last fall about wanting to do something special for Bo's Place for his Eagle Scout Award. He is a member of Troop 55 out of St. John the Divine Episcopal Church. He and his family came to Bo's Place nine years ago when his sister, Julia, died in a tragic car accident. He shared with me that without the Bo's Place community, he really was not sure how his family would have dealt with the loss of his sister. He wanted to give something back to Bo's Place because of the support Bo's Place provided his family in their time of need.

John spent several months working on just the perfect plan – from the very beginning, he knew that he wanted to create a special, peaceful spot for families to gather. Once we had agreed upon a location that seemed to fit with his vision, he went to work developing his plan. He researched a variety of benches. John wanted benches that would continue to look beautiful as they weathered. He consulted a master gardener to make sure he knew how to properly prepare the beds and that his plant selections would work for the space where the beds are located. John included rosemary for the fragrance and because it is a symbol of remembrance and friendship. He included plants that attract butterflies as they are a symbol of rebirth and new life.

Once he had his plans finalized, he raised \$4,000 to fund the project, personally negotiated with several vendors to get discounts and donations for his materials and supplies. Lowes gave him a 20% discount on materials and supplies. All the plants were donated by Thompson-Hanson Wholesale Gardens in Bellaire. Cowboys Soils provided a discount on the bedding soil and provided the mulch free of charge. John also recruited 10-15 volunteers to come to Bo's Place for the official work days.

If you had been here on the Friday and Saturday work days, you would have seen the most industrious group of young men I have ever witnessed. From 5th graders to seniors in high school, they WORKED HARD! They were covered in sweat, soil and mulch residue and would not have stopped for food and drink if the adults on hand had not made them! Talk about efficiency – they worked together as a team from start to finish. When they packed up to go, everything was spotless and Bo's Place was left with a little piece of Texas heaven - a special little spot for families who come to Bo's Place to sit and rest.

When I asked John if he was pleased with the results, he said, "The important question is whether YOU are pleased." I told him his efforts far exceeded anything I had envisioned – it was simply beautiful. He beamed at me and said it exceeded his expectations as well. What a wonderful thing this young man did to honor the memory of his sister and to give back to Bo's Place, a place that had been a support to him and his family in their time of need.

**Mary Beth Staine**  
*Executive Director*



# Visit the National Archive of Grief Support Studies

The National Archive of Grief Support Studies provided by Bo's Place is a database of bibliographical information and summaries of articles selected for their relevance to grief and bereavement. The articles summarized are selected from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals and highlight key concepts as well as provide a brief statement of implications for service providers. Below is one of the summaries from the 2010 review of articles:



## Memory Keepers: a Narrative Study on Siblings Never Known

**Authors:** Diane Kempson and Vicki Murdock

**Source:** Death Studies: 2010, 34(8), pp. 738-756.

**Summary:** The authors of this article conducted a quantitative study that explored, through retrospective narratives, the experiences of adults who had a deceased sibling that they had never known, due to the death of the sibling shortly after birth. Fifteen participants were interviewed with semi-structured interviews and three main themes were identified. The first theme, memory keeping and continuing bonds, reflected the fact that the participants became keepers of the memories communicated by other family members and often established mental and emotional relationships with the sibling they had never known. The second theme, that of personal but unacknowledged loss, reflected the fact that many of the participants felt a profound sense of loss at never knowing the deceased sibling, but found that others did not acknowledge or validate this loss. The third theme, that of meaning-making, reflected the fact that most of the participants engaged in a lifelong effort to make sense of the sibling's death in relation to their own lives. The majority of the participants questioned how their lives would have been different if the sibling had lived, and felt that the death influenced their relationships with others. Many participants stated that their choice of career was influenced by the experience of having a sibling who died shortly after birth.

**Service Provider Implications:** This study highlights the fact that individuals who have experienced the death of a sibling at or near birth may suffer from unacknowledged or disenfranchised grief. The authors highlight the profound, long-term nature of the grief experience and the importance of validation of the loss.

**Key words:** sibling death, continuing bonds, meaning-making

To view other articles reviewed by the NAGSS Committee, visit NAGSS at [www.bosplace.org/nagss](http://www.bosplace.org/nagss)



## Bo's Place Grief Support Group Programs

Trained volunteers supervised by licensed mental health professionals on the Bo's Place staff facilitate all of our grief support groups. All Bo's Place support groups are offered at no charge to participants. Please contact Bo's Place for additional information or to register for a group at 713-942-8339 or email [info@bosplace.org](mailto:info@bosplace.org). Our staff clinicians can also offer referrals to grief-related community resources in the greater Houston area and throughout the United States.

### FAMILY GROUPS

**ONGOING:** Meets twice a month for two hours on weekday evenings or Sunday afternoons. There is also a group for adult Spanish-speaking family members.

**LIGHT:** Time-limited group for families who have experienced the unexpected or sudden death of a family member. Meets weekly on weekday evenings.

**LITTLE FRIENDS:** Time-limited group for three and four year olds and a parent/guardian. Meets weekly on weekday mornings.

### ADULT GROUPS

**PREGNANCY LOSS:** Time-limited group for women who have experienced the perinatal death of a child. Meets on weekday afternoons.

**ADULT DAYTIME:** A group for any adult who has experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. Meets during lunch.

**YOUNG ADULTS:** For young adults, ages 18-30, who have experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. This ongoing group meets twice a month on a weekday evening.

# SUMMER DAZE at BO'S PLACE

For the second year, Bo's Place joined forces with HGOco, Houston Grand Opera's outreach group, and the Society for Performing Arts to provide a very special summer grief program – Summer Daze at Bo's Place. Open to children currently enrolled in a grief support group at Bo's Place, Summer Daze was a hit for all who attended.

Grief work can take many forms. For Summer Daze, it incorporated challenges like a rock wall, music and dance (including hip hop!), performing and video making, eating popsicles and watermelon and much more. The theme for Summer Daze 2011 was "Despite a great sadness in one's life, you can still have a happy life!" Each of the six sessions at Summer Daze focused on specific grief work that aids a child's progress along their grief journey:

- Day One:** Experiencing Fun and Challenges
- Day Two:** Telling Your Story
- Day Three:** Awareness of the Uncomfortable Elements of My Grief Journey
- Day Four:** Awareness of the Good Things in My Life
- Day Five:** Incorporating Unhappy and Happy
- Day Six:** Memorializing and Moving On – Having a Happy Life

The proof of success is in the smiles on the faces of the children – yes, you can experience the joy of summer days despite bearing a great sadness in your heart.

Special thanks to HGOco and SPA's phenomenal artists and to the many, many volunteers who helped make Summer Daze a success. And, a big thank you to Bo's Buddies, our young professional group, who underwrote the rock wall challenge.

# Lights, Camera, A



*My favorite thing about Summer Daze is seeing my kids happy. - Dad*



*My da a day f out c*

# Action!

Love the ROCK WALL!!!  
- Summer Daze Participant



daughter wouldn't miss  
for fear she would miss  
on all the fun. - Mom

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

### Ethics: A Search for Light in the Shadows – A Story's Final Chapter

Thursday, October 6, 2011 • 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Presented by *Karen Magee, MA, LMFT, LPC, Jungian Analyst*



Using lecture, film, individual and group exercises, as well as discussion, Karen Magee will lead an ethical exploration that will focus on the story of one man's life approaching its final chapter. For this individual, an unexpected, unwanted invitation arrives. The response to this invitation changes the life of the protagonist, as well as the legacy he leaves behind. In this interactive training, participants will explore how some individuals and situations are difficult to respond to respectfully and ethically. A clinician's own personal struggles, many times unconscious and unacknowledged, prevent the clinician from being able to see a situation clearly and without preconceived judgment. Participants will seek to better understand and accept their own stories and in the process will find that ethical principles emerge as guiding lights from within.

Pre-registration is required. Payment secures registration. Refunds are not available. Registration fee is \$30. CEUs available for an additional \$15 (L.P.C. and Social Work C.E.U. provider). For more information or to register, contact Valencia Buggs at [valencia@bosplace.org](mailto:valencia@bosplace.org) or 713-942-8339. Space is limited.

### Good Grief for Kids

Thursday & Friday, October 13 & 14, 2011 • 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Good Grief for Kids is a two-day workshop specifically designed for professionals who support children who have experienced the death of someone significant to them. Licensed mental health professionals from Bo's Place teach the basics of grief theory, discuss how to better understand the impact of a death and explore sudden and traumatic death experiences. Pre-registration is required. Payment secures registration. Early registration (on or before October 6, 2011) is \$110 (Thursday only) or \$175 (Thursday and Friday). Regular registration is \$125 (Thursday only) or \$200 (Thursday and Friday). Fees include a light breakfast at 8:30 a.m., handouts, activities, refreshments, and CEU credit. Lunch is not provided. For more information or to register contact Valencia Buggs at [valencia@bosplace.org](mailto:valencia@bosplace.org) or 713-942-8339.

### The Impact of Trauma and Loss on the Developing Child

Thursday, December 15, 2011 • 9:00 a.m. – noon

Presented by *Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.*



The development of a young child is profoundly influenced by experience. Experiences – good and bad – shape the organization of the brain. Trauma, loss, and the absence of essential developmental experiences required to express a fundamental potential of a child are pervasive problems in our culture. Various forms of neglect are possible and include splinter neglect, total global neglect and emotional or relational neglect. Chaos, threat and abnormal patterns of emotional, social, cognitive and physical interactions with young children lead to an array of brain-related problems. Presented by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., this presentation will review clinical work and research that can help us better understand developmental trauma, neglect, loss and the relational problems that arise as a result. An overview will be provided that suggests new directions for clinical practice, program development and policy.

Dr. Perry is the Senior Fellow of The ChildTrauma Academy, a not-for-profit organization based in Houston ([www.ChildTrauma.org](http://www.ChildTrauma.org)) and adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago. Over the last thirty years, Dr. Perry has been an active teacher, clinician and researcher in children's mental health and the neurosciences holding a variety of academic positions.

This training is provided free of charge thanks to the generosity of Dr. Perry and Bo's Place. Pre-registration is required as space is limited. CEUs are available (L.P.C. and Social Work C.E.U.). For more information or to register, contact Valencia Buggs at [valencia@bosplace.org](mailto:valencia@bosplace.org) or 713-942-8339.



# Bo's Place Volunteer Facilitators Provide Acceptance and Active Listening for the Bereaved

Did you know that Bo's Place has approximately 100 active volunteer facilitators at any given time assisting in the running of our grief support groups? Under the supervision of Bo's Place clinicians, our volunteer facilitators provide bereaved families with a safe, caring and supportive environment to navigate their own journey of grief and healing.



Celebrating our remarkable volunteers!

## To become a Volunteer Group Facilitator:

- Attend a volunteer information session with the Volunteer Coordinator at Bo's Place
- Complete and return the volunteer facilitator application, which includes giving consent for the required criminal background checks and signing the confidentiality agreement.
- Complete an individual interview prior to training
- Complete all six sessions of our facilitator training and three observations
- Make a one-year commitment to regular attendance and participation at the assigned group twice a month for the ongoing program or weekly for the LIGHT program;
- Complete a training evaluation form at the conclusion of the facilitator training.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Volunteer Facilitator, please contact Carla Bagalay, Volunteer Coordinator at 713-942-8339. Our next training class begins in January 2012. We hope you'll consider joining us.

## Make Bo's Place a Part of Your Thanksgiving Tradition

*Remember learning about the first Thanksgiving?*

*A special pageant at school and stovepipe pilgrim hats made of construction paper?*



As you begin to make your plans for Thanksgiving, families at Bo's Place are experiencing a very different first Thanksgiving. The first without Mom's pumpkin pie, big brother leading the football game, or Dad at the head of the table. Bo's Place creates a safe space where children and families help each other find a healthy path through grief after the death of someone in their family, a path that can be even harder to navigate during the holidays.

As you prepare for another season of family and thanksgiving, please include Bo's Place in your plans. Your financial support is what allows us to put our mission into action. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your gift, and for making the Bo's Place family a part of your family's Thanksgiving. For more information, contact Mary Beth Staine at [marybeth@bosplace.org](mailto:marybeth@bosplace.org) or go to [www.bosplace.org/donations/online](http://www.bosplace.org/donations/online).

## Facilitator Training Dinner Sponsorship

Bo's Place offers free-of-charge, grief support groups for children and families in the Greater Houston area. In order for our services to be free of charge, we depend largely on volunteer facilitators whom we provide more than 30 hours of classroom instruction on grief theory and facilitation. We offer trainings two times a year – in August/September and January/February.

Training is conducted in the Bo's Place Training Room and begins at 5:45 p.m. for six weeks. Our training groups consist largely of health professionals, business professionals, teachers and school counselors from diverse sections of the community. These generous and dedicated individuals are coming to training after a full day of work, direct from their hospitals, offices or schools. Our goal is to provide these volunteers with a light dinner at the beginning of training.

If you are interested in sponsoring one or more of our training dinners, please contact Carla Bagalay at [carla@bosplace.org](mailto:carla@bosplace.org). Bo's Place appreciates your consideration of providing a meal for our dedicated volunteer facilitators!



## Join Team Bo's Place!

The 2012 Chevron Houston Marathon is quickly approaching and it is not too late for YOU to join **Team Bo's Place!** Last year, our runners raised over \$50,000 to support grieving families in the Houston area, and we are thrilled to participate in the "Run for a Reason" program again this year.

Here's how you can make a difference:

- **Already running the Chevron Houston Marathon or Aramco Houston Half Marathon?** Consider fundraising for Bo's Place! Encourage family and friends to support you by supporting this great cause. It is quick and easy to set up a free fundraising website.
- **Still need a slot in the Chevron Houston Marathon or the Aramco Houston Half Marathon?** You can "Fundraise for Registration" and earn your slot by raising money for Bo's Place! We have limited space available, so contact us to secure your slot today.
- **Interested in the El Paso Corporation 5K?** Registration for the 5K opens on Thursday, September 15th, 2011. You can sign up to be on Team Bo's Place at that time, and you will also have the option to set up a fundraising page.
- **Not a runner and just want to have fun?** Please join us at our Hoopla Station on race day to cheer on all of the runners! And don't forget that you can still make a contribution to Team Bo's Place by making an online donation at [www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com](http://www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com).

We hope you will consider joining Team Bo's Place in 2012! All runners will receive a Team Bo's Place t-shirt and are invited to join us for the following events:

**Training Run #1 – Wednesday, September 14 • 6 p.m. at Memorial Park**

**Training Run #2 – Thursday, November 17 • 6 p.m. at Memorial Park**

**Pasta Party – TBD**

*For more information, please contact us at [marathon@bosplace.org](mailto:marathon@bosplace.org).*

## Why I Run...

I used to be married to a wonderful man. And then he died, suddenly, leaving me to raise two children by myself.

My running group was there for me in all kinds of ways after my husband died. They helped with food, childcare, errands, and a shoulder to cry on.

My family also discovered Bo's Place to help us deal with our grief. Bo's Place provides kids and their parents a safe place to work through the anger, confusion and sadness that come with losing a loved one. Bo's Place has been wonderful for me and for both of my girls.

I run because it keeps me sane. I've trained for and run fourteen marathons with the best friends anyone can ask for. I decided to run the 2012 Houston Marathon after I found out that Bo's Place was a Run for a Reason charity. I'm running this one for Bo's Place.

Ila Owers  
*Bo's Place Family*



## Exercise Helps Cope with Grief



Grief is universal; how we grieve is individual. Grief can cause tremendous stress on the body because it impacts us on a physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and social level. Over time, grief can weaken our immune systems and increase our likelihood of depression, anxiety, and alcohol and drug abuse. While we can not change the fact that we have experienced the death of a loved one, we can work to control what effect that loss has on our health. Therefore, it is imperative to find healthy coping mechanisms - exercise is just that.

Exercise has been proven to elevate endorphins, increase dopamine and regulate all of the neurotransmitters in the brain, which results in calmer, clearer, and more positive thoughts and emotions. Taking a walk outside allows us to reconnect with nature and a walk in the sunlight stimulates the production of Vitamin D. We may choose to use exercise as a time for personal reflection or as an opportunity to share remembrances with a friend. Even short bursts of exercise, 10-15 minutes at a time, have proven to elevate our moods. A regular exercise routine will leave us feeling stronger from the inside out and better able to cope with our loss.

With exercise as a recognized coping mechanism for grief, it is even more appropriate and meaningful that Bo's Place will once again partner with the El Paso 5K, Aramco Half and Chevron Houston Marathon as a 2012 Run for a Reason official charity. Last year Team Bo's Place raised over \$50,000 to support our grief support services and programs for grieving children and families who have lost a loved one and we hope to exceed that this year!

Join us. You can walk, jog, run, or come to our hoopla station on race day and cheer from the sidelines. For more information, contact Courtney Varner at [marathon@bosplace.org](mailto:marathon@bosplace.org).

- Shari Fish, M.Ed., CWC  
*Team Bo's Place Coach*

