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COMPASSION

We are a Companion for the Journey



Helping Children Find a New Beginning

Chris Comeaux, President/CEO

Thank you for reading this Summer issue of our Four Seasons Life Lines publication. Many of us just ended up celebrating graduations as those close to us ended one stage of their life and are preparing for another. My son was amongst those so it was quite a special time for our family to see our oldest culminating one stage of his life and moving on to young adulthood.

This reminds me that quite often people think that Four Seasons' work is about sadness and only endings when in reality it is often about joy, blessings, life, and new beginnings. No doubt there is loss, grief, and endings but many don't know about the beautiful side as well.

An example is our Heart Songs program led by Blair Simmons. Through various methods Blair works with children who have experienced the death of a loved one so that they may learn to cope with their loss, to find joy again, and to live. One great venue for the work of Heart Songs is Camp Heart Songs which is an overnight camp for kids who have lost a loved one. The camp this year is August 12th and 13th at Camp Tekoa.

Years ago I read a statistic that made such a great impression on me and frames the impact our Heart Songs program can have. This statistic said that if a child has lost someone who was their parent, or played that role in their life. before the age of 13, and they do not have an intervention like Heart Songs, there is a 75% chance they might become a convicted felon sometime during their life. I have seen this play out in my own family with a nephew who lost his dad at a very young age. He never received the help he needed to enable him to process the grief, the hurt, and today, the anger. I now see a young man who has so much potential but has a felony on his record which is a huge barrier to him reaching his potential.



If you want to learn more about our Heart Songs program, please go to FourSeasonsCFL.org and if you want to know about how to support the great work of this program contact our Four Seasons Foundation staff at (828)513-2440.

Thank you for your continued support of the great work of Four Seasons.

Wish List

Camp Heart Songs

Please provide enough for 50 campers.

- 4x6 wooden picture frames to be decorated
- Small journals
- New white pillow cases
- New water bottles
- Bottled water
- Individually bagged chips
- Granola bars and/or Cracker packs
- Bagels and/or Muffins
- Fruit snacks
- Portable AC units
- Beach towels
- Bug/Insect Repellent Spray and Sunscreen
- Bluetooth speakers
- Bubbles: all kinds, individual bottles, wands, etc.
- Sidewalk chalk

This Wish List provides ideas for ways individuals and businesses can get involved and give back. In the past, we've had businesses donate their promotional items like water bottles, sunglasses, and bottled water to Camp; this helps our volunteers know which businesses support our efforts and gives our campers a better, more well-rounded experience. Please consider ways you can give back and support this program today!

Angel Fund Helps Local Hospice Patients



Loretta Shelton, *Executive Director, Four Seasons Foundation*

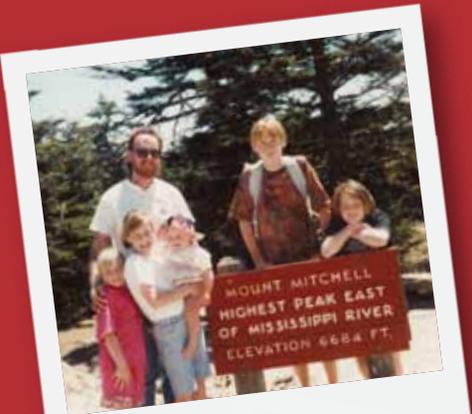
As a non-profit, Four Seasons Compassion for Life relies upon the community to help provide hospice care to all who need it. No one is turned away, even those who cannot pay.

One family served through the Angel Fund wants to say thank you to all who made care possible for their dad. Henry "Tim" Snelson, age 59, passed away in December of 2016 at the Elizabeth House, following a brief period of illness.

Tim's children realized they needed help caring for their dad, who was in the advanced stages of a debilitating disease. With young families of their own and having exhausted their resources, daughters Jaimee Burns and Jenna Snelson were "losing sleep trying to figure out where to turn for help."

Jaimee and Jenna were relieved to learn that because of community support, Tim could get the hospice care he needed, even though they had no way to pay. First, Four Seasons staff helped support the sisters as they took care of their dad at home. Later, as the end drew near, Tim was taken care of at the Elizabeth House. Jaimee and Jenna were grateful for the time to say goodbye, supported by the compassionate Four Seasons staff.

As the only remaining community based, non-profit hospice provider in western North Carolina, community support makes care possible for people like Tim.



Fall 1993



Summer 1993

Jenna and Jaimee with Loretta Shelton and Chris Comeaux at the Four Seasons Foundation 2017 Garden Gala.



If you would like to help make hospice care possible for all who need it, please return your donation to the Angel Fund in the enclosed envelope.

For more information please contact:

**Four Seasons Foundation, 221 N. Main Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792
or call (828)513-2440 | www.FourSeasonsCFLFoundation.org**

Good Grief

It's Camp Heart Songs!

as shared by Jenna Rae Bartges, Author

The tiny girl stood on the edge of the platform by the side of the lake, clutching a rope as the Camp Heart Songs counselor adjusted her zip line harness. "Think about your grief, Tina," the counselor said gently, placing a reassuring hand on the 5-year-old's back. "Think about facing the things you're most afraid of and flying right over them, like you're going to fly right over this lake."

The child clenched her teeth in grim determination.

"This rope is your support system," the counselor continued. "Think about the support system you have helping you deal with your dad's death. You can do this, Tina! You are safe, and you are strong!"

The youngster took a deep breath, then stepped off the platform and started flying across the lake, holding on to the rope for dear life.

The counselor broke into a huge smile when she heard the girl screaming triumphantly, "I'm doing it! I'M DOING IT!"

What is a relatively short zip line span across a mountain lake is a huge leap in healing and confidence for the kids, ages 5 through 15. They have come together to spend a powerful 28 hours at a camp

created specifically for them to explore and heal their grief. Each of the girls and boys, many of them siblings, has endured the death of a loved one. Whether they've lost a family member, friend, classmate, or other important person, all the kids soon discover this is the one place they don't have to put on a happy face or stay quiet about their feelings.

This August marks the 14th summer for Camp Heart Songs, which was created by Four Seasons Compassion for Life hospice in Hendersonville, NC. The Camp serves 11 counties in western North Carolina, but also welcomes children from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina – really, anywhere a little heart is hurting.

"Some people might wonder why kids would even want to come to a camp to talk about their grief," said Blair Simmons, coordinator for Camp Heart Songs. "Actually, this is the one time grieving kids can come together in a place where they all belong. Kids and teens can struggle with feeling all alone in the world, and thinking no one can understand what they've gone through. We provide a completely different experience for them, so they can begin to move through the pain they may have been trying to hide."

Blair said the camp counselors don't just



ask the kids how they feel. Instead, from the moment the campers arrive at 8 a.m. Saturday morning until their parents come back to get them early Sunday, they're immersed in a jam-packed schedule of activities – all of them designed to facilitate healing conversations about their deepest, most painful feelings.

The zip line, for instance, is all about empowerment, conquering fear and facing sadness head-on. One of the arts and crafts projects is making a wind chime, and writing a poem for their loved one who died.

"When the wind blows and they hear the music," Blair explained, "they can feel it's like their loved one blowing kisses, and hugging them. They can feel happy when they hear the lovely sound."

Another popular activity is music therapy. Campers will pick a popular song – last year it was "Lean on Me," and substitute some words so they can tell their own story. For instance, the opening line, "Sometimes in our lives we all have pain" became "Sometimes in our lives we all have death." The kids practice their new version, then perform it for parents when families arrive Sunday morning to take them home.

Kids also drum out their feelings, while others guess what they're communicating with the sounds they're creating.

Furry therapists – lovable service dogs – eagerly accept campers' hugs and tears, giving unconditional love and support in exchange. To help the kids feel more 'grounded,' there's even a mud pit to jump into when the urge strikes.

One treasured tradition is the Saturday evening bonfire. It begins with singing silly songs, making s'mores and sharing laughter. The night winds down with a Time of Remembrance. Each camper receives a candle, decorates it, and writes messages for their departed loved one. The candles are lit, and the group sits in reverent silence, remembering. Then, the kids say the name of their loved one out loud, and when they feel ready, they blow out the flame.

"No one makes you blow out your candle," Blair said. "We wait until each one feels ready. One time a little boy who had been happy and bubbly all day sat for the longest time holding his lit candle, tears streaming down his face. I sat next to him and said, 'Hey, buddy, what's going on?'"

"Through his tears, he told me he was afraid that the moment he blew out the candle, his mom would be gone forever. I said, 'Then you're not going to blow it out until you're ready.'"

"While I walked around the lake with him, I told him the wonderful thing about that candle was that every time he lit it, she would be right there. She's never really leaving. He stopped, took a deep breath, then said, 'OK,' and blew the candle out. A moment later, he was smiling and running ahead to catch up with his friends."

The connections the kids make with each other are powerful, and by the time they leave Sunday at noon, there are lots of hugs, smiles, and last minute stories to share.

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With last summer's enrollment of 38 kids, counselors divided them into smaller groups, separating them by age. The older siblings checked on their younger brothers and sisters frequently, and it's usually the kids who tell the teens to go away – they want their own space.

The healing that begins in the magical and precious time at Camp Heart Songs continues after they leave. Children and teens who might have been bottling up their emotions to protect parents or siblings are so relieved to be able to authentically discuss what they're feeling. They open up and keep talking when they get back home, and the grief they held inside begins to release. Parents frequently request grief counseling for their children to help the healing continue.

Camp counselors are usually Four Seasons staff members -- bereavement counselors, chaplains, music therapists, even people from other departments like billing and human resources. Everyone loves to volunteer!

Four Seasons' vision for Camp Heart Song's future, says Blair, is more – *more* campers, *more* nights, or at least *more* time on Sunday, and *more* community involvement.

Thanks to generous donations of time, money, food, supplies and even the location – it's Camp Tekoa the rest of the year – Camp Heart Songs is completely free for the campers and their families. The youngsters want the healing experience to be extended to a week, and parents agree.

"Parents are amazed at the change in their children when they come to get them," Blair said. "I've heard so many say, 'If you can do this in ONE day, I can't even imagine how much you could help in several!'"

As their cherished time at Camp Heart Songs came to a close last year on Sunday at noon, there was one more activity to share – the Butterfly Release. "We talked about how this exercise symbolizes our growth," Blair said.

"When we opened the box, some butterflies zoomed right out. Some clung to the box. A few fell to the ground, but not because of anything bad."

The group discussed how after camp, some of them are going to fly. They're going to soar, and feel great. Some are going to cling. They're not quite sure where they are with everything, but they're OK – they're just not quite ready to fly yet. And some of them are still going to be feeling somewhat low, because they're processing everything.

"As we watched those butterflies on the ground," said Blair, "the wind beneath their wings lifted them up, and all the kids gasped. I said, 'See? Everyone can fly! It's just going to take some people a little bit longer. And that's OK too.'"

In this loving, supportive environment, where grieving young people come together, everyone *will* eventually fly. Grief *can* be good.

Did You Know?

Dealing with the loss of a family member, caregiver, sibling, or friend is different for every child. Camp Heart Songs helps them communicate their feelings, process their loss, and begin the healing process.

The overnight camp is free for children ages 6-15 and is 100% Community Supported! If you would like to help, please return your donation to Camp Heart Songs in the enclosed envelope.

Four Seasons Foundation, 221 N. Main Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792
or call (828)513-2440 | www.FourSeasonsCFLFoundation.org



“
Camp Heart Songs is time for children and teens to reconnect with their world. For many after death they feel they are watching the world revolve around them while they are standing still. During camp they learn how to step back into their world and their “new” normal life. Camp is about embracing the loss, reflecting on the memories, healing from the hurt, and taking the next steps to beginning again.
”

Blair Simmons, Heart Songs Coordinator

Blair’s devotion to Camp Heart Songs’ mission actually began when she was just 15, and her father died. From her own challenging experience, she saw how adults were immersed in their personal grief, and didn’t have the right words to say to the kids. She knew then she wanted to help other grieving young people, and give parents positive, proactive tips to support their children.



“
Camp Heart Songs is a very sensory based experienced. Our holistic approach lets the kids tap into their grief emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Camp provides unique opportunities to individualize the grief process while finding the commonalities to foster strength and support. Our hope is to send them home with great memories, yet even greater life skills that will help them through challenges beyond grief.
”

**Melanie Brown, LCSW,
Four Seasons Director of
Professional Development and
Patient & Family Support
and
Camp Heart Songs Volunteer
(for 11 years!)**

“

My husband and I love volunteering at Camp Heart Songs each year! Whether it’s welcoming the kids as they arrive at registration, helping out with arts and crafts, or rooting them on as they bravely tackle the zipline, it’s a privilege to play a small part in a child’s journey through grief. Eric and I feel blessed to be a part of this important program.

”

**Lauren Purdy,
Director of Employee & Volunteer Solutions and
Camp Heart Songs Volunteer**



Bereavement Buddy Program

*as shared by Lara McKinnis, Bereavement Team Leader
and Sheri Cagle, Volunteer Solutions Team Leader*

What is it?

The Bereavement Buddy program is still in its infancy and we have high hopes for its continued success. The hospice benefit was built on the pillar stone of compassion - community members giving back to their friends and neighbors. We are both thrilled and grateful to be able to integrate the wisdom and kindness of our amazing volunteers into our bereavement care.

How do you get started?

We hold Bereavement Buddy trainings several times a year. The training is both didactic and experiential. Sometimes we invite participants to create cards for grieving individuals. We provide paper and supplies and ask that participants create a card straight from their heart that has yet to hit the shelves.

What is it like?

Jim Boyle recently attended a training. The card Jim created perfectly sums up the intention of this program and also speaks to the high level of compassion that motivates our volunteers to care for their friends and neighbors. Jim's card was blank on the front as he stated, "I have no perfect image for what I want to say." However, what he wrote on the inside of his card deeply touched every person in the room.

Another newly trained Bereavement Buddy summed up the program perfectly when she said, "When I volunteer with Hospice patients, I am supporting them as they walk toward death. With this program, I'll be able to walk with families on their journey back to life."

***If you are interested in learning more about this program,
any of our other volunteer opportunities, or would like
information about our bereavement services
please give us a call at 828-692-6178.***

We Can Always Relate... Human to Human

As I sat across from Mary, dressed to the nines in her teal suit, tears gently rolling down her cheek, she quietly shared, "I have known loss before and I have been getting along alright, but sometimes the loneliness feels like it could swallow me up." It was Mary's emotion that inspired our idea to become a reality. We had heard her sentiment many times before, but watching her, listening to her plea for friendship created a spark that is still burning today as our Bereavement Buddy (BB as we say) program continues to grow.

Four Seasons Bereavement Buddies are volunteers who are passionate about providing companionship for people walking along the path of grief. While Four Seasons provides training and resources, their primary toolkit comes from within. As Sherry Binkelman, one of our first trained bereavement buddies stated, "One thing that I've always believed in is that we all share the suffering that comes along with the human condition. There's no need to try to fix others but we can always relate... human to human."

Sherry recently completed her first BB assignment with Kathy Gerdes, who lost her mother last year. Recently we sat down with them to recap their experience. Kathy recalled, "I was so tired. I felt like nobody had ever gone through what I was going through. I just needed someone to talk to and something to look forward to!" Both Sherry and Kathy expressed that they were initially nervous. Would they get along? Would this work? Kathy smiled as she continued, "I think it was the second time we met...she[Sherry] walked up to me and gave me a hug and I knew it right there! I went home and said man I'm going to have it made...Hallelujah!"

Bereavement Buddies commit to spend about 10 hours a month with their grieving counterparts, which includes both phone calls and visits. These visits may be in homes or out in the community. While the structure of the program is set, the outcome of the established relationships is not mandated by us. We know that some pairs will use the time to focus solely on grief and then go their separate ways as their Bereavement Buddy time comes to an end. We know that other pairs will establish lifelong friendships during that time. Either option is a success in our book!



Both Sherry Binkelman (in blue) and Kathy Gerdes (in pink) have benefitted tremendously from participating in Four Seasons' Bereavement Buddy Program.



“
I just needed someone to talk to and something to look forward to!
”

Kathy Gerdes, Bereavement Buddy Program Participant

Volunteer Spotlight

as shared by Kristina Israel, Volunteer and Wellness Coordinator

Dorothy Managan has volunteered since 1988, and found her niche early on at the Elizabeth House. In 2016, at 94 years old, she “retired” from volunteering there and transitioned to a new role as Faith Community Representative with Hendersonville Presbyterian Church.

“It’s very important to be able to have information available to church people,” remarked Dorothy. “I’ve been active in the Stephen Ministry since 2000, and there have been lots of educational programs provided at the church by Four Seasons.” She continued, “I’m most impressed with the whole organization, including the training we receive as volunteers.”

Dorothy’s own education was in nursing; she earned her degree from Western Reserve University before joining the Army Corps at the end of WWII. “The good Lord has me here for a good purpose, and I need to follow through on that purpose. I need to feel that I’m helping someone. Nursing puts that into you. You’re ministering to people; you’re helping and making them comfortable.”

As an Elizabeth House volunteer, Dorothy had the opportunity to help others in ways now rare in the hospital setting. She remembers, “Once I went in and asked the nurse if anyone needed anything special... There was one lady that was very agitated, so I went and sat with her. We got to talking and I mentioned something about music. She perked up, so I went and got a CD to play for her. She was calmed and soothed by that.”

Approaching her 95th birthday, Dorothy stays busy volunteering at Carolina Village and serving as a Faith Community Rep with Four Seasons. “I try to fulfill [my purpose] by visiting with people who need to know that someone cares for them, and they are not alone. We glorify the Lord by being able to share.”



grupos de apoyo en español (support groups in spanish)

as shared by Ashley Newbrough, Music Therapist

Several months ago, I became aware of a handful of folks in our community who were grieving, and who also primarily or exclusively spoke Spanish. I wondered, "where do our Latino friends and neighbors go for grief support?"

I started calling around to the churches in the area who have ministries for Spanish-speakers. The purpose of my calls was two-fold: I wanted to learn if these community faith leaders facilitated or knew of bereavement support for Spanish-speakers, and if not, I wanted to see if they would be open to exploring an initiative or partnership with Four Seasons to create a grief support group for Spanish-speakers. I had no idea what it might look like, but I strongly felt called to follow the path wherever it might go, to see if we could help fill a need in our community.



Pastor Alberto Berrio

Of all the churches I called, the only response I received was from Pastor Alberto Berrio from Mud Creek Baptist Church. He was eager to explore where this opportunity might go.

Now, several months later, we are on the verge of piloting a new grief support group for Spanish-speakers. The group starts in July, and will run for four weeks. The group will meet July 3, 10, 17, and 24 from 2:30pm to 4pm. The group will meet at Clear Word Counseling Center at 316 Erkwood Dr., Hendersonville, 28739.

While this group is created in partnership with Pastor Berrio from Mud Creek Baptist Church, the group is not affiliated with any faith or belief system, and is open to people of all faiths and backgrounds.

If you are interested in learning more about the group, or signing up to participate, please contact Ashley Newbrough at anewbrough@fourseasonscl.org

grupos de apoyo
en español

julio 3,
julio 10,
julio 17,
& julio 24
2:30-4:00pm

Clear Word
Counseling Center
316 Erkwood Dr.
Hendersonville
NC 28739



Employee Spotlight

Four Seasons Compassion for Life nurse aide Nikki Granere is honored with Nurse Aide of the Year award by Association of Home & Hospice Care of NC

“Nikki’s job is not just a job to her; it is a calling,” said Four Seasons CEO Chris Comeaux, who attended the AHHC awards ceremony in support of Granere. “Nikki has been caring for hospice patients for over 18 years, never tiring or burning out, and always giving 100% of herself to her patients, their loved ones, and her colleagues. Four Seasons is honored to have Nikki, who brings a compassion and grace to caring for patients that is rarely found. She is truly deserving of this recognition.”

Granere regularly advocates for her patients, always putting them first by covering for her colleagues if they are unable to work, being flexible to see patients whenever the need arises – day or night, 365 days a year. Her collaboration with team members is superb, as she contributes insightful comments at interdisciplinary staff meetings and contacts the appropriate discipline with speed and grace any time her patients have a need. When caring for patients, Granere employs humor, compassion, attention, and love in her practice, making each patient feel special and unique. In one particular instance, Granere was able to earn the trust of a patient with bad past care experiences by utilizing extraordinary compassion, showing persistence and patience when the patient needed it most.

“It is a privilege to work alongside Nikki in serving our patients,” said Jill Rosenberg, RN, CHPN, CEC, Care Experience Coordinator for Four Seasons Compassion for Life. “There are many deserving of the Nurse Aide of the Year Award, but Nikki truly stands out. The care she provides is set apart.”



Nikki is joined by Four Seasons staff members Jenny Martin, Chris Comeaux and Jill Rosenberg to celebrate her special recognition.



Main Office – Greatrex Place

571 South Allen Road Flat Rock, NC 28731

Toll Free: (866) 466-9734

www.FourSeasonsCFL.org

Serving the following counties:



We are always looking for new venues to hold our free, community education events.

If you are interested in our presentations coming to you, please feel free to contact Callie at cdavis@fourseasonscfl.org or 828-450-0422.