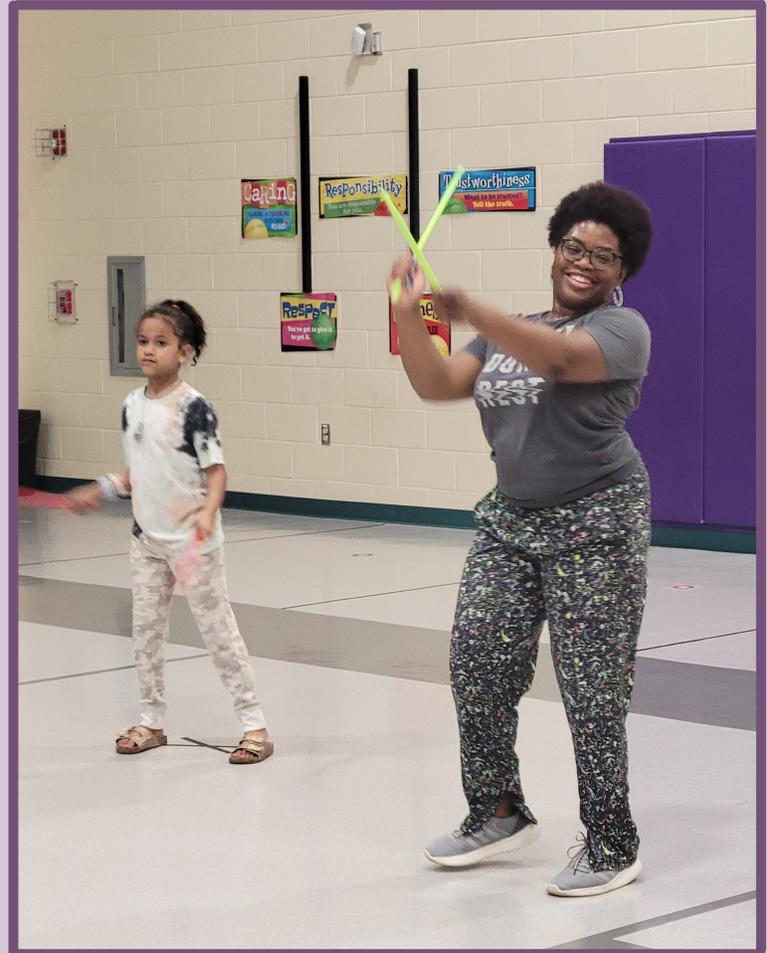


# CHANGING LIVES WITH GRIEF SUPPORT

A Newsletter for the Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families

## Family Fun Night!

On March 18th, the Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families hosted a Family Fun Night at Sandersville Elementary. Maranda Brooks, a fitness instructor, engaged with children in a fun-filled exercise incorporating drumsticks and cardio movements into an energetic and exciting playlist. This drumstick fitness session showed students and adults how drumming and movement can be a positive and active way to cope with grief and other mental health concerns.



# What is it like being a facilitator of a KCGCF grief group?

Meet Alice Davis! She is a former school counselor and facilitator at the Leestown Middle school grief groups in Kentucky.

## Would you mind telling us how you found KCGCF and started to get involved?

I learned about KCGCF through a friend who was looking for people to run a grief group. I had the background of a social worker and thought that it would be a perfect fit.



## What types of work have you done and what does it involve?

I facilitate grief groups, and my group for KCGCF had about 8 to 9 students that experienced some type of loss. We met weekly and talked about the grieving process and going through different emotional mazes that the program focuses on.

## What is your favorite activity that KCGCF offers?

One of my favorite activities is the kids have their own journal that they write in every week. They sign each others journals to remind them that they are a team and that they always have a friend. They can look back through their journal and see that they have people to lean on.



YOUR GRIEF  
CAN LOOK DIFFERENT.

## What did students have to say about grieving and KCGCF groups?

**What do you wish your friends knew about grief?**  
I wish they knew what I'm going through so they would know me.

**What is the most important thing you learned in your group?**  
To love myself and to not care what others think.



### **GRIEF TIP:**

#### **Don't be Afraid to Reach out to Peers and Loved Ones**

When dealing with grief and the loss of a loved one, we may feel alone. Often times it feels like nobody understands the pain and anguish we are dealing with. Being able to have a support system and reach out to those close to us is a good way to express our feelings. Whether it be a family member, friend, teacher, or other close person in our lives, they will always be there to help us through the grief.

## A Note from the Director

In this edition of the KCGCF newsletter, I'm thrilled for you to meet some of the incredible people who work with and support our organization. It takes a village to provide healing spaces and experiences for the children and teens who have experienced death loss. Because of dedicated people such as Andrea and Alice, we have the most amazing village!

I'm also delighted to announce that the KCGCF was recently selected as one of only 30 children's grief organizations in the nation to participate in the Childhood Bereavement Changemakers program. A joint initiative of Judi's House/JAG Institute, The National Alliance for Children's Grief, and the New York Life Foundation, this program will allow participating organizations to build the knowledge and resources necessary to create efficient data processes to tell their story, identify service gaps, and target funding opportunities. Through a series of training workshops and custom technical assistance, Changemakers participants will grow their capacity for data collection and program evaluation through a 12-month process designed to address data and evaluation needs big and small.

This is a huge and exciting opportunity for the KCGCF. It will connect us with valuable expertise, a cohort of top-notch children's bereavement centers across the country, and advanced processes for tracking our program services and client outcomes. Our selection for this program is a wonderful vote of confidence for our young organization. It will allow us to think wisely and strategically about how we grow our programs and services in the years to come.

Yours in service,  
Leila Salisbury



# Meet Andrea James, one of the encouraging people behind the foundation of KCGCF!



## **Tell us a little bit about yourself!**

I was born and raised in Lexington and eventually moved back after living in New Jersey. Throughout my career, I got involved in Lexington's city hall and decided to run for office. I was elected as the first black councilwoman in Lexington and worked in the city hall as a legislative aid. I focused on the opioid epidemic and saw the impact of overdoses in Lexington when I met Leila, KCGCF's founder.

## **Leila said you were one of the first people she spoke with when she wanted to start the organization. What did you say that encouraged her?**

I was friends and co-workers with Leila's mom, Holly, who had passed away. I partnered with her and we would hang out and have tea often. When she had passed away, I saw an estate sale. I met Leila for the first time at the estate sale and recognized her as Holly's daughter. We hugged and shared stories and began talking. Leila told me that she had an idea about starting a grief center in Kentucky after attending one in Mississippi. I told Leila, "If you know that there is a better way to deal with this, we should probably do it. What do you need from me to make this happen?"



**What types of things has the city of Lexington been doing to help grieving children?**

Lexington was not doing too much in terms of focusing on bereaved children back when I was on the council a year ago. It was very situational and there would be partnering agencies that would assist children. It is great that KCGCF is local in Lexington to help anyone in need of grief support.

**Do you have any advice for those who want to get involved in a grief support group in Kentucky?**

I would definitely check out the KCGCF website and sign up for the newsletter to get information about the work that is happening. You can contact Leila and talk about any current situation you or a loved one is dealing with. There are opportunities across the state, county by county. Leila also has connections with the school system in Lexington. I would recommend following up and setting up a phone call with Leila. Start small, start somewhere.

[KCGCF.ORG](http://KCGCF.ORG)



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