



THE KENTUCKY CENTER FOR
GRIEVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

www.kcgcf.org | Spring 2026

Support Us!

There are many ways to get involved, whether that's assisting with groups, donating snacks or meals for our Thursday grief groups, providing supplies, or helping us connect with community organizations! No special skills are required, just a willing heart and a listening ear.

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Volunteers make our groups possible. Make a meaningful difference by volunteering with the Kentucky Center for Grieving Children & Families!

Volunteers can help facilitate peer support groups, provide snacks or meals for Thursday grief groups, donate supplies, or connect us with community resources.



INTERESTED? LET'S GET STARTED!

Volunteer to assist with one of our children's grief groups or parent/caregiver support groups. Contact us at kychildrengrieve@gmail.com to learn more about all our volunteer opportunities, or visit www.kcgcf.org/volunteer.



INTERVIEW WITH KCGCF SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Meet Judy Russell!

Can you tell us about your background and what led you to work KCGCF?

I worked with Fayette County Public Schools as a District Social Worker and District Mental Health Specialist. I observed grief groups at the elementary school where I was working and recognized the positive impact on children, and knew I wanted to work with the Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families helping children and youth with grief once I retired.

What does your role as School Program Coordinator involve?

I communicate with district and school staff about grief groups and their benefits, visit schools to provide resources for staff and parents on how to talk to children and youth about death and grief, and support facilitators who lead the groups.

Why do grief support groups in schools work well for students, and what challenges do grieving students face?

Grief groups provide access that may not be possible after school hours, eliminating barriers like work schedules and transportation. The curriculum focuses on resiliency and lets students know they are not alone. Staff may not know how to approach them, and grief can affect concentration, learning, and well-being, leaving students feeling overwhelmed.



Q&A WITH CATHY ROBINSON

Cathy Robinson, one of our dedicated facilitators at KCGCF, brings both personal experience and heartfelt commitment to her work with grieving students. After retiring, Cathy sought a meaningful way to stay active—and found it in supporting children through grief. Having lost her father at a young age, she understands the deep impact of loss and the lack of support many students face.

Cathy sees students struggling to identify and normalize their emotions, often feeling isolated in their grief. Through KCGCF's support groups, she helps them realize they're not alone and provides a safe space to share—especially when home feels too heavy with mourning.

For Cathy, the most rewarding part is being fully present with each student, building relationships that matter. “I was scared to get back into working,” she says, “but now I feel like I’m doing what I was supposed to do for the past 21 years.”

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy fifth birthday to us! The Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families celebrates our five years of active service milestone this summer.

Back in 2021, we were still dealing with a global pandemic, one that meant additional loss, anxiety, and fear for our children. At that time, the Commonwealth was one of only 5 states in the country not to have a child and family-focused grief organization. I will be forever grateful for the investment of the state in pandemic-focused support programming through Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Service Centers in our public schools. In partnership with 7 schools in Fayette County, we received enough grant funding to begin a two-year proof of concept pilot for school-based grief support groups.

From one staff member in the beginning of 2021 to two full time and two part time staff, an additional 15+ contract group facilitators, and many dedicated volunteers today, what a long way we and this work have come! We have served more than 1,000 students in K-12 school-based groups in 6 counties, hundreds more in community and family-based programs, and trained more than 5,600 professionals working with children. November 2025 was recognized by the state as Grieving Children and Families Month, and the Center has offered testimony and resources to legislators and state agencies so that our child-focused systems can better support positive outcomes for children with grief and loss.

Much has been done and there are new projects, new service areas, new families and children for us to reach in the years ahead. For those of you who have supported us with referrals, donations, volunteer time, and connections, thank you! We could not have done these things without you.

And to everyone else—please join us now in this life-changing work for the tens of thousands of Kentucky children with loss. We are ready to grow and continue meeting the needs and challenges ahead, and we want you as part of our team in this beautiful work.

**In Service,
Leila Salisbury, Executive Director**

