

# NEWSLETTER OF THE KENTUCKY CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THRIVING AMIDST GRIEF'S CHALLENGES

FALL 2023 | VOLUME 5



## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR:

What a year this has been! As we near the end of our third year of operations, we continue to build new programming, experiment with event types and locations, expand our training offerings, and create new partnerships that will let us expand our reach.

This fall brought us several announcements of very good news in the form of three large grant awards that will sustain our school-based work through 2025. We received \$269,000 from the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission to restart our school-based groups and trainings with Fayette County Public Schools and to expand services to the Scott and Madison County School Districts. Generous two-year grant programs from the Kentucky Association of Health Plans and from the New York Life Foundation will allow for longer and more comprehensive services for Scott County, one of the state's fastest-growing areas.

We are deeply grateful for the confidence and trust these funders have placed in us and our programs serving children with death loss. We're excited to resume groups within FCPS and are already in the process of onboarding with the wonderful student support staffs of Madison County Schools and Scott County Schools.

In service,  
Leila Salisbury



# FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS GRIEF SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM



Our fantastic FRYSC partners worked tirelessly to coordinate schedules, work with families to enroll students in the groups, promote special events related to the group, and most importantly, work with their schools to begin to build grief-sensitive spaces where students are better able to function after a death loss. We are grateful to the many teachers and student support staff who attended our trainings. We hope we have helped equip them to see more of the story behind classroom behaviors and have left them with practical strategies for initiating conversations with students with loss. We also worked to provide teachers with ideas for reasonable accommodations to help grieving students succeed academically.

In August, the KCGCF completed a two-year pilot for school-based grief support groups and education with Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS). With the support of state GEER/Covid recovery-related funds and the incredible partnership of several Family Resource and Youth Service Center (FRYSC) coordinators, KCGCF facilitators conducted groups at the elementary, middle, and high school level at 14 different school sites. During this proof of concept program, more than 215 students were served in 11-week groups that met during the school day, and another 275 students and families received Social and Emotional Learning education and Family Night experiences designed to reinforce coping skills (and fun!).

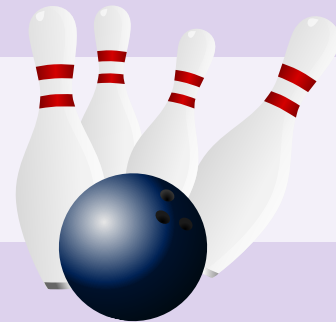
# FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS GRIEF SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

We also want to thank the remarkable group facilitators who worked with us to make these groups happen with integrity and a high degree of skill and empathy for these students. Our facilitators were LCSWs and retired school counselors and mental health specialists. They ran activities, initiated discussions, and most importantly, were wise and caring adults who could support students even during the toughest conversations. These men and women are truly at the loving heart of our program with schools and we could not do our work without them.



Through games, discussions, and art and writing projects, students learned to recognize and sit with difficult emotions that might come after a loss. They also learned communication and self-advocacy skills. Most of all, though, they understood that they were not alone. Fellow students in their groups understood what they were going through and became a support team for each other. Students in group completed pre- and post-assessments measuring stress, anxiety, and depression. We were happy to find that students found the program effective: students experienced a 19% decrease in stress by the end of group, and all grades reported that their depression had been lowered by 18-20%. This successful pilot will most certainly pave the way for additional work in other school districts and will help demonstrate the high need students have for grief support services that can be accessed at school. One of the large, long-term goals of the KCGCF is to create more grief sensitive schools throughout the state of Kentucky. We are so grateful to FCPS and participating families for trusting us to do this work. We have seen a great deal of healing and connection, and we look forward to continuing and expanding these projects so that we may serve more students.

# "WHEN GRIEF STRIKES" BOWLING FUNDRAISER



We raised \$4,750 from the event and are so grateful to attendees and sponsors for making that possible! A big thanks to Jim Dunn of Bluegrass Bowling and Golf for the donation of a bowling ball for our successful raffle. We are grateful to the sponsors who created a ticket pool so that several of our program families could attend the event for free. We loved having everyone for an afternoon of fun and connection.

## THANK YOU TO OUR LANE SPONSORS!

Counseling Associates,  
Richard Royster, LPCA  
Laura Newsome, Realtor BHHS  
Demovellan Properties  
Dr. Lindsay Ragsdale  
Motiv8 Fitness  
Elder Law Lawyers  
Buchart + Wachs Orthodontics



# PARTNERSHIPS & NEW PROGRAMS



This fall we've also created several wonderful partnerships that are allowing us to try new programs and spaces for grief support for children and teens. Though funding from LFUCG's One Lexington program, we're working with the Kenwick Center to offer a series of 4 programs this fall in their great facility. This is also part of a new partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bluegrass, and we are delighted to welcome their match pairs at these evening programs. We've also partnered with the teen librarians with the Lexington Public Library to offer a series of 4 programs at different libraries across town, looking at different creative ways that healing can happen, whether through crafting, art, movement, and even gaming! We're so glad of these partnership opportunities and to meet new students and families so they can learn more about who we are and what we do.

We're also delighted to have partnered with UK Athletics and the UK Football program to work with UK Athlete JJ Weaver on a peer support group for him and the team. The KCGCF clinician leads this once-a-week group for players who have experienced losses. During the sessions, they explore common feelings and reactions after loss, coping strategies, communication skills, and ways they can support themselves and their peers during tough moments. This has been a phenomenal experience for us (check out the national story on this group that appeared on CBS Inside Sports!). We are so grateful for the support of UK Athletics and for the willingness of the group's participants. JJ Weaver has become an incredible advocate for the importance of grief support for young adults (and especially men). His leadership is changing lives for the better.

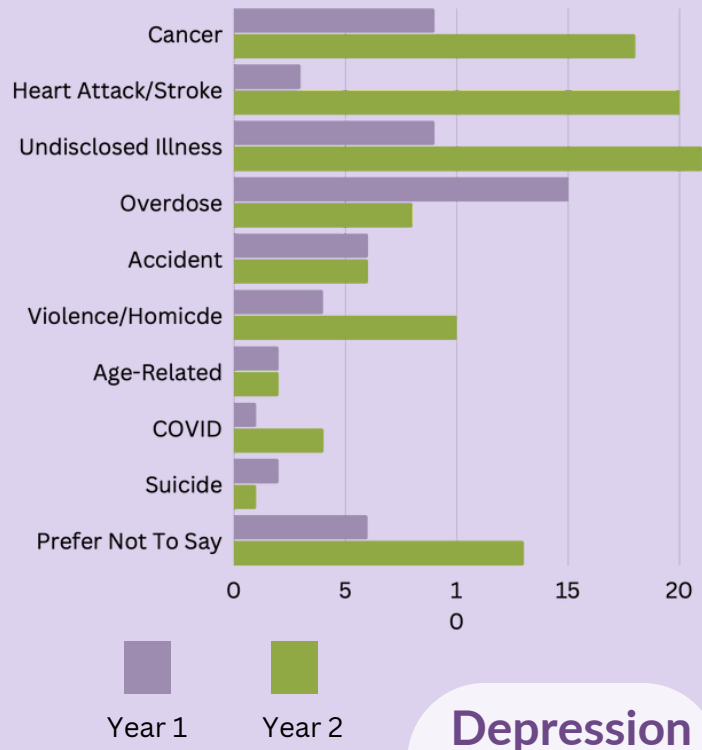


We are thrilled to see how this work is developing, and we can't wait to see what comes next! Continue to follow us on social media, read our newsletters and reports, and consider donating your time and talents to our programs. This is beautiful, healing work, and we'd love for you to be a part of it.

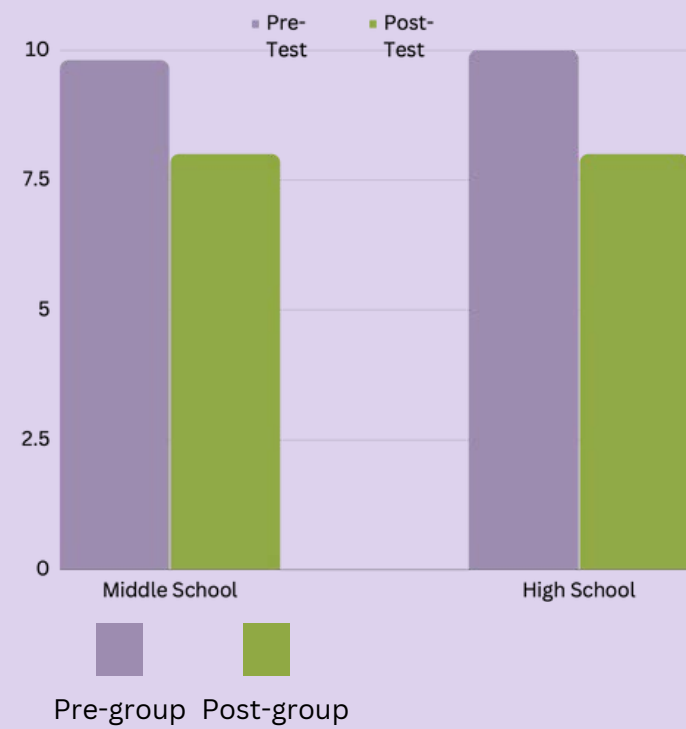


# DATA OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL-BASED GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

## Death Type



## Depression Scale



KCGCF began our school-based grief support groups utilizing GEER funding in Fayette County. This pilot lasted two years included 14 schools at the elementary, middle, and high school level. To test the efficacy of the pilot, pre- and post-group psychometric assessment tests were completed by each student to scale feelings of depression, anxiety, and overall stress.

The pre- and post- test data were taken at week 1 and week 11 of the school groups. The data collected indicates improvement in all areas tested post-group. KCGCF used the Perceived Stress Scale-Child Version, the General Anxiety Disorder-7, the SCARED-SF, and Patient Health Questionnaire to assess participants.

The KCGCF provides in-person and online grief support groups for children and teens, at no cost to participants. For more information on how to enroll in our groups, visit our website at [www.kcgcf.org](http://www.kcgcf.org) or call 859-813-2759.