**Highmark Caring Place, Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents ad their Families**

[**http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com**](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com)

The Highmark Caring Place champions the cause

of grieving children by creating awareness of their needs, providing programs for them and their families, and empowering the community to effectively support them.

The first Caring Place facility opened in Pittsburgh in 1997. Since that time, the program has expanded across Pennsylvania, with additional facilities in Erie, near Harrisburg, and in Warrendale.

Thousands of community members are helped by the Caring Place each year at no cost through our peer support group, education, consultation, and referral services.

Did you know?

One child in 20 will have a parent die before he or she graduates from high school.

# About Us

The Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, is dedicated to grieving children and families, supporting them in their journey toward hope after a loved one dies.

The Caring Place champions the cause of grieving children by creating awareness of their needs, providing programs for them and their families and empowering the community to effectively serve them.

The Caring Place was started in 1996, with the first facility established in Pittsburgh in 1997. Now with sites in Erie (2001), just outside of Harrisburg (2003), and in Warrendale, PA (2009), the Caring Place has served more than 70,000 family and community members.

The Highmark Caring Place:

* Helps children (and adults) understand they're not alone in their grief.
* Provides peer support to children and families who are grieving the death of a loved one.
* Provides a safe place with safe people so that the children can share their grief, their feelings and their memories.
* Is a place where grieving children and families receive support and encouragement from others their age and from trained adult volunteers.
* Encourages children to hold the memories of the person who died.
* Encourages children to express their feelings, memories and thoughts even when these are difficult to express.

The Caring Place is a community service, available to the whole community. Services are provided at no cost to the families.

**Core purpose**  
Our core purpose is to make a difference in the lives of grieving children.

**Core values**  
The core values of the Highmark Caring Place reflect the heart of our organization and the people within it. Our core values guide:

* Our interactions
* The development and evaluation of our programs and staff
* Our strategic planning

**Relationship:** We believe that we are stronger together than alone. We place a high value on people and relationships and approach all relationships with a responsiveness that embodies caring, compassion and concern.

**Respect:** We believe in the intrinsic value of all human beings. We will approach all people and situations with minds and hearts open to difference, and act in a manner that preserves the dignity of others.

**Quality:** We believe in excellence. We are committed to providing innovative programs based upon sound theoretical models that incorporate best practices.

**Integrity:** We believe that how we act and interact is as important as what we achieve. We act and make decisions based on the highest ethical standards and we are committed to ensuring consistency between what we say and what we do.

## The Highmark Caring Place Supported by the Caring Team

[Caring Team for Children](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/caringteam/index.shtml) is a special team of hundreds of schools, businesses, professional sports teams, corporations and community partners that works together to raise funds and increase community awareness for the needs of children.

Since 1989, this partnership and many others have raised awareness along with more than $5.5 million for children in need.

The Caring Team provides a way for schools to help children and families in their own districts while offering school teachers and administrators opportunities to teach students about the importance of teamwork and helping others.

Caring Team faculty, staff and students have the opportunity to tour Caring Place facilities to help educate students and teachers about children's grief, while school personnel can receive written educational resources about the needs of grieving children.

**Warrendale/Cranberry Region**

**200 Warrendale Village Drive  
Warrendale, PA 15086  
(888) 734-4073**

Located in the fastest-growing region of Pennsylvania, the Highmark Caring Place in Warrendale opened its doors in April 2009. The program itself began the previous fall, with the first session meeting at Orchard Hill Church.

# How Can I Get Help from the Highmark Caring Place?

The Caring Place program is a family program that focuses on the needs of children. There is no cost to the families for these groups, or for any services provided by the Highmark Caring Place. The Caring Place is a community service, offered to all members of the community, regardless of health insurance.

Children attend the Caring Place with their families. The program is centered on children, but the program is for both the children AND the adults in the family. After all, the whole family is affected by the death, so it is helpful to discuss the loss together so that the family as a whole can readjust.

When a family attends a peer support group at the Caring Place, they come together with approximately 15–20 other families who have also had someone they love die.

**"The heart means your heart is broken, and the butterfly means it won't always hurt so much." — Anthony, 7**

The meetings, lasting about two hours each, begin with eating dinner, talking and playing games together. Later in the evening, children and teens meet with others their age, while adults meet with other adults. Trained adult volunteers help facilitate the group discussions and activities.

In the groups with their peers, the children participate in activities to help them to get to know each other. Over time they learn that they are not alone in the thoughts and feelings and experiences they have had since the death. Although they may feel completely set apart (or even weird) at school, at the Caring Place, they’re the same as everyone else. Many children (and adults) have expressed their relief at just being able to feel like someone understands.

In each group of children or teens, there are adult volunteers who have been extensively trained. The volunteers are there not to teach the children how to grieve, but to provide structure and support, safety and security to the groups. Within this structure, the children themselves discover what they need.

**The Highmark Caring Place is a community resource, open to any grieving child throughout the community, FREE OF CHARGE.**

The volunteers create a place where children (and adults) can talk about things that are hard, things they can’t talk about at school, or with friends, or even within the family. They provide a place where kids can feel whatever feelings they have — angry, sad, or happy. Along with their peers within the groups, the volunteers are companions to the children and teens in their grief, simply walking beside them, allowing them to do their necessary grief work, without having to do it alone.

## Further Resources

The goal of the Highmark Caring Place is to serve the region by providing direct services to grieving children and families. In addition to peer support groups, the Caring Place provides ongoing telephone support, educational resources and referral services at no cost to grieving children and adults.

Education and consultation services are also provided for schools and other professionals in the community who work with children.

**"The Caring Place is a sheltering cove for the kids in the storm that we call grief." — Chris, Caring Place Parent**

For additional information, [view and download our brochures](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/support/brochures.shtml).

**Brochures**

The Caring Place has produced a series of free educational brochures for families and professionals in the community that address some basic concepts of grief. These brochures enable parents, teachers, guidance counselors, funeral directors, pastors, social workers, hospices and educators, among others, to be better equipped when interacting with children who have experienced the death of a family member. Called “Resources for the Journey of Grief,” the series has become a valuable tool in helping people to better understand grief.



At the Highmark Caring Place, one of the questions we hear most is, “What do I say to the children?” We hear it from parents about their children; school staff who are caring for a grieving child in the classroom; mental health, social service, and medical personnel; and concerned friends and family who are trying to help a family in the midst of their grief.

At the Caring Place, we recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all answer. But we do have the collective experiences of thousands of grieving children and families from which to learn. Through listening to what grieving families have told us, as well as drawing on the knowledge of our expert staff regarding child development and the issues of grief, we have developed the following brochures.

For an overview of what each brochure covers, view the "[Resources for the Journey of Grief](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/brochures_descrip.pdf)" flyer.

* [Saying Goodbye: Preparing a Child for a Funeral or Cremation](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/funerals_cremations.pdf)
* [Coping with Grief at the Holidays](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/coping_grief_holdiays.pdf)
* [Questions Grieving Children Ask](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/questions_grieving_children_ask.pdf)
* [The Grief of Preschoolers and the Questions They Ask](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/grief_preschoolers.pdf)
* [Questions Grieving Teens Ask](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/questions_grieving_teens_ask.pdf)
* [The Grieving Child in the Classroom](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/child_classroom.pdf)
* [Is There Anything I Can Do?](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/help_grievingfriend_teen.pdf) (for teens)
* [Is There Anything I Can Do?](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/help_grievingfriend_adult.pdf) (for adults)
* [Caring for Yourself as You Care for Your Grieving Child](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/caring_self.pdf)
* [Responding to Children in Grief and the Questions They Ask](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/children_questions.pdf)
* [Telling the Children: Talking with a Child When a Parent Is Diagnosed with a Life-Threatening Illness](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/telling_children.pdf)
* [Creating Connections When a Parent Is Diagnosed with a Life-Threatening Illness](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/pdf/making_connections.pdf)

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