



**CREATING
CONNECTION
CREATING
COMMUNITY**

Annual Report 2023



The Children's Room
caring grief support for children, teens, and families



A Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The Children's Room (TCR) has a long history of providing grief support services to children, teens, families, and professionals. TCR was founded in 1996, we moved into our center in Arlington in 2003, and we have since expanded our reach by offering services in the community at schools and community organizations. Moreover, we have embraced a blended programming model by providing some services virtually, recognizing the importance of online services to expand access. As a result, we served 1,935 individuals in FY23, highlighting the impact of our programs.

The need for bereavement services continues to increase annually. According to the 2023 Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM), 1 in 13 Massachusetts children, or 102,000, will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. This statistic underscores the critical need for creating safe and supportive spaces where no child, teen, or family has to grieve alone.

Today, our staff and expansive network of volunteers have re-centered our mission, placing children at the heart of all our services and programs. We also recognize parents' and primary caregivers' critical roles as allies for their grieving children. Lastly, we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting professionals working with grieving children, knowing that their knowledge and compassion are vital in normalizing grief and building greater awareness.

The common themes running across all our programs are connection and community. Grief can be isolating, but in group settings, children, teens, and families can share their stories and feelings. This connection fosters a sense of belonging and builds relationships.

This year's Annual Report shares the different perspectives of individuals impacted by being part of The Children's Room community and their forged connections. As you read their stories, we hope they inspire you to support us in fulfilling our mission. We continue to rely on funding from individuals, foundations, and corporate donors to make our life-changing programs possible, and we receive 99% of our \$1.75 million operating budget through philanthropy.

Looking ahead, we have created an ambitious *Roadmap for Impact* plan and are actively launching it to address the critical need for grief support services in our community. We are ready to take the next step in our journey, knowing that with your unwavering support we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of grieving children and families.

With heartfelt thanks,

Jon Gay
Executive Director

Our Mission

The Children's Room creates safe, supportive communities so that no child, teen, or family has to grieve alone.

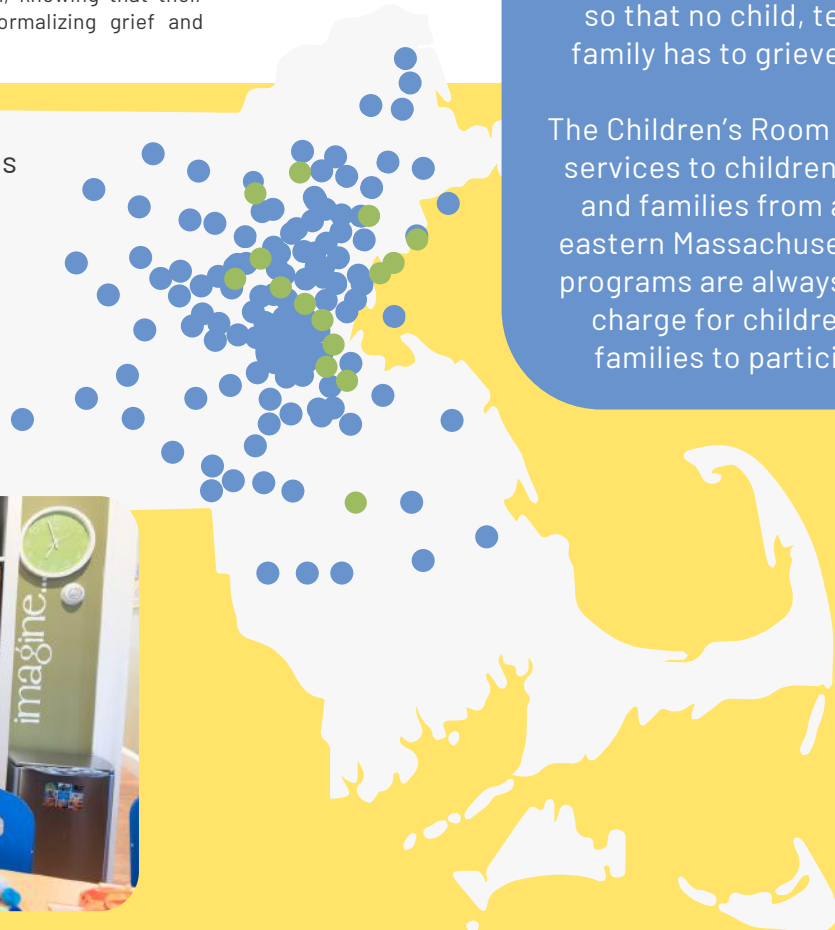
The Children's Room provides services to children, teens, and families from across eastern Massachusetts. Our programs are always free of charge for children and families to participate.

81

Total number of cities and towns where children and families accessing TCR services reside

15

Total number of cities and towns where TCR provides services for school and community organizations





The Children's Room

caring grief support for children, teens, and families

“ The Children's Room is a safe space to share feelings and be supported by a community. ”

- Teen from TCR
Family-Based Peer Support Group



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Paige Nestell
Bailey White

Our Impact

As Massachusetts' leading independent nonprofit child bereavement center, TCR's staff and board developed a new Impact Statement and Theory of Change to guide our work.

OUR FOCUS POPULATION



CHILDREN & TEENS

PARENTS & PRIMARY CAREGIVERS

PROFESSIONALS

OUR APPROACHES



DIRECT GRIEF SERVICES

EDUCATION & TRAINING

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

OUR INTENDED IMPACT

INCREASE

- Sense of connection and community
- Capacity to identify and express feelings related to grief and loss
- Understanding that grief is a normal reaction to change and loss

DEVELOP

- Coping skills
- Supportive abilities of parents and caregivers
- Integration of loss into one's life over time

ULTIMATE SOCIAL GOAL

Increase access to bereavement support in order to normalize grief and integrate death loss, leading to greater awareness, compassion, hope, and understanding in society.



TCR BY THE NUMBERS

CHILDREN & TEENS

216

Children and teens served at the Center

132

Students and teens served in school and community groups

786

Children and teens reached through grief awareness programs

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

257

Served through programs

PROFESSIONALS

544

Served through trainings and presentations

Our Outcomes

TCR surveys children, teens, and adults participating in our programs each year to learn more about their experiences. We measure our programs' impact based on the outcomes we aim to achieve - for children, teens, and adults. This evaluation helps us annually improve our services and assess the impact we have on the individuals we serve.

TCR SUPPORTS CHILDREN

% of children that agreed TCR helped them...



85%

Feel supported by the other kids in their group

83%

Increase the number of things they could do to deal with their emotions and feel better

94%

Feel it is normal to have lots of different feelings after someone dies

85%

Feel it is OK to talk about their person who died

TCR SUPPORTS TEENS

% of teens that agreed TCR helped them...



100%

Feel a greater sense of connection to others their age who are grieving

81%

Understand that grief is an ongoing process

81%

Have time to share their thoughts and feelings

82%

Feel less isolated/alone in their grief

TCR SUPPORTS PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

% of adults that agreed TCR helped them...



90%

Increase their sense of connection to other bereaved adults/families

87%

Increase their ability to cope with their feelings around grief and loss

90%

Feel it is normal to have lots of different feelings after someone dies

85%

Feel less isolated/alone in their grief

*Evaluation data is taken from participants in The Children's Room group programs, with a total of 197 responses.

Volunteer & Donor Testimonial: You Get Back More Than You Give

Mother and daughter Sherry and Carrie Tate share their experience of grief and loss and their journey of helping others through their involvement with TCR's mission.



Carrie and Sherry Tate

Life can throw unexpected challenges our way, and Carrie Tate's life took an unexpected turn when she was just 11 years old. A tragic helicopter accident claimed her father's life, leaving her and her family stricken by grief. At the time, Carrie's mother Sherry turned to a local peer support group for help. Still, the program could only accommodate her. Her children, including Carrie and her older siblings, had to wait. Despite the limitations, this experience gave Carrie a glimpse into the power of peer support.

In 2010, Carrie relocated to Boston. Having previously worked with educational nonprofits, she was eager to get involved with a cause close to her heart. She was browsing the internet when she stumbled upon The Children's Room. A volunteer facilitator training was set to begin. With just a week to spare, Carrie reached out and made a last-minute decision to apply.

Reflecting on her initial motivations, Carrie shared, "I never really talked at all about my experience with my grief. When I found The Children's Room, I was interested in a place that equips kids to express their feelings, understand, develop coping skills, and identify people in their lives that they can talk to. It normalizes the conversation on death, loss, and grief by having other kids in the community who they could talk to about their experiences."

Becoming a volunteer at The Children's Room opened a new chapter in Carrie's life. Although she wasn't directly participating in the programs, she got back more than she gave. It became a personal growth and healing process as she processed her memories and emotions.

Sherry reflected on her daughter's journey, saying, "I remember as Carrie was undergoing the initial training, she was uncertain whether she could do it."

"She expressed that many emotions were coming up, and she leaned into them. Carrie was so passionate, and the best thing I could do was be supportive in any way I could. I remember when we had our loss, she didn't have any place to go, and I felt helpless. That became a reason, too, why I wanted to become a donor and support the mission of The Children's Room. It was also for the kids she was holding space for."

At The Children's Room, the community extends beyond borders. Carrie emphasized, "The volunteers are a community within. The group I have worked with has known me for years and has witnessed many milestones in my personal life. They have witnessed my grief journey, and they have been a witness to my evolution as a person."

"What I appreciate about The Children's Room is that even though it is about the families and the children, I have felt a lot of support and intentionality as a volunteer in making space to honor all the reasons why people come. Much as it is for the families, it also creates the opportunity to hold space together for the volunteers," said Carrie. Her journey through grief and involvement with TCR is a testament to the program's profound impact on individuals and communities. Through shared experiences and support, The Children's Room provides a safe and supportive space for those who have experienced loss and grief, fostering growth, healing, and resilience.

“What I appreciate about The Children's Room is that even though it is about the families and the children, I have felt a lot of support and intentionality as a volunteer in making space to honor all the reasons why people come.”

– Carrie Tate



Sherry Tate and her children Melissa, Christopher, Andrew, and Carrie

Family Testimonial: Running with Purpose

Deana Kennedy-McMorrow shares her journey in running the 127th Boston Marathon and the impact it has had on her grief and healing.

In 2023, The Children’s Room’s Miles & Memories Marathon Team ran the 127th Boston Marathon and raised a collective total of \$108,000 in support of our programs, helping 21 families access peer support services.

Like many families that come to TCR, one of our runners, Deana Kennedy-McMorrow, has known grief and sought healing after the deaths of her husband, brother-in-law, and grandmother. Running became a profoundly personal and intimate experience for Deana, especially while grieving. “The long hours spent on the road provide a space for reflection, where runners can connect with the memories of their person,” she shared.

Being part of a community with those who have experienced similar losses can provide a sense of belonging and understanding. At TCR, we create safe and supportive communities for grieving individuals. As Deana shared, running marathons in remembrance can also help form those bonds and build support networks similar to the ones in our programs. “Realistically, you’re running for charity for two reasons: the first is to work on your healing, and the second is to help others by creating awareness and inspiring [others],” said Deana.

The shared journey creates a support system where participants can find solace, exchange stories, and uplift one another during challenging moments.

Running marathons in remembrance reflects the grief work we do at TCR. Deana explained, “Runners learn discipline, perseverance, and the power of setting goals through training. They witness their physical and mental strength, proving they can overcome obstacles and achieve what once seemed impossible.”

“ The long hours spent on the road provide a space for reflection, where runners can connect with the memories of their person. ”

- Deana Kennedy-McMorrow



Deana Kennedy-McMorrow at the finish line of the Boston Marathon with her daughter



Deana crossing the finish line at the 127th Boston Marathon

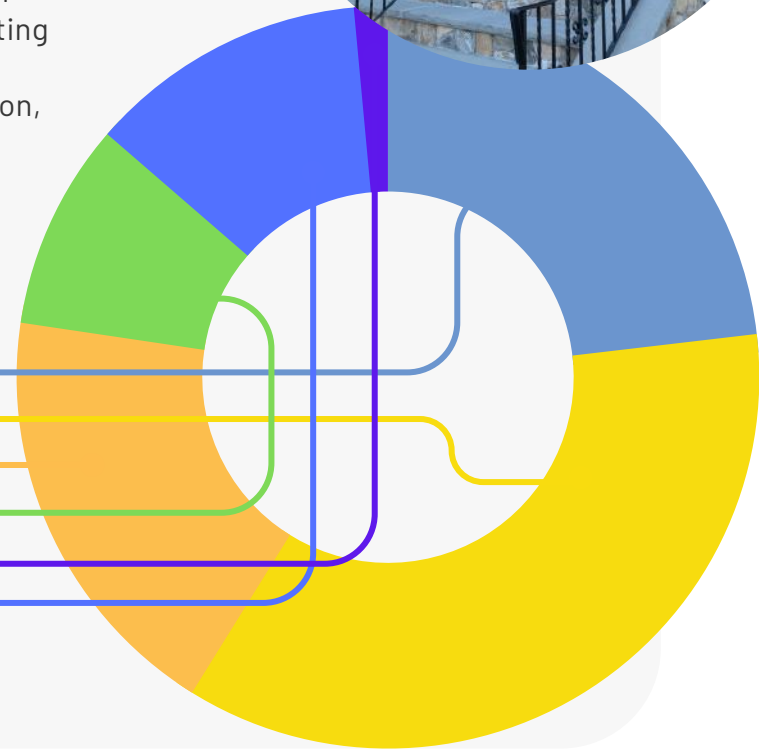
Sources of Funding

The death of a caregiver often results in loss of household income; therefore, we promise never to add a financial burden to grieving families. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we continue to offer our programs to children, teens, and families free of charge.

We are proud to report that our multi-year sustaining pledges from individuals account for approximately 25% of TCR's revenue, contributing to a sustainable funding base for impact. The remainder of the funding comes from foundation, corporate, and one-time individual donors. To view or download the Report of Independent Auditors and Financial Statements, visit childrensroom.org/reports.



Type	Amount
Individuals (Sustaining Pledges)	\$397,872
Individuals (One-Time)	\$613,977
Foundations (Grants)	\$318,223
Corporate/Business (Donations)	\$155,029
Events	\$209,281
Earned Income	\$25,327
TOTAL	\$1,719,709



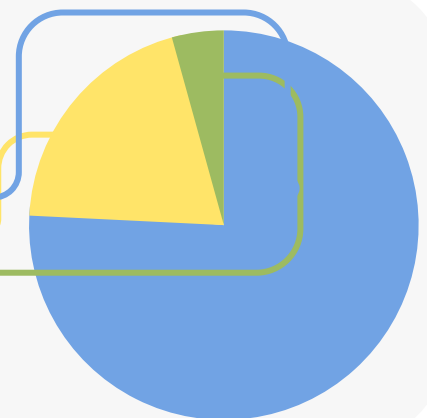
This past year, we increased the number of clinicians on staff to meet the service demand. In addition, we are fortunate to own our facility, a beautiful Victorian home in Arlington, Massachusetts. Children, teens, and families come from 81 different communities across the state to access programs at the house. For children, teens, and their families who cannot come to our center, we have expanded our programs to provide services directly in schools and community organizations.

“ Our people are the heart and soul of our programs at TCR. ”



Allocation of Funds

Category	Amount
Personnel	\$1,118,982
Non-Personnel	\$294,151
Facilities	\$63,507
TOTAL	\$1,476,640
Reserve	\$243,069



Partner Highlight: Pathways of Change

Transformative partnerships have always been integral to achieving TCR's mission. In recent years, The Parmenter Foundation has supported TCR in expanding our reach and creating a new type of social and emotional learning program for students called *Pathways of Change*.



An activity by the children at Loring Elementary School who participated in the pilot of *Pathways of Change*.

Pathways of Change uses art, play, and movement-based activities to provide child-centered ways to help elementary students understand loss, change, and grief concepts. The goal of the program is to prepare children for grief and to support others who are grieving. This past year, The Children's Room piloted *Pathways of Change* with second graders at Loring Elementary in Sudbury, MA, co-facilitated by TCR and Loring staff.

Christine Lambricht, TCR Program Director, School & Community-Based Services, shares, "We learned along the way that we could build connections among the students by using the concept of change as a bridge to discuss more extensive loss topics such as divorce, separation, and death loss. In the same conversation, our second graders could share, 'My dog ran away,' 'I got a new baby brother,' 'I got a new teacher,' 'I found a new friend,' 'My grandma died,' 'My parents live in two different places,' etc. We could talk about these experiences together so it didn't feel like, 'Oh, that person had a big thing happen to them.'"

The *Pathways of Change* program helps students understand that we all will have significant changes happen in life, and big feelings will accompany these changes and losses. The curriculum sows the seeds of resilience and prepares children for the grief they may experience, how they can cope, and how they can help each other—an innovative partnership driving impact for numerous children in our community.

Overview of Our Approaches

CENTER-BASED SERVICES

We hold family-based peer support services, which allow families to come together in person and then break into smaller groups to be with their peers. For children and teens, there is space during each group to have structured activities around grief and loss and for unstructured free-choice time.

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

Our school and community-based groups provide children and teens access to quality, trauma-informed grief support in their familiar daily environments. These peer support groups are offered in collaboration with schools, after-school programs, and community agencies for children and teens. We also lead groups such as our *Pathways of Change* program, which does not depend on a student's experience and grief background but focuses on prevention and awareness.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

We provide training on grief and loss for professional groups at schools, medical centers, community agencies, and other organizations. These include information on how children, teens, and families cope with death and loss, the relationship between developmental issues and grief, and the importance of self-care. Additionally, we provide a psychoeducational series, *Parenting While Grieving*, which focuses on helping parents and caregivers gain more knowledge and skills to aid them in parenting grieving children.



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

CIRCLE OF HOPE GIVING COMMUNITY

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Donations of \$10,000 or more per year, with a commitment of five years.

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Sue Costello & Jeff Keffer
Neil Fisher & Meryl Loonin
Becca Harris
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Michael & Melyne Nagle
Maureen & Robert Powers
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For more information on how to become a member, please contact Kim Cayer at kim@childrensroom.org

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The Parmenter Foundation
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*Thank you to all of our
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 report is accurate to the
 best of our knowledge,
 and includes donations of
 \$1,000 or more made
 between October 1, 2022
 and September 30, 2023.
 We sincerely apologize
 for any errors or
 omissions.*



Join Our Community

Your involvement can make a transformative impact on our children, teens, and families. Whether by volunteering your time, hosting a tour, or making a donation, there are many ways you can become a part of The Children's Room mission.



The Children's Room
caring grief support for children, teens, and families

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