

Kathy Murphy

Hometown:

Short Hills

Start Date:

May 2008

Volunteer Job:

Kathy is a volunteer facilitator in adult group on Tuesday nights and also volunteers as a substitute when we need help on other nights.

Kathy is a member of Good Grief Sustainability Team made up of volunteers and staff committed to ensuring the long term financial sustainability of the organization and is a member of the HOPE League made up of donors who commit \$1,000 per year or more for five years.

“Kathy also provided invaluable assistance to Good Grief for our Day of Remembrance,” said Joe Primo, Center Director. She did everything from

help plant the memory tree in the pouring rain, to creating shadow boxes, greeting guests and serving food,” says Joe Primo, Center Director.

We sat down and asked Kathy the following four questions;

What brought you to Good Grief?

After my husband passed away, I thought it would give me an opportunity to learn something about how to help my own children do their grief work and reach out to others who were grieving. Grief can be a very isolating experience, and I wanted to support others who had had a similar experience.

What have you learned?

I've learned that grief is a universal experience. I read a book written by children from Sweden in the 1980's about their ex-

periences with losing a parent. The feelings and emotions expressed by children more than 20



years ago in a different country and culture, were so similar to the feelings and emotions experienced by my own children after losing their father three years ago. For me, that really drove home the point that whether you're young or old, have lost your mother, father, sibling, or child, the burdens that come with loss are something that can be shared and hopefully alleviated by peer support.

CHANGING
 CHILDREN'S
 LIVES

Cont'd

From participating in Good Grief training I realized how much grief work I still needed to do in my own life and all of the ways that people can experience loss. Learning how to truly listen has been extremely valuable to me. Also how to embrace someone else's grief, and not to avoid or ignore those who are having that experience.

How this experience has affected your life?

In so many, many ways! I listen much better, especially to my kids. I seek out those who may be sad, needing to talk, or just having a bad day. I'm not afraid to talk about difficult things anymore, especially the things that most people tend to avoid in daily life, such as death and loss, struggling with grief and difficulties with kids or spouses or money or whatever. I just feel like,

we're all dealing with all of this stuff, why not just get it out in the open and talk about it. The bottom line is, **you are not alone!** That is one of the most valuable messages that I feel people take away from being at Good Grief, and it's absolutely true.

What brings you back?

I feel so centered and at peace when I return from support groups on Tuesday. Not because we don't deal with difficult things, and sadness, and crying, because we do, but because we were there to help. It's like we all meet at the darkest place and by the end of the evening we can all see the little light at the end of the tunnel. It's an awesome and inspiring experience, and gives me great strength and hope for the future. Most of all, I come back because when

I am at Good Grief I have the opportunity to see the incredible goodness in people, and what could possibly be better than that?