



This uniquely challenging year generated a multitude of physical and mental health concerns in our community. Several families experienced much grief surrounding the deaths of loved ones. Ridge Junior School in the Lakota Local Schools was familiar with this loss and grief, especially this past year. Many of the students and staff dealt with grief and were supported by the amazing organization, Companions on a Journey (COJ).

COJ provided monthly support groups at Ridge. The year began with approximately 20 members. The groups met over delicious pizza lunch and Takis snacks (favorites of the junior high students). Rich, meaningful conversations sprinkled with connection activities provided healing and growth. Students had a safe space to make connections while learning ways to process grief and celebrate their loved ones. **By the spring, the COJ participants grew to 60 members!**



COJ not only came to the school, but they also reached out to our families in the community. They provided resources to the families who experienced loss and even attended memorial services for these families. **The presence and love of COJ was felt all year!**

Ridge is so very grateful to Faith, Sheila, and all of the interns that supported us this year. **COJ is an organization that all schools and community members can utilize.** This group is educated in grief support and dedicated to making a difference. Their love and commitment are truly felt! We look forward to welcoming COJ back in the fall.

Kelly Carstens
Ridge Junior High School,
Lakota Local Schools



This group has been helpful because I can express my emotions to you even though I can't express it to my friends.

- Middle School Participant

COJ helped me feel less alone and it's helped with learning ways to cope.

- High School Participant

It's been helpful hearing other people's stories so I know I'm not alone.

- Middle School Participant

I like being understood and people having my back.

- Elementary School Participant

I like when we share things and when I know somebody is going through what I am I feel better and that we can help each other!

- Elementary School Participant

COJ just helps overall because it feels better talking about my loss.

- High School Participant



We're here for you!

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2021 Annual Report



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Dear Friends,

As I reflect upon Companions on a Journey's many accomplishments in 2021, I would like to share with you how we reimagined our approach to support the bereaved of our community.

During the pandemic, individuals and families dealt with increased isolation, deprived of the community they once shared with each other. Many of the individuals and families we supported experienced multiple losses due to COVID-19, further complicating their grief.

Initially launched within the first weeks of the pandemic, we continued to offer and refine our virtual programs. Within our adult program, we created grief-specific communities to connect the bereaved with one another. These communities allowed bereaved adults from all over our world to come together to find support, have their feelings validated, and to become equipped with helpful ways to help them discover hope, strength, and healing.

In our school-based program, we created and implemented a multi-tiered support system designed to create a grief-sensitive culture in our school communities. As we began 2021, several schools required us to conduct virtual support groups with students. Thankfully, by the fall of 2021, most schools opened their doors to us and allowed us to resume in-person support groups. Throughout 2021, we continued to provide crisis response support both virtually and in-person to local schools.

Our family support program, Mending Hearts for Grieving Children, Teens, and Families, transitioned back to in-person support in the fall of 2021. **We are thrilled to be back together!** We truly believe a family that grieves together heals together.

COJ was able to provide support thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers who worked above and beyond to care for the bereaved. All of this was made possible thanks to our board members and our gracious donors and sponsors, as together we were able to provide hope, strength, and healing to those in need of our support.

God bless you and thank you,

Executive Director

Overview of Services

School-Based Grief Support Program for K-12

- Monthly Grief Support Groups
- Consultation & Education for Staff and Caregivers
- Crisis Response

Adult Support Programs

- Monthly Grief Support Groups (Loss Specific)
- Open Grief Support Groups
- Social Outings
- Individual Consultation & Crisis Response

Community Programs

- Pathway to Healing Events
- Mending Hearts for Grieving Families

Education & Training

- Grief Education
- Facilitator Training
- Caregiver Education
- Postvention Support

Workplace & Partners

- Education & Trainings
- Grief in the Workplace Resources
- Crisis Intervention & Consulting
- First Responder, Healthcare, and Essential Workers Program

Mission Statement

To provide ongoing support for the bereaved - one child, one teen, one adult, one family at a time - surrounding them with HOPE, STRENGTH, and HEALING as they create their new life balance.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Statement

Grief is the most inclusive experience we know, and at Companions on a Journey we strive to make sure all feel welcome. Unfortunately, grief will hit everyone at some point. Regardless of your color, national origin, ancestries, religion, socioeconomic status, sex/sexual orientation, or disability, we are on a mission to support those who are grieving.

Our goal is to treat everyone we serve equally with the highest regard and respect, without prejudice. Grief does not discriminate and neither do we.

We look forward to serving you.

2021 By the Numbers



+1500
Bereaved
Individuals
Supported



59
Partner
Schools

102

Monthly
School
Groups



10

Adult & Family
Monthly Support
Groups



196
Phone
Calls



19

Responses for
Crisis Support



124
Volunteers

=



5800
Hours

Our volunteers supported COJ in many roles:

- Facilitators for adult and school programs
- Sewers for hearts and bears
- Administrative service and events
- Part-time interns

Board members and volunteers are an integral part of COJ's mission to serve the bereaved!

K-12 School Program | Participant Ethnicity

Caucasian - 59% African American - 20%
Hispanic - 8% Two or More Races - 10%
Other - 3%

K-12 School Program | Person Who Died

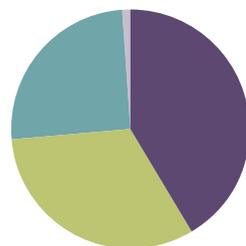
Mother - 18% Father - 27%
Grandmother - 22% Grandfather - 12%
Friend - 4% *Other - 16%

*sibling, cousin, aunt, uncle, great grandparent, and stepfamily member

Revenue & Expenses

INCOME \$308,483

- Special Events **41%**
- Corporate/ Individual Gifts **32%**
- Grants **25%**
- Programs/Training **1%**



EXPENSES \$310,763

- Programming **66%**
- Administration **26%**
- Community Relations & Fundraising **8%**

