



THE HEALING CENTER

2022
*Organizational
Report*

CONTENTS

3

LETTER FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

We need to talk about grief.

4

WHAT WE DO

Our mission and philosophy.

5

BY THE NUMBERS

See The Healing Center's impact.

6-7

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GRIEVE ALONE

Clients tell their stories.

8-9

WHO WE ARE

Meet the people who keep us going.

10-11

THANK YOU

We couldn't do this without you.

FOLLOW US!

—



facebook.com/
thehealingcenterseattle



@the_healing_center_seattle



HealingCenterSeattle



LETTER FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

GRIEF IS IN THE NEWS. For me, this is a good thing. It increases the general population's awareness about what places like The Healing Center do every day. Of course, if an issue is in the news, it's because the topic is going to "sell," which means it resonates with more people. Quite simply, after more than two years of COVID, more Americans have experienced the death of a loved one. The data is tragic.

In addition to increased numbers of bereaved people, diagnosing issues around grief have brought attention to this most basic of human experiences. While there is a deep debate about whether grief should be considered a disorder to be treated, the reality is that some bereaved people are more impacted by their loss than others. The Healing Center does not diagnose the peo-

ple who come to us, and we do not pathologize grief. Some of our basic values — that grief takes as long as it takes, that we don't compare our loss journeys to others' loss journeys, and that griever's don't need advice, they just need to be heard — reflect some of the information that research on grief has theorized. This tells me that The Healing Center is on the right track.

Due to COVID, our services went virtual. This has increased our geographical reach and our ability to serve more bereaved people. We recently increased our capacity to serve more young adults who have experienced the death of a loved one, and more senior adults who have experienced the death of a partner. We reintroduced group support for people who have moved through the earlier shock of their loss and are now processing their new role in the world. We returned youth programming to in-person services. It is a busy and meaningful time of transition, and our organization is exploring how we will move into the future to be effective to the most people.

This work is only possible because of the generosity of our community. Some donors are clients who experienced healing at our groups, some are motivated by their own grief story, and some are compelled to make our community healthier. Will you join us in walking alongside bereaved people? The need has never been greater.

Sonja Whitaker

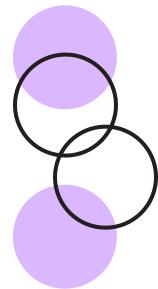
Mission

The Healing Center offers a safe, loving place that honors grief, helping you to move through it and heal. We serve adults, young adults, and children who have experienced the death of a spouse/partner, parent, or sibling. We provide support and guidance on the grieving and healing process. We offer group support as well as programs and activities where you can benefit from the community of people served by The Healing Center. We provide an environment — supported by our community and staff — where you decide when to come, how to grieve, or how long or how often you decide to receive services.

PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of The Healing Center is to provide holistic support to families and individuals who are struggling to cope with the death of a loved one. Our goals are to comfort and support, to meet people where they are, and to provide a safe place where they can do their grief work. It is not necessary to forget our loved ones who have died. We do not need to "let go," but rather integrate their spirit into our lives as we move forward. That means something different for each person, and we support everyone in their own unique way of grieving and healing. We believe that offering a community of people who "get it" allows our clients to find and give comfort as they walk the path toward healing. Ultimately, we hope to support them as they transform their pain into meaning.

OUR SUPPORT GROUPS



SPOUSE/ PARTNER SUPPORT

Early Loss Group

For individuals who have lost their spouse or partner recently, typically within the last 18 months

Transitions Group

For individuals who have lost their spouse or partner and feel that they have moved past the initial stages of grief

Memory Keepers Group

For people 60 and older who have experienced the death of a spouse/partner

Survivors of Suicide

For individuals whose spouse or partner took their own life

YOUNG ADULTS

Young Adult Support Group

For adults approximately 19 to 30 years old who have experienced the death of a parent, friend, or relative

\$557,828

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Ninety

Zip Codes Served

850

Intake Requests

OUR IMPACT

Over the last two fiscal years

425

CLIENTS SERVED

Sixteen

Support Groups

287

New Clients

CHILDREN & TEENS

Little's

Preschool-aged children, around 3 to 5 years old

Healing Club 123

Children in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade

Healing Club 456

Children in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade

Teen Group

Youths in 7th through 12th grade

You Don't Have to Grieve Alone



ANDREW PAYNE WAS 45 when his wife died suddenly, leaving him to parent their children, 12 and 9 at the time, alone.

After the blur of the funeral passed, he found himself analyzing his marriage — the missed opportunities, the future they should have had together. Andrew ended up joining The Healing Center's Early Group, created for adults experiencing recent partner loss. It helped him cope with those initial months of intense grief.

Without the group, "I would have probably spent more time tormenting myself, if I didn't need to pull myself together and be there for my kids," he says.

Andrew spent several months going to group meetings religiously,

"So much of grief on the surface seems so simple and obvious, but the meta processing of it is not obvious," he says. "I feel like society doesn't train us for this. Society doesn't understand us."

Andrew's experience is common, says Sonja Whitaker, The Healing Center's director. "People come to The Healing Center because they're not sure what else to do," Sonja says. Since American culture tends to avoid death, she often hears from clients who feel isolated even from well-meaning friends and family. "You come to us because we're the one place that's going to understand."

This holds true for every age and experience group at The Healing Center. Sylvia Zerba joined the Teen Group after losing her father last year,

when she was 17. "I always come back feeling validated," she says. "I feel like I can relate to them in that certain way, losing a parent. We can talk in depth more about it, whereas with my friends, they don't understand my experience in that way."

So much of grief is logistical. Becca Mostofi, now 32, continues to participate in the Young Adult Group since losing both of her parents a few months apart in 2017. "It's a good place not only to talk about grief-specific emotions, but also a really safe space to talk about grief-adjacent things, like how we handle work stress, or closing our parents' estate, or finding a storage unit for all the stuff we inherited. It's been invaluable."

Becca notes that while most peo-

ple have lost a grandparent, losing a parent at a young age is like having the rug pulled out from under you. The variety of life experience is why The Healing Center runs groups for people at different points in their lives and for different types of grief. "Young adults are still developing their identities in relation to their parents," Sonja says. "When that person is gone, that changes the narrative."

For people who have lost a partner, identity is impacted in other ways. "When a person loses a partner, they're not a co-parent, they're not a spouse, and they struggle — do they still introduce themselves as married?" Sonja says. "It fundamentally changes how you understand yourself."

Nina Triffleman, 68, lost her person to esophageal cancer in 2019. Just two months between diagnosis and death left her unmoored. Nina, who initially found help through a text-based support group, found

The Healing Center when she realized she needed a face-to-face experience. "It was a way to connect with people who knew what I was going through," she says. "I didn't feel like a freak, and I didn't have to barrage the people in my life who weren't going through it." She wanted a non-denominational approach, and when The Healing Center came up in her Google search she knew it would be a good fit. "It sounded very



"So much of grief on the surface seems so simple and obvious, but the meta processing of it is not obvious."

loving, non-judgmental and inclusive," she says.

Importantly, The Healing Center welcomes group members to participate as long as they need to — there's no time limit on services. "What's always been really cool in my opinion, historically people have been able to come and go as needed, because grieving is not a linear process where you're one day done with it," says Becca. "Some people come back after a year, because they're not doing well."

"We meet people where they are at when they come to The Healing Center," says Sonja. "It's a place to talk, to be heard. It may take you a few weeks, a few months, a few years."

Just having a place to share dark thoughts, to vent, or even to make a morbid joke, has been invaluable to Andrew. "So much of therapy is about this — not just for grief, but to viscerally learn you're not alone, and there is a community."



STAFF BIOS

Meet the people who keep The Healing Center going every day.



Sonja Whitaker
*MS, LMFT,
Center Director*

Sonja grew up in a family business, has worked in nonprofits and higher ed, and finally landed in the field of mental health. The roles of wife, mom, daughter, and friend are the most important parts of her life, but the journey to becoming a therapist and walking alongside people as they process trauma, loss, and mental health challenges has made her life even more meaningful. In joining The Healing Center, she gets the opportunity to journey with people through grief, which is the reason she entered the field of mental health.



Lillian Widen
*Program &
Operations Manager*

Originally from California, Lillian moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington. After graduating in 2019, she spent a year serving with City Year, where she worked as a mentor at Rising Star Elementary School in Rainier Beach, helping students to achieve their academic and social goals. Since joining The Healing Center in March of 2021 as part-time administrative support, Lillian has since gotten more involved in The Healing Center's leadership. She is proud to serve now as a full-time program and operations manager.



Mary Jackson
*M. Ed., CC
Program Therapist*

With a bachelor's degree in educational psychology, Mary worked for many years as a counselor in public schools. She first came to The Healing Center as a client after the sudden death of her husband. Recognizing how much The Healing Center's groups helped her, Mary began volunteering with partner loss groups for several years at Camp Erin and Providence grief support programs. She is passionate about The Healing Center's program and feels fortunate to be a clinician for partner loss groups.



Saara Williams-Majid
*MSW, LSWAIC
Program Therapist*

Saara is a multi-lingual therapist whose work is rooted in accessibility and racial justice. Saara received their masters in social work from UW Seattle with a focus in multigenerational family practice, and their BA in social sciences with a focus in gender, race, and ethnicity. They have received honors like the Annual Community Builder Award from MASGD, been named as one of the 2021 Husky 100s at UW, and received an honorable mention for Social Justice Champion at Ryther. Saara hopes to attain their PHD in the near future.



Allison Mastrangelo
*MSW, LICSW, Children's
Program Therapist*

Allison is a licensed clinical therapist with more than 10 years of experience providing clinical and case management services in inpatient and hospital settings, outpatient clinics, schools, and in hospice care. Allison's approach to facilitating groups involves fostering evidence-based psychoeducation through a trauma-informed lens, and encouraging healthy mindsets in healing and rebuilding. She feels incredibly grateful to be working with the wonderful families she meets through The Healing Center.



Jourdan Cruz
*MSW, LICSW,
Program Therapist*

Jourdan is a clinically trained social worker, with specializations in dementia care, geriatrics, and veterans' mental health. He has received training and supervision in cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, brief interventions in inpatient and outpatient settings, as well as grief and bereavement interventions. His therapeutic orientation can be categorized as cognitive-behavioral with positive psychology techniques and motivational interviewing to assist clients in maintaining and improving mental and functional wellbeing.

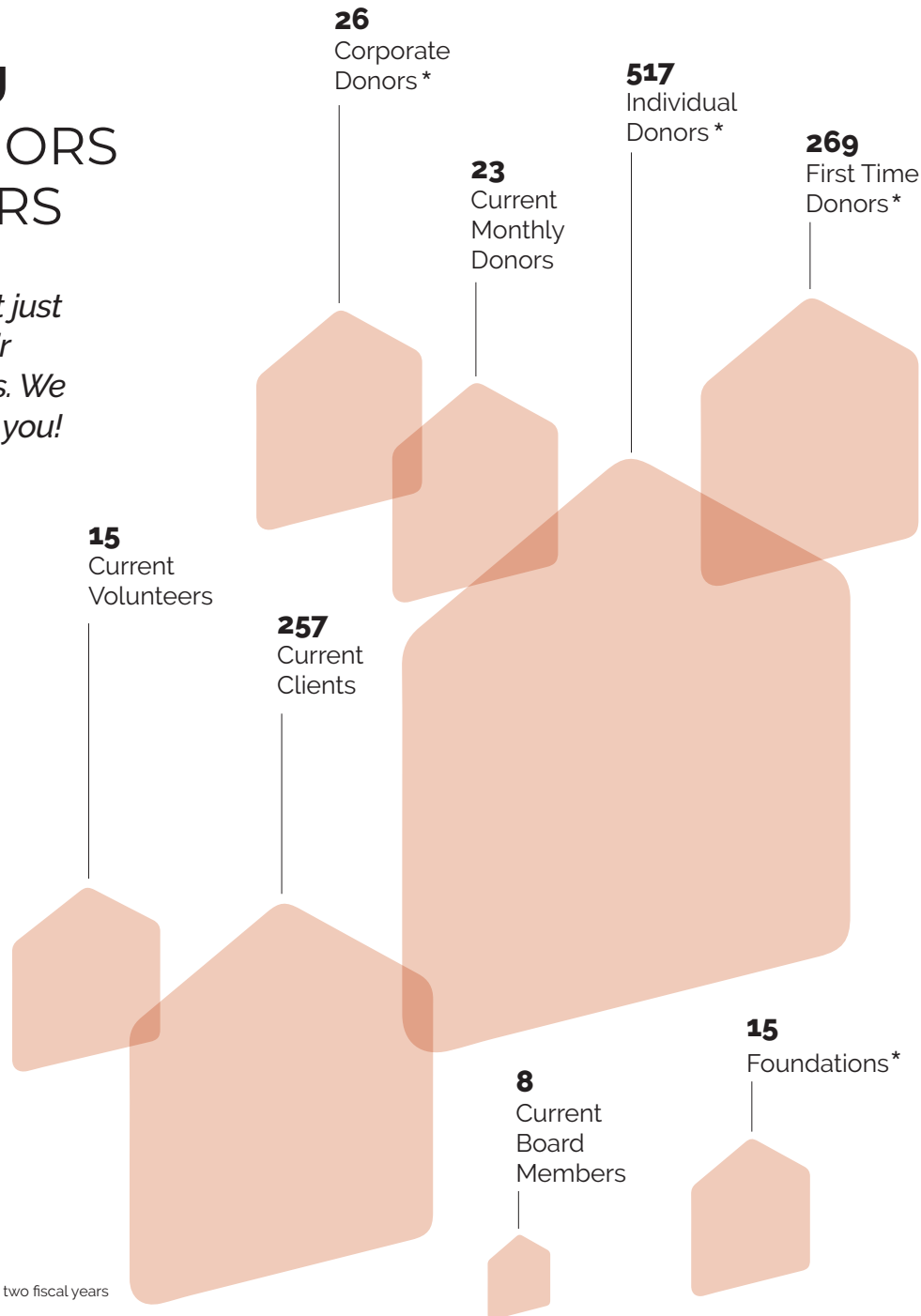


Megan Frisk
*Communications &
Administrative Associate*

Megan is currently completing her certificate in American Sign Language and has plans to get her bachelor's in ASL interpreting. Megan's professional background includes experiences in administrative support, and she is excited to bring those skills to this position in a nonprofit setting. After supporting loved ones through their grief journeys, Megan is passionate about The Healing Center's mission and programming. She values being able to support that programming in her position.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & VOLUNTEERS

So many people support The Healing Center — not just with dollars, but with their time and with their hearts. We could not do this without you!



* Last two fiscal years

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

-
- Kimberly Kelly**
President
- Sidney Blank**
- Brandon Boeke**
- Adam Heffley**
- Amanda Lanzarone**
- Crystal Tetrick**
- Shannon Treverton**
- Maygan Wurzer**



BIG THANKS

The Healing Center Kids show their appreciation for the Center's work.

"I was fortunate enough to have a pretty deep support network around me when I lost Angie, and yet, having access to someone trained and experienced in navigating that level of grief was extremely helpful. There are many amazing charitable organizations out there, and I often find it hard to choose where to deploy resources. I give to The Healing Center because it's a small organization that does so much but goes under the radar."

JIM CAPUTO
Healing Center Donor



THE HEALING CENTER

6522 Fremont Ave N
Seattle, WA 98103

(206) 523-1206

hello@healingcenterseattle.org

www.healingcenterseattle.org