



# Buddy's Place

*A Program for Bereaved Children and Their Families*

## About Volunteering at Buddy's Place

Volunteers are a central part of our program. They are entrusted to provide quality services to the children, teens, and adult caregivers who come to Buddy's Place, a program of Pillars Community Health. We devote special attention to volunteer training. Most of our volunteers are trained as children's support group facilitators; there are also opportunities to contribute in other ways, as described below. We are extremely fortunate to have a group of caring, trained individuals as our volunteers, many of whom have been with us since the inception of Buddy's Place over 18 years ago. Our volunteers tell us they receive as much (or more) from volunteering as they give.

### What are the requirements for volunteering at Buddy's Place?

Our volunteers come to us with a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. They are business professionals, homemakers, teachers, mental health professionals, nurses, educators, retirees and students. Some, but not all, of our volunteers have experienced losses through death as children or adults. Most importantly, they are caring individuals who understand the importance of being present with and providing support to grieving children and their parents/guardians.

Volunteer facilitators are required to attend a direct instruction training program where they learn about grief, children's grief, listening skills, group process, and the Buddy's Place philosophy and program format. Volunteer trainees are also required to attend one Monthly Gathering in addition to the direct instruction. During training, potential volunteers are invited to become aware of their own attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with death and grieving so that they can better determine if volunteering with Buddy's Place is a good fit for them at this time, and what role fits them best.

### What is the time commitment expected?

It varies, depending upon your role. We are very respectful of the fact that our volunteers are busy people with active lives and often hectic schedules. We ask that trained volunteers commit to 1 year of service through a minimum of one 8-Week Session or 4 Monthly Gatherings. Our programs are offered on Monday and Tuesday evenings.

Our 8-week sessions are held on Tuesday evenings in the fall and spring. During the 8-week sessions, our volunteers arrive at 5:00 p.m. and leave at 8:15 pm on 8 consecutive Tuesday evenings. In addition, you will need to spend some time with your co-facilitator during the week, planning each session.

Monthly Gatherings are held on the second Monday of each month, year-round. The time commitment for these Monthly Gatherings is similar (5:00 – 8:15 pm). Volunteers are never expected to volunteer for Monthly Gatherings during the months when they are facilitating or greeting in an 8-week session.

If you're volunteering for speaking, fundraising, special events, or telephoning and clerical assistance, your time commitment will be more on an as-needed and as available basis.

### How do I pursue my interest in volunteering?

Just give me a call at (708)995-3751 or complete the volunteer application and return it to me along with two reference forms.

Thank you for your interest in the program!

Michelle Halm, M.A., M.Ed.

Director, Buddy's Place

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## Reflections from Current Volunteers

***“What would you say to someone who is considering becoming a Buddy's Place volunteer?”***

“Do it – do it! The returns far outweigh the time given. The children are so giving, enthusiastic and strong. They nurture each other while they grow in their grief journey.”

***“If you have ever loved a child, Buddy's Place will afford you the time with a grieving little soul . . . Buddy's Place will humble you into remembering that grief and pain are not just for adults.”***

*“Seven years ago, I thought the work I did during my training as a Buddy's Place facilitator was a special gift to me. Then I began the actual work with grieving families as a volunteer. I really understood the importance of the opportunity to help others along this journey.”*

***“The time invested is so rewarding. For those of us who wish to make a difference in the lives of others, involvement in the work of this program offers a very special chance to do just that.”***

“It's a great opportunity to give back to the community. Who is more deserving than a child who has experienced the death of a parent? It has helped me realize that I can help make that transition a little easier and that's worth my time.”

*“Being a part of the Buddy's Place team is an amazingly uplifting experience. When I tell people that I facilitate in these support groups their thoughts are that it must be a draining and exhausting experience and in fact it's quite the opposite. What is uplifting is that our families are so willing to share their experiences and learn ways to navigate their grief in healthy ways. There is something very beautiful about witnessing the inherent bravery and willingness to reach for something better that we humans all share when confronted with a difficult situation.”*

“It takes you on a journey you would not expect . . . you learn so much about children, grief, families, and you learn to keep your daily trials and tribulations in perspective!”

***“You get back more than you give!”***