

20 Years of Support

Pacific Palisades-Based Nonprofit *griefHaven* is Celebrating its 20th Anniversary and Awards Ceremony



A previous *griefHaven* luncheon



Founder and CEO Susan Whitmore

By SARAH SHMERLING
Editor-in-Chief

Out of darkness came so much light—in fact, 20 years of light, and counting.

Highlands resident Susan Whitmore created nonprofit *griefHaven* in 2003 after the death of her daughter Erika when she could not find the type of grief support she needed. The organization is now honoring 20 years of helping others through their own losses.

“It’s a journey—a lifelong journey,” Whitmore described. “You don’t ‘get over’ losing a loved one. You learn to live with it, and we help you do that.”

griefHaven initially started as a center that provided support groups, individual counseling and a website with resources for those grieving the loss of a child, then expanded its mission to provide grief support and education for all losses.

The organization will host its 20th Anniversary Celebration and

Awards Ceremony—the Heart-to-Heart Gala—on Sunday, November 3, from 5 to 9 p.m. at Skirball Cultural Center.

“Join us in celebration our 20th year as you share and shop—making it possible for *griefHaven* to continue its unique and effective grief support and education for grieving parents, siblings, spouses, families and communities,” read information about the event.

The event will feature a performance by stand-up comedian and actress Caroline Rhea, who is well known for her role as Hilda Spellman in the series “Sabrina the Teenage Witch,” as well as her comedy specials. She also voiced the mom on *Disney*’s series “Phineas and Ferb.”

This year, fellow Palisadian Jacqueline Jacobs Caster—founder and president of Everychild Foundation—will be the recipient of the Peace of Heart Award. The nonprofit operates with a mission to ease “the suffering of children

in the Greater Los Angeles area, whether due to disease, disability, abuse, neglect or poverty.”

The program will also include honoring Palisadian Beth Abrams with the Heart-to-Heart Award for “her many years of supporting *griefHaven*’s mission and her lifelong commitment to providing loving service to organizations she’s passionate about.”

“The death of someone you hold dear is one of life’s most painful and stressful experiences, often taking a person to the darkest and most hopeless of places,” Whitmore wrote in a statement. “Extending a hand of support and service, which is what *griefHaven* does so expertly, is invaluable and always a necessity in all our communities.”

Over the past year, *griefHaven* has been able to provide more than \$35,000 in scholarships for individuals who would not otherwise have been able to afford to attend grief support groups or receive private counseling by

grief experts.

“As one group ends, another group begins, either in person or by Zoom,” Whitmore explained. “so that around the world people who are grieving can be in a group with others who have had the same loss.”

A *griefHaven* group is “more than a talk group,” according to Whitmore: “It’s an actual program that uses diverse tools and resources that have been shown to work for people who are grieving. This program starts off in meeting one and builds upon itself until, at the end of the program, each person not only leaves with specific tools and education about grief, but as a group or individual they have been guided and loved along the grief path.”

The *griefHaven* website also serves as a “loving and educational community,” with more than two million visits per year and thousands of requests for a “Packet of Hope,” which includes “wisdom and well-tested practices to

cope with grief.”

“First responders, medical employees, therapists, businesses, individual facilities, such as the LGBTQ organization, and others also continue to benefit from *griefHaven*’s educational and trauma support resources,” Whitmore added.

Looking forward to 2025, Whitmore said *griefHaven* will “continue to be there for everyone who is deeply entrenched in the grieving process.” Donations will help train additional grief counselors in the *griefHaven* Method. With additional therapists and counselors trained, Whitmore explained, more groups can be formed to get people off of waitlists.

“You can also change the life of someone who has suffered a devastating loss by supporting our scholarship fund so that we may continue to offer grief support groups for all who need them, regardless of their ability to pay,” Whitmore said.

The Friends of *griefHaven*

started with a core group of Palisadians, some of whom had also experienced loss in their lives. The group supports *griefHaven*’s mission and vision through financial contributions, hands-on assistance and yearly fundraising events.

This year’s event is sponsored by Joan and Rob Blackman, Ellie and Bruce Lederman, Linda and Bob Margolis, and Lauren and Austin Fite.

Part of the gala is an auction, with items opening for bidding on Monday, October 21. Anyone can make a bid, regardless if they are attending the gala.

griefHaven has several ways to contribute: by purchasing a ticket to the gala, bidding on the auction, donating or purchasing a ticket that will go to someone who would not otherwise afford to attend.

For additional information—including ways to donate or to purchase tickets to attend the gala—visit griefhaven.org.

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SPUD GEORDI TIME
TEEM PISA TRAVELSLICK
TRIPLECHECK ALE EARLE
NEATIDEA TRICKORTREAT
UPN DION OINKING INRE
TOE EAST RST NEB SEAL
See page 10 for Crossword and Sudoku Puzzles.

SUDOKU SOLUTION

5	4	1	8	6	3	7	2	9
3	6	2	9	7	5	1	8	4
7	8	9	4	1	2	3	6	5
4	9	7	3	5	6	2	1	8
2	3	5	1	4	8	9	7	6
8	1	6	2	9	7	5	4	3
6	7	4	5	3	1	8	9	2
9	5	8	7	2	4	6	3	1
1	2	3	6	8	9	4	5	7

Puzzles4Kids Answers
See page 15 for Kids Puzzles.

CODED RIDDLE
Why don’t mummies take vacations?
hey cannot relax and unwind.

RIDDLE SEARCH

C	T	H	C	A	V	A	W	L	A
A	R	I	V	E	R	B	O	A	
T	N	U	G	B	R	P	L	T	O
A	O	W	Q	E	O	D	A	N	
M	E	O	G	S	E	O	V	O	O
A	L	C	E	B	E	L	S	B	O
R	L	S	A	S	E	S	L	E	T
A	A	R	K	N	U	J	H	C	
N	G	O	N	D	O	L	A	I	O
E	T	A	O	B	R	N	W	O	P

Riddle Answer:
A blood vessel.

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