

# DAVID BRADLEY Children's Bereavement Program

## The Story of Our Children's Bereavement Program

The David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program was established in 1998 in memory of a young man who received help from Wissahickon Hospice as a child.

At age 13, David Bradley, who grew up in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, lost his father to cancer. During that difficult time, Wissahickon Hospice's social worker helped David with understanding his emotions and feelings. This experience had a positive influence on David's personal and professional life. It was his wish that some day he would help children and teens in similar circumstances.

Upon David's untimely death at age 28, his mother remembered how strongly David felt about the hospice's support. David's mother established the children's bereavement program in his memory through the generosity of David's family, friends and colleagues.

*"My mother, along with a local hospice group, encouraged many necessary but often painful discussions with my family. They enabled me to understand what was happening to my father, to hear my father's thoughts about life, and to articulate my own feelings and emotions about losing him."  
— David's reflections from his 1997 graduate school application essay.*

### We Serve Grieving Children and Teens

The David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program helps children and teens cope with the terminal illness and death-related losses of a family member or special person in their lives.

Our comprehensive, ongoing program serves young people from ages 2 – 18 of all developmental levels. All services are free of charge. We offer:

- individual counseling in the home or private setting.
- community outreach.
- educational and resource materials.
- group workshops, upon request.

Mrs. Doris Bradley-Plager with some young friends enjoying Popcorn Day at the Phillies, an annual fund-raising event for the children's bereavement program.



### About Wissahickon Hospice

Wissahickon Hospice provides comfort and support services to terminally ill adults and their families in communities throughout Philadelphia and surrounding areas.

Wissahickon Hospice's team of nurses, social workers, home health aides, pastoral counselors and trained volunteers work with the patient's physician and primary caregiver to care for terminally ill patients at home. Bereavement support services are available to survivors for one year following the patient's death.

#### How to Contact Us

To contact the David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program, call the program coordinator at 1-800-700-8807.

For more information about Wissahickon Hospice, call 1-800-700-8807, visit our website at [pennhealth.com/hospice](http://pennhealth.com/hospice), or e-mail [hospice@uphs.upenn.edu](mailto:hospice@uphs.upenn.edu).

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Grief Support for Children and Teens

Wissahickon Hospice

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*"It's good to know I can still call (my counselor) when I feel sad, even two years after my grandmother's death."*

*— 15-year-old girl discusses her feelings after the death of her grandmother.*

## The Need for Children's Grief and Bereavement Counseling

It is estimated that at least two students in the average classroom at any time are grieving the death of someone, including a parent, grandparent, sibling, teacher, relative, friend or fellow student.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 1 out of 20 American children under age 15 has lost one or both parents to death.<sup>2</sup>

Research suggests that unresolved or unexplored grief during childhood may influence higher degrees of depression, panic disorders, anxiety or suicidal thoughts in adults.<sup>3</sup>

The David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program recognizes that outreach and support of children and teens in their initial grief may help these young people successfully deal with recurring grief.

The need for grief support is growing. In 2004, for example, our program made contact with more than 750 children and their families through individual visits, telephone calls, mailings, and pre- and post- bereavement referrals.

1. Lawhon, Tommie. Teachers and schools can aid grieving students. *Education*, Spring 2004, v124 i3, p559(8).  
2. Steen, K.F. (1998). A comprehensive approach to bereavement. *The Nurse Practitioner*, 23(3), 54-62.  
3. Goldman, Linda. Counseling with children in contemporary society. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, April 2004 v26 i2 p168(20).

## Individual Counseling

Our program's licensed social worker provides individual counseling services — primarily through home visits — to children who have a family member under Wissahickon Hospice's care. We offer counseling services before and after the death of the child's loved one. Our counselor also provides surviving parents or guardians with support to address the child's grief. Consultations with health care or social service professionals in the community are also available upon request.

## Community Outreach and Education

Part of the mission of the David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program is to provide the community with educational materials and support services to encourage discussion and provide methods for children and teens to understand their emotions after the death of a special person in their lives.

*Our children's bereavement counselor is available as a resource for:*

- teachers and school counselors.
- community and non-profit groups.
- churches and school seminars.
- speaking or lecture programs.

In addition, individually designed workshops are available upon request. Workshops include age-appropriate activities such as art projects, memory books, and journaling.

*"As we sat together in the evening after the counselor had met with my children and given them activity books, my seven-year-old suddenly commented that she needed her book. She looked at it briefly, remembering what had been discussed that afternoon, and smiled."*

*— Mother of two young girls, ages 7 and 9. Their father was dying with cancer.*

*"The children's bereavement counselor was a fabulous resource for me as my two young children were preparing to say good-bye to their grandfather. The counselor always listened to my concerns, reassured me and validated that I was doing the best thing."*

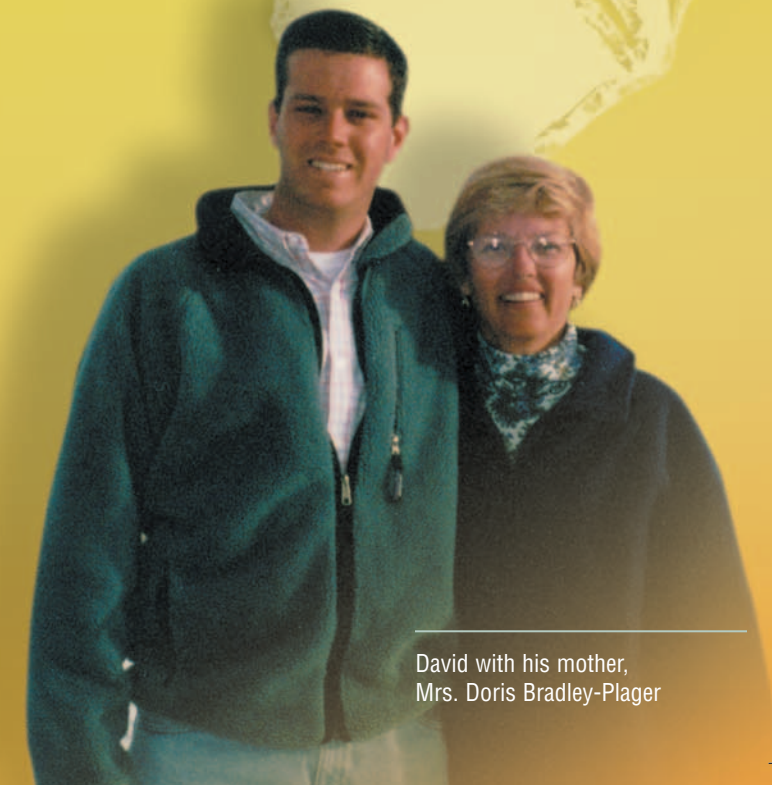
*— Mother of two young boys, ages 9 and 11, whose grandfather was cared for by Wissahickon Hospice.*

## Making a Difference

The David Bradley Children's Bereavement Program is a valuable and unique community resource available to children and teens at no cost to the families. The program is funded through the generosity of:

- individuals.
- memorial contributions.
- community groups.
- local businesses and corporations.
- grants and foundation support.

Wissahickon Hospice also sponsors special events and fund-raisers throughout the year to support the children's bereavement program. To learn more or to receive mailings about our events, please contact the hospice's development coordinator at 1-800-700-8807.



David with his mother,  
Mrs. Doris Bradley-Plager