

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

*for friends and
supporters of Tides*

Tides™



GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMMING
FOR CHILDREN, TEENS,
AND ADULTS



Tides™



GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND ADULTS

Mission

Provide a grief support system to children, teens, and adults.

Vision

Form a community of individuals who know they do not need to grieve alone.

Commitment

Connect individuals by providing grief support to children, teens, and adults by hosting peer support groups, educational and guidance sessions, providing crisis response support, and additional resources to provide hope and encouragement to families.

Board of Directors

Mike Berrena
Karen Brown, MD
Leslie B. Finton, MSW, Chair
Mandy Hartley, Secretary
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Jeanne Knouse
R. Clair Miller, Treasurer
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Julia Rater
Ashleigh Shetler
Matthew Shetler

Tides Staff

Holly Oxendale, Executive Director
Evelyn Wald, Program Director
Angie Kempf, Program and Outreach Manager

Tides in 2021

200

In 2021, Tides supported more than 200 adolescents and adults when tragedies struck our community.

21

hours of crisis support.



80

Educated and guided over 80 individuals and professionals on how to best support others through the grief journey.

105

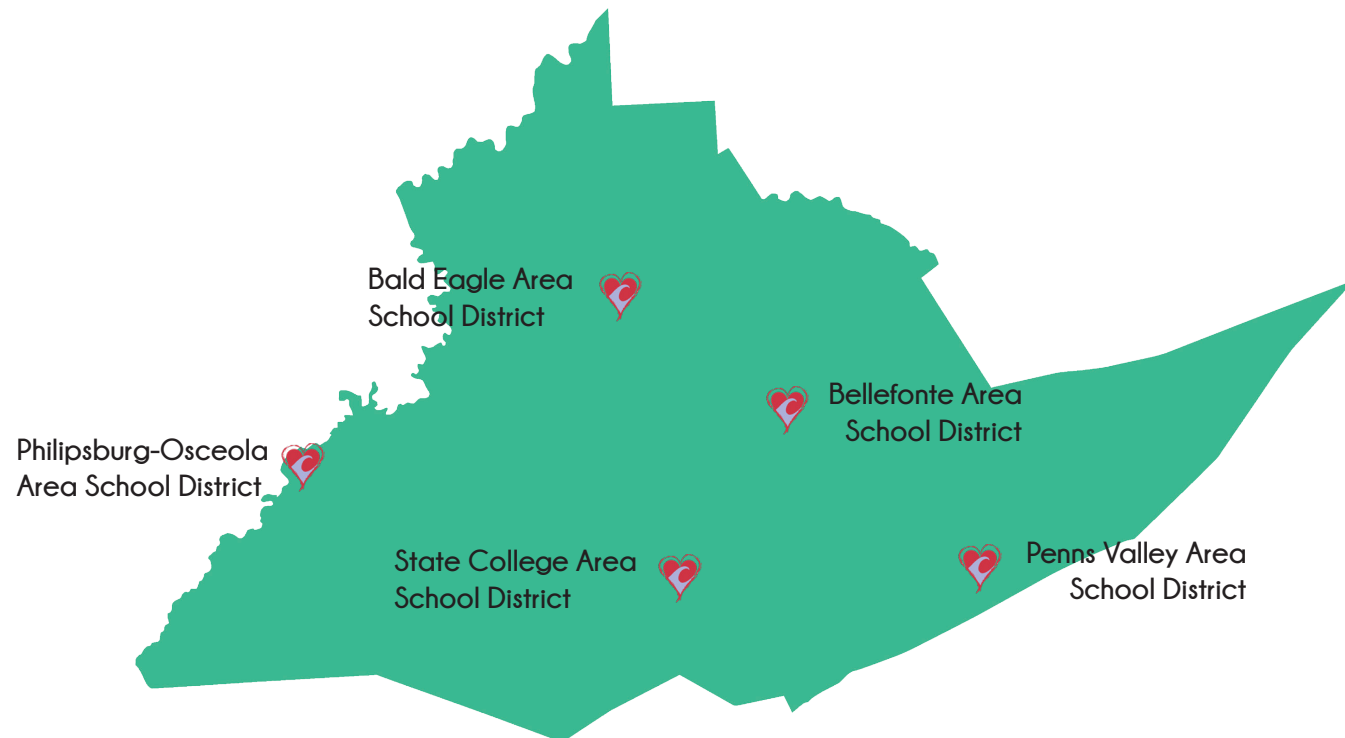
More than 105 children, teens, and adults supported through

67 virtual support groups

11 in person support groups

Immediate Needs in School Programming

When the pandemic impacted our area, the need for grief support in our local school districts quickly became apparent. Thanks to the support of our community, Tides started school-based grief and loss peer support groups throughout Centre County in January 2022. We currently are hosting six in-school groups and supporting more than 35 students. We anticipate our school-based programming to increase as the 2022-2023 school year begins.



A Night at Tides

by Christen Bell

Ask anyone who has participated in Tides nights—and I've asked many—it's the people who make the difference. The Tides staff provide support and comforting touch points throughout the year, the volunteers serve graciously and lovingly, and the participants welcome every individual with the understanding and acceptance that only someone with an experiential bond can offer.

As a writer who has worked on the last three Tides newsletters, I have had the pleasure to speak with Tides staff, volunteers, donors and participants. It didn't take long to see the common thread of genuine people that draws each of them to Tides. Most recently, I was able to chat with some individuals at Tides night, including the little ones. Their circumstances were heartbreaking—the tragedies of illnesses and accidents claiming

lives with unexpected force and finality. Yet, what I found in the brave individuals willing to speak with me caught me slightly off guard—sadness, yes, but not self-pity; grief, yes, but not bitterness. And while I do believe that each of these individuals has indeed experienced the tumultuous darkness of outliving a loved one—where bitterness, self-pity, anger and questions plague them—I also believe fully that Tides is a place where they say exactly that. And when those truths are met with empathy and compassion, understanding and comradery, the healing process has room to begin.

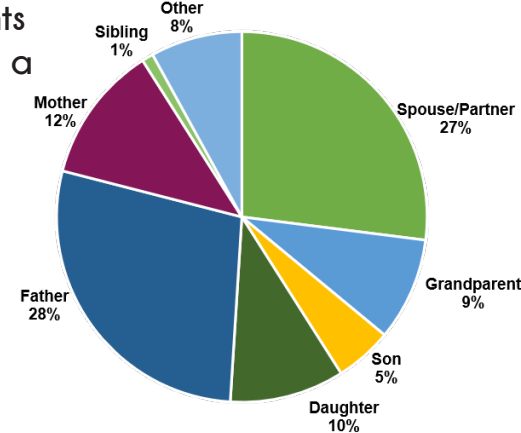
I've been told the grieving process never ends; that it's a lifelong journey. And I believe that's why Tides night participants, be them newcomers or longtime attendees, find a sense of peace in their meetings. I believe they feel the message of Tides embraces them with a truth that rings long after Tides night ends. They are reminded they do not have to grieve alone and they're welcome no

matter how long or short their grief journey has been. I believe they leave feeling better than when they walked in because they felt heard, cared for and known.

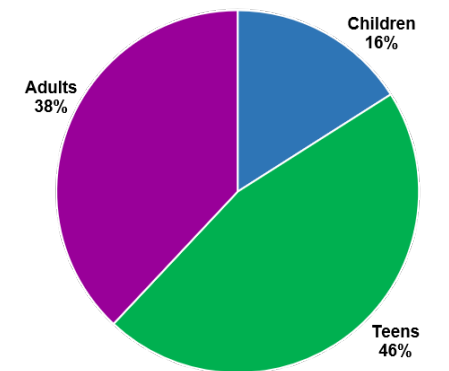
That's why an eight-year-old girl now living life without her dad, can tell me she feels sad when she leaves Tides night. Why? The answer to me seemed obvious as I asked. But her response brought a smile to my face that matched the one she had the entire time: "Because that means it's over."



Families and individuals come to Tides Nights to find support from a variety of losses.



Through Tides nights and crisis response, Tides supports individuals of all ages.



1 in 12

children in Pennsylvania will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18

8.3% ~ 220K

children will be bereaved by age 18
HIGHER than national rate of 7.3%

DOUBLES

537K

youth will be bereaved by age 25

17TH

CBEM RANKING BY STATE[†]

For more info about the CBEM and additional national and state data visit judishouse.org/CBEM

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A Legacy of Kindness



thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” To those who knew him best, these things embody who David was. In his father’s own words: “David was a wonderful young man, very kind, very caring, considerate and respectful.” David didn’t just serve, he served with excellence and he served gladly. He set an example for both his peers and those who may have exceeded him in years if not in wisdom. He has truly left behind a legacy of service to all who knew him.

Crystal Nations, David’s aunt, recounted how she used to pick David up after school to take him to work—further evidence of his hardworking nature from a young age—and one particular day he ran behind. As she anxiously awaited him, fretting over the time and wondering where he was, he finally came into view. David was carrying several things, hands full and walking next to a young girl. He walked to her car and loaded the belongings he carried before getting into Crystal’s car and explaining his delay. The young girl wasn’t someone he knew, she was just someone who needed a helping hand. After seeing a bully knock her belongings out of her hands, David offered his assistance, picking things up for her and

walking her to her car. While this requires bravery and kindness at any age, it is exemplary for a middle schooler.



some of Tides social events last summer as well as some of the virtual Tides nights. The grief in David’s family is still raw and virtual nights have been a gift when walking out the door to attend hasn’t yet felt attainable. The support offered in the virtual meetings has been helpful in their grieving process.

“This is something that no one can

David was an exceptional child and teenager—hardworking, generous and compassionate, he spent much of his time in service of others. He volunteered at the Builder’s Association of Central PA, State College Downtown Rotary, Center for Volunteers in Medicine and as a junior firefighter where he was named Rookie of the Year in 2020 for the Port Matilda Volunteer Fire Company. He gave freely and selflessly to those in need and always exuded a compassion and wisdom beyond his young years.

David struggled with depression and his family chose to honor his memory by requesting that those who knew him spread awareness about suicide and mental illness on their social media pages in hopes that others will find the help they need. Sadly, suicide rates are rising among teenagers. On January 18, 2022, David’s best friend, Brandon Koppenhaver, Jr. died by suicide, just one year after David’s passing.

Tides Involvement

As part of Tides crisis support, the staff was able to connect with David’s family to offer support after his passing. Don was familiar with Tides having seen them active when needed in the community and Boy Scouts. Since then, David’s mother, Laurie, and aunt, Crystal, participated in

“Ever since he was a young child, we always called him an old soul because of how he conducted himself,” said Don O’Connell, David’s father. “He always acted more than his age.”

David was also a Boy Scout with State College Troop 32 who held to every value set forth in their law: “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful,

possibly comprehend or understand unless you’ve actually experienced it,” Crystal said. “When you talk to other people that are going through the same thing, they understand. They know.”

Knowing what it’s like to experience the death of a loved one is not a situation one ever hopes to know, yet for all those willing to share their stories, make relationships or sit in on a Tides night, the gift of comradery is irreplaceable.

“Just knowing that no matter what it is you’re feeling, it’s okay and it’s normal...It’s something you’re never going to get over, you just learn how to carry it,” Crystal said. “And the support we’ve gotten through the people involved in the support group at Tides have helped us to be able to carry it a little better.”

Tides is full of individuals willing to sit with others knowing their words may be many or few, and offering the presence of shared experience. As with many individuals who participate in Tides, the relationships made extend beyond the every other week meetings. Crystal and Laurie have been able to find friendship and community among the group.

What to Know About Coming to Tides

If you or someone you know is considering attending Tides for support, there are some important things to know: there are no expectations and there’s no judgment. “If you want to come and just listen, you don’t have to say anything or do anything. Sometimes just being there and listening to other people’s stories is helpful,” Crystal said. “But there are no expectations. It’s somewhere you can come and say and feel whatever it is you need to say and feel and there’s no judgement, just support and kindness.”

There is Help



There is Hope

Suicide is not caused by one single event. It most often occurs when stressors and mental health issues collide to create a feeling of despair and helplessness. Depression is a common condition associated with suicide and sadly is often undiagnosed or untreated.

If a friend or family member is battling depression and is at risk or considering suicide, it is imperative to have an open and honest conversation. Talk with them in private, listen, tell them you care, be calm and non-judgmental, encourage them to seek professional help, do not minimize their stress or problems, and ask them if they’re thinking about suicide.

When someone you know is considering suicide, it is important to take them seriously. Work with them to keep them safely away from lethal means, such as drugs and firearms. Stay with them as they seek professional help through crisis support helplines or hospital emergency rooms. Continue to be present following the crisis.

More information can be found at The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (afsp.org).

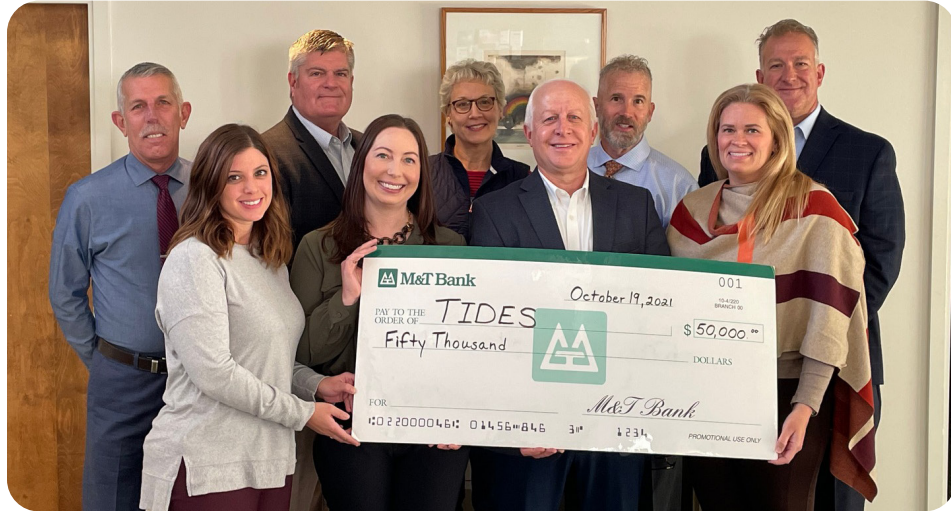
Suicide Prevention Resources
Centre County Crisis
1-800-643-5432

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line
text PA to 741741

The Trevor Project
1-866-488-7386

Nationwide Philanthropy with a Local Community Mindset



Back row: (L to R) John Heichel, Kevin Lantzy, Meg Moose, Terry Powers, and Darryl Owen. Front row: (L to R) Holly Oxendale, Kelly Ernico, Mark Stevenson, Tina Powers

The incredible philanthropy of M&T Bank is making a difference for good in communities across the country, including our very own Happy Valley. The local M&T Bank has supported Tides for 15 years and continues to do so because of Tides mission to support all individuals affected by grief and the great need for grief support in our community.

M&T Bank's charitable giving mission states: "Healthy communities are the foundation of successful businesses. The M&T Charitable Foundation works in partnership with non-profit organizations that focus on improving the quality of life for our customers, employees and neighbors. **Our decisions are made locally, by the people who know their communities best.**"

In 2020, M&T Bank contributed nearly \$35 million to more than 2,800 non-profit organizations across eight states and the District of Columbia. In order to get down to the local communities, there is a process that begins with an overall charitable committee who designates dollars for the whole bank, which is then sent out to regions—in the case of State College, that region is Williamsport—and then it filters down to specific branches.

The State College branch is given a budget and a local committee looks at all of the requests that come in, and makes submissions for final approval. **In 2020, M&T Bank contributed more than \$450,000 to 90 nonprofit organizations in the Northern Pennsylvania region.**

The process of selecting organizations to receive funding is both thoughtful and methodical.

"As a group we get lots of requests," said Senior Wealth Financial Advisor and Tides Board Member Tina Powers. "We'd love to help everyone, but at end of the day we help as many as we can."

One criteria is that the group be a non-profit. From there, they consider both value and need in the community, and that is where Tides shines.

"When we look at the scope of who Tides serves, it's not just kids, it's everyone," Tina said. "It's an organization that's inclusive of anyone who has suffered loss. We talk about the greatest impact and it's not about our name in lights, it's how these dollars could be stretched the furthest and have the greatest impact on our community."

M&T has had a board member on the Tides Board of Directors since

their giving began, which provides a deeper involvement and great vested interest to see the organization fulfill its mission. Tina is the current M&T representative on the board and she has seen first-hand the impact Tides makes on the community—both as a board member and community member who has lost a loved one.

When Tina lost her mother to Covid-19 in November 2020, the Tides staff reached out to offer support. Evelyn Wald followed up two or three times and when Tina was ready to talk, she responded.

"She was just sitting in the wings, ready, and I knew she was there," Tina said. "It's knowing people out there care, and with her experience she knows how to handle things in a nonthreatening way."

Through her own experience and affiliation with Tides, Tina doesn't hesitate to recommend the organization to friends or family who need grief support. She's even accompanied friends to help them take the first step of attending, but after the first time, Power says, they're so comfortable, they don't need her to go back with them.

"It's a casual atmosphere and you're walking into a place where people know what you've been through and they can relate to loss," Tina said. "Your heart is so full when you leave."

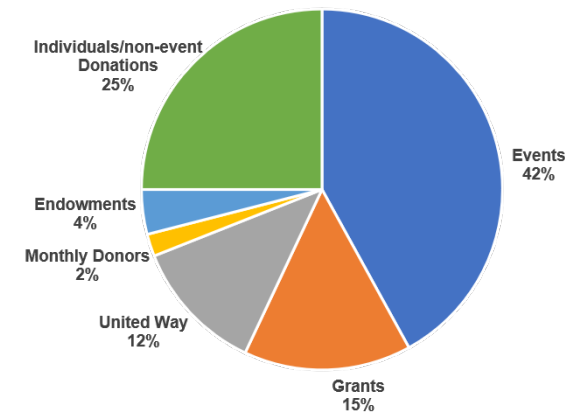
Tina recognizes another reason the program is so successful is because people walk in to Tides night and see the same faces. The staff and volunteers are invested in the program and helping people and they stick around. When you go to Tides night and you're surrounded by familiar faces, caring peers and comforting words, the love is palpable and it's not easily forgotten.

Thanks to M&T Bank's faithful giving, **Tides has received more than \$50,000** and our community is changed because of it. We are continually grateful for the charitable mission of the national company and the generosity and steadfast giving from the local branch.

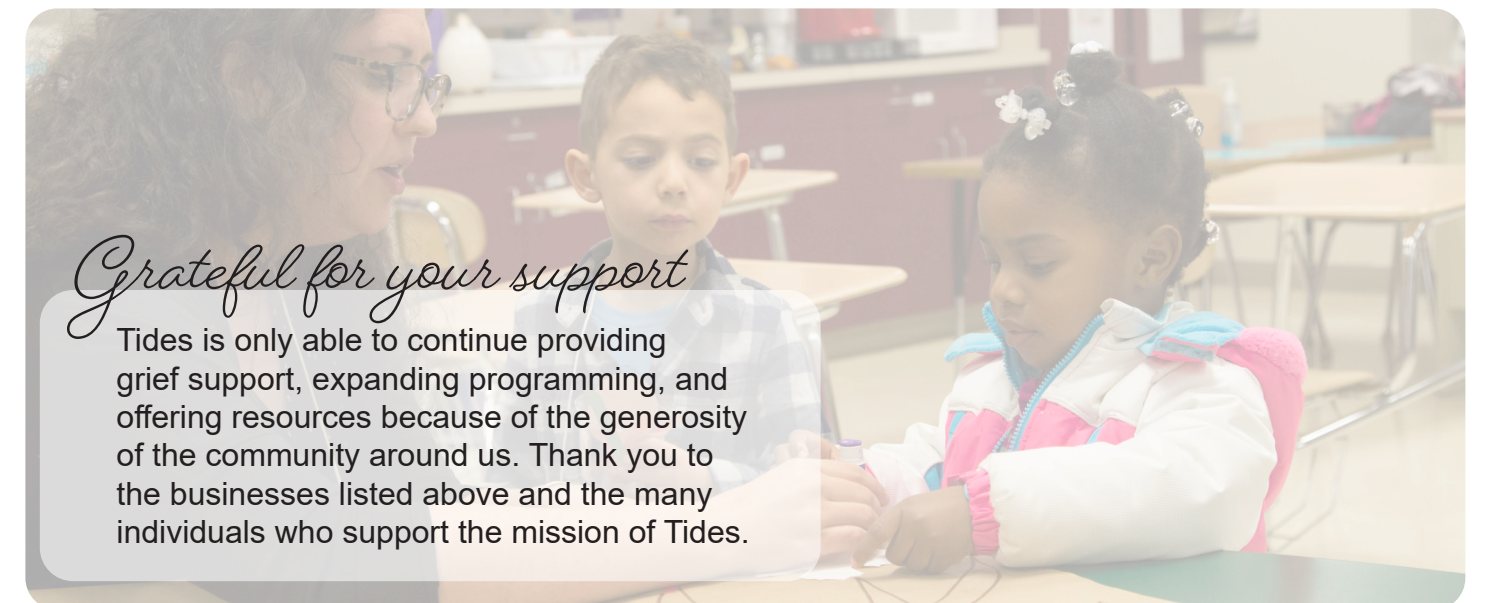
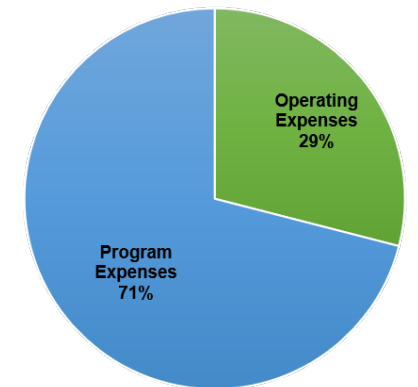
Thank You to Our 2021 Community Partners

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| Amazon Smile | Gardners Candies | Restek |
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| Axemann Brewery | The Hamer Foundation | Shamrock Appraisal and Consulting Services |
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| Centred Basketball | Kranich's Jewelers | State College Wild Baseball Team |
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How funds are donated



Fund allocation



Grateful for your support

Tides is only able to continue providing grief support, expanding programming, and offering resources because of the generosity of the community around us. Thank you to the businesses listed above and the many individuals who support the mission of Tides.

Meet the Tides Team



Holly Oxendale
Executive Director

Fun Facts: Holly is married with three daughters. She and her family enjoy time together, traveling and exploring the outdoors.

Holly joined Tides as executive director in 2018. Her background in management and fundraising initially drew her to the position, but her passion for helping others and meeting the needs of the community are why she ultimately landed at Tides.

"It means a lot to be able to help our community, and being part of an organization that's supporting others is extremely important to me."



Angie Kempf
Program and Outreach Manager

Fun Facts: Angie and her husband met at Penn State and have been married 18 years. They have two daughters heavily involved in competitive swimming where Angie volunteers her time.

Angie started in January 2022 and is the newest member of the Tides staff. Her background in mental health case management and non-profit work make her a valuable addition to the team, and her genuine desire to see Tides reach schools across the county is already driving Tides' mission forward.

"I knew I only wanted a job that would be meaningful and a good fit, and I've already said a couple times that I love my job."

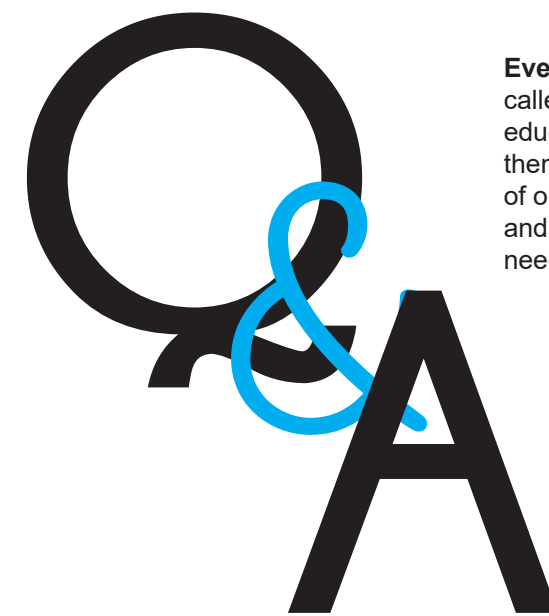


Evelyn Wald
Program Director

Fun Facts: Evelyn is an avid walker and endurance cyclist with energy to match the kids she works with at Tides.

Evelyn has been with Tides since it started over 19 years ago. A self-proclaimed "kid in a grown up body," Evelyn joyfully anticipates her time facilitating the 8 and under age group at Tides, as well as her other support roles as part of the organization. Ask anyone about their story with Tides and there's no doubt Evelyn is part of the story!

"I can't imagine my life without Tides in it... It's just a pleasure being with the kids and being with the volunteers and honoring the courage that all of our families have to come and engage in their grief journey."



Evelyn: We have an annual event called Grief Matters that's targeted for educators and professionals to help them better understand grief. It's part of our larger efforts to provide training and education to organizations that need it.

What are some examples of crisis support Tides has provided?

Evelyn: Tides has an incredible reputation in the community, so when there's a crisis we are contacted. One of the staff will get a call and we go in and support folks. We've gone into schools or local groups when someone dies and offer our support to both children and adults. We go into schools or any other organization or business that asks. We have provided support at a local gymnasium after the death of a coach, schools after the death of a teacher or student, and scout groups after the death of a scout.

What are some things going on at Tides right now? What are some ways you're providing support?

Holly: We started back in 2003 doing our peer support groups and at its core, that's Tides. We're also providing educational and guidance sessions to schools and organizations in our area. We're increasing school programming now that Angie has joined, and we offer crisis support following a death. We also have a resource library full of books and info for families to take home if they want to, and are working on "Bags of Hope" to be available for students if they've experienced a loss.

Angie: We're very excited to be getting into the schools. We're starting a support group at Mount Nittany Middle School, Marion-Walker Elementary School, and are on track to do so at Bellefonte Elementary, Penns Valley Junior and Senior High, and Philipsburg-Osceola Schools. The responses from the schools have been really positive and they're welcoming this partnership and really making it a priority.

Angie: For my role a goal will be to have the grief-specific toolboxes for the counselors in all the schools in our county and increased amount of peer support groups and continued connections with schools, and we are thankfully already on our way to seeing that happen.

Final Thoughts

Angie: I truly enjoy each day working at Tides and am so grateful for the opportunity. Holly and Evelyn are amazing and the families that I have met are really wonderful people. It's so fulfilling to work for an organization that does so much good and one in which I truly believe in the mission. I'm so excited to be a part of the new initiative to bring support to schools in our community by providing resources and education to school staff and to facilitate school-based peer support groups.

Dreaming Big: A Home for Tides

One of the large, long-term dreams for Tides is its own space. Since Tides started it has been in basements, offices and garages of staff and volunteers and it continues to be the way staff gets things done! The group that now fills up Mount Nittany Middle School's cafeteria and utilizes 10 classrooms on Tides nights started out in a counselor's office and faculty break room. There's no denying the growth Tides has seen and with more outreach and awareness, it will continue to grow. Holly, Evelyn and Angie would love to have a comfortable space to welcome families into when there is an immediate need for support and to host the Tides nights at their own facility.





P.O. Box 1251 • State College, PA 16804

“Tides has definitely helped my children. They go to school and they have peers who do not know what it’s like to lose a parent or a loved one. They get to come here and be with children who have lost a loved one. It’s the only place they have that bond. I have noticed a change with them since they started coming to Tides. They’re more at peace with sharing. They don’t feel like they have to hide the fact that their mom is dead....” - Tides’ Dad



GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND ADULTS

Looking for support? Contact us at
(814) 692-2233 · info@tidesprogram.org
tidesprogram.org

Tides is a proud partner agency of

