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Michigan's First Lady Sue Snyder to serve as spokesperson for grieving children

Raising awareness for the need to support grieving children

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan's First Lady Sue Snyder will serve as a statewide spokesperson for grieving children in Michigan. First Lady Snyder joined Ele's Place, a healing center for grieving children in Lansing and Ann Arbor, today in announcing her new role to help raise awareness of the needs of grieving children and the launch of a website designed to provide assistance to families through the state seeking information on how to support grieving children.

"I am honored to be part of a statewide public awareness campaign for grieving children throughout Michigan," Mrs. Snyder said. "It is devastating when children lose a parent or sibling, and they need compassionate support programs. I've seen how Ele's Place provides children the opportunity to share their grief with others their age, helping them cope and begin to heal. Ele's Place makes a profound difference in the lives of grieving children."

For 20 years in Lansing and four years in Ann Arbor, Ele's Place has been providing grief support programs, at no cost, to children and families who have experienced the death or life-threatening illness of a loved one. In addition, Ele's Place serves as a resource and referral agency, providing guidance for newly bereaved families, professional referrals, information and trainings for people who come in contact with grieving families. All services are provided at no charge.

"We are proud that Michigan's First Lady Sue Snyder will be a spokesperson for Michigan's grieving children, spreading the message that grieving children need support and there are programs to help them," said Laurie Baumer, president and CEO of Ele's Place. "Children who do not resolve the difficult issues around grief and loss are at risk to themselves and to society, now or as adults. Unresolved childhood loss is often linked with depression, violence, truancy, school failure, substance abuse and suicidal tendencies. By supporting grieving children who are at risk of developing these complications and providing them with life coping skills, the potential social, emotional and health problems associated with unresolved grief can be minimized."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, **one in 20 children** under the age of 18 will experience the death of a parent. In Michigan, that statistic represents more than **117,000 children grieving a parent's death**, while thousands more grieve the death of a sibling or other loved one. Surveys