2023

Capital Region

Impact Report

Ele's Place







Kristine Kuhnert
Branch Director
Ele's Place – Capital Region



Dear Friends,

We are proud to share the incredible impact of your support on our Ele's Place families in 2023. To the best of our knowledge, Ele's Place is the only center in the United States offering weekly, in-person, peer-to-peer grief support services for children and teens. Over the years, we have touched the lives of more than 33,000 individuals in the Capital Region. That is double the number of seats in MSU's Breslin Center.

This is what you helped us accomplish in 2023 at Ele's Place – Capital Region:

- **Expanded Reach:** Served an additional 175 individuals from 2022.
- **On-Site Programming:** Supported 870 individuals.
- **School-Based Programs:** Supported 318 students through Ele's Group.
- **Clinical Consultations:** Provided to 774 individuals beginning the grieving process.
- **Community Support:** Offered off-site clinical support to 50 individuals in response to the death of a community member.
- **Grief Resources:** Provided Grief Toolkits, Backpacks, and our manual "Helping Grieving Students at School" to more than 86 partner schools in the Capital Region.

At one of our recent events, we heard the stories of Katie and Jessica, two former Ele's Place participants who attended weekly groups with their children. Katie shared that despite her 15 years of experience as a probate and estate planning lawyer, nothing could have prepared her for the profound pain she and her then five-year-old daughter Genevieve felt when her mother, Maureen, died. Jessica offered a glimpse into the profound growth and resilience her children, Hannah, Mason, and Aubrey, experienced as they navigated the death of their father, Jeremy, with the support of Ele's Place.

Katie and Jessica's experiences are similar to so many we hear every day. They serve as a poignant reminder of how vulnerable we can be in the face of loss and how invaluable a space like Ele's Place can be in equipping children, teens and families with the tools to manage and express their grief.

Your generous financial support and unwavering commitment to our mission are invaluable to us. With your help, we can continue to ensure that no child or teen grieves alone. We are truly grateful for your partnership.

With gratitude,

Kristine Kuhnert

Kristine
Branch Director, Ele's Place – Capital Region

Jennifer Wolfe Howard, LMSW
President/CEO
Ele's Place



Dear Supporters,

Thank you for your interest in the mission of Ele's Place. Betsy and Woody Stover founded our organization in 1991 after the death of their daughter, Helen Louise "Ele" Stover. The idea was simple, but profound: Kids of all ages grieve, and by acknowledging and giving them a safe space to express their grief, we can enable them to effectively move through their healing journeys. At Ele's Place, children and teens have the opportunity to talk to others their age who truly understand what they are going through. They have the space to express their feelings in age-appropriate ways through words, art and play.

At Ele's Place, "all feelings are OK." Because even though there are tears, there is also an abundance of joy and laughter — joy that comes from the connections made here!

Over the past three decades, Ele's Place has established a large footprint in Michigan, proudly serving over 3,100 individuals in 2023 alone. Thanks to the generosity of our volunteers and donors, we have provided grief support services to over 43,000 individuals since we opened our doors.

In 2023, Ele's Place staff and volunteer leadership completed a new strategic plan for the organization, which will serve as our north star through 2026. Our areas of focus will be programs; communications; operational excellence; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and fundraising. This plan is a collaborative effort that will help us on the path toward our vision of ensuring no child or teen in Michigan grieves alone.

We are thankful to each of you — our supporters, advocates, volunteers, donors and friends — for all you do! We would not be here to serve our communities without your passion and generosity. Thank you to Betsy and Woody Stover and family for your vision and for establishing this magical place. Thank you to our families for sharing your hearts and your stories! It is our honor to be a small part of your journeys.

With immense appreciation,

Jennifer Howard, LMSW
President/CEO, Ele's Place

Total Served in 2023

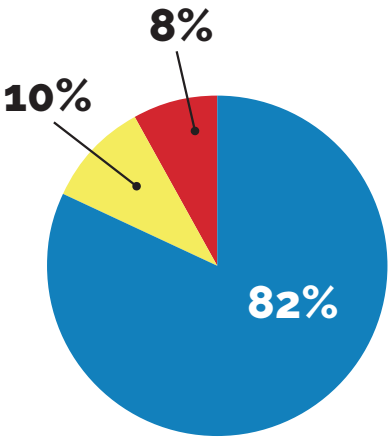
FAMILY-BASED SUPPORT GROUPS – 870 PEOPLE (450 CHILDREN/TEENS & 420 ADULTS)
Family-based programming offered on-site at our healing center. Provides peer grief support to children and teens ages 3-18, with optional support group for their parent/guardian.

SCHOOL GROUPS – 318 STUDENTS AT 30 SCHOOL PARTNERS
Peer support groups within the school setting, primarily in middle and high school. Conducted in partnership with school clinical staff. Ele's Place school-based staff conducted three onboarding meetings with current or future school partners.

CLINICAL CONSULTATIONS – 774 PEOPLE
Clinical staff members provide families who are grieving with individual guidance and support upon request. In addition, they assist parents/guardians in helping their children through the grief process with helpful information, guidance and intake meetings prior to participation in our family-based program. Includes the initial intake appointment for families.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH – 378 PEOPLE
Community awareness presentations, clinical workshops and Tours of the Heart. All services are provided free of charge to families, schools and all members of our community.

2023 Expenses



Nonprofit industry standards state that 70% or more of donor dollars should be spent on programs. Ele's Place takes great pride in being good stewards of your dollars.

- Program
- Fundraising
- Administration

Magic Happens In This Space

Volunteers Share What Ele's Place Means to Them



Merry pictured center

"By the time my son was 15 years old, he had lost 12 people close to him and was terribly depressed. After several months of talking to him about Ele's Place, I finally convinced him to go to one session. Two years later, he finally "closed," saying that Ele's Place saved his life. As a mother, I will always be grateful to Ele's Place, the staff and the volunteers for giving me my son back. This is why I will always desire to be involved in Ele's Place."

— Merry Donn

"I first got involved with Ele's Place 12 years ago when my niece's dad passed away. It was a time of great uncertainty and turmoil. Molly Day, a friend of the family who worked at Ele's Place at the time, immediately reached out to offer support and resources to our family. The unique part was that my sister lived in Las Vegas and attending Ele's Place in person was not an option. Molly and the other great people at Ele's Place put together a grief toolkit for my sister and mailed it to Las Vegas. Ever since that time, Ele's Place has held a special place in the heart of my family."

— Brock Fletcher



Brock pictured third from right



Jim and Diana

"For the past twenty years, I've volunteered as a grief support facilitator for children and teens to offer them a compassionate listening ear to process loss and find hope. Witnessing their resilience and growth is profoundly fulfilling. Volunteering has provided personal satisfaction and a sense of purpose. It has helped me to be a better father, and now a grandfather, to regularly share empathy, communication skills and emotional resilience. Helping others through their grief journey has allowed me to make a meaningful impact, fostering healing and connection while enriching my own life."

— Jim Sheldon

"Volunteering at Ele's Place – Capital Region for the past 31 years has been the most rewarding experience. Having the opportunity to help the kids in our group navigate their unique grief journey through laughter, tears and high energy can be miraculous. Magic happens in this space. When people ask why I choose to give my time to Ele's Place, the answer is simple. Once upon a time, I was a grieving child who felt isolated. Nothing like Ele's Place existed and families did not talk about death. I am grateful every year they allow me to continue serving our families."

— Diana Terry

Look What We Made Grow

Long-Time Supporter Chrissie Brogan Reflects on the History of Ele's Place

Over the years, my family has occasionally accused me of saving too many keepsakes that really could go in the trash. My explanation is always the same; I save memories from people and places that I love.

I have loved Ele's Place for over 30 years, and when I was asked to write about that volunteer relationship, I went straight to my keepsakes from the early fundraisers and events. So many treasured memories, for both me and my husband Greg, are associated with the paper in this photo.



It was 1989 when many of us in the East Lansing community felt helpless and distraught as our friends Woody and Betsy Stover lost their 11 month old daughter Ele. It was the Stover family's subsequent bravery, determination and foresight that turned their tragedy into a critical grieving and healing resource for our city, and eventually our state.

From the very beginning, the Stovers knew that building something this monumental would take an immense collaborative effort from the Greater Lansing community. It was inspiring to watch local mental health professionals and area business leaders come together. Early fundraisers such as The Great Getaway and The Bloomin' Garden Gala were conceived by a group of creative minds intent on maximizing financial donations, while educating the community about the unique needs of grieving children and families. The Junior League of Lansing also provided early leadership, voting to make Ele's Place its signature project with financial and volunteer support. Next, an ambitious Capital Campaign from a volunteer committee helped secure the future acquisition of a permanent home for Ele's Place.



From left: Kate Powers, Kristine Kuhnert, Chrissie Brogan and Greg Brogan

When I think back on all the early initiatives that launched Ele's Place off the starting blocks, I think of incredibly dedicated staff and volunteers committed to the vision of Ele's Place — to ensure that no child or teen in Michigan grieves alone. Together with board members, corporate partners and financial supporters, so many more have kept that vision going strong over the last 30 years, with 33,000 individuals served to date. As a result of being involved in this healing organization for over three decades, I've also witnessed a new and unexpected beauty. Many of the grieving young children from the 1990s and 2000s Ele's Place programs are now young adults who are exceptional mentors and speakers sharing their healing journeys. They are uniquely qualified for this task, and their willingness to be vulnerable for the children coming behind them brings tears to my eyes and warmth to my heart.

As I was recently looking at one of my saved invitations from an early Ele's Place fundraiser, the inside of it read, "Inch by Inch, Row by Row… Can you believe what we made grow?"

The "WE" in "we made grow" is a whole lot of "WE!!!" It represents first and foremost the Stover family, and in partnership with them, it represents the thousands of volunteers, staff and participant families who have been paramount in creating the miracle that is Ele's Place… and YES, I CAN believe it!

An Impact That Knows No Bounds

Community Partners AF Group Share Why They Support Ele's Place

AF Group is proud of the healing work Ele's Place provides in communities across Michigan. Our long-standing partnership allows us to lend support — both financially and through the volunteer efforts of our teammates — to the lasting impact Ele's Place makes upon the lives of individuals across the region, helping to ensure that no child or teen in Michigan grieves alone.

AF Group's Chief Claims Officer and Ele's Place – Capital Region Community Board member Paul Kearney shares the important reason we feel honored to support this amazing organization: "Ele's Place has shown many that grief is the price we pay for love, and it is the instrument that allows us to crystallize and cherish the memories of those loved ones who have died. Ele's Place is a uniquely special place."

Keri Kittmann, AF Group's senior vice president, Business Performance, Strategy & Chief of Staff, and Ele's Place Governing Board Chair echoes this sentiment, "Ele's Place is truly a unique organization, providing unparalleled resources to children and families in our community to help lessen their grief, honor their feelings and share joyful memories. The impact of this wonderful place knows no bounds and we are honored to be part of the support system that makes their work possible."



Paul Kearney at the Bubble Release during the Ele's Place – Capital Region annual Fall Reception

AF Group remains committed to supporting outstanding organizations in the communities where we work and live — a lasting commitment that is evidenced through our wholehearted endorsement of Ele's Place in Lansing. We encourage individuals and businesses across the region to consider becoming involved with this incredible organization and their compelling mission to bring healing and hope.

Thank You to Our Ele's Place – Capital Region Community Board Members

Luke Wilcox, D.O. - CHAIR
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Chad Ross - VICE CHAIR
The Christman Company

Kurt Beck
Plante Moran

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Clark Construction Co.

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Michael Flory
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Charles Hauser
Granger Waste Services

Mary Chris Hotchkiss
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AF Group

Jordan Leaming
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Ele's Place

INCLUSION • DIVERSITY • EQUITY

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Ele's Place is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.