

# THE Rescyou Guide



*Handing you an emotional  
compass so you can navigate life  
after child loss.*



The RescYOU Group is a registered 501(c)(3) organization that provides assistance to families of child loss and promotes child safety. We serve a ten parish region of Acadiana, in South Louisiana.

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[www.therescyogroup.org](http://www.therescyogroup.org)

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The RescYOU Group offers a variety of services to assist families of child loss. To receive support, an application must be completed. Please scan the QR Code below to complete our online application.





## *a note from our founder*

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*Dear Family,*

*I wish that I could take your pain away. I understand the deep grief you are experiencing because I, too, have endured the unimaginable loss of a child. We know nothing makes sense to you right now. Nothing will make sense for a while. The RescYOU Group was created with you in mind. We firmly believe that no family should bear this heartache alone. Our purpose is to provide guidance and support to help you navigate through this difficult journey.*

*RescYOU is not simply a play on words; it is the very foundation of who we are as an organization. RescYOU is an acronym for Reaching, Encouraging, Supporting, and Caring for YOU. We are here to provide this and more.*

*Please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Whether you need us to love you up close or from a distance, we will be there for you. We will always support you and honor your precious child. Our mission is to surround you with love and unwavering support. We are here to "RescYOU" you.*

*From my heart to yours,*

*Reecie Rogers Gilmore  
Founder  
The RescYOU Group*



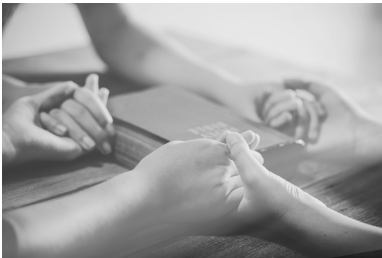


# who we are

## **Mission Statement**

To provide financial aid for end-of-life expenses and to provide emotional support for families who have suffered the loss of a child, from one year to seventeen years old (or currently enrolled in high school). To provide our community with prevention initiatives promoting child safety.

We serve a ten-parish area in the Acadiana region of Louisiana. Parishes served are Acadia, Avoyelles, Evangeline, Iberia, Jeff Davis, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, and Vermillion.



*you are not alone....*

## **About us**

This group is founded by Reecie Rogers Gilmore in memory of her two-year-old son, Clinton Ryan Miller, who passed away from a drowning. Our organization is formed in honor of grieving families who are local to the Acadiana area. We believe it is important to establish a safe place for families to come together and share similar situations, talk about our children, and to provide hope. We understand that there is nothing normal about having to bury a child, and often the bereaved become isolated. The RescYOU Group provides peer to peer support, group sessions, individual counseling, and child life services. We want to provide hope to the hopeless.

# our programs

## **Financial Aid**

The RescYOU Group will provide financial assistance for end-of-life expenses. This is paid directly to the funeral homes, granite/vault companies, for burial plots, or for medical bills associated with the child's passing.

## **RescYOU Navigator Program**

This program pairs a newly grieving family to an on-call Navigator that will act as an emotional compass and guide a family on what to do next. Our trained RescYOU Navigators are all bereaved families.

## **Family Outreach Mentor Program**

We will assign a mentor according to the family's specific loss. This will be peer-to-peer support.

## **Child Life Services**

The RescYOU Group has an on-staff, Certified Child Life Specialist that can provide emotional support to siblings, friends, classmates, and teammates. Services include grief support, death and dying education, preparation for funerals, school reintegration, distraction resources, and memorial keepsakes when possible. Parental support will also be given for how to care for your living children throughout the bereavement process.



# our programs

## **Child Life Services continued**

Child Life Specialist will also provide end-of-life services for pediatric hospice patients or known impending bereavement.

## **Free Grief Counseling**

The RescYOU Group is proud to offer clinical services by licensed professional counselors.

## **RescYOU Guidebooks**

Our RescYOU Guidebooks are distributed to hospitals, funeral homes, pediatricians, schools, first responders, daycares, counselors, and other affiliations to guide a family in need.

## **TRG Support Groups**

For our current support group schedule, please scan the QR Code below to access our calendar.



TRG Family Support Room

## **Prevention Initiatives & Workshops**

The RescYOU Group promotes community awareness of child safety and injury prevention.

# making arrangements

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Planning a funeral for a child is the most difficult thing that a family will ever do. We are here to support you through this challenging process. Reach out to us if you have any questions. Below is a list of things you will need to bring with you when making arrangements. If some of these items are not available, your Funeral Director can assist you.

- **Social Security Number**

You will need your child's social security number.

- **Vital Records**

1. Child's birthplace and date of birth
2. Mother's maiden name and birthplace
3. Father's name and birthplace

- **Payment Options**

Cash and major credit cards are accepted. Inquire about available donations and/or setting up a GoFundMe. The RescYOU Group will make a monetary donation to the funeral home of your choice in memory of your child.

- **Insurance Policies**

1. Bring burial and life insurance policies you have on your child. Be sure to check if any child riders are in effect in life insurance policies owned by either parent/guardian.
2. Not all policies cover services. Your Funeral Director can assist you with determining your policies' benefits.





# making arrangements

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## • **What to Include in the Obituary**

1. Full name, date of birth, and date of death. Photo is optional.
2. A list of family members, both deceased and surviving, and their places of residence.
3. Milestones, best moments, and achievements.
4. Signature character traits or list of favorite things or activities.
5. Schools, clubs, organizations, and affiliations.
6. Impact and legacy.
7. Funeral arrangements and visitation schedule.
8. The funeral home can notify any newspapers you choose.

## • **Clothing**

Choose clothing that reflects your child's personality. All articles are treated with dignity and respect. The funeral home will need all items for dress, including undergarments. Footwear is optional, but not required.

## • **Personal Items**

Toys, jewelry, glasses, etc. can be included in burial or can be used for viewing and returned to the family.

## • **Your Preferences Matter**

Your Funeral Director is here to honor your child's life and your wishes. Do not be afraid to make special requests.



# child life services

## Mission

To provide siblings and children who are immediately involved with support and education throughout the bereavement and events to follow. The goal is to enhance positive coping and understanding throughout their own grief journey.

## What is a Certified Child Life Specialist?

Children learn about the world and experience around them through play and developmentally appropriate education. Child Life Specialist use their extensive training in child development to assess and implement coping skills for life challenges. These coping skills are taught through play and education, specific to the developmental level of the child, ages 1 - 17 years old.



TRG "Little Blessings"  
Peaceful Play Zone,  
Sponsored by:

*"On a scale between 1-10, this room is 100! It has everything a kid needs from great art, to the best stuff, and I love it here!"*

*- Myles, Age 7*

*"Mrs. Cesca gives good hugs, and she loves us. She helps me to feel better."*

*- Alaina, Age 5*



# child life services

## Specific Services Provided

1. Provide immediate (day of loss or days following) sibling support, education, preparation, and distraction throughout sibling's death and services.
  - Prepare children for viewing sibling and environment.
  - Educate children about death and what death means.
  - Educate children about events surrounding death.
  - Prepare children for funeral and burial events.
2. Provide keepsakes when available.
  - Handprints, footprints, hair locket, heartbeat recording.
3. Provide end-of-life services for pediatric hospice patients or known impending loss.
  - Legacy building activities.
  - Sibling support and education.
4. School reintegration support.
  - Preparing children for returning to school after the death of a sibling.
  - Providing schools with specific support resources.
5. Provide parental support for how to care for children throughout bereavement.
  - We recognize that supporting and caring for other children can be challenging when experiencing your own deep grief. Our Child Life Specialist is here to guide you through these challenges at home.

# child life services

## Understanding and Reaction of Death by Age and How to Help

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### A Young Child: 3-5 Years Old

#### **Understanding**

- Sees death as temporary.
- Believes that the person will return or can be visited.
- Feels sadness, but often for only a short time and escapes into play. This can give adults the impression that the child is not really grieving.
- Substitutes attachment to another person in exchange for attachment to the person who has died.
- Needs a daily routine, structure, affection, and reassurance.
- Acting out behaviors may include regression, nightmares, aggression, and noncompliance.

#### **Common Grief Reactions**

- May begin to examine death with words.
- May understand the profoundness of the event, but may not know the person is gone forever.
- Primary expression of feelings will be seen through his/her play.
- A death affects a young child's sense of security.
- Can express strong feelings in his or her sleep and dreams.
- May address a loss more spontaneously than an adult and thus may "recover" quicker.

#### **How To Help**

- Continue the daily routine as closely as possible. Ask a close family friend to help with this.
- Allow help from others for normalized play time.
- Share your feelings of sadness so they do not feel alone in these feelings.
- Use very concrete and simple language when explaining the events.
- Provide comfort and feelings of safety.
- Prepare child for attending the funeral and what to expect,

# child life services

## Understanding and Reaction of Death by Age and How to Help

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### School Age Child: 6 - 10 Years Old

#### **Understanding**

- Begins to understand that death is final and permanent.
- Begins to have a fear of death and of other people dying, especially those in immediate family.
- May feel guilt and blame self for death.
- Has difficulty putting problems and feelings into words.
- Often asks specific and concrete questions about the death, how it happened, the body, etc.
- Can identify strongly with the person who has died and values that relationship.

#### **Common Grief Reactions**

- Acting out behaviors may include aggression, possessiveness, regression, headaches, stomach aches, phobias, and compulsive caregiving.
- Language is becoming a more important tool in the processing of grief.
- The family members are a grieving child's main security.
- Strong peer relationships can help support a child through a grieving time.
- School responsibilities and outcomes may be affected throughout grief.

#### **How To Help**

- Continue to answer questions honestly and as many times as needed.
- Ask if they want to be involved in services and how.
- Work with school officials to tailor a child's workload.
- Encourage sports and active play to lessen anxiety and physical tension.
- Encourage art, music, dance, singing, crafts, and other expressive activities.
- Offer lots of hugs and holding.
- Share your own feelings of sadness.
- Remind them of how much the deceased loved them.
- Continue a daily routine and give household responsibilities for normalcy.

# child life services

## Understanding and Reaction of Death by Age and How to Help

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### Pre-Adolescent: 11 - 13 Years Old

#### **Understanding**

- Recognizes that death is inevitable and irreversible.
- May view death as a punishment.
- Often is very curious and interested in the "gory" details. It is okay to only share what you want to.
- May come up with own theories or explanations of the reasons for death.
- Acting out behaviors may include aggression, possessiveness, headaches, phobias, and defiance.

#### **Common Grief Reactions**

- May swing back and forth in looking for support from the family members to their peers.
- Emotional turmoil is heightened by physical change.
- Begins to engage in discussion that integrates significant events in life, but physical outlets for emotions are still necessary.

#### **How To Help**

- Expect the child to be in battle with their emotions.
- Be available, but don't push.
- Answer questions honestly and thoroughly.
- Look for peer support groups.
- Be as detailed and scientific as you know how if the child asks for information.
- Encourage physical outlets.
- Give household responsibilities to encourage normalcy.



# child life services

## Understanding and Reaction of Death by Age and How to Help

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### Adolescent: 14 - 17 Years Old

#### **Understanding**

- Nearing adult levels of concepts.
- May worry or think about their own death.
- Often avoids discussion of death.
- May question their religious beliefs.
- May fear the future.
- Acting out behaviors may include aggression, possessiveness, headaches, increased sexual behavior, drug use, increased risk-taking, defiance, and suicidal ideation.

#### **Common Grief Reactions**

- Discussion of the critical events becomes the primary means of processing grief.
- May feel highly self-conscious about being different due to grief.
- May fight their vulnerability in grief because it may cause them to feel more dependent on their family at a time when they are striving for independence.
- Teens can be self-centered and thus may have an exaggerated sense of their own role in regards to death.
- Affected physically by their grief, especially in their sleeping and eating patterns.

#### **How To Help**

- Make time for them and remind them of your availability.
- Encourage supportive peer support.
- Include them in services, however they feel comfortable.
- Expect that a teen may want to spend time with their friends.
- Allow for space when asked for, but be cautious of complete withdrawal.
- Expect that a teen may speak of the unfairness of the world as a whole.
- Strong feelings may seem out of proportion. Allow for and accept these emotions.
- Watch for drug and alcohol use.
- Encourage physical outlet or journaling/art.



# **grief tools**

## **What is the difference between grieving, mourning, and bereavement?**

Grief is the normal process of how we react to loss. Mourning is the process by which people adapt to loss. Bereavement is the period after a loss during which grief is experienced.

## **What are some of the normal feelings of grief?**

Grief may be experienced as a mental, physical, social, or emotional reaction. Many people report feeling an initial stage of foginess or numbness. There is no order to the grieving process.

### **Some emotions that you may experience include:**

- Anger
- Confusion
- Denial
- Despair
- Guilt
- Humiliation
- Sadness
- Shock
- Yearning

### **Some physical feelings you may experience include:**

- Crying spells
- Stomach issues
- Dizziness
- Fast heartbeat or tightness in chest
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Restlessness or irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling a lump in your throat

# grief tools

These feelings are normal and common reactions to loss. You may not be prepared for the intensity or the duration of your emotions, or how swiftly your moods may change. Sometimes the feelings can be strange and scary. During the first few weeks after the loss, almost any type of reaction is possible and normal.

## **How can I cope during this process?**

As you grieve, you may start feeling better over time. You will begin to adjust your life around your loss, and although the waves of grief will still come and go, the fog will gradually lift. You may begin to develop new habits and lifestyle changes. Remember that grief takes its own time. Be kind to yourself and do not place high expectations on your healing process. Give yourself time to deal with the changing emotions. Ask for help! Talk to your support system that you have established and try to communicate whatever you may be feeling.

## **How to recognize that I may need professional help?**

If your grief is overwhelming, and you have lost all interest, you may want to seek help from a doctor, clergy, counselor, or other professional. Things to look for:

- You are unable to function appropriately at work or home.
- You have extreme feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or deep sadness that increases consistently.
- You persistently have trouble sleeping.
- You have lost or gained significant weight.
- You are overwhelmed with suicidal thoughts.
- You have physical symptoms that do not make sense.

# grief tools

## **What else should I know?**

Family and friends will try to help during this time. They often mean well and have good intentions, but they usually don't know what to say or do. It is ok for you to tell them what you need from them. You may want to appoint a family member to help coordinate and communicate your needs. This is a time when it is ok and important to rely on the help of others. Visit our website and go to the resource page for additional information. You (or your coordinator) may want to download/print a copy, or copies to share, of the "Helpful Hints For Family/Friends", from our website. This will help others to better help you. There is also a printable sign for your front door to help alleviate the stress of too many visitors.

## **Know the 7 Stages of Grief**

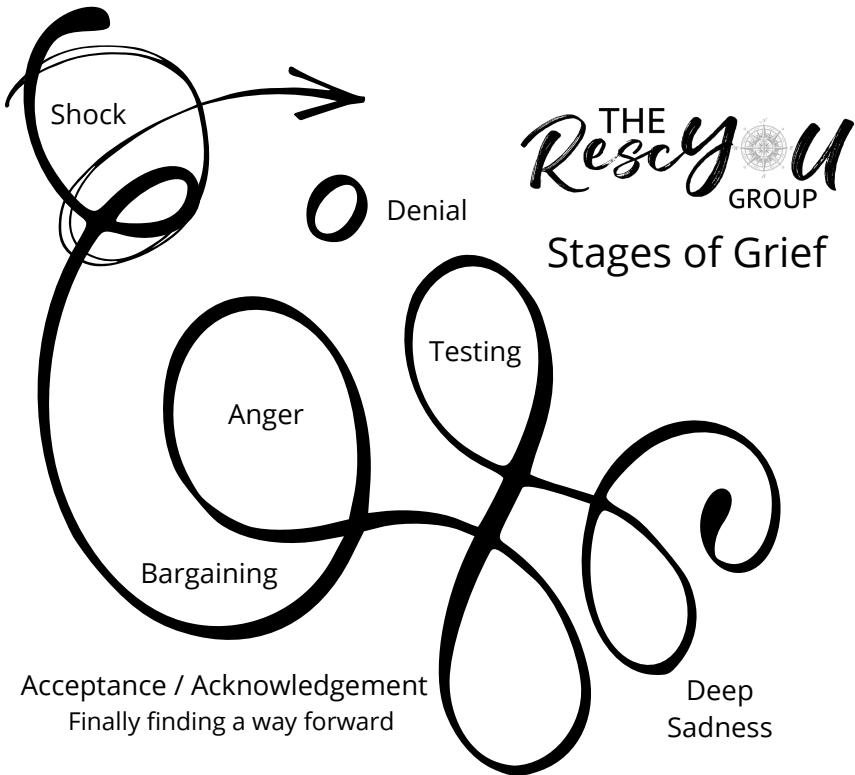
These stages of grief can be experienced in any order. This is part of the normal grief journey.

- Shock - Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
- Denial - Trying to avoid the inevitable.
- Anger - Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.
- Bargaining - Seeking in vain for a way out.
- Deep Sadness - Final realization of the inevitable.
- Testing - Seeking realistic solutions.
- Acceptance / Acknowledgement - Finally finding the way forward.





# grief tools



Grief is a deeply personal and unique experience that can vary greatly from person to person. It is not a linear process with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Instead, it often manifests as a series of ups and downs, with emotions and thoughts fluctuating over time.



# grief tools

## Tips for Coping After the Loss of a Child

- **Take One Day at a Time:** Focus on getting through each day and allow yourself to grieve at your own pace.
- **Seek Support:** Reach out to friends, family, support groups, or therapists who understand your feelings.
- **Self-Care is Important:** Remember to eat well, rest, and engage in activities that bring you comfort and relaxation.
- **Memories Bring Healing:** Cherish the happy memories you shared with your child, and find ways to honor their life.
- **Express Yourself:** Write, create art, or talk about your feelings to help release emotions.
- **Be Patient with Yourself:** Grieving takes time; don't rush the healing process.
- **Celebrate Small Victories:** Acknowledge even the tiniest steps forward in your healing journey.
- **Establish a Routine:** A daily routine can provide structure and a sense of stability.
- **Allow for Different Emotions:** It's okay to feel a range of emotions, both good and bad.
- **Connect with Nature:** Spending time outdoors can bring a sense of peace and calmness.
- **Professional Help is Okay:** If needed, consult a therapist or counselor to guide you through your grief.



# grief tools

- **Honor Your Boundaries:** Say no to things that may overwhelm you, and prioritize your well-being.
- **Create a Memorial:** Build a special place or keepsake in memory of your child.
- **Stay Connected:** Maintain relationships with loved ones who provide comfort and understanding.
- **Practice Patience with Others:** People may not fully understand your experience; try to be patient with their responses.
- **Join Support Groups:** Connect with others who have experienced similar loss for shared understanding.
- **Allow Joy to Return:** Over time, you'll find moments of happiness and joy amidst the grief.
- **Embrace Healing Activities:** Engage in hobbies or activities that bring solace and healing.
- **Know You're Not Alone:** Many have gone through similar experiences and can offer empathy and guidance.

Remember, healing takes time, and it's okay to seek help and take care of yourself as you navigate this journey.

# advice from bereaved parents

## **Allow yourself to grieve.**

This pain is bigger than any other pain you could feel as a human. Give yourself permission. Just like we obey physical pain and seek medical assistance to help ease our suffering, we must obey grief. This is a pain that cannot be avoided, and you will need to seek guidance and assistance. Get help with this process.



## **Allow yourself to feel.**

To move through the pain, you have to feel the pain. You can't fast track this process. If you stuff your grief, it is sure to rear its head at the most inopportune and most vulnerable times. Whatever you need to feel at the moment, FEEL IT!!

## **Allow yourself to laugh, scream, cry, or yell. Grief is unpredictable.**

It is not uncommon to have moments where you smile. That is ok...SMILE! When the pain washes over you, go ahead...scream, cry, or yell. The release of these emotions will help if you let them out. On the days that appear softer, don't let the softness guilt you. It is okay to celebrate the moments where you feel pockets of joy. It is okay to smile, and it is okay to let your laughter be heard. Your child would want you to find joy again.

# advice from bereaved parents

## **Sometimes your friends and your circle of support change after the loss of a child.**

You may find that your old friends don't know what to say and don't know how to support you.

Sometimes we need to teach people how to treat us after loss. Create boundaries for yourself and outline your needs. It is normal not to have the energy in the beginning to do this, so sometimes it is best to avoid interacting with

people who "don't get it." It is okay to take a break from certain friends. Permission granted to remove people from your life that can become toxic to your grief journey. Sometimes this will be for a short duration and sometimes this may be permanently. Recognize that it is easy to hold others accountable for what they do not know. Most people have good intentions. It will take some time to give people grace. It is easy to hold people hostage to their words, especially when their words sometimes hurt instead of help.

## **Get outside as much as possible.**

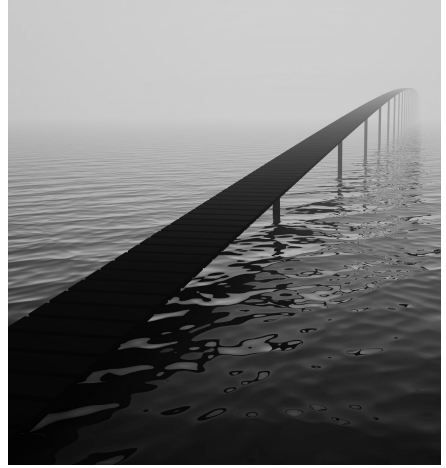
The breeze of the air will renew your spirit. The sunshine has vitamin D and will feel good. Being outside has the ability to connect us to nature, which often has a way of connecting us to our children.



# advice from bereaved parents

## **Take small steps forward every single day.**

Grief can immobilize a person. It can stop us from putting one foot in front of the other. Make an effort to do something that requires forward movement every single day. Something productive. For example, in the beginning, brushing your teeth and hair would be considered forward movement. When you are able, try something simple like taking the trash out, clean out a closet, give a compliment, go for a walk, doing something that makes you feel good, or helping a friend with a task. A kind gesture will require effort, but the result will make you feel better. Ultimately, doing something throughout the day is a way of honoring your child.



## **Don't judge the process.**

Allow yourself time! Set intentions that are reasonable and give yourself grace. It isn't like you have been handed a rule book or a manual on how to do life after the loss of your child. Be patient and loving with your heart and embrace all the help that you can find!



# advice from bereaved parents

**Surround yourself with forward moving people who will hold you on hard days and push you on good days.**

Staying connected to your tribe of people makes a huge difference in your ability to navigate forward. Having people that understand how you feel and that have gone through similar experiences, can bring forward so much understanding and healing. Bereaved to bereaved have permission to say things to each other that the outside world can't say, and peer to peer support allows for accountability. They are your cheerleaders and the keeper of your Kleenex on the days when you need it. They are in a unique position to offer hope and encouragement through their own real-life experiences.

**LIVE.**

I promise you are still here for a reason!



# our story

On June 7, 2008, tragedy struck our family, when my two-year-old son, Clinton Ryan drowned in our pond. I did not know what to do next, and I had no idea how my heart was going to continue to beat when my son's heart stopped. A year was spent trying to re-enter the world of the living. It was a long process to get to this place of preparedness. It has always been my passion to serve families of child loss. We knew that in our community, there was an underserved population among bereaved parents. Families who had suffered the loss of school-age children needed to be supported and offered a safe place of relatable understanding. It took years of research, investigating, and planning to form **The RescYOU Group**.

In 2021, **The RescYOU Group** was born. It was founded on everything that I didn't have when I lost Clint and everything that I needed. It is with great pride that families in Acadiana can turn to us and receive guidance, a procedural process on what to do next, and a soft place to rest their broken hearts. I have come to learn that it is not because of the loss of Clint that I am moved to keep his legacy alive, but because he is still living within me. This untouchable love continues to grow. That is what we hope to be able to teach and provide for our families. We offer a platform of remembrance. We offer hope for tomorrow. The gift of helping is a ripple effect. Hope becomes contagious. When we commit to helping others, we are able to heal ourselves, find purpose in the pain, find healing in the heartache, and find a place for our love to go. To find the day when vibrant love overshadows the darkness of grief. To find peace in knowing that even though our children are no longer earthside, within us, within the heart, and within the walls of TRG, our children are always remembered.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but we know that it takes an army when you lose one. When you don't have the words or know what to say, we understand, and we can read your heart.

*-Reecie Gilmore,*

Founder & Clinton Ryan's Mom





















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# THE RescYOU GROUP

The RescYOU Group would like to thank the following Founding Anchor Donors.

These sponsors allowed our dream to become a reality.



STULLER

*Family Foundation*



