

Annual Report 2012

DEDICATION

The Hummingbird Centre for Hope is established in memory of ...

Keith Williams
1956—2002

Scott Bailey
1969—2006

The Hummingbird Centre for Hope is a legacy being built in honour of their four children.

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The Hummingbird Centre for Hope

Marny Williams-Balodis and Beth Bailey know all too well the extraordinary hardships young parents face when they become the sole guardians of their families in grief. Both became widows in their 30's after the death of their husbands to cancer. They were left to navigate a new world without their husband by their sides. Their personal experiences are the foundation of The Hummingbird Centre for Hope.

Grieving the loss of a spouse or parent has no timetable or stages that can be neatly followed. It takes time and patience for families to adjust to the dramatic lifestyle changes that occur. As a result, the needs of

bereaved families are vast and on-going, and often continue much longer than society assumes they will.

Surviving spouses work heroically to try and maintain a sense of normalcy for their grieving family, while at the same time grieving their own loss.

The stress that is experienced by the surviving spouse is twofold. The first is the emotional devastation experienced by the death of a spouse. The second is the practical hardship that comes as a result of the loss. These worries can include having to take on new roles and responsibilities that were once the function of the other spouse; the reality that simple daily pressures and challenges

now must be shouldered alone; and the responsibility of raising children as an only parent, all the while helping those children grieve the death of their parent. Often it is these practical stresses that become the hardest obstacles to overcome.

The vision of The Hummingbird Centre for Hope is to provide widowed people with support in all areas of their grief - to help lessen the burdens that they are forced to shoulder. The Centre is there for ongoing assistance - to help widowed people gain the skills and confidence needed to help rebuild the lives and dreams of their families. The need for continuing, long-term support for young, only parents resulted in the creation of The Hummingbird Centre for Hope.

Timeline of Events

2011

June - First donation received
September - Formally Incorporated as a Non-Profit
September - Logo Finalized
November - Joined Facebook
November - Webpage Launch

2012

January - Board Training with Cathy Brothers at Capacity Waterloo
April - First "Finding Hope" Support Group
April - First Newsletter

September 25 - Received Charitable Status from the Government of Canada
October - Family trip to Shantzholm Pumpkins
November - Workshop: Towards a Gentle Spirit this Holiday Season



Marny Williams-Balodis

Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director



“It was nice to have dedicated time to talk about emotions & feelings with no distractions. Helps to validate that I am not alone....”

Group Participant

On June 4, 2002 I felt like I was hit by a train. This was the day the doctor told my husband he had terminal cancer. That he had 3-6 months to live. That we should go on vacation and do the things we had always wanted to. The day they told us there was nothing they could do for treatment.

I remember feeling so shell shocked. I looked at my 6 week old daughter and cried. It was the only thing I could do. I couldn't bare to look at my husband who was also in tears asking the doctor “why him?” Six weeks later, I was choosing a coffin and planning a funeral for my husband. Six weeks later I was left to pick up the pieces of my train wreck. To figure out what the hell my life was going to look like now. One of the last things I said to my husband before he died was that I would be ok, that we would figure out a way to be ok. But little did I know what reality was going to be like. There was nothing that could have prepared me for young widowhood. I was about to embark on the biggest challenge of my life and I had never felt so alone. I was 30, a widow, a sole parent.

This is my story, but sadly and tragically there are hundreds of other stories just as devastating. I meet men and women every day who share the intimate details of their spouse's death and how they are struggling to cope with their new reality - I am continually humbled. Widows and widowers are some of the most amazing people I have had the pleasure to meet.

There is no manual for grief. There is no book that tells you how to rebuild your life and your children's life after their parent dies. It is like fumbling around in the dark with shattered glass all over the floor and somehow you are supposed to manoeuvre your way through without cutting your feet - almost impossible.

How can we be expected to rebuild our life without support? Why does society believe that three months of banana bread and frozen casseroles are enough?

What was once a two person job is now left up to one. They say we are so strong and that we are handling things so well ... that they couldn't do what we are doing. But widows and widowers are some of the best actresses and actors out there. On the outside they seem so put together, strong, and confident. But what you don't see is what is going on inside of them and behind closed doors. They are broken and struggling to meet the relentless demands of every day. They are working so hard to keep it together, to not fall apart, to be everything to everyone. Often, they completely burn themselves out and there is no one to catch them when that happens.

From my personal experience, struggles, frustrations and successes, I needed to find an organization that would be there to support me through my journey. Be there when I needed them. Be there when I needed someone to talk with, vent with and cry or laugh with.

I searched our community, the internet and talked to others to see if there was such a place. I wasn't able to find one. This was the start of my dream - to make sure there were supports available to help my peers. When I decided to try and make this a reality, I met Beth. She believed in my dream and had the same passion I did. Her friendship and support has been a true gift to me.

The Hummingbird Centre for Hope came to flight in 2011. We are here to meet widows and widowers where they are in their journey. We are an organization that can help ease the burdens and help young families rebuild their hopes and dreams for the future. We are here to catch them.

Beth E.C. Bailey

Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director

HOPE - a simple word for a feeling that has been ever present in my life. It's been the fuel that has driven my desire for change over the last 7 years. In fact, when I think about the journey of my life, I've learned that even through tragedy, hope can be a guiding force. When I held on to hope I found the inner strength to move forward, and ultimately begin to create change in my life.

On Christmas day in 2005 my husband Scott and I, and our two children, were the picture of a happy family – excited about life and optimistic for the future. Exactly seven months later, my husband had died and I was a widow and only parent to my children. Life as I knew it had been shattered and the task at hand was daunting.

In the early years following Scott's death, the challenges I faced as an only parent often felt insurmountable. The grief I carried as a widow was overwhelming. Having to watch my children struggle to understand the loss of their father was heartbreaking to witness (and still is to this day). I knew that life would never be the same, but I had enough hope in my heart to know that it had to go on.

As time went on, I sought guidance and support. Slowly and deliberately, as I digested our new reality as a family, things started to change – priorities, perspective, values, and my outlook on the world (to name a few). I also began to feel more accepting and hopeful that if I could embrace my life circumstance, then maybe I could also create new dreams, goals and expectations.

In 2009 I attended a new support group that focused on the challenges faced by men and women whose spouse had died, and were also caring for children at home. This group was created and facilitated by Marny Williams-Balodis. Being surrounded by my peers was instantly comforting - as only parents caring for our children we had much in common. While group members shared their experiences we began to feel connected, safe and normal. With the support and encouragement that I received from my fellow group members, along with a hope that was blossoming, I began to open myself to the possibilities of life again.

With some newfound perspective I began to explore the notion of giving back to the bereavement community. Marny encouraged me to consider volunteering and I followed her advice. Through our volunteer work Marny and I became colleagues and support group facilitators with a shared desire to help others in our community. As time went on, we also became trusted friends. That friendship led us to a path that ultimately changed my life, again.

Marny confided in me that she had always dreamed of creating an organization that would address the needs of widows and widowers that were caring for dependent children. We were both passionate about supporting this unique group and I encouraged her to follow this dream. As we chatted about the possibilities, Marny asked if I would like to pursue the dream with her. I immediately said "yes" and our journey together began.

Our goal with The Hummingbird Centre for Hope is to provide widowed people with a continuum of care – to help them cope with the unique challenges that arise when taking on the role of sole provider and only parent to grieving children. Based on our experience thus far, I believe that we can shine a light not only on the struggles and challenges faced in young widowhood, but also on the enormous successes achieved by young widows and widowers while they care for their children.

In my life, tragedy and a belief in hope resulted in personal change and the opportunity to build a community of support that makes a difference in the lives of others. The Hummingbird Centre for Hope is a place where young widowhood can be embraced, and hope nurtured.

My own personal HOPE continues to grow every day, and I have many people to thank – my children, family, friends, colleagues, and especially my widowed peers. It is with immense gratitude that I also thank Marny for her friendship and unconditional support. Her presence in my life is an incredible gift. It has truly been an honour and a privilege to create The Hummingbird Centre for Hope – together.





Nan McBride Board Chair

Statistics Canada reveals to us that in 2011, nearly 1,500 widows between the age of 24-55 years were living in the Region of Waterloo, and the majority of these widows and widowers were most likely raising children. These women and men, and their children, have been left with a huge emotional, financial, and parenting void as a result of the death of their spouse.

Who helps to take care of these grieving members of our community? What happens after an initial grief support group ... after the reality of the loss has set in and a new life plan must be mapped out?

Marny Williams-Balodis and Beth Bailey recognized that there was an important need to help young widows and widowers that are still raising children. They created The Hummingbird Centre for Hope to provide continued support and connection with other resources a widowed person might access after the first year, such as EAP programs or medical or mental health practitioners.

Delivering important services was the first priority. Creating a formal, not-for-profit charitable institution soon followed. One of the first steps was to find dedicated board members who believed in Marny and Beth's passion to give back to these young widows and widowers. I stepped in to become the Chair of The Hummingbird Centre for Hope Board, having been through the process myself, and wanting to help others, too.

The Board's priorities, in turn, were to create a solid foundation and infrastructure—procedures, policies, guidance, goals—so that The Hummingbird Centre for Hope could spring from its nest, spread its wings, and fly.

Starting from the ground up, the Board learned a great deal, helping the Co-Founders to:

- Quantify the scope of the need of widows and widowers in Waterloo Region
- Develop ways to reach out to these widows and create ideas for new programs that fill needs
- Learn together how to obtain financial grants so programs can become reality ... which will help provide opportunities for families to experience healing
- Provide a basis for The Hummingbird Centre for Hope to grow by creating Board procedures, covering all facets of operation from job descriptions to delineation of responsibilities for both Staff and Board directors.

In its first year, The Hummingbird Centre for Hope has made a positive impact in Waterloo Region. Marny and Beth have helped widows and widowers learn to cope with their new situation, provided coaching to support their children, and facilitated opportunities for them to come together and learn from each other.

We gratefully thank everyone who has helped The Hummingbird Centre for Hope take its initial steps, and those who work to make even more happen. Marny and Beth, channeling their passion to help others, were the impetus to finding volunteers and community partners who also shared their goals. Without all these people, The Hummingbird Centre for Hope would still be just a yearning in the Co-Founders' hearts.

The future looks brighter for widows and widowers, and their children, in the Waterloo Region because of The Hummingbird Centre for Hope. The strategic plan includes more programs, additional educational events and family experiences, and the goal to become the premiere source of information, help, and healing for widowed men and women with families in Southwestern Ontario.

Hope is the thing with
feathers
That perches in the
soul,
And sings the tune--
without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the
gale is heard;
And sore must be the
storm
That could abash the
little bird
That kept so many
warm.

I've heard it in the
chillest land,
And on the strangest
sea;
Yet, never, in
extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

~ Emily Dickenson

Programming

The Hummingbird Centre for Hope's mission is to provide widowed people with a variety of second stage supports, once an initial support group has been completed, which can help them cope with parenting and secondary losses. Varying supports will be delivered on an ongoing basis and ultimately be available to people when they are ready to seek help.

According to a report by Comfort Zone Camp, "49% of

the surviving parents surveyed said that their loss has significantly impacted their family's standard of living." "Everywhere one looks across the landscape of early loss – from child rearing to finances to household maintenance to their own health and wellbeing – surviving parents need help. Society – all of us – has to respond." (Stern, Densen & Marren, 2010,).

The majority of programming will be delivered through peer support - support from others who have experienced a similar loss.

The power of peer support is that it helps to normalize the grief experience, show individuals that they are not alone, and create a sense of normalcy by being surrounded by others who are experiencing the same multitude of reactions.

"Finding a safe place to talk about your loss with people that have gone through and are still going through similar experience is very helpful."

Group Participant

Support Group

Finding Hope

A group for men and women grieving the death of their spouse or partner while caring for children at home. Conversations focus on the continuing challenges experienced along the journey of grief, and how the death of a spouse or partner impacts one's daily life. Shared experiences will allow participants to engage in themes that relate to relationships, parenting alone, the enormity of daily responsibilities, and how grief has redefined us.

Educational Seminars

Shantzholm Pumpkins Family Visit

Bring the kids, or come on your own, and pick your pumpkin while you enjoy an afternoon of fall sunshine and friendship. Come and reconnect with friends and peers, meet other bereaved spouses and enjoy watching your kids be "kids".

Towards a Gentle Spirit this Holiday Season

Together we will safely explore how our spiritual beliefs and practices have been affected by our grief and how it affects us during this season. We will also share strategies to help ease the challenges we face as we prepare for the holidays without our spouse. This evening is open to all faith traditions, and those without a particular affiliation.



"Just being with and hearing other's stories of their loss and how they were coping, somehow helped me find strength."

Group Participant

In the News



Blogs

- . Capacity Waterloo Region Blog
- . Souls for Miles Blog
"Holding the gift of a courageous heart"

Articles

- . What's On Thorold newsletter "Hope in the midst of Grief"
- . St Catherine's Standard
"The Paradox of the young widow"
- . Best Health Magazine
"How to find joy after losing a loved one"

Speaking Engagements

- . Camp Widow (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina), "Discovering the New Me"
- . Bereavement Resource Council of Niagara, Annual Bereavement Education Day
"Finding Hope in Widowhood"
- . Social Venture Partners: *8x10 Expose Potential*
Beth Bailey was invited to speak at this event featuring inspiring stories about individual and collective potential to change the world.

"Sharing stories and laughter with a group that "gets it" is amazing"

Group Participant

Thanks To....

We are immensely grateful for the generosity of the many people that have made a financial donation to The Hummingbird Centre for Hope since 2011. Your contribution has enabled us to provide support and programming to young widows in our community.

Thank you also to the following people and organizations for their ongoing support:

Kate Trowbridge Designs
Bruce Klock
Candy Dreams



Financial Information 2012

Revenue

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Donations | 3,650.00 |
| Other | 259.56 |
| Total Revenue | \$3,909.56 |

Expenses

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Legal | 2,794.82 |
| Social Media | 142.20 |
| Application Fees | 230.00 |
| Rent | 228.00 |
| Insurance | 1,212.84 |
| Office Supplies | 32.83 |
| Printing | 98.81 |
| Program Costs | 105.75 |
| Postage | 168.03 |
| Bank Fees | 57.08 |
| HST | 288.02 |
| Total Expenses | \$5,358.38 |
| Revenue less expenses | -1,448.82 |
| Shortfall taken from Dec 31, 2011 balance | 5,137.05 |
| Balance Dec 31, 2012 | \$3,688.23 |

Board of Directors

Annette McBride - Board Chair

April Clarke - Vice Chair

Paul Richardson - Treasurer

Rev. John Loughheed - Director

Jennifer Storm - Secretary

We have a passion for HOPE and for nurturing HOPE in the people we help.

Why the Hummingbird?

In Native American culture, a hummingbird symbolizes timeless joy and the Nectar of Life. It's a symbol for accomplishing that which seems impossible and will teach you how to find the miracle of joyful living from your own life circumstances.

“Hummingbird, the tiniest of all birds, brings special messages for us. It is the only creature that can come to a complete stop while traveling at full speed. It can then remain in one place or can go

forward, backward, up or down. It lives on nectar and searches for the sweetness of life. Its long tongue lets it bypass the often tough and bitter outer layer to find the hidden treasures underneath.”

For the founders, the hummingbird and its characteristics are analogous with the grief journey experienced by young parents grieving the death of their spouse.



HUMMINGBIRD
CENTRE FOR
hope

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Vision

To be known and respected across Canada as an effective resource and support organization for men and women whose partner has died.

Mission

To provide continuing bereavement support to men and women after the death of their spouse or partner. A peer-to-peer environment of hope facilitates the rebuilding of a new sense of self as an only parent.

Values

Mutual Respect and Compassion
Integrity
Optimism, Courage, Joy & Growth
Training and Education