

CREATING MEANINGFUL MEMORIALS

After the death of child

One of the biggest fears people have after the death of a loved one is that the person will be forgotten. This is even more acute when the person who died has lived a short life, a child's life. Too many people discount the loss of a young child and offer unhelpful, insulting comments such as, "You're young. You can have more children," or "Only the good die young." What a bereaved parent needs to hear is that their child's life mattered, however short it was, and that the little one will be remembered.

So what can a family do to create a meaning memorial in honor of their precious child who has left this world far sooner than expected or imagined? How would you like to honor your child and have them remembered and memorialized? Here are some ideas ranging from quick and easy to more complex.

- Write notes and attach to balloons for release.
- Arrange a butterfly release or make a financial gift to butterfly exhibit at a botanical garden.
- Create and plant a memorial flower garden; add solar lights.
- Plant a small tree in your own yard, on school grounds or through the public parks program; add a plaque.
- Adopt a highway segment (a sign with loved one's name or pick up litter).
- Establish a charity foundation or fundraiser in memory of your child.
- Make a charity donation in their memory.
- Create a collage of pictures and words.
- Create an alter in your home with pictures and mementos.
- Make a nap quilt/pillow from child's clothing (scan photos on fabric).
- Acknowledge birthday/holiday by paying it forward in your child's name.
- Volunteer—serve food, take treats to a fire station, help at an animal shelter.
- Sponsor a child for summer camp or boys/girls club.
- Donate books to library or children's program with bookplates acknowledging child.
- Become spokesperson for a cause to help other families and children.
- Adopt an angel for holiday gifting (maybe the same age as your child, or the age your child would be).
- Create a child's holiday or year-round tree for yourself with pictures and personal mementos.



1510 E. Flower St. • Phoenix, AZ 85014 • 480.951.8985 • 480.951.8794 fax • thenewsongcenter.org

A program of Hospice of the Valley

Continue to share memories and stories about your child and encourage others to do so, as well. If you get resistance from your family or friends on this, let them know this is comforting and healing for you. If they can't support you in this way, find groups of friends or other bereaved parents who understand and can be that safe place to share what you need. If it helps you, stay connected to your child's classmates. The comparisons are inevitable—many parents are comforted by other kids who remember and share. The act of creating a meaningful memorial is a validation of grief and love, as well as an empowering act of healing and channel for energy. These acts can be done individually, as a family or as a community. There is no “best time”—it is when it feels right.

—*Sandra Howlett, Ed.D.*



1510 E. Flower St. • Phoenix, AZ 85014 • 480.951.8985 • 480.951.8794 fax • thenewsongcenter.org

A program of Hospice of the Valley