



Michael's Place

let the healing begin

2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF RESTORING HOPE



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Michael’s Place gives my daughter and I an opportunity to share our experiences with grief and loss, with people who truly understand. It can be maddening sometimes to be surrounded by people who don’t understand your incredible loss and the feelings associated with it. In a world that wants you to “hurry up and get over it,” I feel Michael’s Place provides a safe place to work through the stages of grief while giving a camaraderie which is priceless!

Angela M., Attendee

From the Executive Director / CEO



Dear Friends,

It is with great privilege that we present the ***Michael's Place Annual Report: 20th Anniversary Commemorative Edition***, representing our fiscal year of July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

As Chris Dennos and I were setting our organizational goals back in 2001, neither of us could imagine all of the faces that would become part of our greater Michael's Place family or the growth that would take place. Although much has changed in 20 years, our mission-focus of providing innovative and compassionate, no-cost support programs and services for bereaved children and adults has remained the same.

Understanding the changing needs of the bereaved with the increased isolation and loneliness of the pandemic, the 2020-21 year required considerable program re-development. Some achievements include facilitating 13 ongoing in-school support groups reaching underserved students throughout the 5-county region, providing monthly Robin's Nest events for our grieving children and families, redefining our support group programs and services, and returning to in-person support groups.

As a special highlight, Michael's Place was honored with an Impact 100 grant of \$105,333. The transformational funding allows us to build a highly trained volunteer team who will meet the growing bereavement needs of our region and affect healthy healing.

Twenty years represents a significant organizational life, and yet we know that we have much to accomplish to impact continued healthy healing in our regional community. Thank you to all who have supported us during these last 20 years as we set our sights on the next 20+ years.

With much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mindy Buell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mindy Buell





A Look Back at 20 Years

*Anyone who comes to Michael's Place
remains part of the Michael's Place family,
no matter how much time has passed.*

Mindy Buell, Executive Director/CEO



A Look Back at 20 Years

IT BEGAN WITH MICHAEL

Providing a safe place for grieving families to heal and express individual stories is the core mission of Michael's Place and the realization of a lifelong goal of Chris Dennos. In 2001, Chris founded Michael's Place – in memory of her young cousin, Michael Dendrinos – with the help of a handful of committed board members and first staff member, Mindy Buell. YOUR giving has assured that Michael's Place could expand beyond one core program of weekly support services. Today, Michael's Place provides innovative, comprehensive grief care meeting the needs of thousands in our community each year.



A Look Back at 20 Years

Q&A WITH FOUNDER, CHRIS DENNOS, AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MINDY BUELL



Chris, what was the driving force behind the founding of Michael's Place?

When I decided to move to Traverse City I knew I wanted to create something for this community as a contributor and not as the daughter of my parents. They were so philanthropic and it was important to me to follow their lead. My ulterior motive was very personal. Starting a grieving center was my way of caring for children and families who needed a supportive community to heal.

Mindy, the average length of time for a nonprofit executive director is six years. Being a leader at Michael's Place for 20 years must have come with many challenges. What has kept you dedicated to the mission and inspired you to continue in your role as executive director?

The strength and beauty of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming suffering is something I have had the privilege of witnessing every day. Chris Dennis founded Michael's Place with a mission of healing. She remained as our board president for the first 17 years and continues to be our greatest advocate as a trustee. We have an incredible board that is passionate about our mission and smart about our vision. The commitment of our volunteers to provide no-cost grief support is immeasurable. The staff continues to amaze me each day with each person's dedication, care, and ability.

What would you say that you consider the most important aspect of what you have been able to achieve over the years?

Chris: When I hear the stories of people we have helped, I get chills. After many years, Michael's Place is well known and our community understands and trusts us when they are most vulnerable. In the early years, people would shy away from discussing Michael's Place. Over the years, the discussion has become less frightening and that is due to 20 years of focusing on our mission of creating a more compassionate community.

A Look Back at 20 Years



Mindy: The last 20 years has focused on listening and being present to each person who turns to Michael's Place. One of the greatest achievements was the expansion of our grief support to schools and workplaces. In 2007, we helped guide a school district through the tragic deaths of four high school students in three weeks. We have expanded our efforts and today, our services include grief education to teachers, training for school grief crisis teams, and aftercare services to schools and workplaces.



What have you learned?

Chris: I have learned the importance of working as a team, being flexible and transparent. Michael's Place is a family of collaborators, from the staff, the board, volunteers and families, we are all devoted to bringing hope back to those who have lost loved ones. Being flexible has allowed us to grow and improve all along the way. We have never seen roadblocks that stopped us, slowed us possibly, but not stopped.

Mindy: So often, we focus on mistakes and imperfections. I have realized that things go very well, or not at all as planned. All these lessons are valuable and continue to expand my knowledge and understanding. Many challenges have led to great lessons learned over the last 20 years at Michael's Place.

What is your vision for the future of Michael's Place?

Chris: Michael's Place has far exceeded my vision. Twenty years ago, we started hoping to help as many as possible with our group support. I had no idea of the work we would do in schools and businesses. Today my vision is to be recognized nationally for our unique programs and training opportunities.

Mindy: Michael's Place has only begun its journey of impacting our regional community with grief support. I look forward to Michael's Place being a household name, not because people need our grief support, but because people know they can turn to us for education, training, and care in support of those in their lives who need us.

20 Years in Review: Together, We Grow

2001

Michael's Place was founded and began with one staff and one family support group program.

2007

The need for school support services was emphasized following the deaths of four students in one school district.

2008

Received a Rotary Charities grant to hire a Clinical Program Director and begin **School-Based Initiative** to meet growing demands.

2009

First grief support request from community business leads to **Compassionate Workplace Initiative**.

2010

Robin's Nest 'Best Day' program for children and families was launched.

First **A Night at the Movies** fundraising event.

2011

Inaugural **Restoring Hope Breakfast** fundraising event raised \$400,000 in gifts and pledges.

2012

Recipient of Grand Traverse Band 2% grant allocation, beginning a strong partnership with TBAISD and GTB.

Received first New York Life Foundation grant to support continued work in the schools.



Michael Dendrinis,
for whom Michael's Place
is named. b. 1957- d. 1971





2015

Michael's Place Executive Director, Mindy Buell recognized in ***Powerful Women Series***.

Michael's Place locates at 1212 Veterans Drive. Dedicated space for children's support groups was created thanks to ***The Les and Anne Biederman Foundation, Help in Heels, and Dan Brady Painting Company***.

2016

School Grief Crisis Plan template copyrighted.

Selected as ***Hagerty Nonprofit Partner of the Year***, assisted through employee service, pro bono consulting, and a \$25,000 financial investment.

2018

Michael's Place was one of six bereavement centers selected to partner with national nonprofit ***StoryCorps*** to record stories for their ***Road to Resilience Project***.



2019

Mindy Buell presented ***Grief and Resilience: Notes from the Field*** at TEDx - Traverse City.

Founder, Chris Denny, recognized as ***7 over 70*** in the Traverse City Business News feature ***Not Slowing Down: Seven Remarkable Septuagenarians Still Making Their Mark On The Region***.

Rotary Charities grant received to increase capacity and develop revenue-generating program.

2020

COVID required significant adaptation in 2020/2021, including:

- Transition from in-person grief support to remote and hybrid models adapting safety protocols while meeting the needs of the bereaved throughout the community.
- Moved from traditional in-person fundraising events to two virtual campaigns to support operating needs.



Michael's Place Today.

Together, We Thrive.

Michael's Place provides support and advocacy to children, teens, and adults grieving the death of a loved one and serves the bereavement needs of the community.

Michael's Place Today



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Karen Browne, *President*
Dan Brady, *Vice President*
Chris Dennos, *Founder, Trustee*
Doug Morgenstern, *Treasurer*
Gretchen Overbeek, *Secretary*
Marika BeVier, *Trustee*
Mindy Buell, *Trustee*
Judy Harrison, *Trustee*
Leslie Heimburger, *Trustee*

STAFF

Mindy Buell,
Executive Director/CEO

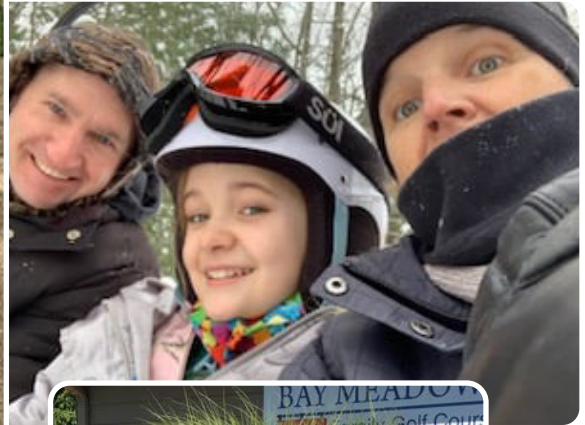
Elizabeth Boomer-Judson,
Community Services Coordinator

Breanna Broering,
Grief Services Coordinator

Pam Jones-Robinson,
Marketing & Volunteer Coordinator

Kristi Spencer-Nemec,
Grief Services Coordinator

Connie Wintzinger,
Development Director



Michael's Place Today

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Michael's Place provides grief support programs and services that are designed to ease the impact of loss. We believe that the creation of a safe environment promotes healthy healing for children, families, and individuals and builds resiliency and a compassionate, connected community.

GRIEF SUPPORT FOR ALL AGES:

Peer-facilitated Support Groups

Support groups are facilitated by trained volunteer facilitators and staff who provide guidance along with peer-to-peer support. Youth meet in age appropriate groups and participate in grief-related activities and discussions. Adults meet with others who have a greater understanding of their grief journey.

Robin's Nest

With the help of mentors, the Robin's Nest program provides best day activities and educational opportunities designed to help grieving children and their families feel normal, bring joy to their lives, and create new memories.

Workshops and Support Opportunities

Create-A-Keepsake | GriefShare | Healing Garden | StoryCorps Inspired Sessions | Educational Workshops and Presentations





COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES:

School-Based Initiative

Michael's Place provides support and guidance to the community through:

- In-school support groups to elementary, middle, and high school students grieving the death of a loved one.
- Guidance and training to schools to develop grief crisis plans, assistance following the death of a school community member, and ongoing grief education.

Compassionate Workplace

Michael's Place provides support and guidance to businesses and community organizations in the midst of a bereavement crisis and to professionals that work in high-loss environments.

Community Education

In addition to the customized training available to schools, businesses, and health care professionals, Michael's Place offers education and presentations to community groups and organizations on grief-related topics.

I attended the Youth Summit on Suicide's "Grieving a Death to Suicide" session led by Kristi Spencer-Nemec from Michael's Place. It was very informative because I lost my mother six years ago and still feel as though if I had not had surgery that day there might have been something I could have done. I am going to seek out help to resolve these issues of grief, which I have not fully addressed.

Educator & Summit Attendee

Your Impact: Programs and Services

Michael's Place is the only bereavement center in northern Michigan providing no-cost grief support programs to children, teens, adults, and the community.

2020-2021: BY THE NUMBERS

1,976

Children, Adults,
and Community
Members Served

10

Counties
Served

229

Grief Support
Programs Provided



There are no words that can express the gratitude for the amazing staff and wonderful programs at Michael's Place. They are a blessing and an invaluable resource to all the families that they support.

Laura M., Attendee

Your Impact: Robin's Nest Best Day Events for Grieving Children

378



Youth and their families participated in Robin's Nest 'Best Day' opportunities.

Thank You to Our Host Sites and Event Sponsors:

Seung-Ni Martial Arts Class

A Day @ Reining Liberty Ranch

Theatre Camp @ Parallel45

Bike Camp @ Norte

Dinner and Dessert Provided by Jimmy John's and Grand Traverse Pie

Drive Thru Meal Provided by North Bay Produce and GTACS

Fall Fun @ Jacob's Corn Maze

Tubing @ Timberlee

Skiing & Snowboarding @ The Homestead

Ice Skating @ Centre Ice

Bowling & Laser Tag @ Incredible Mo's

Thank you so much to all the businesses that have supported our families through this difficult past year with COVID. They stepped in and allowed our families to experience meaningful and enjoyable time together even though we couldn't gather as a group. This was a true community gift and brought smiles to many children, as they allowed us to offer activities every month.

Elizabeth Boomer-Judson, Community Services Coordinator

Your Impact: Schools and Workplaces

SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN 2020/2021 MICHAEL'S PLACE PROVIDED:

41

Students with support in the ongoing in-school grief support program

71

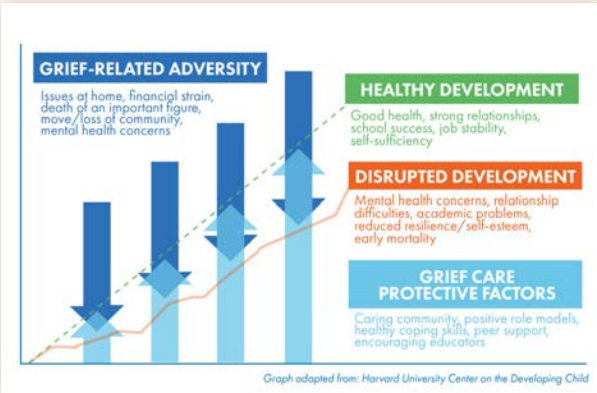
Middle and high school students and faculty with grief education on suicide loss

76

In-school support groups

Childhood Bereavement: The Cost of Inaction

Research shows that bereaved children are at an increased risk of disrupted development. Unaddressed childhood grief and trauma can lead to short-and long-term difficulties including decreased academic performance, mental health issues, and early mortality.



BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN 2020/2021 MICHAEL'S PLACE PROVIDED:

Before the pandemic, grief was estimated to cost employers up to \$75 billion every year in lost productivity. Mental health-related expenses are certain to skyrocket, as at least 1.8 million Americans are estimated to have already lost a relative to COVID-19, and deaths of despair continue to rise nationally and regionally.*

**Data retrieved from the Grief Recovery Institute Educational Foundation and CDC*

44

Individuals in local businesses and organizations with grief support

14

Community presentations

387

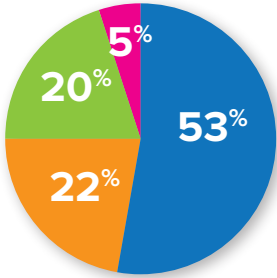
Community members with education on grief and loss



Michael's Place Financial Statements (Cash Basis)

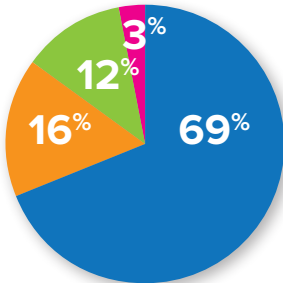
Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2021

REVENUE



- General Corporate & Individual Contributions
- Bequests
- Program Grants
- Fundraising Events

EXPENDITURES



- Grief Support Services
- Administration
- Facility Rent & Maintenance
- Fundraising & Community Outreach

OPERATING STATEMENT

REVENUE

General Corporate & Individual Contributions	303,379
Bequests	123,710
Program Grants	113,220
Fundraising Events	30,592
Total Revenue	570,901

EXPENDITURES

Grief Support Services	290,001
Administration	64,776
Facility Rent and Maintenance	52,110
Fundraising and Community Outreach	11,317
Total Expenditures	418,204
Operating Surplus or (Deficit)	152,697

BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Checking and Savings Account	326,404
Rental Security Deposit	3,250
Short-term Pledges Receivable	101,000
Pledges Receivable Beyond One Year	257,170
Furnishings & Equipment (net of depreciation)	15,470
Total Assets	703,294

Liabilities and Fund Balances

Accounts Payable	1,685
Payroll Taxes and Benefits Payable	6,281
Restricted Grant Balance	46,247
SBA Loan Payable	0
Unrestricted Net Assets	649,081

Total Liabilities and Fund Balances	703,294
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Your Giving / Restoring Hope Campaign

Your volunteerism and generous financial gifts are critical to delivering the Michael's Place mission.

The pandemic demanded a shift from in-person fundraising events to virtual campaigns. Thanks to YOU these efforts proved very successful at a time of increased need. Michael's Place could continue to deliver grief support programs and services at no cost when so many families were faced with deep uncertainty and burdensome isolation.

RESTORING HOPE CAMPAIGN



(Above) Karen with Sara, age four months.
(Right) A bookmark Sara made when she was learning to print. Karen explained that the two words needed to be separated by a space. "But I want to be next to you," Sara said.

\$163,963*

* Total Includes cash donations & pledge gifts

303 donors



For ten years, Michael's Place raised much-needed funds at the community event, the Restoring Hope Breakfast. Our virtual Restoring Hope Campaign featured a powerful video testimonial from Karen Anderson, a mother grieving the death of her daughter Sara at age 46 from cancer. This heartfelt story touched the lives of so many who, in turn, were moved to support the mission of Michael's Place. We are grateful that this virtual campaign reached a compassionate, generous community.

Thank you to Karen for her eloquence and courage. Thank you to our board of directors, who established their own pages and shared the message far and wide. Thank you to those who supported this critical fundraiser that allows Michael's Place to continue to deliver bereavement programs and services to families at no cost, and to schools and workplaces.

Your Giving / 20miles for 20years



Michael's Place kicked off our 20th year celebrating with the 20miles for 20years Virtual Challenge.



We are so grateful to each participant, team, fundraiser, and donor for supporting Michael's Place and this fun virtual event!

\$33,018.35

Special thank you to presenting sponsor **North Bay Produce**, major sponsor **Windemuller Electric**, and each of our generous sponsors for your dedication to the grieving families in our community:

139 donors

Special thank you to these youngest of Michael's Place volunteers who took on the challenge with joy!

- > Auto-Owners Insurance
- > Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
- > Cherryland Electric Cooperative
- > Cintas
- > Coldwell Banker Schmidt - Schmidt Community Fund
- > Consumers Energy
- > Image360
- > Independent Bank
- > Johnson & Associates Insurance
- > Priority Health
- > Smith & Johnson Attorneys, PC
- > Target
- > TBA Credit Union
- > Team Bob's Heating, Cooling, and Plumbing
- > Team One Credit Union
- > Traverse Catholic Federal Credit Union
- > Traverse City Elks Lodge #323
- > Walmart Foundation





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Michael's Place is a family of collaborators, from the staff, the board, volunteers and families, we are all devoted to bringing hope back to those who have lost loved ones.

Chris Dennon, Founder of Michael's Place

