



WILLMAR FAMILY GRIEF & HEALING CENTER

Providing compassionate support for grieving children, teens, and their families



Our start:

WillMar Family Grief & Healing Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was originally founded in July 2000 by marriage and family therapist, Nina Gorbach, as the WillMar Center for Bereaved Children.

This unique community program was created to meet the needs of underserved, bereaved children throughout Sonoma Valley.

The Center provides a safe, healing environment and compassionate peer-support services to children who are grieving the death of a loved one from illness, accident, suicide, or homicide.

To provide the Center with the greatest flexibility to help those in need, WillMar does not receive government funding or insurance reimbursements and relies entirely on donations from individuals, foundations, and service organizations.

What we do:

WillMar Center is the only stand-alone bereavement center between Los Angeles and Portland that charges no fees and is dedicated to helping grieving youth ages 3½ -19 rebuild their lives after a catastrophic loss resulting from death or severe illness.

In addition to the safe, healing environment offered at the Center, WillMar provides emergency on-site grief support, education, and training to schools and the community at large.

With the dedication of more than 55 volunteers and professional facilitators, WillMar’s in-house programming serves 200 children and teens through weekly and bi-weekly peer grief-support groups, with a strong focus on the expressive arts. The Center also provides weekly on-site Grief Reach services to Sonoma elementary schools.

A single story:

Jeannette is a young mother whose children were only four and seven when their father was killed in a head-on collision. Shocked and overwhelmed with grief, Jeannette wondered how she would help her children make it through the pain of losing their dad. A good friend told her about WillMar, and after the first meeting, Jeannette knew that the Center would be there to help all three of them.

Her daughter loves the art room, but her favorite part of going to WillMar is when she makes messages for her dad and places them under the stones on the memory altar. And her son will tell you how much he loves playing in the Bop-room, but that he also values the quiet times when he can make wishes and light a candle for his dad and his family.

Jeannette says, “We could not have gone through this without the love and support of the incredible people at WillMar Center.”



Impact100 Sonoma awarded a Community Grant to WillMar Family Grief & Healing Center

for \$9,000 for supplies for their “on-the-go” grief kits (2012) and two Impact Finalist Grants: \$2,500 (2010) and \$20,000 (2013).

Our future:

We are working hard to raise funds in order to continue providing all Sonoma Valley children and families with free, compassionate, and professional grief-support services.