

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame Archive Project

Archive Project

Inception to Induction

COPE

“Connecting Our Paths Eternally”

Year of Founding: 1996

Issue(s) Addressed: Helping parents cope with the loss of a child through different activities and parenting classes

Induction Category & Year: Family Support, 2008

Founders: Lillian and Robert Julien, Judy and Richard Berg and Patti Greenburg

Personal Quote from Director Karen Flyer: “COPE provides the tools to live as well as the tools to grieve.”

History: COPE was founded in 1996 by Lillian and Robert Julien, Judy and Richard Berg, and Patti Greenburg after they all lost a child under different circumstances. Robert and Lillian lost their daughter to a car accident while she was in school at the University of Arizona on January 25 1992, Judy and Richard lost their son to a skiing accident on January 19 of the same year, and Patti lost her daughter to a drug overdose on May 26, 1997. In the early years of COPE, these founders helped each other through the loss of their children simply because they all were grieving over the same thing: the loss of a child. This intimate partnership is the reason Cope director Karen Flyer says “The COPE organization works so well.” They met in the comfort of each other’s homes and as they realized how much what they were doing helped them, they began to reach out and help other parents whose children had died. COPE grew from the founding families to now helping a network of over 300 people and their organization is still growing.

The sad truth is that many children’s lives are cut drastically short and parents don’t know how to grieve. That’s where COPE comes in with its different free services and activities with other

parents who are going through the same situation. COPE's group activities allow the parents to work together as well as with other couples to get through the loss of their children because many marriages are broken or crumble due to the loss of a child or children. As the core COPE group began to grow, they moved the meetings from each other's houses to different locations around the island. They have the Elias Hicks House in Jericho, as well as a space in the Oceanside Jewish Center, Temple Emanuel in Oceanside, and in the Jericho and Syosset libraries. COPE is hoping to get its own location on Long Island in the future to use as their headquarters.

COPE's mission is simple but at the same time complex; helping parents get through the difficult death of a child. In their various locations, Cope offers many different healing programs. They range from small group support, individual support, art therapy workshops, movement and music classes, school bereavement programs, spirituality groups and workshops, and professionally led lectures and workshops. They have a directory of grief counselors and a library of books, tapes, CD's, videos and they send out monthly newsletters. COPE can help parents who have lost a child in many different ways, from the different groups that they have to offer in various locations to their hotline (COPE line) where people can call and talk about their problems dealing with the loss of a child. The COPE line phone number is (516)364-COPE (2673) and they offer hotline help Monday through Friday 9am-10pm as well as Saturday and Sunday from 10am-3pm. The COPE line is manned by men and women who are trained to help the people who call. As COPE grows, none of the founders has lost touch, and all of them are still very active in what they do and still strive to help others.

COPE is a non-profit organization with one paid full time employee, director Karen Flyer and various paid-by-hour therapists who help to run the different programs and groups that they offer. COPE is completely free to anyone who wants to participate in the various activities, and most of the parents who are helped by the organization stay to volunteer and help other parents who are going through the same loss. While speaking with Karen Flyer, she said "Many of the people who volunteer here are parents who were helped by coming to our programs and want to give back to the people who helped them by helping."

Since COPE is a non-profit organization, they organize fund raisers to help with the expenses. These fundraisers run a few times a year and consist of a walkathon, a golf outing, which is held at the Muttontown club in East Norwich, NY, and a third event that changes each year. For any parent in need of help due to the loss of a child, COPE is there to help you. For parents who reside outside of Long Island, COPE recommends the organization Compassionate Friends because they are a nationwide group. COPE director Karen Flyer said that “Though we are not affiliated with Compassionate Friends, when people from out of state call, I recommend Compassionate Friends to them because they also are a great service.”

Contact Information:

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