UNITE, Inc.
GRIEF SUPPORT AFTER MISCARRIAGE, STILLBIRTH AND INFANT DEATH

UNITE Notes

Grief support after miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death

Summer 2026
Vol. 43, no. 2
Editor: Caitlin DePrinzio

FROM UNITE LEADERSHIP

A Message from the Chairman

It is with great gratitude that I write this letter to you. I appreciate the continued support and trust you have given me over the last three years as Chairman of UNITE.

This is truly a labor of love as I honor and remember my daughter, Maya Dylan, who was stillborn on March 1st, 2019.

Through many support groups (attending three in our first year), the love of my wife Hali, family and friends, and the guidance of facilitators and parents who came before me I learned how to navigate this journey and my new normal. UNITE not only saved my life but has provided me with a path to pay it forward by becoming a Co-Facilitator of the Dads Group and part of the board.

I am proud to announce UNITE is continuing its mission successfully and wholeheartedly. We continue to provide monthly grief support to those parents and now grandparents in need while expanding on ways we can assist those in our community. This year we held three additional events for parents: Moms Night Out (candle making), Dads Night Out (axe throwing) and Family Night Out (Phillies Game). We are looking forward to hosting the 15th Annual Walk to Remember in October.

We are fiscally in a strong position which allowed us to host the events mentioned above as well as donate Memory Boxes to Mainline Health. We will continue to look for ways to support our community and those in need by hosting more events for our parents and making donations in the area.

It is not without the support and efforts made by the board and facilitators who generously donate their time, money and resources that we are able to help so many in need. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It truly takes a village.

If you would like to help, please do not hesitate to reach out. We welcome you to become a volunteer or board member. Please email boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org.

With a Full Heart,

Matthew Sklar

Chairman of the Board

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POETRY & REFLECTION

Footprints in my Heart

Inspired by Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson

I dreamed of walking through life with you,
your little footsteps growing beside mine.

I imagined first steps,
shoes by the door,
walks to school,
and all the places your feet would someday take you.

But our journey changed
before I was ready.

And as I walked through the days that followed your loss,
I looked behind me and wondered
how I had made it this far.

Through the hospital rooms.
Through the empty arms.
Through the silence of coming home without you.
Through birthdays that should have been celebrated
and milestones that should have been yours.

There were moments when the path behind me
seemed to hold only one set of footprints.

And I wondered,

How did I keep walking
when my heart was broken?

How did I take another step
when every part of me wanted to stay
in the life I had imagined with you?

Then I realized—

I was never carrying this grief alone.

In the moments when I could not stand,
love carried me.

The love I have for you.
The love others gave to me.
The memories, hopes, and dreams
that still connect us.

And although your tiny feet
may never leave footprints beside mine on this earth,
your life has left a mark
that time can never erase.

A footprint upon my heart.
A footprint upon our family.
A footprint upon every tomorrow
I continue to walk toward.

So I will keep walking.

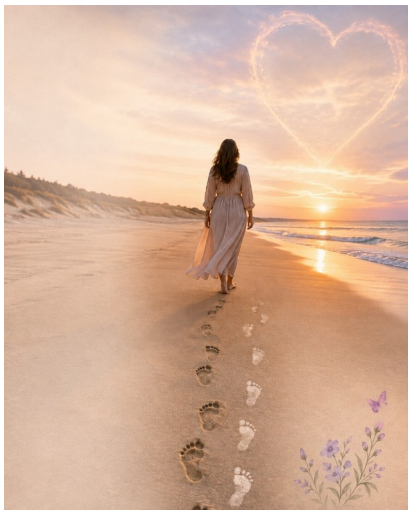
Some days with strength.
Some days through tears.
Some days one small step at a time.

And when the road feels impossibly lonely,
I will remember—

Your footprints may not be visible in the sand,
but they are forever woven into mine.

Wherever this life takes me,
a part of you will always walk with me.

"A footprint upon my heart. A footprint upon our family."



PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING...

Finding Grace in Death

by Denise M. Paul MA, CT, CPLC

"Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues."
— John Stott

Over the last 20 years, I've spoken to hundreds of parents who were mourning the death of their baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, and early infant death. It is a privilege to be on this grief journey with so many bereaved parents. I believe that parents are the experts in their own grief, and I feel fortunate to learn from them.

Recently, while facilitating a virtual Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group for UNITE, Inc. (for parents who are pregnant again, following a loss), a mother said something to the group that stopped me in my tracks. She said, "There was grace in Maggie's death." I was astonished and puzzled to hear that she found grace in her full-term baby girl's death! How could that be? I never imagined that someone could find grace in the tragic loss of her firstborn baby. I loved that she used the word "grace" instead of saying that there was a "silver lining" in her death. Grace is such a beautiful virtue.

This mom recognizes that there are far more difficult circumstances surrounding the death of many babies. In some cases, parents have several miscarriages and lose hope of ever having a baby. In other cases, parents are faced with life limiting anomalies in which they must make difficult choices. Some babies are born alive and suffer short, painful lives. It's very difficult to expect parents to find grace in these circumstances, but it is possible.

After processing what this mom shared, I began to open my eyes to grace in everyday things. I've acknowledged so many graces that I now see in my own life, and I've pointed out graces that I see for others. For example, I recently spoke to a dad who suddenly lost his 17-year-old son. He was grateful that he was able to donate his son's organs and tissues to help save others. That was where he found grace in his son's death. As we focused our conversation on the topic of grace, he identified other graces that seemed to comfort him. His son was surrounded by his friends when he died, he did not suffer, his death could not have been prevented. These were all blessings that he now labels as "graces."

It is important to note that this conversation happened 4 years after her baby's death, so she had 4 years to process her thoughts and allow her pain to soften. While this mother certainly recognized that her daughter's death was traumatic and tragic, she proudly stated that her birth is what made her a mother. She had the opportunity to experience the profound love that a mother has for her child. She further stated that she got to carry her baby, deliver her, bathe her, dress her, and name her. She acknowledged what a blessing it was to introduce her baby to family members in the hospital, and she found comfort in having a funeral for her. She also found grace in the absence of what could have been. Maggie died peacefully and did not suffer.

Maggie's mom also shared that the grace extended beyond Maggie's death. She found grace in learning what she was capable of enduring, as the profound pain of sorrow consumed her. She felt a strength that she didn't know she had. She believes that Maggie's death has made her a better mother to her son, who was born two years later. There was grace in the deepened relationships that she found with family members and friends who came together to collectively grieve and share in rituals of remembrance. While she did briefly question her faith, she stated that her spirituality deepened. This loving mother talked about these blessings as "gifts" that would not be possible if not for Maggie's death... and that is where she has found grace.

Grace can be found in almost every sorrow or disappointment that we experience. I'd like to give you an example of a way that I found grace in an ordinary day in my life. Recently, an airline delayed a flight when my husband and I were traveling to California to celebrate our anniversary. The delay caused us to miss our first night in a very expensive resort in Napa, which we were very much looking forward to. We had to spend the night in an inexpensive

airport hotel until the next morning when we could resume our journey. Although we lost a lot of money and we were very disappointed, I found grace in the fact that we were together, we were able to get a hotel room so that we could sleep, and that we still had 4 nights to enjoy at the resort. I even found grace in the fact that we had the financial means to fly to California and stay at a fabulous resort. It was in finding grace that made the disappointment bearable, and it allowed me to discover gratitude.

Life will be full of little disappointments and sometimes major tragedies. My hope is that you will be able to find grace in every day of your life.

"Grace surrounds us like the soft, comforting, refreshing rain. Let gratitude help you find the power of that grace and see all your experiences in life as blessings."
— Ardath Rodale

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Events

Creating welcoming spaces for parents and families of loss

When a parent loses their baby, their world stops; what was normal yesterday is no longer. The sadness is overwhelming, the future unknown. The parent yearns for support but unless you have experienced this horrific tragedy, you simply do not “get it”.

Over the past 50 years, UNITE has provided parents of baby loss with peer-to-peer grief support. A safe space to be with other parents of loss to discuss their grief, their sadness, their hard days, and their questions of how to move forward. It is in these moments that a parent finds a glimmer of hope as there are other parents to help them along this awful journey.

Returning to a social environment can be daunting and uncomfortable. Seeds of doubt quickly rush through your body. Will other people think I am over my grief, will anyone ask about my baby, what if I have a grief burst, will people judge me or simply avoid me. For these reasons and many more loss parents may avoid returning to the world they knew before.

UNITE made a conscious effort to expand on its mission and offerings and held 3 additional events this year. The hope was to provide parents with a night to enjoy themselves with no hidden agenda or fear. A simple night out with other moms and dads.

MARCH

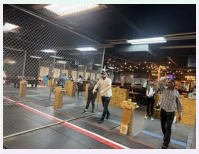
Moms Night Out

In March, UNITE held a mom’s night out at Cork and Candle in Ardmore. An intimate night spent sipping wine and eating light bites while making candles. Conversations were made and new friends were made. Moms had a night simply to be moms with other moms.

APRIL

Dads Night Out

In April the dads had their chance to drink some brews while hurling axes at Chopper’s Axe House in Philadelphia. No injuries were reported and many laughs were had by all. Like typical dads, a competition ensued and a winner was crowned. As they say, boys will be boys.



MAY

Family Night at the Phillies

In May, UNITE hosted its first Family Night at the Phillies. Families were encouraged to bring their living children, other family members and friends who have supported them through their journey. Like any true Philly sporting event, a pregame tailgate was held, and 75 people attended the game. Although the Phillies did not pull off the win, it was no doubt a great night for all.

UNITE is eager to continue to host these events and more to provide parents and families of loss a warm and welcoming place to come together. A place to remember their babies and find their new normal. We look forward to seeing you at our next event!

WAYS TO HELP

Volunteer • Join the Board • Sponsor the Walk — reach out anytime at boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Empty Desk: When Back-to-School Season Hurts

Caitlin DePrinzio

For so many families, the first day of school is filled with excitement.

New backpacks are packed the night before. Lunchboxes are labeled. Outfits are carefully chosen. Parents stand on front porches taking pictures while their children hold signs announcing their new grade, their favorite things, and what they want to be when they grow up.

Social media fills with smiling faces and side-by-side pictures showing just how much everyone has grown.

But for grieving parents, the first day of school can feel very different.

Because somewhere in the middle of all of that excitement is the reminder of everything that should have been.

"There is an empty desk in a classroom where your child should be sitting."

There is a backpack you will never purchase.

A name you will never write on a folder or lunchbox.

There will be no first-day-of-school outfit carefully laid out the night before. No picture on the front porch. No sign telling everyone what grade they are entering.

No yearly update to the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

And sometimes, it is the smallest things that hurt the most.

Walking through the school-supply aisle and realizing which character backpack they might have chosen.

Seeing children the same age climbing onto the school bus.

Hearing another parent complain about the chaos of getting everyone out the door in the morning and wishing, more than anything, that you had the opportunity to experience that chaos too.

Grief has a way of attaching itself to milestones.

Birthdays. Holidays. Graduations.

And sometimes, milestones that were never technically yours to celebrate can hurt just as much.

You may find yourself calculating what grade your child would be entering.

You may picture what they would look like standing beside their siblings.

You may wonder who their friends would have been, what subjects they would have loved, whether they would have been nervous on the first day, or whether they would have run through the school doors without looking back.

You imagine the person they should have been becoming.

And while the world around you celebrates new beginnings, you may find yourself grieving all over again.

Back-to-school season can feel incredibly lonely because so much of this grief is invisible.

No one sees the backpack you did not buy. No one notices the missing name on a class list. No one sees the child who should be standing in your first-day picture. But you see them. You feel their absence. And you remember.

If the first day of school is difficult for you, you do not have to force yourself to participate in the excitement around you. It is okay to step away from social media. It is okay to avoid the school-supply aisle. It is okay to cry after putting your living children on the bus. It is okay for happiness for other families and heartbreak for your own child to exist at the exact same time.

There is no correct way to move through these milestones.

Maybe you light a candle for your child that morning. Maybe you buy the backpack they would have loved and donate it to another child. Maybe you write their name somewhere only you will see.

You should be here.

Because even though there may never be a first-day-of-school picture, a report card, a graduation, or an answer to what they want to be when they grow up, your child is still part of your family.

Their absence is real because their presence mattered.

So as another school year begins and pictures of smiling children fill our screens, we hold space for the families whose photographs will always be missing someone. For the parents quietly calculating what grade their child should be entering. For the siblings who know someone should be standing beside them. And for every child whose desk will forever feel empty.

You are remembered
You are loved
And you should be here.

POETRY & REFLECTION

A Late Walk

Robert Frost

When I go up through the mowing field,
The headless aftermath,
Smooth-laid like thatch with the heavy dew,
Half closes the garden path.

And when I come to the garden ground,
The whir of sober birds
Up from the tangle of withered weeds
Is sadder than any words.

A tree beside the wall stands bare,
But a leaf that lingered brown,
Disturbed, I doubt not, by my thought,
Comes softly rattling down.

I end not far from my going forth
By picking the faded blue
Of the last remaining aster flower
To carry again to you.

The last remaining aster flower

SAVE THE DATE

15th Annual Walk to Remember

Saturday, October 17th • 12–3 PM • Ridley Creek State Park, Picnic Areas 11A & B

Join us for a day of remembering our babies who were lost too soon. Light refreshments will be served, along with activities for all. We will also offer Yard Signs, Luminaries, and T-shirts. We will also have lawn games, arts and crafts, and face painting for the little ones.

Please check the UNITE Walk Page to purchase Yard Signs, Luminaries, and T-shirts.

The Walk is also our largest fundraising event of the year. If you would like to sign up as a sponsor or donate, please visit the Walk Page. We hope you can join us.

Want to help beyond the Walk? We're always looking for volunteers and board members — email boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Summer 2026 Donations

We Are So Grateful for Donations Given Throughout the Year

2025 WALK TO REMEMBER

$21,529

We raised an amazing $21,529!!

WITH GRATITUDE

Nancy & Steven Sklar
Marissa Michelle Litman
Melissa Kirsch
Linda Nuccitelli
Bill and Andrea Devenney
Dennis and Leslie Boyle
Mary Cushing Doherty
Karen Binns
Karen Boyle
Brian Sternlieb - Miles for Paige
Bryan Sternlieb

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES POSSIBLE

UNITE offers a number of services to grieving parents and their caregivers including the following: Peer to Peer Grief Support Groups

- Literature
- Educational Programs
- Training Workshops
- Group Development Assistance

Without Your Most Generous Donations, UNITE Would Not Be Able To Continue These Services

INFORMATION & UPDATES

News

Important UNITE information and ways to stay connected

Mailing Address

Please note our new mailing address:
P.O. Box 21715, Philadelphia, PA 19346

Phone Number

Please note our new phone number:
484-758-0002

Safe Arrivals

We would love to hear about your safe arrival so we all can celebrate in your joy. So we can put it in the newsletter, please send information on your new bundle of joy to cedeprinzio725@gmail.com.

Home Page Info

www.unitegriefsupport.org

Virtual Butterflies: The donation cost for placing one of these virtual items on the page is $25 and will be in memory of your baby. You may donate through PayPal by clicking on the Buy Now icon. Note: On the PayPal page, where it states, "Instructions to the Merchant," type in your baby's name, etc.

Newsletter Submissions

Please send your original poetry, short stories, articles, and letters to UNITE Notes at cedeprinzio725@gmail.com. The beautiful writings that we receive from UNITE's bereaved parents are what make our newsletter so special. If you have written poems, articles, etc. that you would like to share with other parents, please send them soon. Note that the newsletter is now being uploaded to the UNITE website which allows all who are searching for comfort and support due to the loss of their child(ren) to see your written story.

Acknowledgments / Fundraisers Wanted

If anyone has not received an acknowledgment for their donation, please contact the boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org, or call the UNITE line at 484-758-0002. Please leave your name, phone number, and the best time to return your call.

We are looking for some fresh ideas in fundraising! Do you have an idea to share? We'd love to hear about it. Please contact UNITE at boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org.

SUPPORT & CONNECTION

Support Groups

Pennsylvania • New Jersey • Specialty Groups

For information about the group nearest you, please contact UNITE, Inc. at 484-758-0002 (leave a message), write to UNITE Inc. at P.O. Box 21715, Philadelphia, PA 19346, or email boardchair@unitegriefsupport.org. New members must contact the group coordinator before attending their first meeting. All UNITE Meetings, except for Riddle Memorial Hospital, are virtual and are by invitation only. Please call 484-758-0002 if you would like to attend a UNITE Support Group. UNITE, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, marital status, religious belief, race, sexual orientation or economic status.

Pennsylvania

UNITE, Riddle Memorial Hospital – IN-PERSON

Media, PA
Meets 2nd Thursday, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Facilitator: Sheila McCabe

UNITE, Pennsylvania Hospital

Philadelphia, PA
Meets 1st Tuesday, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Facilitators: Karen Donnelly; Kelly Colby

UNITE, Chester County Hospital

West Chester, PA
Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Facilitators: Ryan Olivere; Sue McAndrew

New Jersey

UNITE, Penn Medicine Princeton Health

Meets 1st Wednesday, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Facilitator: Bernadette Flynn-Kelton BSN, RN

Specialty Groups

Father's Group, Dads Only

Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Facilitators: Matthew Sklar; Simon Hindle

Grieving Grandparents Group

Meets 2nd Tuesday of Each Month, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Facilitators: Nancy and Steven Sklar

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UNITE Notes Staff

Editor: Caitlin DePrinzio

Submissions

We welcome your original poetry and articles. Your contributions are important to UNITE's work of reaching out to bereaved parents. We reserve the right to edit and select from submissions. Please send all submissions to:

UNITE Inc.
P.O. Box 21715
Philadelphia, PA 19346
484-758-0002
or email cedeprinzio725@gmail.com

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