

## CUSD Cares

### New Song Center for Grieving Children

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CUSD Director of Counseling & Social Services, Brenda Vargas talks with Jill Lovill, Clinical Director with organization **New Song Center for Grieving Children**. New Song Center is open to any child, teen, and young adult in our community, who is grieving the death of a loved one.

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**Brenda Vargas:** 0:06

Welcome parents and community members of CUSD Cares. Today we are joined by the clinical director of New Song Jill Lovill. Jill, welcome to CUSD Cares.

**Jill Lovill:** 0:17

Thank you so much for having me.

**Brenda Vargas:** 0:19

We are very delighted to have you. You've worked with Chandler and your agency has worked with Chandler for quite a few years now. So, we just appreciate this partnership. I think it's one of the things that we'd like to do in this podcast is share with our community who is New Song and what they're all about in case they're not familiar. If you don't mind kind of jumping in and sharing with our community, who is New Song?

**Jill Lovill:** 0:45

So New Song Center for Grieving Children is a program of Hospice of the Valley. Our primary programming is peer to peer support groups for children and families grieving a death loss. So, it's important to know that although we are a program of Hospice of the Valley, you do not need to have had a loved one on service with Hospice of the Valley. We support families regardless of cause of death. Our programming starts primarily at the age of five, and then we have support groups, going through young adulthood and then also for the caregiver of the child that comes to program. We also have unique programming when it is a child who is dying or has died, whether that be individual counseling for the siblings of the child, or our program called Enduring Tides, which is that peer to peer support group model. But specifically, for when a child has died. We also have quarterly events for siblings of families who have a child with a life limiting illness. We have memorial events throughout the year. We have educational programming, we have family fun events, and of course it's important to note that all of our services are free of charge to the family. So, no need to stress about insurance or how am I

going to pay for this. There will not be a charge to the family to provide or to participate in our programs,

**Brenda Vargas:** 2:04

Which is absolutely so phenomenal of a service to provide our community. One of the things that our counselors and social workers have been so welcoming in regards to being able to work with you and your staff is the fact that you don't forget the parents and caregivers. And that's been a huge crucial piece of supporting kids. We know we are one, just one sliver in providing supports at school, but we know that that support doesn't end there. So, we want to extend that learning and those best practices support the person that's doing the bulk of the work. As we know, loss has been such a heavy, heavy piece for most of our families and our community during this time, last two years or two plus years for all of us that we've all been impacted in some capacity of knowing somebody that either we've lost close to us or even within our network of friends and community and we just appreciate the work that you have done with parents and caregivers. Can you tell us, a little bit deeper of a dive, of what does that look like as caregivers are trying to navigate not just how to support their child, but how to even make sense of what they're dealing with for themselves?

**Jill Lovill:** 3:13

Thank you, Brenda. So, we provide a variety of resources for parents and caregivers. Some of that may be something like a consultation. A lot of times families have a difficult time with disclosure to a child or a teenager or whomever about death. And that's something that my role is, connecting with families, even before death or, right after death to talk about what do we say to the kids. Usually, it's just a confidence boost because parents know their kids best and know what to say, but something that we can participate in. We also, as mentioned, have the peer-to-peer support groups for parents who are grieving a death loss and they can come with their child with enduring ties. If it's an only child who has died, they can come alone or with their partner. We have a unique program called Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families, which is more of a parenting course I would say than that processing group that New Song is. That's in partnership with Arizona State University, and they're looking to hopefully roll out a self-guided program of that which would be really neat and easily accessible. And again, that's parenting skills when you're raising a bereaved child. We also have the education series that comes up, whether it's through the schools like you mentioned, or, for example, just this Wednesday we're doing a parenting through grief during the holidays. So, various education series that people can listen into and participate in, to just learn more, and feel equipped to handle so much.

**Brenda Vargas:** 4:39

And do you have any opportunities for parents whose languages may not be English? I know that you offer a few.

**Jill Lovill:** 4:45

Yes, we do. So, we do have a program called Luz Del Corazon, which is our Spanish speaking program. Those adult programs are run in Spanish. We have a bilingual facilitator in each of the children's group, but in the adult groups that all in Spanish, that's at our central location. We also do provide counseling as needed for individuals who are Spanish speaking. If someone's language is not English or Spanish, we would partner with an interpreter to try to get the services that are needed and supportive to that family. And we have all of the materials that are available in Spanish as well.

**Brenda Vargas:** 5:21

That's incredible to have those options available for families. As we know, Arizona has become a very diverse community. I know that we have been on the receiving end of lots of different students and families from all different parts of the world. And so, we welcome them with open arms and open hearts. I know that you just shared services. Tell me who on the receiving end, because I know you're only one person, Jill, if you could explain just a training education that the people in your role and those that you oversee, what it is that is their background and so people can feel confident that when they are touching base with someone from New Song, it is someone with the highest level of expertise in this area.

**Jill Lovill:** 6:03

Got it. And so, when talking about the counseling services that are provided, Erica Schwartz is a licensed clinical social worker, and she provides the support primarily to our families when it is a child who is dying or has died. As mentioned, I provide support primarily when it's a parent who is dying or has died and that's either in the consultation or the counseling form. I'm also a licensed social worker myself. And then our evening coordinators coordinate the program evening. So that would be either in Gilbert is probably our closest location to the Chandler Unified District, or all throughout the Valley. So, we have Gary, Sue Ellen and Dulce is our newest member, she is Spanish speaking and has a certificate in trauma and bereavement. And so, they provide oversight to our volunteers who facilitate the groups. All of our volunteers have gone through extensive training through New Song and our partner organizations, which are Ryan House and Phoenix Children's. And of course, Hospice of the Valley, and they always have staff onsite. So, our volunteers are trained to hold space and support those who are grieving. And then if ever there's something that needs a little bit extra, either the staffers onsite are available, or of course myself and our executive director, Lisa, are always available on call, as well.

**Brenda Vargas:** 7:20

That's fabulous. I know that every situation that a family might be dealing with may be very unique and requires probably some individual consultation in order to navigate, whether it's after a death and or they anticipate that their loved one may soon die. What is your

recommendation if a listener knows of someone, a neighbor, a friend, someone they really care about, that this is going to be something that's going to be a big lift for them. How would you suggest that they start contacting, New Song and the next steps as far as how to best prepare and or just how to be a good friend or loved one in supporting another family that may be experiencing loss but may not be ready yet to speak with anyone openly about it?

**Jill Lovill:** 8:10

Absolutely. And so, when you're a friend of someone who's grieving, I think it's very helpful to do information gathering. So, you could certainly call New Song and say, hey, could you tell us a little bit more about your programs? Where are they located? What do they entail? How often do they run, etcetera. And then provide that information to the bereaved or to be bereaved family, of, hey, when you are ready, you're welcome to call New Song and they're available. It's tricky when people call in and say, can you call my neighbor? Not as much, we really want to make sure that they're comfortable with that and to your point that they're ready for that. So, unless we have their permission, we probably won't do that outreach necessarily. But if they said yes, my sister said please have someone call me, of course we'd be happy to make that first call. We have a website that is available and has robust resources and information about our program. It's easy to reach by visiting [www.hov.org/newsong](http://www.hov.org/newsong). So that's hov for Hospice of the Valley [hov.org/newsong](http://hov.org/newsong). There are breathing exercises on there. There's activities to do when you are grieving or to support grieving families. All the information about our program, ways to donate as mentioned, we are a not-for-profit that provides free services. So, you can certainly support the mission by donating there and ways to just gather more information. A lot of times as friends we say, 'Well if there's anything I can do to help' but it's hard to take advantage of that cause we don't know what we need to help. So just gathering information is tremendously impactful for families usually.

**Brenda Vargas:** 9:48

So other than donating, which I know we're getting ready to approach this end of the year time in which a lot of folks might be, gearing all their paperwork for tax purposes, is there any other way to volunteer or support new song from your perspective?

**Jill Lovill:** 10:03

Absolutely, yes. So as mentioned, the donations are incredibly impactful in our mission. So, we are grateful for anything anyone can give and also, we're always looking for volunteers. As mentioned, we are a volunteer, facilitated peer support group program. So, if you feel called to spend that time with grieving families, like I said, provide a lot of training to help you feel comfortable in doing that. And we would welcome you with open arms. We are always looking to do that and actually Gilbert is one of our most robust programming nights, in desperate need of volunteers to help facilitate. So please do reach out if that's something of interest to you. You can call us; you can email us or there's a volunteer application right on that website that I provided. We also have volunteer opportunities if facilitating fields like a bit too much, handing

out pizza to our families. We provide free dinner, at every program night as well. So, we need support in doing that, setting up for our various events throughout the year so that's always an opportunity. We would love that. And you know, a lot of people generously donate supplies and things like that to us as well. So, we welcome whatever you feel compelled or called to give.

**Brenda Vargas:** 11:08

Well, we have such an incredibly generous community, Jill, so I have no doubt that someone listening may want to give of their heart in one way or capacity or connect someone else to you and your organization, your Gilbert location, if you don't mind sharing where those services are provided, what is the facility?

**Jill Lovill:** 11:25

You bet. And so, of note, our program is not an open program where you just show up. So, we do have to go through your intake process, just to make sure we're a good fit for you and that we're the right support that you need. Our Gilbert location is located near the Mercy Gilbert campus, and we have program nights that run typically every other week. So, again, when calling in and getting that information, making sure, I don't want to, you know, blast the wrong information. But usually, our program runs in the evenings once a week, every other week for families.

**Brenda Vargas:** 11:57

Yeah, I want parents to get an idea or caregivers, location wise. And you also offer telehealth options, is that correct? So that people can virtually be supported in that capacity as well.

**Jill Lovill:** 12:09

Yes, if that's something that the family needs for some reason, then we could look into that for, usually more for our individual counseling at that point. But that in person connection, if comfortable and reasonable within your needs is really helpful.

**Brenda Vargas:** 12:26

Well, parents and community, as you can hear from Jill at New Song Center for Grieving Children, the services they provide not just for our children, but they're also for parents and caregivers that are in a very critical role and very difficult, sometimes, place to navigate how to best not just support their child but also support themselves and continue to be well and face each day with whatever comes. Jill, we just so appreciate from a professional development standpoint, all the training you've provided our staff and we just want to make sure our community is well aware of your services and if they have any doubt to just reach out as she shared, it's [www.hov.org/newsong](http://www.hov.org/newsong) and it looks like you guys are ready and willing to serve. You've helped so many families already in Chandler in our partnership in the last four years that we certainly want to make sure to give you a nod and your staff for everything that you've

done. And just let our community know that we have experts within this field that are right in our backyard, ready to serve at no cost. So, Jill, thank you for your time today.

**Jill Lovill:** 13:32

Thank you so much. And the feeling is so mutual. It's been an absolute honor to partner with Chandler Unified. You welcomed us with open arms and we're really grateful for the relationship as well. So, thank you very much.

**Brenda Vargas:** 13:43

So, parents and community, if you have more questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. And thank you for another addition of CUSD Cares.