



ERIN'S HOUSE CONNECTIONS

30th Birthday Series

Third Edition 2023

Celebrating 30 years of building hope & healing hearts!

THANK YOU!

FORT WAYNE LIGHTS UP BLUE!
11/16-11/19

Featured Story: Lights of Love Memorial With The Eckert & Fisher Family

BIG Changes to Onsite Peer-Support Groups

#GivingTuesday:
Be A Slice of Program Night 🍕

Holiday Gathering: Amazon Shopping For A Good Cause!



Erin's House provides support services for children, teens, and their families who have experienced a death.

www.ErinsHouse.org • 260.423.2466



Children's Grief Awareness Day

Thursday, November 16, 2023



Erin's House Staff encourages you to wear blue on November 16th in support of Children's Grief Awareness Day!

1 in 10

CHILDREN IN INDIANA



WILL EXPERIENCE THE DEATH OF A PARENT OR SIBLING BY THE AGE OF 18

This statistic more than doubles to 355,000 youth who will be bereaved by age 25.



Children's Grief Awareness Day is a time for acknowledging and supporting children who are grieving. Grief is a universal experience, but for youth, it can be particularly challenging. This special day serves as a reminder of the unique needs of children's grief and aims to raise awareness about the resources and support available to them. This day encourages open conversations about grief and highlights the importance of providing these young hearts with a safe space to express themselves.

► Overall, Indiana Ranks 15th highest in the nation for childhood bereavement.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

WEAR BLUE

Show solidarity by dressing in blue on November 16.

SHARE

Spread awareness by sharing the message with family, friends, and your community. Post on social media, host an event, or start a conversation.

GIVE

Your monetary donation to Erin's House helps ensure that youth who are grieving receive the support they need. Or consider giving your time by volunteering as a group facilitator.



From November 16 - 19 this year, turn your attention to Fort Wayne's most prominent landmarks to be beaming in blue lights! Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge, Rousseau Centre, IMPC Downtown, Wells Street Bridge, Sweetwater, Skyline Garage, Parkview Field, and more will all be participating.

Healing Journey and Connecting Hope

Erin's House Programming Updates

Since Erin's House for Grieving Children opened in June of 1993, we have been offering on-going peer support programming for families twice a month. In recent years, on average, family attendance showed only eight programs per year were utilized.

After 2020 and switching to virtual groups, Erin's House reevaluated its programming with the goal of creating a more intentional experience with increased consistency and improved attendance.

Our previous group dynamics, though impactful, caused stagnation within the groups. Kids were having to repeat their story and reintroduce themselves to the group each time which wasn't beneficial to their healing process. Additionally, since COVID, consistency became harder to re-establish and the program groups were losing their bond and connection. Starting January 2023, our 10-week program, Healing Journey, addressed this by ensuring all children start and finish together, fostering strong connections as the outcome. Each week builds upon the last, allowing for deeper exploration of the effects of grief.

Each evening program ends with "closing circle", and now, each Healing Journey concludes with a Bubble Release and

a message for their person. Families depart Erin's House with their newly acquired skills, feeling more confident and empowered in their grief journeys. Having had the opportunity to express fear, sadness, anger, or to simply play and forget their worries, children and teens experience a consistent and impactful change in their lives through Erin's House.

When continued grief support is needed, families have the option to register for Connecting Hope, our supplemental 4-week program as well as three camps offered throughout the year.




"The biggest change I've seen is consistency. Families have better rapport, better attendance, plus the kids in group remember each other's names which is so impactful!"

SARAH MUSIC, VOLUNTEER SINCE JANUARY 2019


100%
 OF PARTICIPANTS
**IDENTIFIED
 SUPPORT SYSTEMS**


95%
 OF PARTICIPANTS
**DEMONSTRATED AN INCREASE
 IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION**


95%
 OF PARTICIPANTS
**IDENTIFIED POSITIVE
 COPING SKILLS**


100%
 OF PARTICIPANTS
**SHARED MEMORIES
 AND STORIES ABOUT
 THE PERSON WHO DIED**



Lights ^{OF} Love MEMORIAL

**November 22 -
December 3**

MEMORIAL LEVELS



\$10 Custom Holiday Ornament

One custom ornament
with your loved one's name



\$30 Lighted Candle

Lighted Candle with
name on video board
One custom ornament
with your loved one's name

IN LOVING MEMORY OF STEVEN B. FISHER



You Are Forever In Our Hearts, Steven.
Love You All The Much In The World!

Mom, Justin, Gavin, Julia,
and Parker



\$100 Personalized Tribute

Name, Picture, and message on the video board
Lighted Candle with name on video board
One custom ornament with your loved one's name

Through the Lights of Love Memorial, you can remember your loved one with a special tribute during this holiday season. Tributes are displayed on the Parkview Field video board each evening from November 22 - December 3 of this year. This event is free for all to attend.

Lights of Love Dates & Times:

Wednesday, Nov. 22:

4pm - 6pm & 8pm - 9pm (Night of Lights)

Thursday, Nov. 23:

4pm - 8pm (Thanksgiving)

Friday, Nov. 24 - Sunday, Nov. 26:

1pm - 8pm

Monday, Nov. 27 - Friday, Dec. 1:

4pm - 8pm

Saturday, Dec. 2 - Sunday, Dec. 3:

1pm - 8pm



To purchase a tribute, sponsor an Erin's House family's tribute, or learn more, visit ErinsHouse.org/lights-of-love

Ornaments are locally made by Julie Wall of The HEDGE. Additional ornaments may be purchased for \$10.00 each. Ornaments can be picked up at Erin's House or shipped.

Tributes must be submitted by November 19th.
Ornament ordering open through December 6th.



MEET

The Eckert & Fisher Family



Last year was our first year getting involved with Lights of Love as a new Erin's House family. Visiting Parkview Field and seeing the face of my son, Steven, on the screen was amazing. Being there brought back all the stories and memories we made together during his short 26 years of life and is something I will never forget. I'm so glad we were able to support Erin's House while remembering him.

In October, my daughter, Julia, and granddaughter, Parker, really looked forward to returning to Erin's House. It's truly a place where they can be themselves and be around other children who understand how it feels to experience such a significant loss. For my husband and I, we enjoy being surrounded by so many people who truly care. It's a place we greatly love.

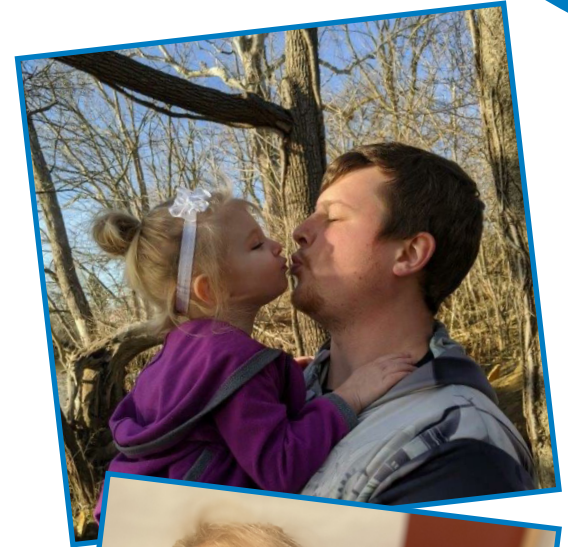
Processing Grief

Three months after my son passed, my stepmother lost her battle with ovarian cancer, and then three months later my dad lost his battle with lung cancer. My family suffered three significant losses in a six-month timeframe. That's a lot for a young child to process. I think as adults, processing death is very hard, but for children, it's so much more. They haven't had a chance to live a long enough life to fully understand what has been taken. They only know that they will never see, hold, or talk to that person again. As we cope with these family deaths, Erin's House has been amazing in supporting Parker and Julia through their grief.

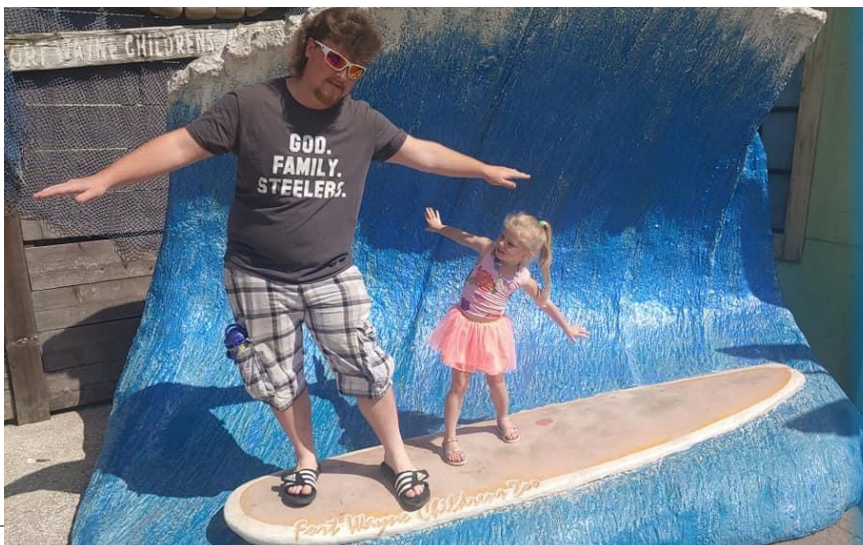
I want to thank Erin's House for giving them a place where they can remember their loved ones in a beautiful and creative way.

Blessings,

Rachel Eckert



A Cherished Family Tradition: "At Emmanuel St. Michael Lutheran School, there's an annual Christmas church service organized entirely by the students, a tradition that has been upheld since my own school days there. Steven faithfully returned each year to watch his younger siblings' involvement. He was anticipating the day he could watch his daughter, Parker, follow in his footsteps."



"Steven's favorite part of life was his daughter, Parker. He would take her to the zoo every week when it was open, even if it was only a few hours."



GIVING TUESDAY

THE TUESDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING: NOVEMBER 28, 2023

An opportunity for people around the world to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and support their communities.

This year for GivingTuesday, we are recognizing our pizza nights before programming, and how it's not just about filling bellies. After a death in a family, mealtime is one of the hardest traditions to upkeep. With that missing chair at the table, it can unknowingly affect adolescent eating patterns and the good habit of eating together as a family. When families enroll in our 10-week programming, Healing Journey, the first activity we bring back to the family dynamic is dinner time each night they come to Erin's House.

Help us to continue to support mealtime for our families by pledging a one-time donation of

- \$50** to supply a family's favorite pizza during their 10-weeks at Erin's House.
- \$250** to supply pizzas for an entire program group night of over 20 families.



Jordan Family
Favorite:
Pepperoni Pizza



Kaeser Family
Favorite:
Sausage Pizza



Kid Questionnaire

During a program night last month, the group of 6 to 9-year-olds created special memory boxes. While the children designed their boxes with markers, stickers, and colored paper, facilitators asked each child about what happy or funny memories they remember about their person.

WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN YOUR MEMORY BOX?

"I'm going to put pictures and a seashell that my mom found when we went to the beach together!"

Ny'laxa NY'LAYA, AGE 7

Raising Glasses and Funds: *Wine for the Spirit*



A toast to healing hearts and building hope

The 18th annual Wine for the Spirit event was a night to remember with over 400 guests, sponsors, and volunteers gathered for an evening of fine wines, local bites, and lively auctions.

To all who joined us at this annual fundraiser, whether through spirited bidding, open-hearted donations, invaluable sponsorships, or through gifted auction packages, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your collective effort has paved the way for Erin's House to continue offering critical peer-support services to families who are grieving, without any financial burden.

In every glass raised, and in every bid placed, we witnessed the power of community coming together for a great cause.

Special Thanks to our
Wine for the Spirit Sponsors:

Premier Sponsors



Event Sponsors

Indiana Spine Group

Katz Sapper & Miller

Amount Raised.....	\$370,000
Local Businesses Involved.....	177
Online Silent Auction Bids.....	2,016



MEET

Trish Mathus Featured Speaker & Current Erin's House Family

"My kids, Natalya & Cade, couldn't be here tonight, but Natalya wanted to know, 'if you share our story, will it help people understand how special Erin's House is?'"

When we started at Erin's House, we had a feeling it would be hope and healing, and that's exactly what we found. They're really good at just listening, and I had no idea how powerful that was. In programming especially, Natalya had a really tough time accepting that Cousin Evie had died. There was a night in the program you're asked to write your person's name down and she couldn't do it; it was too hard, and she didn't want to go back. Now, she'll write 'Evie' on her hand and carry her with her that way. That was one way I saw a tangible difference in her, and that's because of Erin's House.

Holiday Gathering



We need your help this season to provide our families with an opportunity to create joyful memories and traditions while remembering their person.

Throughout December, each program night will have its own Holiday Gathering celebration. Every family will get a gingerbread kit to build together, along with each child and teen receiving a scooter and stockings full of goodies and warm winter items.



Spread holiday cheer by using our Amazon wish list to make giving even easier. With just a few clicks, your items will be delivered right to our door!
ErinsHouse.org/holiday

Deadline for wish list donations is December 1st.



Erin's House provides support services for children, teens, and their families who have experienced a death.

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 Russ Eggeman - Building Maintenance, P/T
 Madi Wurster - Program Assistant, P/T



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Administrative Office Hours:
 Monday - Friday 9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Please let us know if you would like to be removed from our mailing list. Call 260.423.2466.