

OCEAN BREEZE



Adults write their feeling and emotions in a journal at the "No One Should Grieve Alone Conference." Annalise Knudson/
Staten Island Advance photos

Conference helps adults with the grieving process

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Matthew Leardi is still learning how to cope with the death of his grandparents five years later.

The Tottenville resident lost both his maternal and paternal grandparents all within a few months. "I lost my grandparents fairly quickly," he said. "They were large portions of my life."

Leardi, who is both a social worker and a therapist, explained that the No One Should Grieve Alone Conference, presented Saturday by Camp Good Grief, has helped both his professional and personal life.

The daylong conference, which drew more than 160 people to the Regina McGinn Education Center at Staten Island University Hospital, Ocean Breeze, featured guest speakers, activities and workshops geared toward helping adults who have suffered a loss.

Camp Good Grief's founder and board president, Linda Steinman, came up with the idea for the conference after seeing adults struggle to cope.

THE OLDER YOU GET, THE HARDER IT GETS

Dr. Patricia Tooker of Grant City is still grieving the loss of her mother-in-law, who died last month, whom she had known for more than 40 years.

"I am here to gain more insight and knowledge about personal grieving and the aging of my own parents," she said.

Tooker, who is the dean of the School of Nursing at Wagner College, hoped the conference would also help her professionally, passing along information to her faculty members.

As a nurse, she said, her family leans on her for sup-



One of the activities was mask-making. Adults are asked to write their concerns and fears inside the mask.

port and strength.

"[The older you get], the harder it gets to cope with your own loss and aging," she said.

ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHOPS

The first activity of the day asked participants to write down why they attended the event.

Some wanted to learn how to cope with a sudden loss, while others wanted to learn more about grieving for their professional careers.

"I want to be happy again," one post read.

"I just can't stop crying," another read.

One activity stood out to Leardi: creating a memory box.

"All the good memories started coming back," he said. "I was getting teary-eyed and I had to leave the room for a minute."

Along with creating memory boxes, the day included yoga and meditation, mask-making and journaling.

GUEST SPEAKERS AND PERFORMANCES

Illuminart Productions performed an original play called "Sometimes You Just Want Ice Cream" about the bereavement experience. Several of the play's actors and writers were alumni of Camp Good Grief.

The play was an eye-opener for Leardi, who said it would help him deal with bereavement cases involving youth from a different perspective.

Keynote speaker Donna Schuurman has helped families across the world grieve after a death. Her presenta-

tion, "10 Ways to Navigate Life After a Death," offered insight into her own personal experiences as well as how others can cope.

Staten Island native Eddie Joyce, the event's featured speaker, discussed his fictional book, "Small Mercies," which focuses on a Staten Island family after 9/11.

The conference was sponsored by Northfield Bank Foundation, Bernard and Anne Spitzer Foundation, Investors Bank Foundation, Matthews Children's Foundation and Morrison Healthcare Food Service.