



pathfinders

you never have to walk alone

FINDING THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

When Tyler Ray Ribich was born he instantly became the light of our lives. He was extraordinary. He not only lit up every room, but he lit up people's hearts by making them laugh when they needed it most and by sharing his many artistic talents in countless ways.

The Assistant Principal at Basalt High School called him "the heart of his class" and he was one of two students in the senior class elected by his peers to serve as head student. A few days after the election and a week before his 17th birthday, we lost Tyler to a drunk driver and everything in our family's universe went dark.

Like our love for Tyler, our grief over losing him is all encompassing. We have been shattered and gutted, but thanks to Pathfinders, we have never been alone. Amidst our shock and despair, and with the amazing support of Beth Mobilian, we created a beautiful celebration of life for Tyler on his birthday. Beth gave us the gift of being our spiritual guide that day and she truly embodied the voice of our family as we celebrated our beautiful Tyler.



Allison Daily has been our guardian angel and rock this year. She has been there for us every step of the way and has helped us to better understand our grief. Most importantly she has supported our connection to Tyler by encouraging us to find ways in which we can continue to honor and show our love for him. Our hearts will always have giant holes in them and we will never be the same, but through our time with Allison she has enabled us to see that Tyler's light is still shining ever so brightly. We will be forever grateful to Allison and Pathfinders for supporting us as we find the courage and strength to honor and share Tyler's ray of light.

—The Ribich Family



FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS COORDINATOR

This spring marks my first anniversary as the Development and Events Coordinator for Pathfinders. I am extremely proud to work for an organization that provides many meaningful services to the residents of our valley. My journey with Pathfinders has been seven years in the making. In 2013, my husband and I suffered the tragic loss of our youngest child. At the time of his death, there was a program through the Aspen Valley Hospital offering one year of free grief counseling to parents of any child born at the hospital that passed away. Not only was this service truly a gift to newly bereaved parents, but we were lucky to have Allison Daily as our counselor.

After growing close with Allison over the course of that year, I knew that when I was ready I wanted to give back to Pathfinders. Allison had an amazing volunteer opportunity for me, in which I worked with an elderly client once a week, and soon I went from volunteering to helping Allison in a plethora of other ways.

As a past recipient of support from Pathfinders, I understand wholeheartedly what our services mean to the people that we serve. Our valley is extremely fortunate to have an organization like Pathfinders. From school aged children to the elderly, the counselors at Pathfinders meet people where they are at in life and provide a meaningful and therapeutic experience in dealing with the issues they face. I hope in this time of great uncertainty you will continue to support our efforts to help those that are struggling and could truly benefit from the compassion, care, and love that Allison and her incredible team of counselors and volunteers offer each client.

Take care and stay healthy,

Alyssa Shenk



Our time with Allison Daily has helped us to see that unbearable grief can become lighter when we find ways to honor the loved ones we have lost. After Tyler's celebration of life, Beth Mobilian inspired our family to start the Tyler Ribich Ray of Light Fund to honor the memory of Tyler and his artistic talents. The mission of the fund is to support art education and outreach for youth in the Roaring Fork Valley. We have proudly offered several middle school improv classes and parent and me music classes throughout the valley. It has been a true joy to share things he loved so much with our community.

Tyler's biggest dream was to become an actor. For his senior capstone project, he planned to make a film about a character who seeks fame and fortune in Los Angeles, only to find out in the end, that what really matters is making people laugh and bringing a little joy to them. Given our devastation over never being able to see his film come to fruition, we thought it was fitting to create a documentary in his honor. The documentary, *Living Like Ribich*, includes over 50 interviews with his friends, teachers and family members. The film perfectly illustrates how Tyler's light touched so many lives.

Although we had planned to host the premiere of the film this coming May 11, which would have been Tyler's 18th birthday, we sadly have postponed the event due to current community restrictions. The premiere will not only honor Tyler, but it will serve as a fundraiser for Pathfinders. It is so important to us to give back to Pathfinders, for without Allison's love and guidance, this documentary would not have been possible. The premiere is going to be a very meaningful event and we look forward to the day we can share the film with Tyler's community of friends, family and supporters.

—The Ribich Family

GRIEF DURING THE PANDEMIC

“NO ONE EVER TOLD ME THAT GRIEF FELT SO LIKE FEAR.”

-C.S. LEWIS (AUTHOR)

It's hard to describe what it is like for someone who was deep in their grief journey before the pandemic. As I continue to meet with clients, I am noticing similar themes emerge with regards to how these individuals and families are coping amidst the pandemic. For some of my newer clients, they feel as if their grief has been hijacked by COVID-19.

As with most newly bereaved, it is common to want to hibernate because it can be extremely difficult to be out and about, engaging in social situations. So, for many of my new clients, the mandates for quarantining and social distancing have not been a big adjustment for them; however, what has changed for them has been their ability to focus on their grief. Loss of jobs, inadequate food supply, and general fear over health and safety has overshadowed their grief, making living day to day, which was already difficult for them, even more trying. For clients that lost a spouse before COVID, some are noticing that their children are fearful of losing their other parent to the virus. For our clients who are living with a serious illness such as cancer, Parkinson's, ALS or Alzheimer's, the intimate fear of death has eclipsed their desire to live life to the fullest. The spread of the virus has put many of us on edge and made us extremely frightful, but for the already vulnerable the fear is even more heightened, truly paralyzing these clients.

I have noticed that grief during this pandemic has predominately taken two major forms. The first is grief over those that we have lost from COVID-19. For one client it has been hard to know that people around the world are dying, yet there are no pictures to connect names with faces or public honoring to properly acknowledge those that have lost their lives to the virus. The second is grief over life as it once was before closures, facemasks and social distancing. While this particular type of grief pales in comparison to death and serious illness, it is still a loss and important to recognize.

Everyone's experience with grief is different and for most, the uncertainty surrounding this pandemic has made grief even more difficult to understand and process. There are some, however, who have found this time has brought them peace in their grief. For instance, one client recently told me that it has shifted her deep grief to a sense of calmness. This feeling may be best described by a quote from grief coach, Marie-Claude Goudreau in which she states, "There is a calmness and a quiet strength within us griever's at this time. As everyone else panics, we can draw upon our resilience. Having faced the end of our world once before, we know we can get through anything."

Grief, loss and illness are central to the mission of Pathfinders. Although for some, these unprecedented times have muddied the waters of grief and made it difficult to focus, our counselors continue to support our mission by guiding our clients and the greater community through the difficult discussions surrounding these hard topics.

—Allison Daily, Executive Director

COUNSELING IN GRAND VALLEY: HOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE FROM GLENWOOD TO PARACHUTE



Left: Carla Delgado, Translator. Center: Norma, Pathfinders client Right: Jennifer Glynn

It has been my great privilege to work as a counselor for Pathfinders for the past nine years. Based out of Rifle, I have served as the primary counselor for the services that Pathfinders offers in the Grand Valley from Glenwood to Parachute.

Over the years my experience has taught me that while the issues faced by Pathfinders clients, as well as their emotional and physical needs, is often the same no matter where they live, the delivery and approach to counseling can vary different. For instance, many of my clients are Spanish speaking and given that there are limited Spanish speaking therapists available in our area, I often need a translator to accompany me during my sessions. Additionally, many of my clients feel more comfortable meeting with me in their own home rather than coming into an office. Although the types of illness and grief has varied, some of the clients I have worked with have been individuals for whom the idea of mental health support is foreign or previously unacceptable. Thus, it has been challenging to find ways in which I am able to meet these clients where they are at in life with words that they are comfortable with; but, to be able to help them in their rawest and most difficult moments has been extremely humbling.

From tragic sudden loss of multiple family members, to children who lost a parent to gun violence, to serious illness such as multiple sclerosis, I have worked with a wide range of clients over the years. I have found the work I do to be both heart-breaking and rewarding all at the same time. The majority of the people I work with need the support, yet often lack the resources or knowledge on how to find it. Thank goodness for the mission of Pathfinders that enables us as counselors to step in and offer much needed assistance to these individuals and families. I am truly proud to be a part of this fantastic organization which makes a significant difference in the lives of many in the Grand Valley each and every day.

—Jennifer Glynn, Counselor

THE GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION OF OUR SCHOOLS-BASED PROGRAM

Throughout the school year we operate a schools-based program from Aspen to Rifle, connecting Pathfinders counselors to students and families. We are appreciative of our ongoing relationship with the various school counselors and administrators throughout the Roaring Fork and Grand Valleys. They work incredibly hard to conduct outreach and have done an excellent job of identifying students and families in need that could benefit from our services.

Even during these unprecedented times, our schools-based program counselors have been working hard to find the best way to continue to offer their services and maintain these relationships. For many of our counselors, utilizing online modalities to conduct these free sessions has proven to be a useful means of communication. For instance, Robyn Hubbard, who has been working with several high school students coping with grief and loss has managed to offer sessions via video conferencing. Robyn shared that "while not ideal, these students have all reported great benefit from our continued sessions and appreciate the new connection through this format during this difficult and challenging time." Another one of our counselors, Susan Graves, has been utilizing online art therapy as well as other hands-on activities with her clients and she is finding they really seem to enjoy this form of contact.

Each year our program continues to grow and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve these school communities. We recognize that without our amazing donors and the many grants we receive throughout the year, this program would not be possible. This support has not only enabled us to continue to offer our schools-based program, but it has allowed us to expand our team as well. We recently welcomed Delfina Huergo to our program. Delfina brings enormous value to our team as a Spanish speaking counselor who can help us bridge the communication gap that we experience in some of our work. In addition, we have a wonderful intern, Amanda Peterson, who has worked for Pathfinders this year. Amanda has been leading an online group with the Glenwood Springs Mental Health team from the Roaring Fork School District and it has proven to be a great way for these giving individuals to have an outlet for themselves.

Although on the surface our schools-based program is quite different than it started out at the beginning of this year, our counselors will continue to work hard to make sure all individual and group counseling service needs are met throughout the remainder of the school year. We recognize how very beneficial it has been for these clients to continue to maintain the relationship they established with their counselor, as well as have a safe place to process their emotions related to grief and loss. We are already looking forward to the next school year when we can reconnect with all of the students and families in person.

—Laura Irmen, Schools-Based Program Coordinator

ONLINE RESILIENCE WORKSHOP COVID19 RESPONSE

Over the course of the last month we have offered seven online resilience based workshops which utilize a four path model for cultivating resilience while navigating times of distress. Through these workshops we have provided support for varying groups of people such as crisis counselors, teachers, organizational leaders, people serving vulnerable populations, cancer survivors, parents supporting children at home, caregivers and more. During these workshops we are able to create a safe space for participants to express emotions by which they feel supported in the challenges they may be facing— isolation, vulnerable populations, fear of virus transmission, economic hardship as well as the difficulty in managing pre-existing challenges of grief and loss with the added complexities that the pandemic has introduced into daily life. We have received a lot of positive feedback on the workshops we have conducted thus far, with participants sharing how they loved the opportunity to go deep emotionally; recognizing that they got a lot of tools and insight in a short amount of time on how to navigate these challenging times; appreciating how it was a collective way to feel connected; and enjoying the chance to learn about the four path model. We understand the value in this programming and we will continue to provide more workshops as the need arises. We are grateful to be able to deliver such meaningful opportunities to our community during these uncertain times.

—Robyn Hubbard, Counselor

Pathfinders

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