

**First-Hand Experiences of Carriage House Grief Support Center Participants
Collected by Mackenzie Ryan, Gold Award Girl Scout Candidate**



Hi! My name is Mackenzie Ryan and when I was younger I lost my father. I am a Gold Award Candidate in Girl Scouts and my project is to spread the word of The Carriage House Grief Support Center. I want to be able to give back to The Carriage House for all they've done for me.

Thank you for allowing Patrick, Quinn and me to share our stories:

Mackenzie's Story

My mom spent a long time looking for something to help me cope, and when she found The Carriage House, a grief support center; it truly changed my life forever in the best ways. I was eight years old when I started going to The Carriage House and I went there for some time. Even though I was young I still remember all the lessons and memories very well. This astounding place taught me that it was okay to be different and to accept myself for who I am.

One of the most impactful moments for me was at the remembrance ceremony when everyone lit candles because it made me feel like I wasn't alone. It is a truly welcoming and heartwarming safe haven for children of all ages and their families. I now look back and think of how lucky I was to have been a part of it.

Patrick's Story

My dad died when I was in fourth grade and like many kids I felt a whole lot of overwhelming things: grief but also awkwardness and even embarrassment as to the way he died.

At The Carriage House, the kids are in control and I was happy to be able to decide what I talked about and what I didn't. It was a space where I could be understood even without speaking. It was clear everyone's grief was valid.

Quinn's Story

My father was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was an infant. But half-way through my fifth grade his remission failed. During the summer between my 5th and 6th grade, my father died.

At The Carriage House, I wasn't strange, or a freak. I was normal. I was surrounded by kids who had gone through the same ordeal I had. They understood me.