

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 2013

Elijah's Place Programming for Grieving Children Aiming to Begin Sessions in Liberty County

Since its inception as a program of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas in 2003, the support groups for grieving children known as Elijah's Place have been one of the agency's most recognizable works. Until now, though, families wishing to have their children participate in the program have had to come to Beaumont to do so. That's about to change.

Thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the Scanlan Foundation and a collaborative relationship begun with the Family & Consumer Science Advisory Board for the Liberty County AgriLife Extension Service of Texas A&M, plans are underway to begin support group sessions for children ages 5 – 18 in Liberty County.

Several key pieces of the puzzle still need to be put in place, but actions are being taken to try to begin support groups later this year.

Elijah's Place is heavily volunteer driven, with volunteers leading support groups for children of various age groups served by the program. A first critical step towards conducting group sessions in Liberty County is training sufficient volunteers to accommodate families that may sign up for the program.

"The children served by our program need as much support as they can get, and supportive, involved volunteers are critical to making the group support sessions successful," said Randi Fertitta, Director of Elijah's Place. "We have been blessed with great volunteers in the Beaumont area, and I look forward to working with our first group of volunteers in Liberty County. I appeal to people in that area to step forward and make it possible for us to provide this service to grieving children."

Volunteer training consists of three successive sessions totaling 20 hours which are necessary to help volunteers understand the dynamics associated with grief in children and to learn how to support children through their processing of grief.

Volunteer training sessions are scheduled in Liberty on three straight Saturdays in April and May. Training sessions will be held on April 20 and 27 from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and on May 4 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Those interested in learning more about Elijah's Place volunteering or wishing to register for the training sessions should call Fertitta at 409-924-4426.

Fertitta is also encouraging families in the vicinity of Liberty who would find sessions in that county more accessible than sessions in Beaumont to sign up to participate.

"Our groups help children who have been affected by the death of a parent or sibling to deal with that unique trauma in their life," she said. "Grief is challenging for all members of a family, and even though we think of children as resilient, they still need a great deal of support to get through one of the most stressful experiences a child can face."

The services of Elijah's Place are offered at no charge to participants and are open to all, regardless of their religious preferences. Families wishing to enroll children in Elijah's Place should also contact Fertitta at 409-924-4406.

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