



Where no child grieves alone: Friends of Aine welcome community to new outpost

🕒 Friday, November 12, 2021 👤 By Chris Dugan 📁 Business, Non-Profit News 💬 0



Ribbon is cut on newly-renovated Friends of Aine house on Coolidge Avenue. Photo/Chris Dugan

MANCHESTER, NH – An estimated 1 in 13, or 5.3 million, children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent or sibling before they reach the age of 18. While you are letting that settle in, you should also know that by the time one reaches the age of 25, that number more than doubles more than 13.3 million.

Sobering statistics, indeed.

The downstream impacts of grief, particularly among younger children, can be devastating. However, thanks to a newly opened house on the city's West Side, more resources and programs are now available for those in need.

Founded in 2013, **Friends of Aine** (pronounced Ahn-ya) provides bereavement support services and resources to children and families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Aine Phillips passed away suddenly in 2010 and the organization was formed in her memory by her parents Christine and David, spurred on by the need to help their family, especially Aine's younger sister Bella, cope with the devastating loss.

This week, the Phillips family, supporters, volunteers, friends, and community leaders gathered at the newly renovated Friends of Aine house on Coolidge Avenue for a special open house and ribbon-cutting event.



Christine Phillips welcomed the gathering of about 75 people and thanked the many who had made this vision possible.
Photo/Chris Dugan

Christine Phillips welcomed the gathering of about 75 people and thanked the many who had made this vision possible. She called childhood grief “a major issue” and shared that “Friends of Aine seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment” for children in need as well as their families. She went on to explain that the model of Friends of Aine seeks to support clients “across the continuum of care and collaboration with other agencies.”

Queen City Mayor Joyce Craig spoke next and stated that “Unsupported childhood grief is a public health issue.” She lauded the Phillips and other supporters for their hard work and dedication over the past several years to the mission of Friends of Aine.

Friends of Aine staff say that the expanded space will provide safe, comfortable, age-specific grief support rooms for the children and teenagers (ages 4 to 18) it serves. The four rooms are called: the Littles Room, Middles Room, Tweens Room and Teens Room. Friends of Aine’s trained volunteer facilitators will help empower children and teens to name and share their experiences, normalize their grief through activities that explore topics related to grief, and learn coping strategies to help navigate their grief.

Prior to the move, Friends of Aine only had space to run six groups (comprised of eight children and one facilitator, which is the standard ratio to ensure a connection within the group) once weekly. With the new space on Coolidge Avenue, the organization is doubling that capacity with six groups meeting twice per week. This enables Friends of Aine to serve 192 children and 96 adults (who are guardians receiving concurrent services during the kids’ meetings) annually.

Christine Phillips went on to say that the timing of the opening was particularly poignant in that Aine’s birthday is in November. The month is also National Children’s Grief Awareness Month. “So, this is the perfect time to honor her,” she said.

The agency is the only one in the granite state whose sole mission is to support grieving children, teens, and families. All programs and services are provided free of charge and the organization also seeks to advocate for policies to enhance education and bereavement services statewide.



Mayor Joyce Craig spoke during the recent ribbon-cutting for Friends of Aine house. Photo/Chris Dugan

To learn more, please visit: www.friendsofaine.com

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