



# GreenTree Community HEALTH FOUNDATION

Improving the health and well-being of communities in Northwest Philadelphia and Eastern Montgomery County.

# The Future is Bright



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Using soccer, the biggest sport in the world, as a powerful tool for youth development.



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Programming that supports a holistic sense of wellness for youth.



### Uplift Center for Grieving Children

Creating a safe space to heal.

*Special Edition!*

# 15 YEARS

A LOOK BACK AND WHAT  
THE FUTURE HOLDS!



**Bethany Flood,**  
Executive Director

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**Grants Awarded  
2019-2020 (TO DATE)**

- Breastfeeding Resource Center
- Covenant House
- Face to Face
- Food Moxie
- Inter-Faith Housing Alliance
- Jewish Relief Agency
- KenCrest Centers
- Maternity Care Coalition
- North Light Community Center
- Philadelphia Children's Alliance
- Starfinder Foundation
- Students Run Philly Style
- Supper at Church of St. Martin-In-The-Fields
- The Food Trust
- Uplift Center For Grieving Children
- VNA Community Services
- Why Not Prosper



Happy New Year! It is a little belated, but I do hope you've had a wonderful beginning to 2020. Time is moving so quickly it's hard to believe it is mid-March already.

**Happy 15th Birthday to Green Tree!** On pages 6-7 take a look at some of Green Tree's historical highlights. Without your help we would not be here - Thank You! Without our amazing volunteers and committed donors Green Tree would not have been able to accomplish all that has been. Please take a moment to meet two such volunteers - Erin O'Connor and Janet Waxman. If you would like to volunteer with us, please do not hesitate to connect with us!

Being such an important point in our history, Green Tree determined now is the perfect time to evaluate where we are, where we want to go, and how we can best serve this community. This strategic planning process is long and deep. We are seeking input from grantees, volunteers, donors, community members, and peer foundations among others. If you would like to be a part of this process and have not yet had the chance, please contact us. There are multiple ways to participate, the easiest being to follow the link on our website to take the brief survey. Your input is valuable!

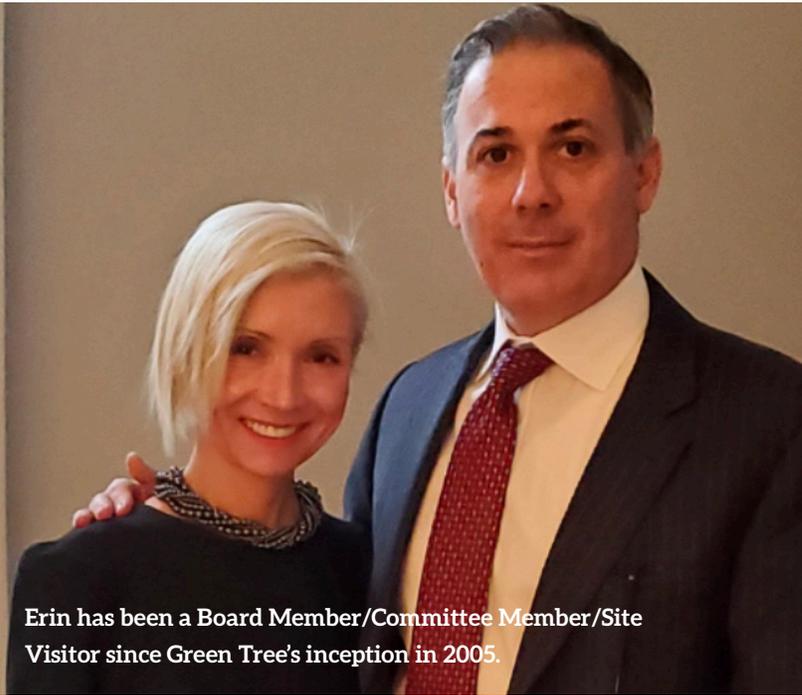
Thank you so much for your time and commitment to Green Tree! I hope you enjoy this newsletter that focuses on services that improve the lives of children in our area. It is moving to think that our life expectancy is related to the zip code in which we live. Did you know that the life expectancy of a child born in Chestnut Hill (19118) is 84 years while a child born in Mt. Airy (19119) is 77? And in Germantown (19144) it is 76? The national average is 78 while in Philadelphia County it is only 75.\* There are so many factors that influence health and life expectancy that we cannot say it is only zip code, but when one mile can make a seven year difference we need to learn how we can best support the children of our community such that their immediate health as well as long-term outcomes improve.

Thank you again for your commitment to health in our community!

Bethany

\*This data and more can be found on Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's interactive website: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/interactives/whereliveaffectshowlongyoulive.html>

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Erin has been a Board Member/Committee Member/Site Visitor since Green Tree's inception in 2005.

## ERIN DOYLE-O'CONNOR

'As chair of the grants committee, I get to see first-hand the difference our grants make in the lives of those most in need and organizations that work to help them. I became involved with Green Tree right from the start. I had just moved from out-of-state with a healthcare background and saw it as a great opportunity to learn more about our new community. After all these years, I continue to be amazed at the work our grantees do and how deeply they care about the people they serve in our community.'

**We appreciate Erin's involvement with the Foundation and ongoing support!**

## JANET WAXMAN

'I've made four site visits and the meetings with administrators have demonstrated to me the great needs in our community. Because of the generous grants from the Green Tree Community Health Foundation, these non-profits can better serve their clients. I was greatly impressed by my assignments to Laurel House, shelter for women and children; Food Moxie, shelter with an emphasis on how to have healthier lives; Center In The Park, empowering and promoting positive aging for seniors, and the Anti-Violence Partnership, using strategies to reduce violence...  
**...I love the idea of helping a foundation to give funding to worthy organizations.'**

**We appreciate Janet's involvement with the Foundation and ongoing support!**



Janet Waxman believes that it is her responsibility to give back to her community. She did just that when she responded to a request for volunteers in our Newsletter a few years ago.

**Interested in learning more about Green Tree?  
Visit our website: [greentreecommunityhealth.org](http://greentreecommunityhealth.org)**

STARFINDER FOUNDATION

# From Soccer To Success



By Amber Adamson, Director of Development and Communications



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**Starfinder uses soccer, the biggest sport in the world and a universal language, as a powerful tool for youth development.**

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Beginning as a weeklong soccer camp for twenty-three Philadelphia children in 2002, Starfinder has evolved into an internationally recognized, award-winning provider of year-round programming for kids of all ages. Starfinder uses soccer, the biggest sport in the world and a universal language, as a powerful tool for youth development. Each year, over 900 children and teens from throughout Philadelphia, including immigrants from all over the world, participate in our afterschool, weekend, and summer programs.

Soccer – and a safe place to play it – is just the beginning. Our 32,000 square foot facility in Manayunk is a central hub for our in-house and neighborhood-based programs – and a second home for many of our youth. All kids deserve to learn, grow, and thrive, but many don't have the support systems and access to opportunity they need to achieve their full potential.



**Our Statistics Speak for Themselves:**

Starfinder has served over 11,000 youth living in underserved neighborhoods.



**Our Programming:**

We deliver programming structured to support youth in three key areas: health and physical fitness, social-emotional well-being, and future focus (long-term success).



**Our Kids:**

Our seniors have achieved a 100% graduation rate and 85% of our teens have taken on leadership roles outside of Starfinder.



# Mithsaika

In 2015, we met Mithsaika. She came to the United States with her family in 2013 from Haiti, after living through the devastating 2010 earthquake and its aftermath. It was a tough transition for Mithsaika, who spoke no English and had to repeat 9th grade. She felt isolated because people struggled to understand her. Having played soccer in Haiti, Mithsaika joined her high school team in 10th grade. That's where she learned about Starfinder and began participating in Starfinder's intensive soccer and leadership program. This changed everything for Mithsaika

“At Starfinder, I have not been judged by my skin color, by the way I speak, or even by the way I play when I make mistakes...”

Mithsaika worked with a mentor who helped her establish personal goals like improving her English and connected her to counselling support. As a young woman of color, coming to terms with her sexuality, for the first time she felt safe and accepted for who she was.

“At Starfinder, I have not been judged by my skin color, by the way I speak, or even by the way I play when I make mistakes. [What matters is] my character. That's what Starfinder is about. They treat you equally in all ways.”

Mithsaika embraced the Starfinder community and worked hard - on the field and in the classroom. She became class president as a junior, was Salutatorian of her graduating class, and was recruited to play Division 1 soccer at Harcum College.

Today, Mithsaika is studying psychology and plans to become a social worker. She is also working at Starfinder as a coach-mentor, one of the 9 alumni who make up Starfinder's coaching staff!

“I feel great about myself. That's why I came back. Because I want kids in this program to know that Starfinder is a safe place, and that we will help you. We're not here to completely solve your problems. We'll give you the support that you need, but you need to do the work.”

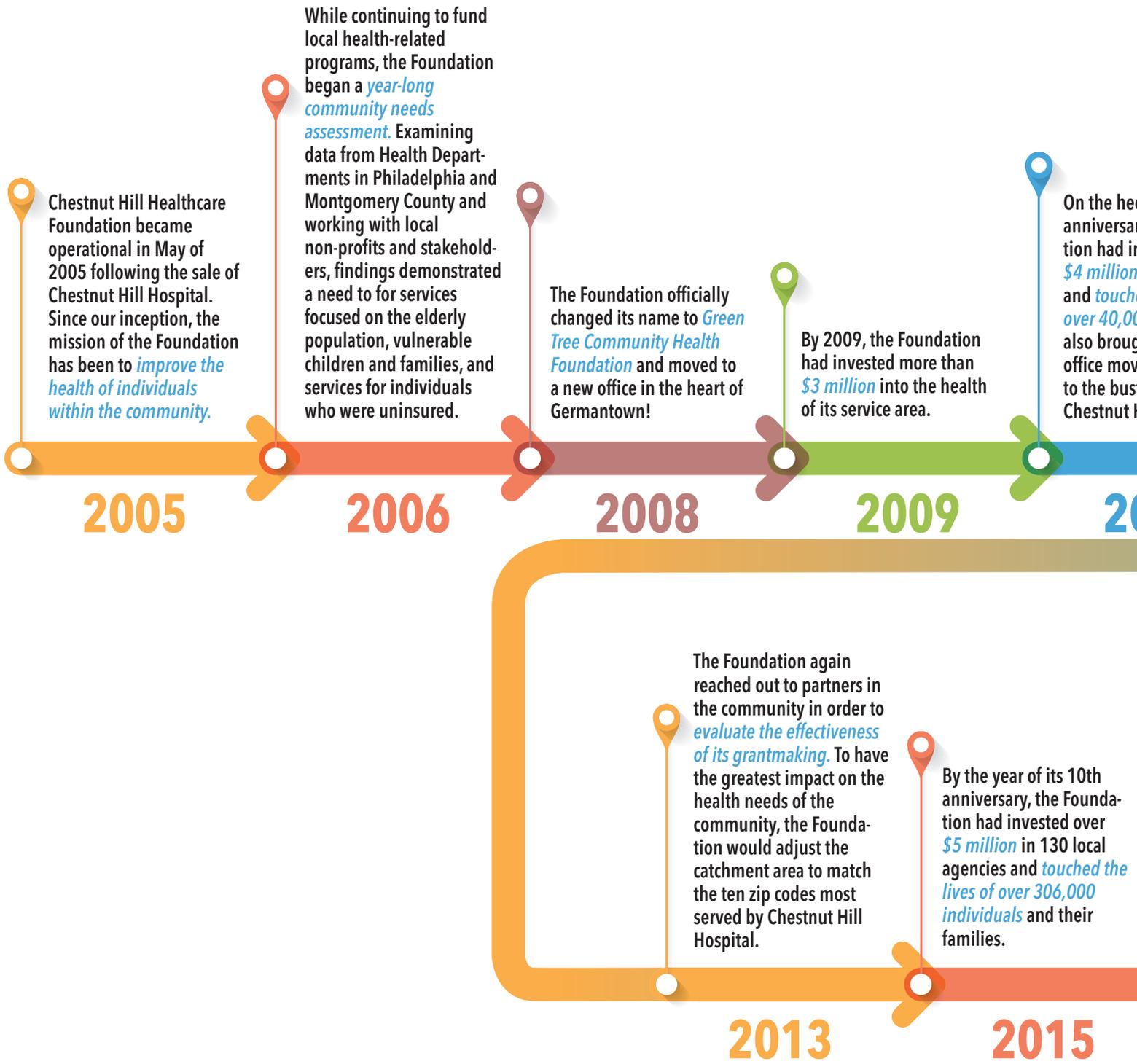
We want to thank Green Tree for supporting Starfinder --- a special place where young people, like Mithsaika, establish personal goals and overcome obstacles to achieving their dreams.

To learn more about Starfinder visit [stafinderfoundation.org](http://stafinderfoundation.org).

[What matters is] my character.  
That's what Starfinder is about.  
They treat you equally in all ways.”



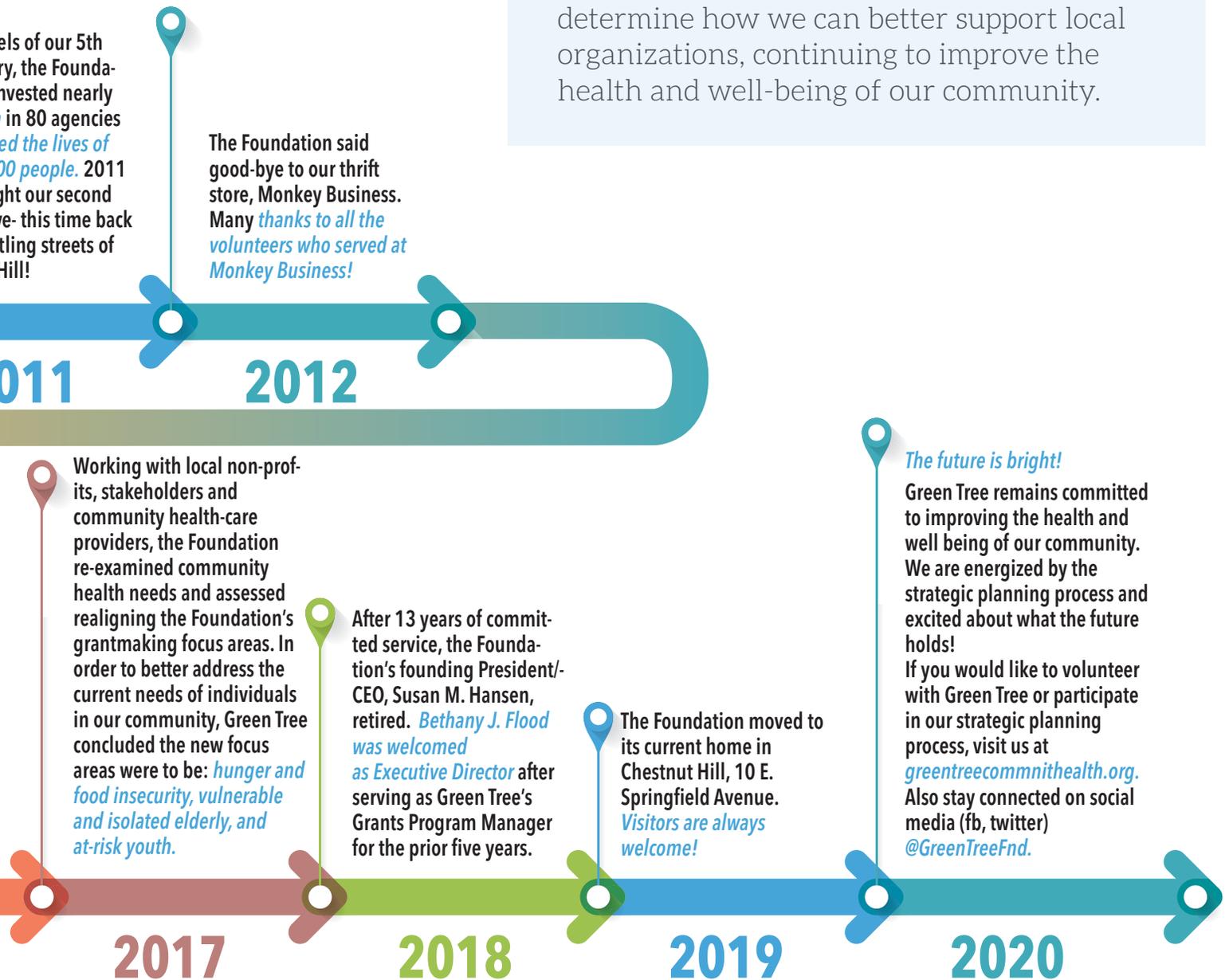
# 15th Anniversary



# Milestones

2005  
-  
2020

As the Foundation celebrates its **15th anniversary** this year, we are proud to have awarded over **400 grants, totaling \$7.5 million.** These grants have touched the lives of **over 400,000 individuals and families.** The Foundation is very excited to begin a full-scale strategic planning project this year. With this project, we hope to strengthen our effectiveness and determine how we can better support local organizations, continuing to improve the health and well-being of our community.





# Roadmaps to Wellness

By Jesse Kohler, Director of Development

**“North Light helps children with their responsibilities so they can grow up and be as successful as they wish.”**  
Jaden – a North Light client



Jaden, the child of a mother who has been using North Light services for years said, “North Light helps children with their responsibilities so they can grow up and be as successful as they wish.”

North Light Community Center has served the Manayunk, Roxborough, and surrounding Philadelphia communities since The Great Depression. Though North Light has

evolved over the decades to host a variety of programs and services intended to meet the needs of all community members in need, our organization has always been geared toward supporting children and families.

Every weekday at North Light during the school year, both before and after school, you can find children running around the Center or the playground outside, laughing and playing with each other. A normal day at North Light, children get the chance to play and socialize, eat nutritious foods, have access to caring mentors, participate in educational programming and receive academic supports if necessary. In addition, North Light childcare remains affordable through state subsidies as well as an internal sliding scale for families who are unable to secure childcare subsidies.

One special program everyone looks forward to at North Light is summer camp. This year at summer camp, North Light is launching the Adventures of Wellness, which promotes a holistic sense of wellness, from physical wellness to

psycho-social-emotional wellness to academic wellness and beyond. There are multiple ways that the activities embedded into this year’s summer camp programming will achieve our goal of promoting holistic wellness. Physical activity not only improves mood, boosts energy and improves your health, it can also help to relieve stress, further promoting healthy brain development and positive neural pathways, which can optimize the brain’s functionality.

Creative expression, such as art, dance, and music, helps to create healthy pathways that relieve stress in both children and adults. Oftentimes, people struggle to communicate troubling aspects of their lives, which can create a feeling of being ‘stuck’. Creative expression can help to communicate these feelings nonverbally, which can help us get these feelings out of our heads, even if words are not put to what we are communicating.

Other aspects of camp programming will highlight outdoor adventure. Connecting with nature has many beneficial and often healing

properties that make people feel closer to the earth. Campers will go on nature walks, plant and tend flowers/vegetables in our rain garden and raised flower beds. These activities will allow our campers to learn about water systems and symbiotic relationships found in nature that impact multiple aspects of our lives.

Children will also be working with chefs and nutritionists to learn the benefits of healthy eating and cooking your own food. It has been found that early exposure to healthy foods leads to healthier choices over a lifetime, which promotes positive outcomes, such as better cognitive and physical function.

Everything at North Light comes back to our mission of empowering people of all ages and abilities,

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especially those most in need, to reach their full potential as productive and responsible citizens. And as our communities continue to evolve, we must evolve too. North Light could not adapt to meet community needs without the support of Green Tree Community Health Foundation. Our holistic approach to support, including the initiatives to increase health and wellness for the children and families we work with, is only possible through the generosity of others. North Light staff and volunteers all find immense pleasure in helping families and individuals in need, and are grateful for Green Tree's support.

To find out more about North Light Community Center visit [northlightcommunitycenter.org](http://northlightcommunitycenter.org).



# Uplift Center for Grieving Children Healing Together

By Katherine DiPierro, Development Associate



The in-school grief group was filled with eight students, aged seven to twelve, who came together each

week eager to share and anxious to participate in all activities - all except one student, Siani. Though it was clear she enjoyed attending, Siani preferred to remain silent. Every group begins with a game of Thumbball, during which participants say their name, the name of their person who died, and then answer the question located under their thumb on the ball tossed between each other. Each week, when Siani caught the ball, she passed her turn. Every week until the final week. On that day, Siani took a deep breath, said her name, and told her story. Her father had been shot and killed, and this was the first time she had ever said it out loud.

The other students were silent as Siani shared, staring at her with surprise and awe until she finished. At that moment, they rushed toward her, cheering and

embracing her. The grief group had created a safe space where Siani could be vulnerable - often the most courageous step to take. It is just as powerful to know that Siani and her friends continue to have each other to not only understand, listen to, and support one other, but also to applaud and encourage honest, emotional sharing. Even after Uplift's formal grief groups end, youth participants are part of community in which they are never truly alone.





One in five children in Philadelphia will lose a parent or sibling by the time they reach their 25th birthday. You could fill all three of Philadelphia's major sports arenas and still need 60,000 additional seats for each grieving child to have a spot. While grief is a normal and universal response to death, children in Philadelphia face barriers that can lead to a difficult grief process, including inadequate school support, limited financial ability to access professional therapy, and a general lack of awareness about the mental health needs of under-resourced families in the City.

The organization's grief support programs bring grieving children together to share and help each other through their grief journey. Uplift clinicians use specialized curricula consisting of games, activities, and crafts that teach children to use coping skills, understand and handle their emotions, and form healthy attachment to their peers, group facilitators, and family members.

Uplift's impact throughout the city is vast. Thanks to Green Tree's support, Uplift will work with nearly 2,000 children across 6 Family Services locations, and more than 150 schools and community group sites in the current program year alone.

**To find out more about Uplift Center for Grieving Children visit [upliftphilly.org](http://upliftphilly.org).**

**For twenty years, Uplift Center of Grieving Children has been helping the most vulnerable children and families in our community work through the death of a loved one with strength and compassion. Generous support from Green Tree Community Health Foundation allows Uplift to offer its services to children and families at no cost. Uplift's caring and compassionate programs include:**

- Family Services Grief Groups - providing peer support for children, youth, teens, and caregivers following the death of someone close to them.
- In-School and Community Grief Groups- mobile versions of Uplift's grief groups that reach students in public, private, and charter schools across Philadelphia, as well as justice-involved youth, the LGBTQ+ community, and families who have lost a loved one to an overdose or homicide death.
- Post-Crisis Support Services- help to stabilize school communities in the aftermath of the sudden death of a student or teacher.
- Uplift also equips teachers, counselors, and other professionals with the tools needed to understand and respond to children's grief through trainings and workshops.

# GreenTree Community HEALTH FOUNDATION

10 East Springfield Avenue, South  
Philadelphia, PA 19118



United Way  
of Greater Philadelphia  
and Southern New Jersey

Donor Code 16083

## Congratulations!



*Pictured above: Bethany Flood,  
Executive Director, Green Tree  
and Julie Cousler Emig, Executive  
Director, Education Plus Health*

Our grantee,  
Education Plus  
Health, celebrated  
the grand opening  
of their School-  
Based Health  
Center at Building  
21 in January.

## Community Members!

Green Tree started a strategic planning process to see how we can better serve our community. We emailed a short survey. If you did not receive the survey and would like to participate in this process, please send an email to:

**[abby@greentreecommunityhealth.org](mailto:abby@greentreecommunityhealth.org)**  
or call us at **(215) 438- 8102.**

Would you like to be on or taken off our mailing list?  
Call 215.438.8102 or visit us at [greentreecommunityhealth.org](http://greentreecommunityhealth.org)