

Dear

Sitting on the deck of Savannah's newest rooftop at the Thompson Hotel Hotel, a young man and his lovely girlfriend approached me, "Jamey, is that you?" "Christopher?" The last time I saw Christopher was when he and his sister Haley attended Camp Aloha almost twenty years ago. Now a successful young man working at Gulfstream, Christopher shared how well he and his sister Haley are doing and that Haley is a middle school counselor and continues to use the skills she learned at Camp Aloha to help the students she interacts with every day. As a Camp organizer, and now a fundraiser, it occurred to me that if it weren't for **donors like you**, Christopher and Haley would have never had the opportunity to learn the tools to live with loss that Camp Aloha provided to them.



When Jennifer and Tommy's oldest son, Thomas, was killed during a robbery in the summer of 2002, Jennifer knew that her younger children, only 7 and 11 at the time, would need support to help them cope with the loss – but she didn't know where to turn. A friend recommended Full Circle Grief & Loss Center to her and encouraged her to send Christopher and Haley to Camp Aloha. Founded in the mid-1990s, Camp Aloha is an overnight camp for children ages 6 to 17 who have experienced the death of a loved one.

Actually, as a new bereavement counselor with Full Circle, Christopher and Haley were the first two children I provided bereavement counseling to, prior to them attending Camp Aloha. Christopher, 7, and Haley, 11, shared with me how important their brother Thomas was to them, how he taught them soccer, and built play forts with them. Camp Aloha allowed Christopher and Haley to see that they were not alone and not the only children dealing with the death of someone they loved and admired.

One of the therapeutic activities at camp involved planting an aloe plant because aloe helps to heal wounds and continues to grow even when it loses a part of itself. The plant symbolizes the fact that life continues, even as you grieve. Ritual,





as part of your grief journey, is also an important lesson that the campers learn. Haley and Christopher, who through all of these years have nurtured that aloe plant and have watched it flourish, began a ritual—they share offshoots of the original aloe plant with their extended family and with Thomas's friends, ensuring Thomas will always be remembered.

Siblings are some of the most important people and influences in our lives. But when tragedy strikes, it's not hard to imagine how difficult it would be for a family to make sense of it – especially if that death is unexpected or at the hands of another. Haley

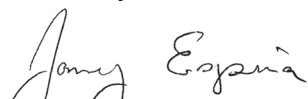
learned at Camp that telling your story is the most important thing we can do in our grief journey. But Haley took it to the next level, in a partnership with Victim-Witness Assistance, Full Circle, and a close friend who illustrated the book, she wrote a book on dealing with her grief, death by violence, and forgiveness. She wanted to help others find the peace that she had found – **donors like you helped her to find that solace!**

Please know that because of your support of Full Circle Grief & Loss Center and of Camp Aloha, thousands of children, just like Christopher and Haley have received support to try to make sense of things that just do not make sense. Hospice Savannah has a long history of helping local families at the end-of-life, but it is also a valuable resource to those who need support after experiencing a sudden, unexpected loss.

As the person who organized and ran Camp Aloha for many years, it's hard to convey how physically and emotionally draining Camp Aloha is for the staff and volunteers. But seeing Christopher as a well-adjusted, successful young man all these years later, I know every minute and all of the effort was well worth it. **This is why I am asking you to help ensure that any child who needs bereavement support in our community receives it. Won't you please consider making a generous donation to support the future Christophers and Haleys?**



Sincerely,

  
Jamey Espina

VP of Development & Community Programs