



**Gerard's  
House**

# *Meeting Grief Where It Lives*



**2025 Annual Report**

# We don't have to do this alone...

Those who have experienced big losses know that waves of grief do not arrive on a schedule or wait for the “right” moment. Those grief waves can come crashing down on us in classrooms, kitchens, cars, and quiet or chaotic moments of daily life. In 2026, Gerard's House continued to meet grief where it lives by showing up with care and acceptance for grieving children, teens, and adults.

This year also reminded us that healing often comes through unexpected connections. In moments of shared presence between peers, volunteers, staff, and even the companionship of dogs, grief softened and belonging took shape.

What follows is a snapshot of a year in motion: the growth of our programs, the stories shared, and the many ways we continued to companion grievers of all ages, meeting grief wherever it lives.

**Whatever has brought you to learn more about our work—we are so glad you're here!**

# From Feeling Small to Feeling Supported: A Mother's Journey



## **Maribel, how did you get connected to Gerard's House?**

*I found Gerard's House through my kids' school after their dad was murdered. We were grieving his loss, and at the same time grieving the fact that there was never justice for his death, that was especially hard on my son.*

*I really wanted help for my kids, and I also needed guidance as a parent on how to support them. We all joined support groups in Spanish. I was grateful there was a group for me too, because as moms we often feel we always have to be strong. But when their dad died, I felt so small and didn't know what to do.*

## **How do you think the grief groups helped your family?**

*Moms tend to tell their kids not to cry or try to find an explanation because we think that will help them feel better. Instead of trying to fix it, I learned I just had to accompany them, let them express their feelings and see I would be there as they healed.*

*This journey is a process and it still is for us. It touches our lives during celebrations, on his birthday, when we see pictures or movies, on Father's Day and Day of the Dead. It's not as much as in the beginning, but it is still a part of our lives.*

## **What motivated you to volunteer in our youth groups?**

*I wanted to give back and support someone's healing by just listening and not giving advice. I love hearing kids sigh and feel relief after talking about grief. I know my son was very quiet in his group, but he was getting so much from hearing other kids. Before attending, he used to ask himself why it was only him. Afterward, he realized he wasn't alone.*

## **What does accompanying your children in grief look like for you?**

*I've been able to use what I learned as a volunteer with my family. My kids have the right to feel sadness or anger, and I try not to judge them or control their grief. I try being with them not only through words, but also through our emotions. If I can, I let myself cry with them. Sometimes I don't want to, but I've learned it's important for kids to see that parents cry too. That's how we all heal together.*

Gerard's House is a safe place for grieving children, teens and families, where healing happens through acceptance and peer support.

20  
25

# Snapshot



**\$724,328**

in Total Donations and Grants Received



**70+**

Active Volunteers



**\$77,232**

Volunteer Time & In-Kind Support

## Grief Support



**1,700+**

Youth and adults received grief support through our programs.

**13**

Summer camps in Santa Fe, Espanola and Ohkay Owingeh

**28**

Weekly grief groups

## School-Based Support

**11**

Santa Fe Public Schools

**5**

Rural & Indigenous Expansion

## Internship Program

**7**

Master Level Students

**1**

Future Focused Education Youth Intern

**1,594**

Total Hours Donated

## How well did we do it?

% of students who reported that their group helped them



% of students who report they increased their knowledge of how to take care of themselves when grieving

\*Interns received a \$500 stipend each quarter to offset their expenses, such as gas to travel to off-site grief groups.

# Grief doesn't stay in one place, so neither do we.

Throughout the year, Gerard's House brought grief education directly into the places where people live, learn, work, and gather. Compared to 2024, we more than doubled our number of presentations and trainings—reaching 299 adults and 65 youth across schools, churches, museums, healthcare settings, legal clinics, conferences and other community organizations.

From Grief 101 and anticipatory grief trainings to workshops addressing immigration-related loss and deportation, these presentations give teachers, doctors, counselors, students, and family members practical tools to recognize and respond to grief. By meeting communities where they are—physically and emotionally—we help people show up for those who are grieving instead of meeting them with silence or uncertainty.



27

Community  
Presentations  
in 2025

364

participants in  
grief  
education

95%

of participants felt  
more confident  
supporting someone  
who is grieving after  
attending our  
Grief 101



# Program Updates

## Adult Support

### A Warm Welcome

At 15 years old, our office dog, Yolo has earned the nickname “PR” (Public Relations) for his habit of trotting into adult groups to greet and welcome everyone individually.

These days, he prefers to stay out of sight during rowdy youth groups, but his quiet presence still helps break the ice and comfort nervous kids and families arriving to Gerard’s House for the first time.



Our adult support offerings continued to expand throughout the 2025 calendar year with four ongoing weekly groups in English, an adult support group in Spanish, and three groups for Caregivers in Grief. Our WEAVINGS group remained a place where moms who have lost a child could continue weaving together their stories and forever motherhood.

In addition to groups we launched a variety of experiential workshops such as altar building and labyrinth walking. We know talking is just one way to share grief and want to invite adults to explore other creative forms of expression too.

We also hired for a new position to lead our adult programming. Tom Ludiza has helped us to move forward on many ideas that have been in the planning phase including a new training specifically for volunteers who want to work with adults.

## Rolling Out Support

As we travel to off-site groups and home visits, drivers are spotting our new Grief Reach Van sponsored the by Rotary Club of Santa Fe. This “grief mobile” is covered in English and Spanish quotes from kids and adults, sharing the message that free, bilingual support is available throughout Northern New Mexico. We’ve loved getting waves and friendly honks of encouragement on the road!

## Rural and Indigenous Expansion



We are excited to share that our work in the Española and Pojoaque Valleys and the northern pueblos now has a home in Española—*Gerard's Casita*! At the end of 2025, we were running four weekly groups—double what we offered at the end of 2024—and hope to double again in 2026. In addition to weekly groups, we offer Family Grief Nights, Student Grief Workshops, and Summer Grief Camps. Local partners are training alongside our staff to become grief group facilitators and expand our reach.

In Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, we held our second annual summer grief camp with 16 Woe Beedi Warriors (grades K–6). New craft activities, a fire and water ceremony at the creek, a traditional prayer, and dinner brought families together in meaningful ways. Our weekly grief support groups at the school entered their fourth year with a waitlist, prioritizing students who had recently experienced the death of a parent or family member.

# Youth Groups for Support after a Death or Separation

## Finding a Safe Place

One April evening during groups, a small puppy was abandoned at Gerard's House. With the local animal shelter full, staff took her home to figure out a plan. That night our Executive Director Nicole Gonzales, who had recently lost a beloved chihuahua companion, decided to open her heart and home and adopt her! We like to think the people who left her knew Gerard's House is a safe place for pups, too.



Meet Rowdy!



Building on nearly three decades of service, our Grief Connections Program continues to use play, art, conversation in creative ways to help children and teens process the death of their loved ones. Families were supported not only emotionally, but through community partnerships that helped address the practical challenges that so often accompany loss with assistance for groceries, rent, winter clothes and even toys over the holidays.

In the Nuestra Jornada Program, after 10 years of using the same activities, we partnered with an Advisory Committee of community members and past participants to create new immigration-related grief activities. Designed for students in Santa Fe Public Schools who have experienced loss through death, deportation, or separation by borders, these activities honor families' cultural traditions. New favorites include Self-Care Lotería—a beloved Mexican game similar to Bingo—and the Piñata of Memories, where students create a piñata filled with memories and break it open together for a powerful release.

# Shining a Light on Ongoing Losses

The Sharing & Healing Program continues to support grieving mothers with immigrant roots, especially during these uncertain times. Estefani's story is an example of this.

While eight months pregnant and caring for two young kids, Estefani's husband was detained by ICE, causing a lot of stress and fear for her family. She learned about our in-person Family Night support group through a friend of hers and began attending with her children. Through the group, Estefani received emotional support from facilitators and other moms who held space for her and even dedicated the group's closing circle to her and her family. Participants passed around a candle and shared light and words of support.

Although her situation was not resolved, Estefani shared that the solidarity she received gave her the strength to keep going for her children and husband. Due to stress, she developed preeclampsia and delivered her baby early. Our navigators supported her by connecting her to rent assistance, diapers, and other essential wraparound services for her and her children.





Our **Stepping Stones Program** supports families facing anticipatory grief when a child or caregiver has an advanced, serious illness. This early support often opens the door to ongoing grief groups. A 14-year-old shared that the home visits from Gerard's House were the only place he could talk about his dad's cancer and that after his death, he looked forward to joining a group and making new friends who could really understand.

# Living with Uncertainty

With ongoing political attacks on immigrant families, many children are carrying a lot of fear and anticipatory grief as they try to prepare for a possible separation from their parents. We are drawing on what we know from our programs to show up for families during this difficult time.

We hosted 66 youth and adults in three workshops this fall for those who are grieving the deportation of a loved one or living with the worry that a separation may happen. Families came together to eat dinner together, learn about grief symptoms, talk about ways to support themselves and their children, and meet with a resource navigator who helped connect them to financial aid for basic needs and legal services.

# Get Involved & Connect

Facing grief can be intimidating, however our partners and donors find creative ways to support our community and honor those who are on this journey:



*Our volunteer Carmen Ribadeneira with the installation at the International Folk Art Museum.*

## 1. Explore “Ambiguous Loss”

Words don’t always do grief justice. Visit our collaborative exhibit “Ambiguous Loss and the Art that Expresses It” at the Southside Library this March.

Created by students with immigrant roots in our Nuestra Jornada groups, this exhibit has traveled from the International Folk Art Museum to the Community Gallery at Vital Spaces and now to local libraries.

Our hope is that the exhibit brings people across cultural backgrounds into connection, helping ease the loneliness of loss and build solidarity.

## 2. Volunteer Facilitator Training

Join us for our upcoming Volunteer Facilitator Trainings this spring and summer. These multi-day trainings will equip you with the tools and confidence to begin co-facilitating peer grief support groups for children, teens or adults.

## 3. Support Our Challenge Grant

Contribute to our annual Challenge grant and do your part to ensure our groups remain free and accessible to anyone in Northern New Mexico who is grieving.

This year we listened as so many kids,  
teens and adults told us,

***“It really helps to know I’m not the only one.”***

Thank you for making that possible.



**Gerard's  
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