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Hope Hidden in Loss ~ Support the KinderMourn Hope Floats Duck Race

written by Guest Blogger | March 28, 2015

Smarties, this is a beautiful story written by Meg McElwain, (Mitchell's mom). It is absolutely powerful and we ask that you please make sure you support the [11th Annual Kindermourn Hope Floats Duck Race](#) on Sunday, April 26th. ~Jen

I hope you never need the services that the non-profit [Kindermourn](#) provides to grieving parents and children. I never thought I would, but when our 2-year-old son, Mitchell, died in April 2014 after a 21-month battle with a rare form of pediatric leukemia, I found myself and my family in desperate need for someone outside of our faith in God to help us find meaning and hope in our lives again.

Our oldest son Frank was three-years-old when his then three-month-old baby brother was diagnosed with cancer and five-years-old when Mitchell died just days after his second birthday. Frank was the first in our family to receive counseling at Kindermourn. My husband and I knew that Frank needed a safe place to express the sadness and fear and also explore the confusion that he was feeling after his brother's long illness and death. We started weekly play and art therapy sessions with Kindermourn counselor and Frank was able to express the helpless feelings that he had when Mitchell was sick and how he wanted to help make Mitchell better. His counselor helped him understand that it's okay for him to be sad and angry and even confused. Kindermourn taught him ways to channel his feelings by making and using a "calm down



bottle” and how to keep a special marble in his pocket to rub when he starts to have feelings that he does not understand.

Some of Frank’s grief presented itself in outbursts in his kindergarten classroom. Some of his actions seemed to resemble a child with hyperactivity. My husband and I were confused and upset because we had not seen this behavior in Frank before he started kindergarten. Kindermourn helped us understand that this kind of behavior is common in a grieving child because they are having thoughts and feelings that Frank describes as “hurting his heart” and “making my head feel crazy” and he needed to express them.

Kindermourn professionals conducted a free education session for the teachers and administrators at Frank’s elementary school so that they could better understand childhood grief. In that meeting, Kindermourn and the school staff discussed positive ways to help Frank, our family and other children and families who are grieving that they may encounter in the future.

Kindermourn has counseled me on how to be the best parent I can be to my grieving child while I am in a dark and painful place of grieving for Mitchell, too. We role play situations that help me be a more effective parent to Frank. The team at Kindermourn offers encouragement to me on hard days by reassuring me that my husband and I are doing what is right for our living son while we take time to grieve for our son who is in Heaven.



I recently began my own individual counseling sessions with a Kindermourn counselor. Mitchell has been gone almost exactly one year and I am finally ready to allow the pain, shock and sadness of what I watched my baby experience during his short life to come to the surface. I’ve pushed the feelings down for so long because, like most women, I was more focused on taking care of everyone else in my family.

I am facing the guilt I feel that I had to leave my older son in the care of his grandparents while I spent most of my time in the hospital caring for Mitchell. I am opening up about the horrors of watching my baby boy fight cancer and experience debilitating side effects from chemotherapy and treatments that are in no way natural for a baby to experience. I talk about the things that give me nightmares. I am sharing the stress that our son’s terminal illness and death have put on my marriage and relationship with my husband and am trying to find ways to connect with him so we don’t end up as a statistic. The reality is that most marriages fail after the death of a child and now that I am in the darkness of grief, I understand why.

My faith in God and my relationship with the staff at Kindermourn remind me to have hope on hopeless days. It gives me comfort to know there is someone at Kindermourn who I can trust that will listen when I need to talk.

Again, I hope you never need the services that Kindermourn provides, but if you do, you will be grateful like me for those who support the organization so that my family and others can start to find hope again after the death of their child.

About Meg McElwain



Meg McElwain is wife to Frank Turner, III, and mother of Frank Lyttle Turner, IV, and the late Mitchell Bays Turner. She owns [Magnolia Marketing](#) in Charlotte. You can learn more about her family at www.mitchellsfund.org.

Photocredit: Flashes of Hope Charlotte

The 11th Annual Kindermourn Hope Floats Duck Race

The nonprofit, [KinderMourn](#), has served the entire Charlotte community since 1978. KinderMourn's mission is to provide hope for bereaved parents, grieving children and teens by offering support and counseling programs, create awareness of bereavement issues and empowering the community to effectively assist those who have suffered a unthinkable loss.

KinderMourn's largest annual fundraiser, the Hope Floats Duck Race, will be held on April 26th from 2-5 p.m. at the National Whitewater Center. The free event is fun for all ages, and features live music, children's activities and the quackiest race in town with over 15,000 rubber duckies braving the rapids to the finish line! For more details, please visit www.kindermourn.org.



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