



Health & Wellness Finalist: **Michael's Place**

Initiative: **Tending the Wounds: Trauma, Suicide, and Childhood Bereavement**

OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE

The initiative proposed by Michael's Place is focused on the mitigation and prevention of Trauma, Suicide, and Childhood Bereavement. Their proposed program, Tending the Wounds, is designed to help children and adults traumatized by the suicide or overdose death of a loved one. The initiative engages partner organizations and mobilizes community support by replicating proven national models in an evidence-based approach to address the rising need for grief support programs. Their proposal increases the organization's capacity of trained volunteers prepared to engage the bereaved in intentional, transformation sharing and listening. The programming will provide Michael's Place volunteers with the necessary tools to support individuals, schools, businesses, and community organizations.

The following sections contain key information from the application, as written by the applicant. Please note that while detailed financial information has not been provided here, each applicant submitted an initiative budget and supporting financial documents as part of their application. Each proposed initiative and the supporting financial documentation has undergone a thorough financial review by our Community Investment Review Committee and the initiatives proposed by our finalists have been found to be fiscally sound.

This proposal was updated after the initial submission, with the knowledge and approval of the Health & Wellness committee. This document reflects the updates provided by the applicant.

FULL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Michael's Place Tending the Wounds: Trauma, Suicide, and Childhood Bereavement mitigation and prevention initiative will put children and adults traumatized by the death of a loved one from suicide or overdose on the road to resilience. It will give them strategies to manage their grief, knowledge that they are not alone, and support from peer groups and trained adults who recognize their challenges. Michael's Place is the only organization in northwest Michigan meeting the bereavement needs of families suffering the suicide of a loved one with free grief support groups and programs. More youth are dying at their own hand; Michigan's Upper Peninsula and northern lower have increased suicide rates – in

some counties, double the state average. In 2017, 217 people under the age of 25 died by suicide in Michigan, nearly 80% higher than the previous decade.

Tending the Wounds, based on models developed by our national partners, the New York Life Foundation and StoryCorps, focuses on the traumatic bereavement from a death of despair including suicide and overdose and follows a theory of action that builds the knowledge, skills of Michael's Place staff and volunteers. This initiative increases the organization's capacity with trained volunteers and improves programs and services to the traumatically bereaved that are more comprehensive than previously experienced. This comprehensive approach engages partner organizations and mobilizes the entire community to support more of the bereaved by replicating proven national models in an evidence-based approach. The specific training expands the depth of knowledge and skills in relation to ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and PEARL-9 trauma-informed approaches to measurements, evaluations, and assessments of bereaved children. Trauma assessment and protocols will be created for inclusion in our enrollments to assure families and children, whose grief is exacerbated by a trauma history, are cared for appropriately.

Tending the Wounds transforms the volunteer-training program, currently only available two times per year, through the creation of volunteer-training modules available and accessed online allowing training to take place throughout the year. The initiative will address the magnitude of the problem, serve a greater number of bereaved individuals and families, and promote deeper and healthier healing by removing the shame and humiliation families feel following a death of despair from suicide or overdose. It decreases the stigma of suicide so all receive greater compassion. It creates conversation between people of all ages who no longer need to hide their worries and anxieties, builds community, and connects stories.

The Michael's Place highly skilled team and partners will: address the rising need of school grief crisis interventions and aftercare for schools with a suicide involving a student or other school community member; host creative programming that engages the bereaved in intentional, transformation sharing and listening through StoryCorps; focus Children's Grief Awareness Month on children and families bereaved by suicide or overdose; and build a more robust, comprehensive, and vigorous volunteer training program that will increase the organization's capacity to serve a greater number of grieving children and adults with staff and volunteers educated on the impact of traumatic bereavement.

Tending the Wounds engages community partners including the Grand Traverse Band from across the 5-county area with a strong focus on underserved populations.

COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED

Michael's Place will serve northwest Michigan, community-wide, with the proposed project. Northwest Michigan is suffering from a suicide epidemic, nearly double the state average. Located in Grand Traverse County, Michael's Place is in the heart of a tourist mecca, marketed nationally as "Pure Michigan." The region boasts miles of fresh lake shoreline, agriculture and wineries, and a significant divide between wealthy summer cottage owners and retirees. The year-round population is primarily in the service industries or white collar employed. The ethnic makeup is largely white, but with an increasing number of Hispanic, bi-racial, Asian Americans, and African Americans. There is a significant Native American population represented by the Grand Traverse Band, which has been a strong partner in the work of Michael's Place. Grief is prevalent in their community, as is drug and alcohol abuse and a keen awareness of historic trauma.

With approximately 155,000 households, almost 35% are living below the poverty line. Access to services can be quite limited due to these factors but our services continue to be free of charge. In addition, Michael's Place is the only center of its kind serving the region with grief support for all ages; children, teens, and adults, and has years of experience assisting families with grief and loss due to suicide.

We help school grief crisis teams implement their plan by providing scenario drills for them twice a year. It is our goal to train the adults within a school community to feel confident responding to a grief crisis and to respond most effectively to each student grieving a loss. Our motto is: They support the students and Michael's Place supports them. Michael's Place is called on between 5 to 15 times in a given school year to provide guidance and leadership in a grief crisis. Although grief-crisis trained school leadership respond the most effectively, in the event of a suicide, even the most highly trained and seasoned leader requests a higher level of assistance and support from Michael's Place. Although we are not a 24-hour crisis organization, we do all we can to assist schools in a grief crisis, especially as it pertains to suicide. Cultivating relationships and understanding how to effectively communicate with school leadership in a crisis starts well before the grief crisis. When a crisis occurs, the collaborative partnerships we have established through relationship building, grief education, in-school support group opportunities, and grief crisis planning and training, work to negate any additional trauma for the children and teens in each school community.

Lastly, Michael's Place serves those who are grieving at no cost to them. The majority of our families, and the grieving children in schools we serve, cannot afford to pay for the care they seek.

NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED

Large rural swaths of the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula saw the highest suicide rates in the state: double the state average in some counties. In 2017, 217 people

under age 25 died by suicide in the state of Michigan, nearly 80 percent higher than a decade before. And, there is current research drawing the link between the rise in suicides in our rural communities and the opioid epidemic which many potential partner agencies are struggling to address. A University of Michigan study noted more than 40 percent of U.S. suicide and overdose deaths in 2017 involved opioids.

Current national statistics regarding suicide are horrifying. Suicide is now listed as the second leading cause of death for our youth ages 10 to 34. In 2020, someone will die by suicide every 20 seconds. Nurses are 23% more likely to die from suicide than women in general and 4 times more likely to die from suicide than people outside of medicine. In the United States, someone dies by suicide every 13 minutes. And, although, suicide touches all economic categories, the most vulnerable populations are in the low income and rural areas of our region.

A small rural school district in the 5-county area experienced three student suicides within the span of three months, making national news. Tragically, this was not the first school in our region, or even that school year, to cry out for help following the suicide death of a student. Our area schools are clamoring for more efforts to serve the bereavement needs of children, particularly in relation to suicide and trauma care.

Tending the Wound will expand our services to students, staff, families, and the general communities. These incidents serve as a grim reminder of the ongoing need for grief crisis preparedness and aftercare and reinforcement of the need to adopt trauma-informed care as service providers. To be prepared for those we serve, we ourselves must be trauma-prepared. Tending the Wounds recognizes the importance of trauma training for the Michael's Place staff and volunteers in order to better serve our community. The ACEs protocol has gained wide recognition among practitioners in the area. Regionally, several service organizations have made ACEs and PEARLS-9 a new standard of care during an intake process. This includes regional medical care providers. With these standards implemented, Michael's Place will be better equipped to provide the best care, and meet referral needs of our children and families.

Michael's Place has been awarded three multi-year grants by the New York Life Foundation in partnership with the National Alliance of Grieving Children to fund outreach to underserved communities. This project gives both Michael's Place and the New York Life Foundation an opportunity to directly impact our entire region with a greater understanding of how to serve bereavement needs of children and youth after a loss from a suicide and deepen community awareness regarding the impact of trauma on grief.

GAPS IN SERVICES

Resources are limited for grieving youth in our region. Nationally, 7 in 10 teachers currently have at least one student who has lost a parent, guardian, sibling, or close friend in the past year. Yet only 7% of teachers have training in how to deal with a grieving student. Locally, 70% of Traverse City High School students completing the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) protocol had experienced grief and loss. The CDC's national ACE study found that more than four ACEs increases the chance of suicide by 1,200 %. "People with high ACE scores are more likely to be violent, have more marriages, more broken bones, more drug prescriptions, more depression, and more autoimmune disease."

Michael's Place has grown significantly in 20-years but as the community grows and changes, so must the organization. We strive toward the highest standards of supportive practice and care. The social workers on staff and the licensed Program Director deepen the level of care with continuing learning of interventions, and the necessary systems in place to support program delivery. This initiative will additionally provide focus on training partner organizations and community members to close the resource gap.

Suicide is rising regionally, and at younger and younger ages. While there may be many reasons for this including the opioid crisis, Michael's Place is in a position to deepen our understanding of how to circumvent bereavement issues that can lead to further life-threatening behaviors. We can assess and deepen our understanding of how to circumvent bereavement issues that lead to further life-threatening behaviors. Healthcare professionals have warned of gaps in service delivery for mental health providers. Noting these gaps and setting out to eliminate suicides, the Henry Ford behavioral health system's, Dr. Brian Ahmedani, said: "We wanted 'perfect care' — and to us, that meant zero suicides. But there was not a lot out there that showed us how to do it."

Michael's Place will support our regional community by enhancing and deepening our programmatic capabilities with a goal of "perfect care." Although there is "not a lot out there" to lead us, some national models partnering with us through implementing ACEs and PEARLS-9 protocols as best practice, will help us identify children and families with inherent risk factors. Our increased capacity will facilitate sharing this knowledge and skills with partners creating a healthier, more resilient community.

For schools, the current gap can be closed with in-school grief support and enhanced training in a trauma-informed capacity. Our partnership with Traverse Bay Area ISD's superintendents will enhance this initiative and complement the schools' trauma training, as students respond most effectively to adults who have relationships with them.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES & INDICATORS

Each month, Michael's Place offers 24 grief opportunities. In 2019, Michael's Place saw an attendance of nearly 3000 bereaved children and adults.

Michael's Place school-based programming saw in-school support group attendance rise nearly 200% from the 2017-18 to the 2018-19 school year. In addition, we offer workshops to all community groups through our Creating a Compassionate Community: Grief Education and Training.

Tending the Wounds, built on this impressive success story and trusting relationships, increases our capacity to reach the traumatically bereaved from deaths of despair including suicide and overdose with a greater impact. Creating a more robust, comprehensive, and vigorous volunteer-training program with modules accessible online will impact our team of 6 employees and 100+ volunteers who will increase the impact on our bereaved clients, the school teams impact on bereaved students, and the impact on the community-at-large. These links create a chain of events that illustrate a transformational Theory of Action.

Through COVID-19, our grief support programs continue and are even more important as isolation and loneliness increase. Individualized grief support and peer-to-peer-based grief tele-support are our new normal. We are collaborating with National Alliance of Grieving Children organizations, Midwest Regional bereavement centers, and local organizations to continue our mission. This initiative will provide consultation services and support for new method delivery of engaging the community.

Goal 1. Michael's Place staff and volunteers will have the knowledge and understanding of the complexities of suicide and trauma of grief with increased skills to evaluate and assess all programs; make data-driven programmatic decisions; facilitate the healing of those grieving; and prevent suicides.

Objective 1: Staff and volunteers trained on loss by suicide, ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) research and PEARLS-9 protocols, will have a clear understanding of program strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles for each grief support program and service.

Outcome: Participants will implement an appropriate response system strengthening a more trauma-informed culture in providing client support services.

Indicator: 100% of the grief support offerings will be evaluated to expand the quality and depth of offerings, including volunteer training, 24 grief support monthly offerings, and 25 in-school support groups.

Objective 2: New action plans based on evaluation results will increase effectiveness for those with suicide loss.

Outcome: Standard protocols will be implemented by staff and volunteers with direct contact with children, teens, and adults trained in ACEs & PEARLS-9.

Indicator: Participant impact data will be collected, analyzed, and reflected in a revised continuous-improvement plan to meet goals.

Objective 3: The organization's foundation is strengthened by a more trauma-informed culture of staff and volunteers with advanced training.

Outcome: Staff will strengthen their ability to educate and support classroom teachers to build resilient students as trauma-informed educators.

Indicator: Data will be collected and analyzed, including client and service provider surveys, demographic statistics, process descriptions, observations of performance.

Objective 4: Assessment tools identifying strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles will be developed to ensure that decisions regarding changes to services and programs are data-driven and research-based.

Outcome: Action plans will be developed and implemented using collected data for continuous improvement process.

Indicator: 100% of program evaluations will be addressed in future strategic planning for continuous improvement planning.

Goal 2. The organization's resources of time, finances, and capacity to welcome a greater number of grieving children, teens, and adults are increased and strengthened through the production of training tools and video modules accessible to new volunteers seeking training and current volunteers seeking continued education.

Objective 1. MP program staff will evaluate the current volunteer training program, and develop training modules. Outcome: The new training modules will be consistent with historical training and incorporate new modules including the impact of trauma on children and adults and the impact of traumatic bereavement.

Indicator: An assessment and review of the newly developed training program will be conducted by the program staff who will indicate 100% of the volunteer training is covered in the newly created modules.

Objective 2. Training modules will be filmed, edited, and launched on the organization's website, new volunteer training protocols will be created, and volunteer recruitment will be launched. Outcome: User-friendly volunteer training modules will be available and easily accessible online, volunteers will understand their roles, and volunteers will be vetted and ready to be trained. Indicator 2. Michael's Place will have 40 trained volunteers to meet the current demand of service, volunteers will indicate through an evaluation the effectiveness of the training for continuous improvement, and 100% of volunteers will receive training through the online modules each year tracked through the volunteer coordinator's annual evaluation.

Goal 3. All individuals experiencing the loss of a loved one will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to manage their grief, preventing further hardship and trauma.

Objective 1. Children, teens, and families grieving a loss to suicide or overdose will discover coping skills and tools to overcome their loss.

Outcome: More participating families & individuals grieving a loss to deaths of despair will have strategies for healthy healing to mitigate the feelings of isolation, shame, and guilt.

Indicator: 100% of those participants grieving a loss to suicide will be able to find purpose in their loss as they share the wisdom of their journey with the newly bereaved.

Objective 2. Bereaved youth will find inner-strength and resiliency through attentive adults who are present to them and hear them.

Outcome: Bereaved children, teens, and families will feel validated by sharing and recording their stories of loss and resilience maintaining access to these stories for generations.

Indicator: 25% increase in Loss By Suicide support group participants.

Objective 3. Children, teens, and families will create healthy healing story-sharing and conversation opportunities using the tools and training provided by StoryCorps and New York Life Foundation through The Road to Resilience project.

Outcome: Children and teens with loss to suicide or overdose will mitigate their suffering with a platform to ask difficult questions and have a voice in the conversation.

Indicator: 100% of participants will have their story archived in the local library, History Center, and/or Tribal's Eyaawing Museum Center

Indicator: 100% of participants will complete a survey evaluating the impact of the support and services.

Goal 4. All educators in partnership will have the knowledge and understanding of the complexities of deaths of despair and trauma of grief, skills to support their students and others through their loss, and skills to prevent suicides.

Objective 1. In-school support groups and grief education and training to school personnel will focus on the rising need of grief crisis interventions and aftercare following a death of despair in a school community.

Outcome: Grieving students attending in-school support groups will have grief-aware classroom teachers trained by Michael's Place and be more equipped to retain academic lessons and feel more secure in their classroom surroundings.

Indicator: 100% of schools with trained educators and trained grief crisis teams will feel more confident and effectively respond to a grieving student and to grief crisis, mitigating further trauma.

Objective 2. Partnering school districts cultivating relationships with Michael's Place will know and trust our grief programs and services and increase requests for grief education, training, and support of staff to lead schools in a grief crisis.

Outcome: In-school support groups increase the value placed on addressing children's grief issues while decreasing the economic barriers necessary for students to receive healthy grief support.

Indicator: 100% of grieving students attending in-school support groups will feel safe and empowered in their ability to articulate their needs.

Goal 5. All community members will have the knowledge and understanding of the complexities of deaths of despair and the trauma of grief, as well as the skills to support friends and others through their loss, and to prevent suicides.

Objective 1. National Grieving Children's Awareness Month with a specific focus on deaths of despair will educate the community on grieving children and teens.

Outcome: Community conversations will focus on children and teen grief from loss by deaths of despair using social media outlets, radio and television interviews, and online and print articles.

Indicator: Awareness of Michael's Place benefits and partnership with StoryCorps and New York Life Foundation increase of 10% more families seeking support.

Objective 2. A first-time community event featuring Every Brilliant Thing, focusing on suicidal depression in a useful, thought-provoking, and accurate way.

Outcome: Community members will bear witness to conversations of children and teens grieving a loss to suicide partnering with media and local videographers, including underserved populations of rural, impoverished children, teens, and families from the Grand Traverse Band.

Indicator: Surveys demonstrate how stories created compassionate, informed community members.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Michael's Place has been providing grief support to children, teens, and adults for almost 20 years and grief training and planning specific to schools since 2007. The knowledge and understanding for what a grieving child needs in and out of the classroom is one of our many strengths. Because the schools sought our services for grieving children, typically in the midst of a crisis, the organization met the need by applying program expertise gained over several years to the school environment. Michael's Place has created a school grief crisis template that can be used by all schools and made to fit their school's resources. We have worked with many school districts throughout the region to create their grief crisis team and crisis plan, train their grief crisis teams, and train their faculty and staff on being systems of support for their students and their co-workers. Major partners in this effort

have been TBAISD, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the National Alliance of Grieving Children, and the New York Life Foundation.

According to Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, organizational capacity is “the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance, and a persistent rededication to assessing and achieving results.” Michael’s Place has a proven history of ability to harness human, financial, and other resources to effect positive change in our community. Achievements include tremendous consistency in retaining personnel, both professional staff as well as volunteers, which has strengthened the wisdom of those in the organization and speaks to the commitment of those who serve; Implementing a new fundraising model at a critical juncture of growth in 2011; Engaging with peers through the National Alliance of Grieving Children to achieve national benchmarks; Board and staff engagement in strategic planning assisted by industry leader, Hagerty Insurance.

The board of directors, fully engaged with 100% support of finances and time, works to advance our mission through time, financial resources, and expertise. Each member is an active participant and advocate. Fiscal management is overseen by members with professional expertise in banking and credit union institutions, and with additional guidance from a finance manager with 30 years of experience in advancement in a 4-year college.

We have the leadership, dedicated staff, committed volunteers, generous donors, and most importantly, the trust of those who are grieving, to implement this initiative. Through partnerships with schools, workplaces, and community stakeholders, we have cultivated relationships that will ensure the capacity to achieve the goals of the Impact Grant as well as successfully continue them for years to come.