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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Childhood Bereavement Takes a Dramatic Leap in Northern Michigan

Special challenge to help raise awareness and funds begins May 21, 2022

TRAVERSE CITY, MI., APRIL 22, 2022 – Children grieving the loss of an immediate family member increased by 35-percent nationwide according to a local organization dedicated to supporting bereaved children and families. Michael’s Place, a nonprofit grief support center located in Traverse City said they have seen the impact of this increase over the past year, and it is only in part due to COVID deaths.

Prior to the pandemic an estimated one in 20 children experienced the death of a parent or sibling by the time they reached 18. Today the number is closer to one in 13 children nationwide, and [one in 12](#) in Michigan.

Outreach from regional schools for both in-school support groups and grief crisis training has increased dramatically, with one small rural school seeking services from Michael’s Place after reporting 20 students who have experienced a recent loss of a parent in just one small school building.

The increased demand is not limited to bereaved children, according to Mindy Buell, Executive Director of Michael’s Place. “Our requests for services continue to grow across our programs as a whole,” Buell stated. “We can’t attribute this increase as a direct result of COVID, but there may be contributing factors.” [Overdose deaths](#) are on the rise and the rate of [depression and anxiety has increased](#) since the beginning of the pandemic which has been a driving force behind some of the demand for mental health services.

“We are seeing schools, businesses, and the community overall displaying a heightened awareness of the critical need to address emotional and mental health, which has led to an increasing request for services,” added Buell. “With a shortage of mental health resources in our area, we are just grateful that Michael’s Place can continue to help meet some of those needs of those grieving in our community. We could not provide these services without the generous support from our donors.”

You Can Help Support the Mission:

In honor of 21 years of service to the community, Michael's Place is holding a unique challenge and is asking the community to join in and help continue the healing.

The *21miles for 21years Virtual Challenge* allows registrants to participate individually or as a team in a "Choose Your Adventure" challenge, with the goal to log 21 miles between May 21-June 21, 2022. Participants can also choose to create a fundraiser in memory of a loved one or simply to help support Michael's Place. Because this challenge is virtual, anyone across the globe can get in on the fun!

Join Michael's Place, Presenting Sponsors North Bay Produce and Bill Marsh Buick/GMC, and other challenge sponsors for a fun kick-off event at Hull Park on May 21st, 11:00am – 1:00pm. Registration for the challenge is \$35 for adults and \$21 for kids and families. Register by April 29th and receive a free t-shirt. All proceeds from the event directly support the grief services of Michael's Place.

To register for or donate to the Challenge visit:

runsignup.com/Race/MI/TraverseCity/MichaelsPlace21Challenge

About Michael's Place

Michael's Place provides support and advocacy for children, teens, and adults grieving a death and serves the bereavement needs of the community including schools and workplaces. The organization gives those who grieve a voice to share their story, care and support to survive their loss, and hope to begin to live again. In 2021, Michael's Place served 2000 and provided 72 in-school grief support opportunities.

For more information, visit www.MyMichaelsPlace.net or call (231) 947-6453.

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