**“We the Living”**

**A grief intervention for children and youth affected by gun violence**

In 2015, Savannah had its most violent year in a quarter century. The city made the national news, not for its beauty and charm, but for the 53 murders, a 61% jump from the year before. In 2017, the National Association of Social Workers produced a Social Justice Brief entitled, “Gun Violence in the American Culture”. In the brief, the writers noted that every day 93 people in America die from gun violence. Firearm homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans ages 1 to 44. The brief asserts that violence in our culture has risen to the point of a public health crisis.

In response to this public health crisis in Savannah, organizations all over the city, including law enforcement, have jumped into action to find ways to curb the violence.

But, what happens to the people left behind, especially the children? How do they cope with the trauma of a loved one dying from gun violence?

Hospice Savannah’s Full Circle Grief and Loss Center knew that in order to help create a healthy city, the organization needed to design a way to bring grief support into the communities that are most affected by the gun violence. The need for this is clearly shown in a study by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente, illustrating that adverse childhood events, without intervention afterwards, can lead to higher risks of health issues, depression, suicide, and incarceration in adulthood.

At the end of 2016, Full Circle was awarded a grant from the New York Life Foundation to aid in the creation of a support group called “We the Living” for children ages 6-17 that provides grief support to children and teens affected by homicide.

**Kids worry about other family members being shot. They wonder about ideas of justice and revenge. They fear that they might be next. The “We the Living” group provides a safe place to express feelings, talk about fears, learn coping tools, and form friendships with other kids who understand what it is like to lose someone to homicide.** Everyone’s story is worth being told and “We the Living” provides a healing space for the kids and teens to tell their story of life with their loved one.

For more information or to register your child or teen for support, please call our Full Circle bereavement counselors at 912-303-9442. As always, support is offered at no charge as community service of not-for-profit Hospice Savannah, Inc.

[www.HospiceSavannah.org/fullcircle](http://www.HospiceSavannah.org/fullcircle)

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