

Opinion

6A - Tuesday, May 30, 2023

A GRACE FILLED JOURNEY • by Mary Herschelmann

Even In Loss, Life Simply Goes On



Life goes on.

It's been two full years since we lost Grace, and I think one of the very hardest parts of grief is that life simply goes on.

When Grace was diagnosed with INAD (infantile neuroaxonal dystrophy), our lives were full of caring for her and hopefully, making sure she had the very best life on Earth.

Even before her terminal diagnosis, Grace had weekly appointments for physical, occupational and speech therapy. There were specialist appointments at Children's Hospital in neurology and orthopedics. Eventually, there would be medical strollers and medical car seats, medicine and IEP meetings at school. And in the end, there were feeding tubes and oxygen machines in our home.

Then, in one instant, Grace was gone. We went from a routine of planning her feedings, breathing treatments and appointments to nothing in one single instant.

Suddenly, our lives were more "normal." In the days and weeks after the funeral, we went back to work, back to duties at home, and back to fun things, like swimming with Charley and trips to the zoo. But part of us is still missing.

After Grace passed away, a friend sent me something she had read about grief. The analogy included grief as a giant circle ball in the middle of a box, with a button marked pain. In the beginning, the ball is so big that it is constantly pushing the pain button and grief tends to consume every aspect of your life. As life goes on, the ball tends to shrink, meaning that it hits the pain button less often than in the beginning, but it still hurts just as much every time the ball manages to land on the pain button.

And over the past two years, I'd say that's pretty true. Life goes on, and we have planned new adventures with Charley. In some ways, our adventures are a bit easier. They no longer require pre-planning to make sure I have enough formula for Grace's feedings or accessible seats wherever we go. But in most ways, we miss having her be part of our adventures.

We went to our very first St. Louis City soccer games this year, and as we made our way to our seats, Kyle and I shared a moment of grief knowing that she would never get to experience that with us. Although I think my heart knows she'll always be right there in the stands with us.

For me, the hardest part of grief is just simply that life continues to go on, in some ways as if Grace never existed at all. We all continue to make new memories and find ways to honor her, but the truth is that our lives will keep going on without her.

We are so blessed to have a community that continues to make her memory shine. Kyle and I were "tricked" into an assignment last week at Beckemeyer Elementary School, where Grace would have been a fifth grader. As her fellow classmates made their final walk through the hallways, they carried signs for Grace that said "Always in our Hearts." One mom even told me that Grace would always be a special part of the class of 2030. I can't even begin to describe how much that means to us.

And while I will always miss her every day I have left on Earth, I feel so blessed to remember the lessons she taught us and the adventures we had together. Everyone can help make this world a more "Grace-filled" place.

Don't forget, "Choose Joy. Choose Kindness. Choose Grace."

GUEST COLUMN • by Sally Mattson

Winning Faith In Life Essay

Ever since I was little, God has been a part of my life. I grew up going to church on Sundays and youth group on Wednesdays. Throughout this time my faith has developed and grown, but knowing God since my childhood has led His word to influence how I live my life.

This influence has often manifested itself in quiet ways rather than showing itself in bright bold letters everywhere I go. By knowing who Jesus was as He walked this Earth and by growing up seeing my parents striving to follow the Bible, I hope that I have been able to display at least some of the characteristics about Jesus.

Throughout high school, I have learned how to show kindness to others when I'm having a hard day, to do the right thing even without a witness, and how to take time to listen to what people have to say. All of these have been demonstrated to me through sermons, conversations, and my own time in the Bible. Learning these traits and applying them to my life have made me a better person and I hope, at times, have helped others to grow more aware of what it is to live a Christian life.

During my time in high school, I developed a friend group which includes people with various beliefs and outlooks on life. Not all of them are Christians, and through many conversations I have learned that a good amount of them have a screwed view on Christianity and God. These perspectives

are mostly a result of how other Christians have treated them in the past. I believe that God has put me in this friend group to be a different Christian influence on my friends. Rather than judge them for who they wish to be, I have learned to love them for who they are. By being around them and trying my best to be an example of how Jesus would treat them and love them despite our differences, I hope to give them a better perspective on Christianity and God so that they may grow to believe that Jesus died for their sins and end up in heaven.

Being a Christian and trying my best to exemplify traits like gratitude, mercy, and love has made me into a better person. I hope that God has continual uses for me, and will continue to put me into situations where I might show what it means to be a Christian.

Hillsboro High School senior Sally Mattson is the Greater Hillsboro Ministerial Fellowship Faith In Life essay scholarship winner. Honorable Mention awards were given to Alex Frailey, Isabella Harston, and Sierra Compton.

Each year the Greater Hillsboro Ministerial Fellowship offers a grant to one or more students who submit a "Faith in Life" essay. The topic of this paper is to be the positive impact faith in God has had upon the person's life. The submitted essays have the name of the writer removed and are read by someone outside the Hillsboro School District who works with youth.

GUEST COLUMN • by Valerie Belusko

What's Your Plan For Tomorrow?

This past weekend I checked something off my bucket list. I saw one of my favorite bands play in St. Louis. I am the kind of person that is motivated by music. It makes me happy. It pushes me to do more and try harder. Sometimes it helps soothe anger or vent frustration. And—always music makes me think.

For those who don't "breathe music," this might be hard to fathom, and although I would love to share more about my passion for music, that is not the intent of this article or my role in community and economic development. My reason for mentioning any of this is because of lyrics in a song (lyrics I finally heard, performed live last weekend). The lyrics say, "What's your plan for tomorrow? Are you a leader or will you follow?" I have never been much of a follower. I like to learn by doing things and experiencing things. I have an innate sense of distrust and often like to do my own research after learning something new before forming an opinion. Over the years, I have learned to think critically about how active planning can change a community's current reality and future.

Leadership can be overwhelming, and many times community members have yet to learn how much time, energy, and effort is put forth by our elected officials. As soon as new elected officials come into office, they are playing catch-up to learn about projects currently in the works. They must also take specific trainings on topics such as Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act. Proactive communities and elected officials usually go above and beyond mandated training. They look for additional training which helps them become better-informed leaders. This is what sets true leaders apart from others. They are constantly working to understand the needs of their community

and looking for opportunities to explore new ideas and learn practical methods to address current challenges and future opportunities.

Illinois Extension has a Leadership Academy for those interested in being a leader! These classes help individuals understand different leadership styles, generational needs, how to manage change, how to find and access important data in the decision-making process, be deliberative in democracy, budgeting, fiscal responsibility, and so much more. Programs can be customized to meet the needs of leaders within your community or region. We serve Christian, Jersey, Macoupin and Montgomery counties and are exploring a hybrid delivery method for this academy. We recognize how busy our community leaders are and understand how hard it can be to fit trainings into a full schedule. We also understand there is value in conducting face-to-face meetings as this helps us share ideas and network with those in similar positions. If you are interested in being a leader who takes care of the "here and now" and is also concerned about the future, don't hesitate to contact me! Leadership training can also be customized for those in non-profits and community service roles.

Valerie Belusko is a University of Illinois Extension community and economic development educator. Community and Economic Development programming helps community leaders, residents, and businesses build capacity for renewal and growth by collaborating with local communities to build effective teams to address their community's challenges. For more information about services and programs Valerie can offer to your organization or business withing Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties, please contact her at valerieb@illinois.edu or call 217-532-3941.

Joe's Corner

by Joe Rollins



IMAGINE HILLSBORO CHECKS IN • by Lucas Altenberger

Imagine Committees Back In Action



Welcome back to Imagine Hillsboro Checks In! This column features a bi-monthly update regarding all things Imagine Hillsboro. It seems like spring and its events have just arrived, so it is hard to believe we are already planning for summer events as

well. Most of our committees have been very busy in one way or another over the past couple of months. Let's hear what everyone's been up to.

April saw the successful return of the Imagine Hillsboro Community Egg Hunt. As always, the event included a later sensory-friendly egg hunt for those with diverse needs. If you are interested in donating plastic eggs for next year's event, please contact Kaitlyn Fath at kaitlynfath@gmail.com.

On May 18, Imagine Hillsboro hosted a meet and greet event at The Abbey on Broad. All committees had representatives available to meet with prospective members/volunteers and discuss recent events and "wins" within their committees. Patrons enjoyed a complimentary fry bar with a variety of sauces, prepared straight from The Abbey's kitchen. Drinks were also available for purchase. We would like to thank everyone who attended this event to help make it successful! Another at-large event, the annual Meeting-of-the-Whole, is planned for Friday, July 14. If you are subscribed to Imagine Hillsboro emails, please be on the lookout for further information regarding this meeting.

The Bicentennial and Events committees have a plethora of events planned for Hillsboro's 200th birthday on June 24 and 25 including food trucks/booths, a picnic, and bounce houses. Please keep an eye out on the website and future *Journal-News* articles

for a complete list of events and happenings. On Sunday, June 25, the Events and Festivals committee will be hosting a newly revamped mother-and-son event. What can you find at this event? Water gun fights, bounce houses, three-legged races, and of course: pizza, soda, and ice cream! You can save \$10 by pre-registering for this event at imaginehillsboro.com/events-registration. Pre-registration cost is \$20 per mother/son duo and \$5 for each additional child. Admission will be taken at the door, but there is a \$10 upcharge. For our littles (under five), there is a special time slot from 1:00 to 3:00. All ages are invited to attend the second session from 3 to 5 p.m.

Imagine Hillsboro is again in the midst of the Farmer's Market season. Vendor applications are available via Google Docs on the Events Committee page of our website. You can also find a complete list of dates here as well. So far, we've had some great vendors, including jellies and jams, hand-crocheted items, fresh meat and produce, plants, and freeze-dried candies. Stop by to see what we have to offer! As always, the Farmer's Market season will conclude with a Harvest Market, to be held on Saturday, Oct. 7. Looking ahead, you may also want to mark your calendars for Storybook Christmas on Saturday, Nov. 25.

Last weekend, new plants were placed into planters around the downtown area by our wonderful volunteers. Bike Hillsboro has held several trail work days recently. On May 13, the bike trails committee hosted another successful night ride. Thanks to all who came out!

In other committee news, the Technology Committee is revitalizing very rapidly with new leadership and regular meetings now being planned. Please contact marketing@imaginehillsboro.com if you are interested in joining.

DID YOU KNOW? • Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center

Did You Know...About Litchfield Chamber

The Litchfield Chamber of Commerce has been an active and influential group in the City of Litchfield since its inception.

In 1898, a group of 28 like-minded business men formed "The Litchfield Board of Trade" which was the predecessor to the chamber of commerce. From the very beginning, it was an active group that worked hard to promote and grow Litchfield. One of their first acts was to purchase a corn field from Mike Cleary, so it could become the site for the American Radiator Company.

In 1907, the "Litchfield Board of Trade" changed its name to "The Merchants' Protective Association." Its biggest effort of that time was to raise money to help

Brown Shoe Company open a factory in Litchfield. The "Merchants Protective Association" raised \$60,000 to help make this happen in 1917.

In 1936, the group changed its name for the last time and became "The Litchfield Chamber of Commerce." At this time they became affiliated with both the state and national chambers.

Over the years Litchfield Chamber of Commerce has been involved in many different efforts to support businessmen and make Litchfield a desired location to raise a family.

The Litchfield Chamber of Commerce current office is located in the historic Carnegie Building. More information about



the history of Litchfield Chamber of Commerce can be found by visiting the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center located at Historic Route 66 North in Litchfield, during regular business hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and from 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

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