



*"My mom was in and out of rehab a lot. It was not uncommon for her to disappear. When she died, I didn't really understand that this time, she wouldn't ever come home again.*

*Luckily for me, my dad found Circle Camps for Grieving Children. I have attended Circle for nine years, first as a camper, and now a Counselor-in-Training. A week with a bunch of grieving girls? Most assume it would be a sob fest, but every year, the hardest I cry is when we get on the buses to go home. Circle has become my second home, and everyone there my second family.*

*At home, known as the "Girl-Whose-Mom-Died", I felt like I was nothing more than my grief. Now, that means being the girl who began learning resilience, strength, and how to deal with loneliness at the age of 5 - things most people don't learn until they are adults.*

*At Circle, I have met countless people who have changed my life for the better. From my best friends to my most inspiring counselors, I've been provided a support system which helped me through the hardest times in my life - not just my mom's death, but everything else that came after. Thanks to Circle, I learned how to grieve and how to live a "normal" life.*

*I spend every year waiting for my week at Circle, the only place I've ever felt I belong. I live for the moments when the kids I mentor tell me how much I help them. "I've come to realize that my mom's death presented me with a bittersweet opportunity: to pass on what I have learned about grief to others. Thank you Circle for the lessons I have learned."*



Circle Camps for Grieving Children provides overnight camp programs for young girls who have experienced the death of a parent. Circle Camps held its first program in 2002 with 32 campers supported by 26 volunteer counselors. Currently, there are three Circle Camps programs: pilot program Circle of Tapawingo – Sweden, Maine; Circle of EKC – Morgantown, West Virginia, and Circle Summit Leadership Program, - Morgantown, West Virginia. All camps are at no charge to campers.

In the past 16 years, over 1,200 grieving young girls have attended a weeklong Circle Camp. Volunteer counselors come from all over the U.S., range in age from 19-74, and have a return rate over 90%.

Over the years, the Circle program has grown from the Camper Program for girls ages 9-12 to include a Teen Program, ages 13-14, a two-year Counselor-in-Training Program for former campers ages 15-16, and Circle Summit, a leadership program for girls 17-18. At 19, former campers become counselors.

The Circle program is unique in its integration of grief activities in the campers' week. To be able to speak and cry about their losses, surrounded by the Circle community, is the greatest gift Circle gives to its campers.

Exceptional, empowering activities include Circle Time, when campers can choose to talk about their deceased parents in the company of their bunkmates, Voices of Circle: A Circle of Voices, a profoundly moving collection of camper writings, the Rock Ceremony, where campers place a handwritten message on a rock in our Memory Garden, and Camper Campfire when campers say good by to their Circle family until the following summer.