

# Grief and Loss Support For Children in Rural Iowa

## Program Update | July 2025

EveryStep's Grief and Loss Services – Home of Amanda the Panda (ATP), addresses the mental health needs of rural Iowa students with school-based grief support groups delivered to their communities. By building relationships with local principals, guidance counselors, school nurses, and teachers, staff deliver 6-week peer support groups where students share their grief stories, connect with peers, and learn resilience skills to feel better equipped to cope with grief in healthy ways.

In addition to group sessions, ATP expanded its reach through special events, educator trainings, and grief day camps designed to meet the unique needs of each school community. These efforts offered students and staff additional layers of support and education, helping schools become more compassionate spaces for those navigating loss.

## Drumming Up Fun and Healing at Amanda the Panda



Groovin' Through Grief Day Camp, West Des Moines, IA

At Amanda the Panda's Groovin' Through Grief day camp in West Des Moines, more than a dozen youth learned to express and cope with their feelings through the power of drumming. Led by nationally recognized teaching artist Josh Robinson, the event combined rhythm-based activities with hands-on drum-making using buckets and tape. Campers from throughout central Iowa explored how music can express emotions without words, built trust and connected with memories of loved ones. The day ended with the "Drum Warrior Pledge," encouraging participants to use their beats for good. The camp blended

therapeutic value with fun, leaving kids energized and supported in their grief journey.

## RECAP

SEPT. 2024 – JUNE 2025

**417**

Rural children, teachers and community members served

**272**

Students served through school-based support group sessions

- 146 Elementary School
- 126 Middle/High School

**145**

Students, staff and caregivers served through outreach events

**20**

Schools served

**2**

Day camps held

### Groovin' Through Grief Day Camp

West Des Moines - Polk County

- 13 Elementary & Middle School Students

### Uncovering Grief Day Camp

Creston - Union County

- 15 Elementary & Middle School Students

**2,241**

INDIVIDUALS SERVED SINCE 2021 (STUDENTS, CAREGIVERS, STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS)



Scan the QR code to watch the Groovin' Through Grief Day Camp recap video.

# SUPPORT GROUP SURVEY RESULTS

**88%** of students felt like they could pay attention more in class after being in this group

**92%** of students reported attending this group has made it easier to come to school every day

**97%** of students share they would tell their friends to try this group if they also have experienced a loss in their life



## 2024-2025 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

<b>Bedford Elementary</b>	<i>Bedford - Taylor County</i>
<b>Berg Middle</b>	<i>Newton - Jasper County</i>
<b>CAM High School</b>	<i>Anita - Cass County</i>
<b>Carlisle Elementary</b>	<i>Carlisle - Warren County</i>
<b>Creston Elementary</b>	<i>Creston - Union County</i>
<b>Creston Middle</b>	<i>Creston - Union County</i>
<b>East Union High School</b>	<i>Afton - Union County</i>
<b>Indianola Middle</b>	<i>Indianola - Warren County</i>
<b>Lenihan Intermediate</b>	<i>Marshalltown - Marshall County</i>
<b>Mt. Ayr High School</b>	<i>Mt. Ayr - Ringgold County</i>
<b>Nevada Elementary</b>	<i>Nevada - Story County</i>
<b>Nevada Middle</b>	<i>Nevada - Story County</i>
<b>Oskaloosa Middle</b>	<i>Oskaloosa - Mahaska County</i>
<b>Pella Middle</b>	<i>Pella - Marion County</i>
<b>Perry Middle</b>	<i>Perry - Dallas County</i>
<b>SE Warren Elementary</b>	<i>Milo - Warren County</i>
<b>Southwest Valley Elementary</b>	<i>Corning - Adams County</i>
<b>Winterset Elementary</b>	<i>Winterset - Madison County</i>
<b>Winterset Middle</b>	<i>Winterset - Madison County</i>
<b>Winterset High School</b>	<i>Winterset - Madison County</i>



Uncovering Grief Day Camp  
Creston, IA

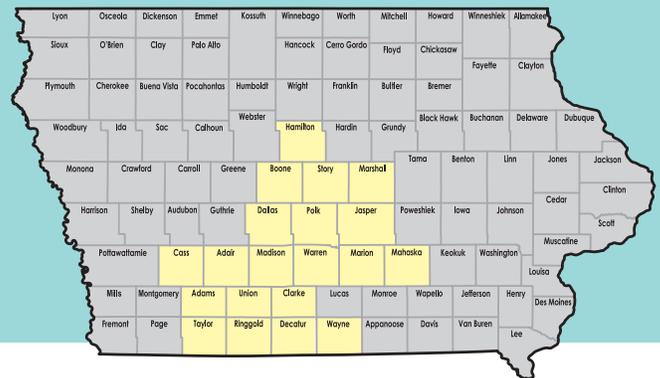


## USE OF FUNDS

Personnel	\$140,146
Supplies	\$458
Staff Development/Professional Fees	\$2,978
Communications	\$793
Marketing/Client Resources	\$10,475
Mileage/Travel	\$10,325
Admin/Other	\$34,826
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>

## COUNTIES SERVED TO DATE

Adair	Clarke	Jasper	Marshall	Union
Adams	Dallas	Madison	Polk	Taylor
Boone	Decatur	Mahaska	Ringgold	Warren
Cass	Hamilton	Marion	Story	Wayne



## OUTREACH EVENTS AND SPECIAL SUPPORTS (2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR)

**Indianola Middle School** *Indianola - Warren County*  
Presentation for 70 staff members on supporting grieving students.

**Carlisle High School** *Carlisle - Warren County*  
Mental health presentation for 5 staff members and 25 youth and caregivers on coping with grief and loss.

**Creston Elementary** *Creston - Union County*  
Provided grief education and support to 41 students and 4 staff members following a death of a parent.



Grief & Loss Services

Home of Amanda the Panda

For more information about our programs, contact:

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