



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

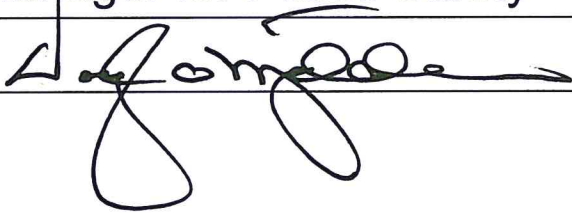
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Death Cafe and Bereavement Groups
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis
Title: Management Specialist
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Douglas Middleton
Title: Deputy County Manager for Public Safety
Signature: 

1. Program Overview

Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) partnered with Alane Ford (formerly Alane Miles) of James River Home Health and Hospice to provide programs dedicated to supportive discussion of death and grief. People of all ages experience the loss of loved ones and colleagues, and, like many other localities, Henrico County is experiencing the effects of the age wave as the Baby Boomer generation enters retirement. Facing the need to provide information and support to a population increasingly experiencing grief, and desiring to break through the stigma surrounding conversations of death and dying, Ms. Ford offered her expertise to provide Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups at HCPL. The programs provide a needed community service, leverage the reputation of the library as a safe space to learn and explore ideas, and provide an outreach opportunity for James River Home Health and Hospice. Programs have been attended by community members of all ages, and due to demand, the program has expanded from annual Death Café events into monthly Bereavement Group meetings.

2. Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Henrico County's population, like many localities across the country, is beginning to experience what is known as the "age wave," as the Baby Boomer generation enters retirement and the number of senior citizens for whom we provide services is reaching unprecedented levels. As this large segment of the population ages, the library has started to provide more programming targeted specifically to seniors. These include daytime programs for retirees, in addition to programs related to logistical considerations surrounding death and dying such as estate planning and medical directives. Prior to the partnership with Ms. Ford, however, no HCPL programs addressed death and grief directly, which are experienced by residents of all ages, and which can require information and support to work through.

The library prioritizes meeting community needs and providing access to information. Though many of our patrons, elderly and otherwise, were experiencing grief and loss, prior to this program, the library system could only provide information on the subject in the form of books, and had no formal reading list for bereavement. While books are a wonderful resource for exploring grief, libraries should not allow the delicate nature of, or stigma surrounding, discussing death and dying be a barrier to providing programming on the subject, which can give library patrons both information and support. Just as a library would partner with experts and institutions to provide quality programming on other subjects, HCPL partnered with a grief counselor to provide expert programming on death and grief. The partnership with Ms. Ford, and the popularity of her Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups, has demonstrated that discussing grief in the informal, safe community space of the library meets a real community need.

3. How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups at Henrico County Public Library are an innovative approach to meeting the needs of our aging population, as well as the needs of any person experiencing death and grief. The programs provide a safe and welcoming atmosphere, and access to a trained professional to guide participants through difficult discussions, while keeping the mood upbeat and lively. Many people who need grief support do not have the resources to hire a grief counselor. Many senior citizens may feel isolated after the death of a partner or family member. Persons of any age may struggle with their feelings of grief. The Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups offer these people connections to an expert, to resources, and to empathetic peers. The programs are low-cost for the library, and provide a valuable outreach opportunity for James River Home Health and Hospice. The programs leverage the trust people have in the library as a safe space, and deepen that trust. It can be difficult to confront topics of death and dying, but librarians have a responsibility to connect their patrons with the information

they need. This program breaks through that stigma to provide meaningful and informative support for grieving patrons.

4. How Program Was Carried Out

Alane Ford first approached Henrico County Public Library in 2015 with an idea for outreach programming for her employer, James River Home Health and Hospice. The first program was done with HCPL Mobile Library Services. The program was called River of Life, and was provided to residents of assisted living and nursing homes during Mobile Library Service visits. The River of Life program was interactive, and involved using a table and props to create a visible river made of rocks, origami, fabric, photographs, and other things that residents can touch. Ms. Ford, along with Mobile Library Service staff, lead a discussion that allowed residents to remember aspects of their own lives. Ms. Ford had done a similar program in the past, but stated that working with library staff allowed her to “really flesh out this program for their patrons and it ended up being really beautiful and meaningful.” At each program, Ms. Ford and library staff would give different things to patrons for them to take home. It became a very popular program.

In 2016, Ms. Ford and Barbara Weedman, the library’s Public Services Administrator at the time, were inspired to brainstorm other programs. Ms. Ford had been leading discussions on questions about death and dying, funeral planning, advanced medical directives, and grief for about 15 years. The term “Death Café” was chosen to align with the international term and movement. At Death Cafés, Ms. Ford opened up a safe place for people to come to ask questions that are both open-ended and philosophical, as well as focused and personal. The participants in the Death Cafés ranged in age from 20 to 80. One innovative aspect of these programs is they are upbeat discussions of what is commonly considered a morose subject. Participants keep talking in a lively manner throughout the entire session, up to the last minute. Libraries would provide food at these events in order to put people at ease. Ms. Ford said, “it was important for

me to have [the programs] at libraries because people already associate a library with a safe place they can go to get accurate knowledge.” Death Cafés are still held a couple of times annually at HCPL locations across the county.

While the Death Cafés grew in popularity, Ms. Ford worked with librarians to create a reading list that was printed as “Bereavement” bookmarks, and distributed them throughout the county’s libraries, as well as to other county agencies. Ms. Ford worked with librarians to assemble titles of some of their favorite death and dying books, both fiction and nonfiction, and the library’s graphic designer made bookmarks that are now available to all county library patrons as a reference guide. The bookmarks have been given to the County’s Department of Mental Health and Developmental Services as well.

The Death Cafés eventually evolved into monthly Bereavement Groups. Ms. Ford currently hosts a Bereavement Group in the Tuckahoe Library, HCPL’s busiest branch, located in Western Henrico. Soon, she will be starting a group at the Sandston Library, located in a small community in Eastern Henrico that is home to many elderly residents. With monthly Bereavement Groups on both ends of the county, and Death Cafés continuing at libraries periodically throughout the year, Ms. Ford and HCPL are providing a reliable and necessary service to County residents.

5. Financing and Staffing

Program Costs

Refreshments for Death Cafes at 5 Area Libraries=\$75/year (\$15/ea)

Tea and water for Tuckahoe Bereavement Group=\$30/year

4000 Bereavement Bookmarks=\$390

Total=\$495

Bereavement bookmarks were created and designed by library staff and the library’s graphic designer in-house. They were printed, in a quantity of 4000 for a cost of \$390 from the library’s

Community Relations Department printing budget. Bookmarks have been distributed to all HCPL locations, as well as other county agencies, such as the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Services. Promotion for the programs is done by the in-house Community Relations department and library staff at no added cost.

Libraries across the state could replicate this program at little cost by contacting local hospice care providers and proposing a similar partnership, emphasizing that would benefit both parties, and offering to provide refreshments for participants. Libraries with smaller budgets for printing could create handbills or bookmarks in-house for their bereavement reading lists.

6. Program Results

Popularity of Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups demonstrates that discussing grief in the informal, safe community space of the library is having a meaningful impact on our community. Through a combination of outside expertise, and leveraging the reputation of the library as a reliable and welcoming place, these innovative programs are meeting community needs. In these lively discussions, library patrons are encouraged to explore considerations of death and dying ranging from practical to philosophical in a supportive, social setting that is informally mediated by an expert on the subject. There have been many repeat attendees, so much so that the annual Death Café events evolved into monthly Bereavement Group meetings.

Ms. Ford wrote:

“These groups have shown me what I already knew, which is that people come to the library because they feel safe there. The people who come to the groups are already coming to the library as a place of comfort. They trust the group because they already trust the library. The age range for these groups has been from the 20s to the 80s. The librarians offer support through connecting people to the books and resources I recommend and they offer the little helpful things that people need in groups like this: water, tissues, and a friendly face.”

7. Brief Summary

Henrico County Public Library (HCPL) partnered with Alane Ford (formerly Alane Miles) of James River Home Health and Hospice to provide programs dedicated to supportive discussion of death and grief. People of all ages experience the loss of loved ones and colleagues, and, like many other localities, Henrico County is experiencing the effects of the age wave as the Baby Boomer generation enters retirement. Facing the need to provide information and support to a population increasingly experiencing grief, and desiring to overcome the stigma surrounding conversations of death and dying, Ms. Ford offered her expertise to provide Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups at HCPL. The programs provide a needed community service, leverage the reputation of the library as a safe space to learn and explore ideas, and provide an outreach opportunity for James River Home Health and Hospice. Programs have been attended by community members of all ages, and due to demand, the program has expanded from annual Death Café events into monthly Bereavement Group meetings.

The Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups at Henrico County Public Library are an innovative approach to meeting the needs of our aging population, as well as the needs of any person experiencing death and grief. The programs provide a safe and welcoming atmosphere, and access to a trained professional to guide participants through difficult discussions, while keeping the mood upbeat and lively. Many people who need grief support do not have the resources to hire a grief counselor. Many senior citizens may feel isolated after the death of a partner or family member. Persons of any age may struggle with their feelings of grief. The Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups offer these people connections to an expert, to resources, and to empathetic peers. The programs are low-cost for the library, and of high value for the Henrico community.

It can be difficult to confront topics of death and dying, but librarians have a responsibility to connect their patrons with the information they need. Death Cafes and Bereavement Groups

at Henrico County Public Library break through that stigma to provide meaningful and informative support for grieving patrons.

Death Cafés and Bereavement Groups



Death Café

Join us for a surprisingly upbeat and informative discussion about death and dying. Spiritual and Bereavement Counselor Alane Miles provides a fascinating opportunity to ask any and all of your questions about the often-taboo topics of death, dying, grief, and funeral practices, in a friendly, informal setting. Ms. Miles has twenty years of experience in the hospice field, hosts the *Death Club Radio* show on WRIR, and writes for *Style Weekly*. Registration is not required.

MON. OCTOBER 3

7:00 PM at Twin Hickory
5001 Twin Hickory Rd., Glen Allen

MON. OCTOBER 17

7:00 PM at Libbie Mill
2100 Libbie Lake East St., Henrico

MON. NOVEMBER 14

7:00 PM at Fairfield
1001 N. Laburnum Ave., Henrico



henricolibrary.org/events

Bereavement Group

An open group for people to make sense and calm in the presence of change and loss. Led by Alane Cameron Miles, Hospice Bereavement Coordinator.

4th Thursdays (*except where noted)

2-3pm

Tuckahoe Library Conference Room

January 25

February 22

March 22

April 26

May 24

June 28

July 26

August 23

September 27

October 25

November 29^{*5th Thursday}

December 22

Note that the location has changed to the downstairs conference room.

**Henrico
County
Public
Library**



henricolibrary.org