



Tunnel to Towers Foundation
T2T.ORG

THANKS & GIVING NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021



Dear Families,

(Mary Siller Scullin, Frank Siller, Janis Siller, and Regina Siller)

Voltaire wrote *"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."* I pray that the thoughts shared in this, and future newsletters, which is created for, by, and about our Line of Duty families, gives each and every one of you much to appreciate; and raises you up, so that the hope, the resilience, and the humanity of their words become a shared excellence.

Everyone here at the Foundation is in awe of our unsung heroes and we feel blessed to have you in our lives. On behalf of my brothers and sisters, the Board, and Foundation staff we wish you peace this holiday season.

Blessings,
Mary Siller Scullin

Nancy's Notes on Thanks and Giving

There is power in Thanks and Giving. Why? Thanks and Giving are the most effective ways to combat loneliness, depression, post-traumatic stress and heartache; cultivating gratitude and giving back to others. The two work in tandem, and I am not always good at them, but the good thing about them is that they are ALWAYS available to me.

For gratitude, it is not enough to think about the things I have to be grateful for. The thoughts do not always penetrate. I have to write out a gratitude list or talk to people out loud about my gratitude. There is something about putting pen to paper that helps me really feel it— there is something about saying it to someone outside of me that helps it resonate within me.

The second piece, being others-focused, is tricky. It can be hard to do when we need it most because it is in those times that we feel we do not have the capacity to help others. Instead of connecting with others, we turn to unhealthy comforts (at least I do). Ahem, can someone say, "Nancy, put down the cookies!" Johann Hari said, "The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection." Serving others is the most deeply felt act of connection.

I know this to be true: every single time I choose to be others-focused, I feel better. It helps. This could include phoning a friend and just being there to listen, volunteering for a charity, or smiling at a stranger that you can tell is having a really rough day. There are a thousand ways to be others-focused, and it really is not so important what you choose to do. Choosing to be others-focused in any way really can be doing what is best for you. So in truth the beneficiaries are two!

In closing, in the words of our patron Saint St. Francis of Assisi, *"Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received, only what you have given."*

Nancy Gass
Surviving Spouse of US Army SSG Jerry Gass
Gold Star Family Home Program Recipient



The Power Of Giving On The Healing Process



Grief can come at us like waves in the ocean. That first wave is like a tsunami. It knocked us around and we may or may not have seen it coming. The thing with tsunamis, and grief alike, is that there are always waves behind the first one, some being bigger than others. After a few hard hitting waves we start to pick up coping mechanisms to help ourselves withstand the onslaught of grief. Healing can become a goal or a directing wave. We can find ourselves working to move forward from the loss as we carry it with us in our new "normal". Grief should not be a puddle we

sit in. One way to move forward in our healing is to give back in whichever way works best for us. Giving provides a distracting and positive fulfillment in an otherwise tragic time in our lives. The act of giving can be therapeutic no matter how small the act. The act of giving when you may feel your worst is the perfect time to give. Giving back has been studied and shown to build resiliency. These days, who doesn't need some resiliency? We all experience loss and grief on some level and no experience is comparable to the next. If we can help our own healing by helping others build resiliency, I would encourage you to give what you can, when you can. Build your resiliency!

Tiffany Burgess
Surviving Spouse of US Army SSG Bryan Allen Burgess
Gold Star Family Home Program

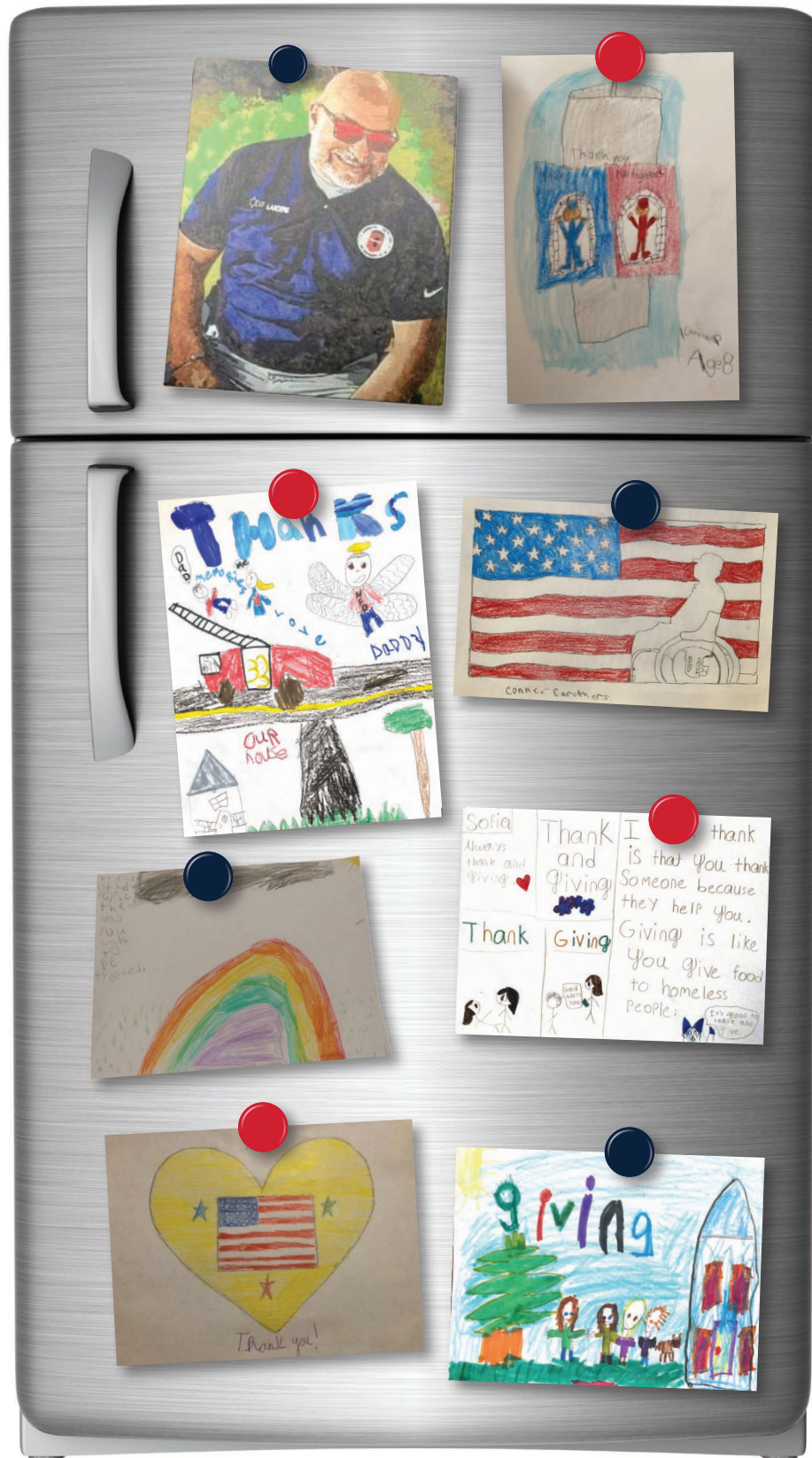


"Look What Our Kids Can Do!" – T2T Fridge



Artwork By: Elaina Adam (10), Niya Ansari, Lilly Biagini (13), Autumn Chapman (7), Gabriel Rodriguez (8), Tenley Pezzino (9), Madeline Rodriguez (3)

"Look What Our Kids Can Do!" – T2T Fridge



Artwork By: Connor Boots Carothers (14), Stella Gass (8), Kinley Myers (10), Avery Oberheim (18), Giovanna Parlo (8), Sofia Pasillas (9), Maya Sabine (5), Sophia Sabine (7)

Tunnel to Towers 5K Run & Walk NYC

Thank you to all who were able to join us this year for the 20th anniversary Tunnel to Towers 5K Run & Walk. Run weekend is about far more than running. Beyond the run itself, run weekend for recipients is really about so much more. It is about coming together with our fellow recipients and breaking bread, meeting one another, seeing our children play together, having conversations that need to be had, laughing together, crying together, and sharing stories of hope, healing and perseverance. You see, our Foundation is prohibited from sharing your personal information with each other for your own privacy and security, but when we come together for events like run weekend, we have the chance to connect of our own accord, share with each other and build relationships that can help us long after run weekend ends.

One of the best gifts the Tunnel to Towers Foundation gave me was the support and community of my fellow recipients; the people who know best the loss I have endured, the pain I have carried, and the strength it has taken for all of us to go on and rebuild our lives after our loss. My Tunnel to Towers family is forever giving me hope for all of us that there is so much beauty and life ahead of us; so much magic and joy yet to be had. Run weekend is a little piece of that magic that comes to life in each other, in the events, in all of you as well as in your laughs, your smiles, and through your tears. God bless all of us and our children and families. God bless the Siller Family that started this all and who brought us together, shining a light through the darkness. If you have not experienced "Run Weekend," I highly recommend you join us next year! We would be thrilled, honored and privileged to have you with us!

Nancy Gass
Surviving Spouse of US Army SSG Jerry Gass
Gold Star Family Home Program Recipient



Thanks and Giving

After 20 months of fighting a global pandemic, small moments of normalcy have begun to appear, settling the unease many of us have felt during this time of uncertainty. Though the negative emotions of this time have reared their ugly heads, all we have gone through as one world has given appreciation a little spotlight on our otherwise cloudy days. The words thanks and giving hold different weight, different meaning, for each of us. Whether we show thanks by offering a hug, words of gratitude, a silent note in our journal, or a prayer to whomever we believe in; whether we give our love, time, money, or affection, every bit of thanks and giving we can muster this year is valid and will be valued. Be it a very little or a whole lot, what you are thankful for and giving of matters. Someone I have great admiration for, Dan Levy, once said "It is important that we realize that words have meanings far beyond the dictionary definition." No matter how you interpret or live the words thanks and giving this year, make them meaningful to you.

Warmest Regards,
Michelle Cuce
In The Line of Duty Administrator



Moments With Mecca

Reflecting on life at this time of the month, as we wind down towards the end of the year, pause to give Thanks to the mighty work of God for allowing you to be all that you need to be throughout life's obstacles, and for those that create an impact within your life.

Give thanks to yourself for being who you are as a person, for what you have learned through life's experiences, and for the love that you share.

Giving yourself thanks is giving space for self-care by taking time out for you whether it is taking a candle-lit bath, meditating, working out, running, or spending time with family. There are multiple ways to give thanks, but never forget the power in giving yourself thanks.

Catch this— it's awkward to give thanks to yourself because everyone is used to giving thanks to others; this is a great thing to do because it helps you cultivate relationships and other powerful aspects in life.

Never forget about you. This will assist with filling your spirit with what you need mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically to feed you with gratitude and compassion to continue moving through your life's Purpose.



Giving is powerful. You give from the heart not expecting anything from it. When giving, know that you are being a blessing to others. What you do for yourself is temporary, but what you do for others lasts until eternity.

Move with Greatness!

Mecca Nelson
Surviving Spouse of US Army SGT Mario Nelson
Gold Star Family Home Program Recipient

Help Name This Newsletter!

We are asking that all of our home recipients help us name our newsletter.
Please email your suggestions to newsletter@t2t.org

Pay it Forward: Transforming Pain into Purpose



“Giving thanks” may be a tall order for some of us this year. When our worlds have been turned upside down and absolutely crushed by the loss of our loved one, husband/wife, father/mother, brother/sister, uncle/aunt, colleague, or trusted friend— how in the world can we possibly see past that immeasurable loss to “give thanks” for anything? How can we “give” to anyone else when it feels like everything we had has been taken? How can we show “thanks” when we struggle to function some days?

While it may be a challenge that some of you are not up for, you must not lose perspective. I can say this with a great deal of empathy, validity, and experience because I understand what you are feeling. I get it. My husband of almost 20 years was shot and killed while on duty as a Champaign Police Officer on May 19th, 2021. Chris, an excellent police officer with 20 years of experience, was responding to a call for help. He and another officer were coming to the aid of a woman and her children. They engaged the perpetrator and within 7.5 seconds he began firing his unlawfully-possessed gun at my husband and his partner. Thankfully, Chris’s partner survived despite being struck by bullets three times. Chris was also shot three times including a fatal shot to his head.

My husband was 44 years old and in the prime of his life. We have 4 beautiful daughters- Hannah (21), Avery (18), and twins Addison & Aubree (14). We, like many of you, have every right to be upset, angry, bitter, and seeking some sort of earthly justice. Rather than allow those feelings to set up shop in our hearts, we *intentionally* decided to create purpose out of our pain.

We recognized very early on that this experience was much bigger than the five of us. It meant so much more to so many other people. We felt an instant and urgent sense of responsibility to advocate for Chris’s brothers and sisters in uniform. On the day of his funeral, my daughters and I made a commitment to all police officers. We committed to defend their name, their purpose, their honor, and their badge. We meant every word. As a result, we (along with a few other phenomenal people) created a God-serving foundation in Chris’s honor called **Peacemaker Project 703**. The word “Peacemaker” comes from Chris’s favorite bible verse- Matthew 5:9 and #703 was Chris’s badge number.

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Our vision is:

To promote our nation’s positive regard and respect for law enforcement.

Our mission is:

To proactively support law enforcement officers and their families through community outreach, reform, and education.

Our core values are those that Chris valued:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Family
- Service

We have identified something therapeutic about creating a legacy for our husband and father. It satisfies our sense of purpose and fills a void when nothing else can. His life mattered and we are making sure that he is not forgotten. We were not prepared for this life experience. We did not see it coming. We did not ask for it. We did not choose it. The only choice we have now is how we decide to respond to it. We choose to turn our pain into purpose. This year, we give thanks for our hero and for all of yours. We will continue to provide “thanks” by “giving” to our fellow law enforcement officers and their families through our purpose – Peacemaker Project 703.

To learn more, please visit www.peacemakerproject703.com or visit us on Facebook at Peacemaker Project 703.

Amber Oberheim
Surviving Spouse of Patrol Officer Christopher Neil Oberheim
First Responder Family Home Program Recipient

