

In the fall of 2009, our volunteers were offered the opportunity to participate in an on-line informational survey. This survey gathered information about our volunteers, as well as their volunteer experience with Mommy's Light. The survey was sent to our active and trained volunteers. Eighty-four (84) volunteers completed the survey.

**Thank you** to the volunteers who participated in this survey.

We are pleased to share the results of this survey with you now.

## **Results of the Mommy's Light 2009 On-Line Volunteer Survey**

### **Where do you live?**

We are very fortunate to have dedicated volunteers spread throughout the greater Delaware Valley area. The largest percentage of respondents to this survey lived in Chester county, followed by Delaware county, Bucks, Philadelphia, Gloucester, New Castle, Berks, Burlington and Camden counties.

### **Employment Status:**

Fifty-three percent (53%) of the respondents reported that they are employed full-time. Other volunteers responded that they are employed part-time, are self-employed or do not work outside of their home.

### **How did you become involved with Mommy's Light?**

Many respondents indicated that they became involved with Mommy's Light as a result of the experience of the death of a loved one, most frequently their own mother. Others expressed a desire to be of service, to help children or became involved because of a connection to Mommy's Light's mission or founder (Mary Murphy). Many had heard about Mommy's Light from a friend who had already volunteered, through their employer or club, or as a result of a story about Mommy's Light in the press. Several volunteers found Mommy's Light via on-line volunteer opportunity search engines such as Volunteer Match or VolunteerWay.org.

### **How did you choose the role of a Request Fulfillment Volunteer?**

The most frequent response to this question was that this role was chosen because they wanted to have a direct experience with the children in our program (47%) followed by those who expressed their desire to make a difference for a grieving child. Others felt that this would be the most rewarding role for them and the most active way to stay involved with Mommy's Light. Many responded that they made this decision after attending the New Volunteer Training class or in response to the need for Request Fulfillment volunteers. Some volunteers responded that they chose this role to help us expand our services into areas where they live.

### **What has the experience of volunteering been like for you?**

The overwhelming response to this question was very positive. Respondents used adjectives such as rewarding, wonderful, fulfilling, amazing, privilege, humbling, healing and gratifying to describe their experience. One volunteer responded that while it was difficult to see the family's pain, it was good to see that we can help. There were a few volunteers who responded that they had experienced personal challenges in their volunteer experience.

### **What challenges make serving a family more difficult?**

The most frequent response to this question referred to challenges in communication (45%). Some expressed difficulties with establishing/maintaining contact with the families in the program and communicating the role of Mommy's Light to the families. Others responded that scheduling the visits (request family availability as well as the volunteer's personal availability) can be difficult. Staying creative was another difficulty reported by some respondents. Other responses included difficulties when the family chooses to end their participation in the program, communicating with kids who are in foster care or the emotional issues that our volunteers may experience when serving the kids in our program.

### **How would an anonymous observer describe your interactions with the kids?**

Most responded that they would want to be described as caring and friendly with a good sense of humor. Being comfortable with the family, a good listener and having a genuine interest in the children were also reported.

### **What personal experiences/skills are your greatest assets in your interactions with the kids?**

Most respondents reported more than one "asset". Fifty-eight percent (58%) reported that they believed that their personal experience of grieving the death of a loved one helped them relate to the request family's situation. Many of our volunteers reported professional or educational skills in the social work and counseling fields. Good listening and communication skills, an empathetic and caring personality, and a love of volunteerism were also reported. Several volunteers cited "being a mom" as their greatest asset.

### **What characteristics would be considered as a barrier to serving a bereaved family?**

Our volunteers responded that being too emotional or not being able to control your emotions would make serving a family difficult. A lack of empathy or passing judgment on the choices or behaviors of the family must be avoided. Poor communication skills would be a barrier to service, as would extreme shyness or nervousness with the family.

**Are there any traditions you celebrated with your family as a child that you would like to share?**

Some traditions are unique to one family, while others are shared by many. Here are some of the traditions celebrated by our volunteers:

Holiday traditions – wrapping gifts, trimming the tree, baking special treats, looking at the light displays, visits with friends and family, using mom’s china for a special meal.

Summer traditions – days spent at the beach, waterskiing, camping, playing games outside, day trips to fun places, family picnics.

Cooking/Baking – holiday cookies, special family dinners, Santa pancakes on Christmas morning, making mom’s special stuffing at Thanksgiving, choosing your favorite meal on your birthday.

Some volunteers responded that their family stopped celebrating traditions after the death of their mother. Various reasons were cited for why this happened, but most who reported that they did not celebrate traditions as a child also noted that they enjoy celebrating traditions with their children now.

**What else do you think we should know about you or your volunteer experience at Mommy’s Light?**

The most frequent response to this question was that the volunteers wanted to express their support for the mission and good works of Mommy’s Light. Many respondents also noted that they had experienced very positive interactions with the staff and fellow volunteers, which was one of the reasons they continue to volunteer their time with Mommy’s Light.

**In response to your comments...**

**You want more information about what is going on at Mommy’s Light:**

***Action Plan:*** Here are some ways to stay in touch with Mommy’s Light –

Facebook: Become a “friend” of Mommy’s Light on Facebook and keep up to date on all the latest news!

Email – Mommy’s Light is “going green” – our Annual Report is a beautiful example of this initiative. To make sure that you receive all our emails with Mommy’s Light news and volunteer information, please make sure that we have your current email address AND that your computer is set to allow access our emails.

Highlights – Highlights, our volunteer newsletter, is posted quarterly on our website. Stay tuned for a new edition soon!

**You want more opportunities to volunteer your time:**

***Action Plan:***

Keep watching your emails for notices of new volunteer opportunities and try something new!

- We always need volunteers to help with tasks in our office. Whether you can volunteer for an hour, a day, or one day a week—we have tasks to suit your availability.
- Organize your own fundraising event to benefit Mommy's Light. With the help of our Development Director, Joan Jackwood, you might be surprised by how easy and fun it can be! Contact Joan for more information at [joan@mommyslight.org](mailto:joan@mommyslight.org), or #610-458-1690.
- Help spread the word about Mommy's Light by bringing our information to your school, religious organization, social clubs and employers.
- We often need a "stand-in" request fulfillment volunteer to prepare or deliver that tradition request. Helping as a "stand-in" is a great way to meet another family and share your creativity for another tradition request package.

**You want more interaction with the staff of Mommy's Light and your fellow volunteers:**

***Action Plan:***

Look for more information in 2010 about volunteer get-togethers in your area! These get-togethers will offer you the chance to share ideas, ask questions and find out about new ways to enhance your volunteer experience. We are very excited to "hit the road" in 2010!

**Thank you to all the volunteers who participated in this survey. Your feedback is welcome at all times, so please contact a Mommy's Light staff member whenever you have a question or idea that you would like to share!**

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