

Laura Munts helps children maintain connections to their deceased mothers

By Jennifer Marie Savage

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When Laura Munts asked one of the directors at the non-profit organization Mommy's Light Lives On to review a grant opportunity from the "You Make A Difference" contest being sponsored by People Magazine, Maybelline New York and Columbia Records, she never dreamed she'd be singled out as someone who makes a difference. But, the Eagle, Pennsylvania resident and mother of two has been.

According to a press release from People Magazine, Munts was one of four winners of its joint campaign honoring women who make a difference. As such, Mommy's Light Lives On, a non-profit organization Munts serves as the executive director of, will receive a \$10,000 grant and on Dec. 1 there will be a concert and ball in Philadelphia honoring Munts.

"I'm very much excited," said Munts, when contacted by the *Downingtown Ledger*, "not just for myself, but for the whole organization."

Mommy's Light Lives On was founded in 1997 by Mary Murphy of Newtown Square in Delaware County, Pa. Munts, a corporate attorney, helped Murphy legally form the organization.

"I bought a \$35 book, How to Start a Non-Profit, and we sat at my dining room table and did it," said Munts.

Three months after forming Mommy's Light Lives On, Murphy died.

The organization currently serves families in Pennsylvania, northern Delaware and three counties in New Jersey.

"We serve maternally bereaved children and teens in continuing simple and direct pleasures they shared with their mothers," said Munts.

Some of the first children the organization helped was Max and Maddie, whose mother contacted the organization in 2000. She was in the final stages of breast cancer.

"We asked the children what tradition they had with their mother they would like to continue after she died and Max said he wanted to keep gardening," said Munts.

So each spring Mommy's Light Lives On provides the family with planting and gardening equipment, but Munts said the tradition goes far beyond gardening.

"It's maintaining the emotional connection with the mother, so that three months later, a year later... they still remember the mother," she said.

The organization also provides educational material for adults and children. Munts said in Chester County alone there are 20,000 people eligible for their services, which is free.

Recently, Munts said, they received a letter from a 10-year old girl in California whose grandmother had told her about Mommy's Light Lives On web site. The girl said it really helped her, Munts said, adding, "We've received tremendous feedback from many states. They want to know when we'll be starting a chapter there."

Mommy's Light Lives On has a staff of one full-timer, one part-timer, three contractors and "several active volunteers who have donated thousands of hours of their time," said Munts.

Munts is married to Andrew and they have two children, Maggie, 11, and Matthew, 9, who Munts said is two of her best volunteers. "They help with a lot of things," she said. (The family also includes pet dog Lily.)

Munts said the \$10,000 grant "certainly helps with our fundraising" and will go towards educational material aimed at educating adults about the organization's mission. "You cannot reach the children unless you reach the adults," she said.

People Magazine, Maybelline New York and Columbia Records launched the campaign in September 2005. According to a press release from People Magazine, the campaign honors four women in local communities who, like Australian singer Delta Goodrem, have overcome their own personal struggles, made sacrifices, and/or have tried to make a difference – both in their own lives and in their communities. (Goodrem is a cancer survivor.)

Munts said People Magazine sent a photographer who took her picture. "They said have your hair and make-up people do me up and I said I didn't have 'hair and make-up people'," Munts laughed.

She contacted Salon di Domani, located in Eagle. She said the people there made the experience fun.

"Everyone was so excited this was happening," she said.

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