



# Light Post



Bringing **joy and comfort** to children and teens by helping them keep alive **traditions** and simple pleasures they *shared with their mothers.*

Dear Friends,

This year, Mommy's Light Lives On Fund™ celebrated its seventh anniversary and served its 70<sup>th</sup> child. Our new children and teens have requested a wide variety of traditions, from cheering at their mother's favorite NASCAR race to eating popcorn during family game night. And while we serve these new children, we continue to serve children from prior years – once a year, each year until they turn 18.

Some of the children we have been serving for years are surrounded by new loved ones who support them through their continuous adaptation to their mothers' deaths. Max and Madi are in their fifth year of planting in the garden their mother started. Now, they share their gardening delight with their stepmother, stepsister and stepbrother.

Others are not so fortunate. Last year we served a family of nine siblings while their mom was in the last stages of cancer. Mommy's Light arranged for the children to go to their favorite restaurant. Their mom loved shrimp and they loved eating it with her! Several of the children also shared with us that they enjoyed going to the movies as a family. Shortly after their mom's death, the children were split up into two foster homes. Then, just two months later, they were moved into four foster homes and an orphanage. The youngest four children were then moved to yet another foster home.

Recently, with the help of social workers, Mommy's Light diligently tracked down all nine children and arranged for them to participate in their movie tradition. One of the older siblings expressed deep gratitude that Mommy's Light was able to locate all her siblings so they could remember their mother together.

Some maternally bereaved children are surrounded by love and stability in familiar environments. Others experience significant changes and new surroundings. Either way, there is a blessing that comes with each opportunity to remember their mothers and to celebrate the relationship once more. These celebrations transcend their current situations – allowing them to honor the past, celebrate the present and build the future.

During the last seven years, your generosity has enabled Mommy's Light to grow the groundbreaking work with maternally bereaved children envisioned by our founder, Mary Murphy. Please continue to give generously so that we may reach out to and serve more children and teens.

With Gratitude,

Laura Munts  
Executive Director



*Researchers have described that children and teens whose mothers die are three times more likely than the general population to gravitate to either end of the social spectrum. That means they are three times more likely either to (a) be in juvenile delinquent institutions or jails or (b) become great contributors to society. Through bereavement education and direct services, Mommy's Light hopes to help tip the scales toward a positive outcome for the more than 20,000 eligible children and teens in the Delaware Valley region.*

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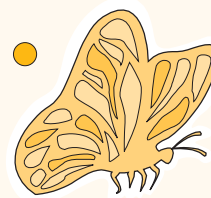
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# The Yellow Butterfly



Shane and Chelsea had always visited the beach with their mom and asked Mommy's Light to help them continue this treasured family tradition. So, on a warm Saturday morning this past August, Kris and I were welcomed into their home with our arms full of beach games, toys, swim goggles and a letter. With great care, Chelsea read the letter describing the treats that Mommy's Light had assembled to recreate the details of this tradition, including oodles of VIP tickets for rides and games at the Wonderland Pier, Mack and Manco Pizza certificates, and best of all, lodging at a hotel with 'extra bouncy' beds. Shane and Chelsea's mom always allowed them to bounce on the beds in their hotel room.

The children talked excitedly about going back to the shore and they thanked us several times for making sure that they would get to do the same things they always did with mom. We had a wonderful visit and when it was time to leave, Kris and I stood on the front step with their dad to talk for a minute. Shane and Chelsea ran outside

and began looking for butterflies. They explained that they would quite often see a yellow butterfly in their yard and on outings. The family had decided that the yellow butterfly was their mom coming to visit. A minute later, Shane shouted for us to turn around. On the bush immediately behind us was a large yellow butterfly! Shane smiled and told us that his mom had come to say hi, but his dad said that he thought that perhaps she had come to say thank you to Kris and me for helping her children continue the family's beach tradition.

This was a profound "magic moment" for us. We were grateful to have the privilege of serving this beautiful family.

***Tracey Oberholtzer, Mommy's Light Volunteer Director***

***Kris Frydlewicz, Mommy's Light Volunteer***

*For more information regarding Mommy's Light's services, please visit [www.mommyslight.org](http://www.mommyslight.org).*

Dear Mommy's Light:

I feel it necessary to write and compliment your organization and your volunteers, more specifically Dale Bennett. The first day I met Dale and was introduced to Mommy's Light was the day my wife, Sharon, died. Dale's soft and caring tones were very comforting to us that day. As Dale and I began to blueprint the next 16 years of Bekah's Mommy's Light experience, it filled me with peace, joy and emotion. Although Sharon was too ill to respond by sound or gesture, I know she could hear and understand what it was we were describing. I remember what a wonderful feeling it was for me to know that Sharon was being given this gift by an organization who just a few days earlier I had never even heard of, and more importantly that she was there to hear all about it. Every fight Sharon fought against this evil disease and every breath Sharon took was not for herself, her father, sister, brother, or even me. It was for Rebekah. That's why Sharon hated to leave. It had nothing to do with fearing the unknown. But as much as she wanted to stay, she accepted her fate and made it a point to never show anger to anyone. As a matter of fact, in her own remarkable way she always tried to comfort those who broke down around her, of which I was no exception.



*Mark and Rebekah*

Such heroes deserve to be honored. Mommy's Light is helping us to do just that. All of you should feel very proud of yourselves. I know I'm proud to be a part of this experience. I certainly look forward to our continued years of working together with Mommy's Light and Dale Bennett. Bekah and I think she's the best.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

Mark Renzi

**Hope Edelman**  
**15219 Sunset Blvd., Suite 211**  
**Pacific Palisades, CA 90272**

December 1, 2004

Dear Supporters of Mommy's Light:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter as a new member of the Mommy's Light Advisory Board. I was thrilled to first hear about your organization a few months ago, and to learn of the work you do to support children and adolescents who are either facing or have faced the severe illness or death of a mother.

As you all know, the death of a mother is the most primal loss a child can experience. It seriously impacts who he or she is, and forever impacts who he or she will become. In most families the mother, as primary caretaker for the children, is the dominant source of their emotional nurturing and sustenance. While children may one day find substitutes to fill the roles she once occupied, they will never find a full replacement. Children whose mothers die will miss them forever.

Yet when I first began interviewing women for my book *Motherless Daughters*, I was struck by how many women had kept silent for decades about this most significant loss, as if waiting for permission to tell their stories. Their families had done minimal, if any, grief work, and in many cases had never spoken about the mother after she died. Years later, these daughters were paying the price of that silence with difficult relationships, low self-esteem, and fears of future loss.

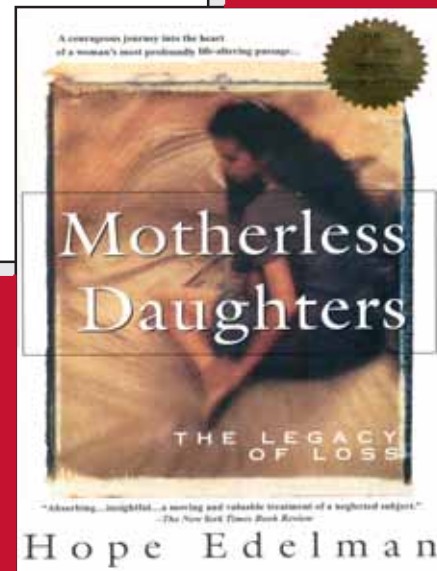
As I began to lecture around the country, I repeatedly stressed the need for daughters and sons to receive support *at the time of death*, so they didn't wind up ten and twenty years later saying, "My life has been difficult all these years because no one helped me when I was nine." The many family bereavement centers that have opened in the past 20 years have gone a long way toward helping children cope. Still, I've since recognized that children need more than short-term support. They need ongoing, empathetic individuals to help them honor the continuing bonds they share with their mothers as they move through adolescence and into adulthood. That's why I leapt at the chance to become part of Mommy's Light. It's an organization that recognizes the importance of continuing bonds with a deceased mother, and understands that children must not "let go" of a mother no longer physically present in order to grow. What they must do, what they need to do, instead is carry her along.

Blessings to you all at Mommy's Light for the essential work you do.

Sincerely,



Hope Edelman



Hope Edelman is the author of three nonfiction books: the international bestseller *Motherless Daughters* (1994), which was translated into seven languages; *Letters from Motherless Daughters* (1995), an edited collection of letters from readers; and *Mother of My Mother* (1999). Hope is currently working on her fourth book, *Motherless Mothers*, to be published by HarperCollins in fall 2005. Her writings have appeared in numerous publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Washington Post*, the *Dallas Morning News*, *Parenting*, and *Seventeen*. She is the recipient of a New York Times Notable Book of the Year designation and a Pushcart Prize for creative nonfiction.

*“Absorbing...insightful...a moving and valuable treatment of a neglected subject.”*

— *The New York Times Book Review*

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# Upcoming Events

**March 5 and 6, 2005** –The American Girl Fashion Shows benefit at Lily Langtry's in Valley Forge, PA. For ticket information, please contact The Saturday Club at (610)688-9746 or [AmericanGirl@SaturdayClub.org](mailto:AmericanGirl@SaturdayClub.org).

**April 30, 2005** - Mommy's Light 5K Race and 1 Mile Fun Walk in Eagleview, PA. For race information, please contact Hillary Delone, Race Chairperson, at [hjdelone@comcast.net](mailto:hjdelone@comcast.net).

**November 5, 2005** – Second Annual Night of Stars Benefit at Aronimink Golf Club. To donate auction items or for ticket information, please contact Alison Niles at (610)725-9790 or [Alison@mommyslight.org](mailto:Alison@mommyslight.org).

For volunteer opportunities at these events, please contact Tracey Oberholtzer at (610)725-9790 or [Tracey@mommyslight.org](mailto:Tracey@mommyslight.org).

For sponsorship opportunities at these events, please contact Laura Munts at (610)725-9790 or [Laura@mommyslight.org](mailto:Laura@mommyslight.org).

# Volunteer Appreciation



(l-r) Ellen Langas Campbell, Mary Talucci and Anna Hillman, a 2004 Volunteer of the Year

Laura Munts (r) presents a Volunteer of the Year Award to Dale Bennett

Mommy's Light hosted its annual Appreciation Party on June 12, 2004, at the lovely home of Anna Hillman in Penn Valley, PA. Volunteer of the Year 'Angel Awards' were given to Dale Bennett and Anna Hillman for their outstanding service. Dale was a member of the first Mommy's Light volunteer training class in January 2000 and her dedication is constantly expressed in her willingness to serve wherever needed at a moment's notice. Anna Hillman has been Treasurer and a Director of Mommy's Light since 2000. Her light shines brightly throughout all aspects of our organization.

## Events At A Glance

**Mommy's Light thanks all of those who have orchestrated these events. In addition to being wonderful fundraising opportunities, each event has helped us educate the public about our free services and recruit volunteers throughout the Delaware Valley region.**

**National Ovarian Cancer Walk for the Whisper** - In September 2003 and September 2004, Mommy's Light staffed an information booth and distributed hundreds of information packets at the Philadelphia chapter's Walk for the Whisper.

**St. Norbert's Athlete's Fun Run/Walk** - Seventy-five athletes and family members of the St. Norbert's field hockey and soccer teams participated in a 3K fun run/walk fundraiser at the Upper Main Line YMCA on October 24, 2003, raising \$2,400 for Mommy's Light.

**Whole Foods 5% Days** - In January 2004, Mommy's Light was the beneficiary of 5% Day at all seven area Whole Foods Markets. Sally's Music Circle provided entertainment for children in two stores. Cheerleaders from the Big Five colleges and Drexel cheered the shoppers. 5% of the day's profits from the stores, totaling \$15,000, was donated to Mommy's Light. The Callowhill store sponsored another 5% day in March 2004, raising more than \$3,500 for Mommy's Light.

**Munchies For Mommy's Light** - 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Grandview Elementary School selected Mommy's Light as the beneficiary of their philanthropic efforts. Throughout the school year, the students purchased snacks provided by their terrific teachers. The proceeds, which totaled more than \$1,200, were presented to Mommy's Light by this group of shining stars.

**American Girl Fashion Shows** - More than 1,500 people attended the sold-out American Girl Fashion Shows and Teas hosted by The Saturday Club in March 2004. The Shows, emceed by local celebrities, featured girls ages 3 to 12 modeling historic and contemporary fashions. Show sponsors included Comcast, National Penn Bank, Wachovia, Chicos, PNCBank and The Pennsylvania Trust Company. The Saturday Club donated \$32,000 from the event to Mommy's Light.

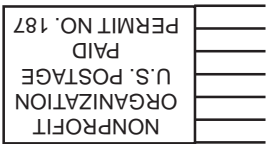
**Read-A-Thon at The Chester County Book and Music Company** - The Chester County Book and Music Company hosted a Read-A-Thon on Sunday, April 17, 2004 to benefit Mommy's Light. The event was wonderfully organized and executed by 12 year-old Ian Weiss for his Bar Mitzvah project, raising more than \$1,400. This was a truly uplifting event, proving how much kids can help other kids.

**Susan G. Komen Philadelphia Race for the Cure** - More than 25 Mommy's Light volunteers, family members and friends participated in the 2004 Mother's Day race. Mommy's Light's team joined more than 36,000 other participants in raising more than 2 million dollars for the fight against breast cancer. Mommy's Light also staffed an information booth at the event, distributing hundreds of brochures and annual reports.

Bringing **joy** and **comfort** to children and teens by helping them keep alive **traditions** and simple pleasures they shared with their **mothers**.



www.mommyslight.org  
(610) 725-9790  
Lionville, PA 19353  
P.O. Box 494  
Mommy's Light Lives On Fund™



# Night Of Stars!

On Saturday, November 6, 2004, Mommy's Light celebrated its 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary by hosting the first annual "Night of Stars" benefit. NBC's Steve Levy and Linda Swain, and America's home shopping diva, Kathy Levine, co-hosted the event, which raised more than \$36,000 for Mommy's Light. American Express Financial Advisors and RAIT Investment Trust were our sponsors for the evening. Guests bid on 65 tempting prizes, including a Comcast luxury box at the Wachovia Center for a 76ers game, a beautiful diamond necklace from Bernie Robbins Jewelers, and a week-long stay at a fabulous castle in Brittany, France.



(l-r) Andrew Munts, Laura Munts, Hosts Steve Levy, Linda Swain and Kathy Levine, Ian Swain



Night of Stars Castle Winners  
(l-r) Bob and Alison Niles, Charlie and Jackie Kessler