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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COMMUNITY INVITED TO MARK CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY  
IN EVENTS DEVELOPED BY EXCELA HEALTH, HARTMAN-GRAZIANO**

**LATROBE, PA, September 23, 2022** ... Excela Health Home Care & Hospice and Hartman-Graziano Funeral Home Inc. have partnered to promote community support for children coping with grief and loss through special activities tied to the national observance of Children's Grief Awareness Day held each year on the third Thursday in November.

The two organizations will co-host a free art activity for children, 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 17 at the Latrobe Art Center, 819 Ligonier Street, Latrobe. Participants will be creating an ornament that will honor their loved one as well as represent the various feelings they have experienced following the loss. There also will be information available for adults on how to support grieving children and on the Neighborhood Kids Program, a family-based support group for children, offered by Excela Health.

Seating is limited for this event and reservations are required. An adult must accompany the child that evening and register the child for the art activity by calling the Hartman-Graziano Funeral Home Inc., 724-537-5575, by November 11.

The purpose of Children's Grief Awareness Day is to call attention to the prevalence of children's grief and of the needs of those children who have had someone close to them die. This added attention is intended to promote a greater level of understanding as well as offer suggestions for how individuals can support someone who has suffered such a loss. "Adults often worry about how to talk to children about grief and loss; we hope to provide not only information, but also assurance, encouragement and support to families as they journey through their grief," said Maureen Ceidro, bereavement counselor for Excela Home Care & Hospice.

"We wanted to recognize this day within our community, as well as offer something for those children who need our support. Throughout the entire day individuals that drive past Fred Rogers Park in Latrobe will see signage bringing awareness to the day, as well as several luminaries that will be decorated with blue butterflies. Blue is the color of Children's Grief Awareness Day and the butterfly is the symbol of hope," explained Maria Graziano-Bickerstaff, Funeral Director at Hartman-Graziano Funeral Home Inc.

The pair also will be creating a "Wall of Hope" Butterfly Garden that will be on display at the Latrobe Art Center throughout the entire day. "During the month of November we will be having community members write a message of support or hope on blue paper butterflies that will then be displayed within the garden for children to see as they arrive that evening to create their piece of art. Our vision is that these butterflies will serve as a beacon of hope to all the children within our community who are grieving the loss of a loved one," added Graziano-Bickerstaff.

The paper butterflies will be distributed throughout the community as well as available at the Hartman-Graziano Funeral Home, 1500 Ligonier Street, Latrobe. Interested individuals may call or stop by the funeral home to add a personalized message to the "Wall of Hope" Butterfly Garden that will be displayed inside the entrance of the funeral home the entire month of November. Community members are further invited to wear something blue on Children's Grief Awareness Day in support of grieving children.