

“There is nothing so powerful as truth” DANIEL WEBSTER

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## FRIENDS OF AINE

# A time to reflect at ‘gathering in remembrance’

By Jonathan Phelps  
New Hampshire Union Leader

MANCHESTER — Hundreds of butterflies symbolizing love, life, renewal, hope and beauty were released in the Delta Dental Stadium infield by more than two dozen adults and children grieving loved ones lost too soon.

The Gathering in Remembrance event on Sunday had a more somber tone than the typical cheers that fill the home of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats.

But the scoreboard featured messages of hope throughout the event.

“It’s OK to laugh.”

“It’s OK not to be OK.”

“You are not alone!!!”

Friends of Aine, a Manchester-based grief support group for children, hosted a mass-grieving event, which they called a “Gathering in Remembrance.” The event was in part designed to grieve

Christine Phillips, executive director for Friends of Aine and mother of Aine



Christine Phillips, executive director for Friends of Aine and mother of Aine, gives hugs after the butterfly release during the Gathering in Remembrance held at Delta Dental Stadium in Manchester on Sunday.

THOMAS ROY/UNION LEADER

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Source: [Christine Phillips, executive director for Friends of Aine and mother of Aine | | unionleader.com](https://www.unionleader.com)

## Gathering

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Kailani Zimmermann, 11, of Nashua and her sister, Kailia, 4, walk the bases before the butterfly release during the Gathering in Remembrance held at Delta Dental Stadium in Manchester on Sunday.

those who lost their lives to COVID-19.

About 100 people registered to attend the event, but it was open to anyone who wanted to come.

“We can learn to integrate our grief into our lives and make it part of who we are as a whole person,” Christine Phillips, the organization’s director, told those gathered.

“We don’t compare, we do not stigmatize,” she said. “We identify with one another and we listen.”

Friends of Aine was founded three years after the death of Phillips’ daughter in 2010.

Aine Phillips, 8, died suddenly from a rare disease, pulmonary veno oc-

clusive disease after being misdiagnosed. The organization was founded in part after Phillips and her husband, David, recognized how Aine’s sister Bella, who was 6 at the time, needed grief support.

The organization aims to provide bereavement support services to children and families. The work is done in peer groups.

“We come together today as a community so that you are not alone,” Phillips said.

Before the start of the gathering, Theresa Kane lifted her right hand in the air as the song “Rise Up” by Andra Day played over the loudspeakers.

She lost her son, William McAl-

lister, to an accidental drug overdose in June 2020. But the Marlborough, Mass., woman came out to support her granddaughter, Autumn, 11, one of the support group participants who lives in Manchester.

“There should be more programs out there,” Kane said of the work of the organization.

The family found out about the program from Autumn’s guidance counselor at McDonough Elementary School.

“I think it has helped her a lot,” said Autumn’s mother, Liz Woodward. “One of the big things they say is the pain will never go away but you learn to live with it.”