

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 20, 2021

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Friends of Aine's Backpack Program Benefits Manchester School District

Manchester, NH – Friends of Aine, a nonprofit organization providing bereavement support services to grieving children, teens and families, launched its free Backpack Program this week with distribution to the Manchester School District. Funded by the Bean Foundation, the backpacks include grief support tools students can use individually, or together with school community members, including teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, coaches, and support staff.

Friends of Aine held a virtual meeting with 38 Manchester School District staff members, including Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Gillis, principals, and vice principals to describe the contents of the backpacks and provide tutorials on how to use them. There are certain resources and activities designed to stay at school, along with take home items for grieving students.

“The ongoing and heartfelt partnership between the Manchester School District and Friends of Aine is truly remarkable. There is a collective passion for providing tools, support, and resources to support our school leadership teams and community,” said Jennifer Gillis, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent, Operations, Manchester School District. “We are so appreciative of the backpacks, as they are an information and resource goldmine. I simply can't say a big enough thank you for this partnership.”

The team kicked off backpack distribution with an outdoor visit to the Manchester School District, and then hand-delivered the resources to each of its elementary, middle, and high schools.



Friends of Aine Staff; L to R: Christine Phillips, Co-Founder; Linda Dinndorf, Training and Education Coordinator; Dylan Brothers, Development Assistant.



“In New Hampshire, one in 13 children – approximately 20,000 – will experience the death of a parent or sibling by their 18th birthday,” explained Christine Phillips, Friends of Aine Co-Founder. “We developed the Backpack Program to help school community members address the complexities of childhood bereavement, and to have children feel supported in their grief.”

For more information about Friends of Aine and its grief support services, visit [friendsofaine.com](https://www.friendsofaine.com).

ABOUT FRIENDS OF AINE

Friends of Aine is the only nonprofit organization in New Hampshire whose sole mission is to support grieving children, teens, and families. Through a network of trained volunteer facilitators, its peer-to-peer support programs assist children and teens with sharing their experiences, exploring topics related to grief, learning coping strategies, and not feeling alone in their grief. Thanks to the generosity of donors, there is no cost to families. Friends of Aine also provides training, education, and research to families and professionals. The organization is inspired by Aine Phillips, who died suddenly at the age of eight, and the lack of existing grief support at the time for her surviving sister, Bella. For more information about Friends of Aine, visit [friendsofaine.com](https://www.friendsofaine.com).



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