



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



A Movement of Hope



Letter from the Founder & CEO

Dear Friends,

In 2008, Soaring Spirits International was born from a simple idea: that widowed people deserve to be met with understanding, connection, and the opportunity to heal in community. What began as a deeply personal vision has grown through widowed people themselves—and through the families, friends, and professionals who chose to walk alongside them.

In 2025, that movement reached further than ever before. Tens of thousands of widowed people and their families engaged with Soaring Spirits through our programs, gatherings, online communities, and educational efforts. Every week, hundreds of people newly navigating widowhood found their way to us—often at a moment when life felt unfamiliar and unsteady—seeking connection, language for what they were experiencing, and reassurance that what they were feeling made sense.

Across our work, people found more than services—they found belonging. Families participated in programs that honored both sorrow and joy. Children were welcomed and supported in ways that affirmed their experiences. Hundreds of professionals—from insurance agents to healthcare providers to first responders—were introduced to grief-literate approaches that changed how they show up for widowed people in their care. Communities began to see widowhood not as something to turn away from, but as a shared human experience we can face together.

The impact of this work cannot be fully captured by numbers alone. It lives in moments of relief and recognition. In the quiet realization of “I’m not broken.” In the first laugh that doesn’t come with guilt. In the growing confidence of someone learning how to move forward while still honoring what came before. These moments—repeated again and again, across thousands of lives—are what define this movement.

The pages that follow will share the details and data behind what we accomplished together in 2025. But before you turn them, I want you to know this: hope is something we build—intentionally, collectively, and courageously. From that first idea in 2008 to the scope of our work today, this movement has always been about showing up for one another.

Thank you for believing in this vision. Thank you for standing with widowed people. And thank you for helping grow a community that continues to change what support can look like.

With gratitude,

Michele

Michele Neff Hernandez

CEO & Founder



LEADING WITH HOPE

OUR MISSION

Soaring Spirits connects widowed people with each other to build resilience in grief through an ongoing peer support community and research-based programming.

OUR VISION

We strive towards a future where widowhood has been reframed as a collective, collaborative process through which people grieve, connect, and thrive. Widowed people everywhere have access to life-affirming communities, and research-based programs designed to build resilience and facilitate renewal.

OUR FOUR PILLARS OF SERVICE



DIRECT SUPPORT FOR WIDOWED PEOPLE

We provide evidence-based programs — both in person and online — that help widowed people build resilience, process grief in healthy ways, and find lasting community.



PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

Because widowhood affects whole families, we offer programs for grieving children and resources for friends and relatives supporting a widowed loved one.



GRIEF LITERACY FOR PROFESSIONALS

We train professionals whose work intersects with widowhood, equipping them with grief literacy and widowhood-specific tools to serve clients with compassion and confidence.



PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVE

We recognize widowhood as a community health event, providing trauma-informed training to hospitals, schools, and first responders — strengthening outcomes for widowed people and the communities around them.

4,750,000

2025 Global Reach

Each number reflects a person met with understanding, care, and community.



DIRECT SUPPORT FOR WIDOWED PEOPLE

768,000

People Reached through Social Media

109,000

Blog Engagement

31,500

Widowed People Attended a Regional Social Group

19,500

Newly Widowed Print Resources Shared



GRIEF LITERACY TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS

300

Professionals Trained in Grief Literacy and Support for Widowed Clients



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND NETWORKS

150

Children who have experienced the death of a parent and their surviving parents supported through Camp Widow® Kids

100

Allies Provided Practical Tools for Supporting Widowed People



PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVE GRIEF LITERACY TRAINEES

160

Police Officers

25

High School Students

20

Chaplains

THE CAMP WIDOW® DOCUMENTARY

23,500

Online Viewings

3,500

Screening attendees

Hope Channels on Social Media



Camp Widow® Documentary

+ 3,927,379 social media views via a viral collaborative post across ITVS, Camp Widow®, and Soaring Spirits International platforms.



Camp Widow® Highlight

+ Camp Widow® Social Media accounts have reached 513,335 individuals – an increase of 810% in 2025.



Total Reach

+ Across all social media platforms, we have reached over 768,000 unique individuals 2025.

Storytelling as a Catalyst for Community Health

The Camp Widow® Documentary is transforming how people understand grief. By sharing widowed voices with honesty and heart, the film reframes widowhood as a community health issue that affects families, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Screenings across universities, hospitals, libraries, and community spaces have become gateways to grief literacy training and awareness, sparking empathy and equipping audiences to respond with compassion. Each viewing opens doors to new partners, showing that storytelling can heal—and that when grief is met with understanding, whole communities grow stronger and healthier together.

View the Camp Widow®
Documentary on PBS:



CAMP WIDOW®

Taking Hope on the Road



In 2025, Camp Widow® continued to grow, bringing healing and connection to cities across the United States. The Camp Widow® program also served widowed people in every Canadian province through the dedicated efforts of our Canadian satellite organization, Soaring Spirits Canada.

THIS YEAR WE WELCOMED:

805

adults to Camp Widow®

217

Camp Widow® scholarships provided, totaling \$43,400

75

children who lost a parent funded to attend Camp Widow® Kids for FREE

CAMP WIDOW® IMPACT

91%

felt validated and understood after attending Camp Widow®

89%

said they would recommend Camp Widow® to a widowed friend

74%

of adult attendees were new to Camp Widow®

40%

of Camp Widow® families reported low-income status

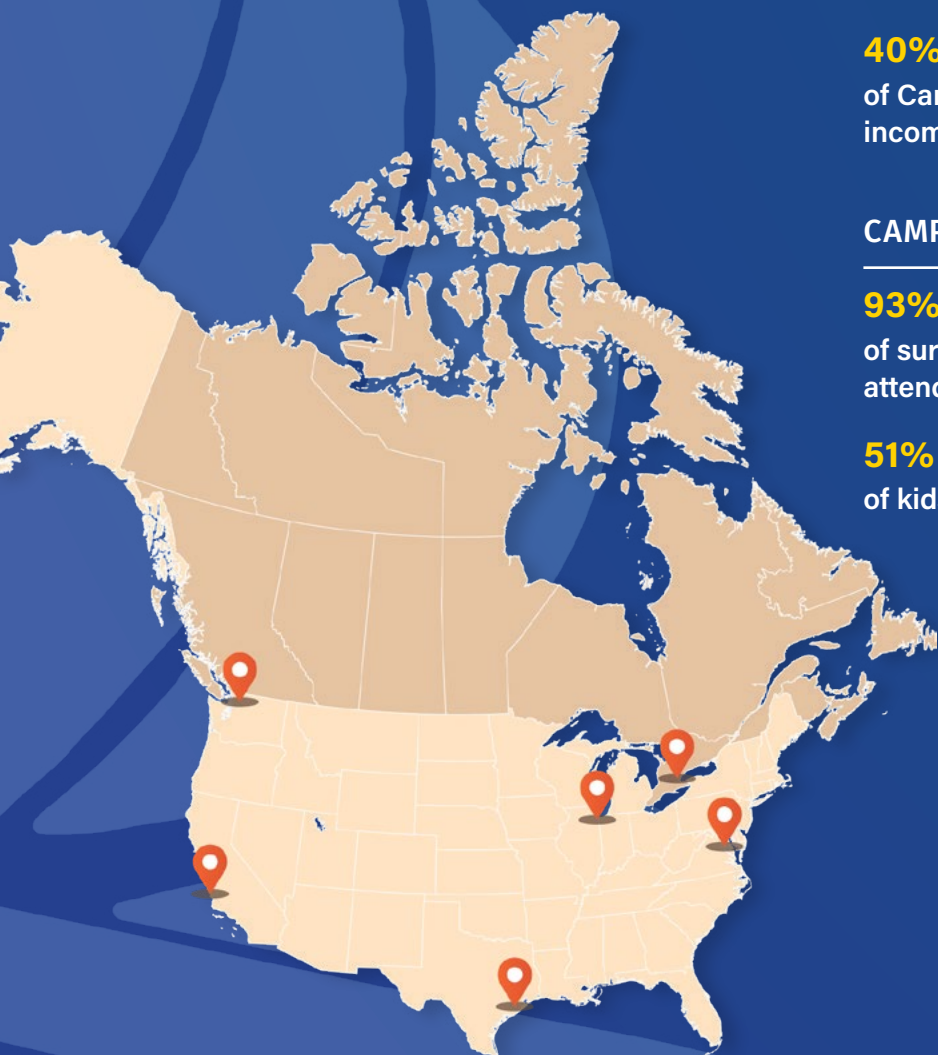
CAMP WIDOW® KIDS

93%

of survey respondents said they are likely to attend Camp Widow® Kids again

51%

of kids had never attended a grief camp before



2025 CAMP LOCATIONS:

- + Houston, TX
- + Seattle, WA
- + Los Angeles, CA
- + Chicago, IL
- + Washington DC
- + Toronto, Canada

VOICES OF HOPE

Camp Widow®



“ Every Tuesday, the Newly Widowed program reminds me that surviving my wife’s death is possible. Before Soaring Spirits, I never believed that could be true.

60-year-old, widowed six months



“ I had been reading about Camp Widow® for five years, never believing I’d be able to attend. When I learned Camp Widow® was coming to Houston, I cried—I could finally go. Camp Widow® came to me!

56-year-old, widowed five years



“ For one day, I felt totally normal.

13-year-old Camp Widow® Kids camper



“ I really appreciate that my children got to meet other people their age who are living through parental loss. I also appreciate that it allowed me to attend the adult portion of the conference with full trust and confidence that my kids are safe. My kids LOVED the therapy dogs.

Widowed Parent



“ I can’t count the number of customers who have come to my office to thank me for sending them a Soaring Spirits Newly Widowed Packet. My relationship with my widowed insurance clients has been transformed because of Soaring Spirits.

A. Lintz, California Insurance Agent



“ Every police officer needs this training. It not only teaches us to interact compassionately with grieving people, but also equips us with trauma management tools that are vital for staying healthy on the job.

Chicago Police Department graduate of Grief Literacy and Compassionate Death Notification Training



“ My regional group members have become my family. We celebrate together, cheer each other on, and walk through the ups and downs of grief, side by side. I can't imagine my life without these amazing strangers who became my second family.

Nancy, widowed three years, SSI regional group member for two and a half years



“ I've spent years looking for resources for my widowed clients, and nothing compares to the quality of Soaring Spirits' programs. I'll be a supporter for life.

A. Dziejcz, Financial Advisor, Montgomeryville, PA



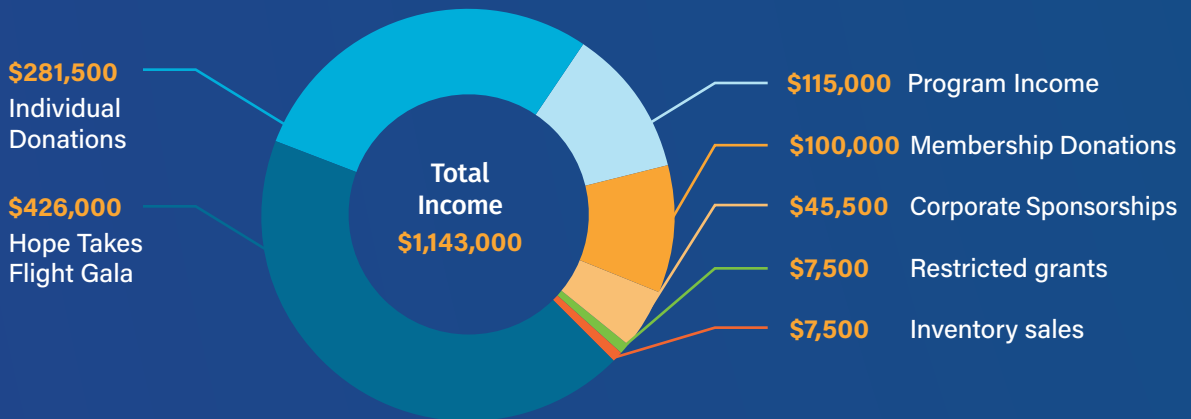
“ Volunteering with Camp Widow® Kids healed something in me I didn't even know needed healing.

Grayson, first time Camp Widow® Kids volunteer whose father died when he was five years old

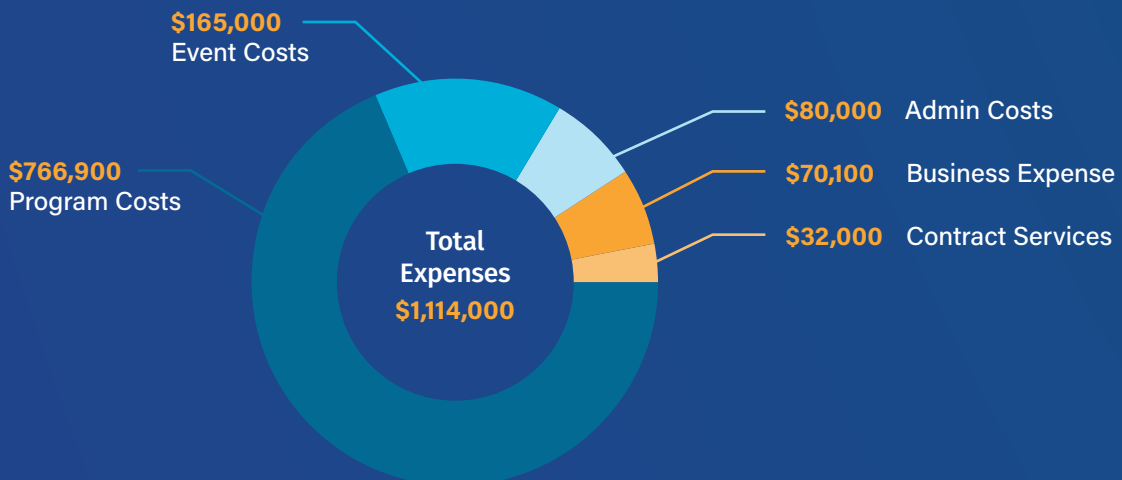
2025 Financials

INCOME	EXPENSES
\$1,143,000	\$1,114,000
\$95,250 Monthly Operating Cost 70% Programs 30% Administration	

Total Income in 2025



Total Expenses in 2025





SPONSORS WHO FUEL HOPE

Corporate Sponsors



Event Sponsors



LEGACY AND BEQUEST PLEDGES

- + Dr. Nancy Saltzman
- + Davis and Annie Clark
- + David Perkins
- + Steve Austin
- + Michele Neff Hernandez
- + Michael Dare
- + Kath McCormack

Named Funds:

- + The Frova Fund
- + The Phillip Hernandez Memorial Fund
- + The Daniel Dippel Memorial Fund

Bequest Gift:

- + The estate of Barbara Idzerda

MATCHING DONATION SPONSORS

- Microsoft
- CISCO
- Gap
- Wells Fargo
- A & E Television
- Aya Healthcare
- Workday
- QUEST Diagnostics
- State Farm
- JP Morgan Chase
- American Electric Power Company
- Alaska Airlines

SSI is proud to hold **Platinum Status on Guidestar**—ensuring transparency and trust for every donor.



HEROES OF HOPE

The individuals, families, and organizations listed below each contributed **\$1,000** or more in 2025 to support Soaring Spirits International's mission. Their placement within giving levels reflects their total **lifetime contributions**, recognizing the lasting impact of their generosity and commitment to building hope in community.

FOUNDER'S CIRCLE OF HOPE — \$250,000+

Michelle Dippel

LIGHTHOUSE OF HOPE — \$100,000+

Sharon Austel

Michael Inabinet

Jennifer Loudon

Cyrus Sigari

BEACON OF HOPE — \$50K+

Adventist Health
Simi Valley

Kadzielski Charitable
Fund & Barbara
Frova (Frova Fund)

Gregory Roman
Debi Rooney Jaso

**Dianne West
Garvey**

Janine Eggers

Kath McCormack

Shelly and Robert Slimp

WP Electric and
Communications

Randall Essex

PILLAR OF HOPE — \$25K+

Jennie Armstrong

Sandra Charlesworth

Doug Mann

The Smidt Family
Foundation

Victor Buono

The Daniel Dippel Fund

Terry & Chip Marvin

Lynn Campbell

Christine Ford

LEGACY OF HOPE — \$10K+

Arizona Hardwood
Floor Supply, Inc.

Darin & Kelly Gaines
John Gates

Marin Kakachev
Ashley M. Jones, Esq.

Michael Sweeney
Gina Virzi Kelly

Donna Blausler

Brett Goldberg

Knight Impact Partners

Danielle and Jake Wiener

The David Bohnett
Foundation

Kevin Haboian

Diana Mendes

Jessica Wyles

Nancy Boxwell

The Phillip Hernandez
Memorial Fund

Andrea Meyerowitz

Vivian Yochelson

Paula Dowell

Cheryl Hosea

Robert Moss

Yochelson & Associates

Patrick Dugan

Dana Jackson-Kruse

Michael Pollack

Dr. Nancy Saltzman

ARCH OF HOPE — \$5K+

Tara Berberich	Andrea Grover	Vera Lynn	Community Foundation
Jane Bergerson	Scott Haywood	Daniel Mejia	Maria Tinsley
Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee	Erika Herrera	Jacob Nelson	Matt Wells
Barbara Deggelman	Sarah Hobson	Darryl and Karen Nind	Dan White
Donna Eames	Rebekah Inocencio	Jeanine O'Donnell	Jane White
Gang, Tyre, Ramer, Brown & Passman, Inc	Argentina James	Thomas O'Grady	Paul Yarossi
Stephen Greene	Wendy Knudsen Farrell	Shelley Roth	
	Jonathan Kurohara	Silicon Valley	

FOUNDATION OF HOPE — \$2.5K+

Ted and Debra Bagley	Corey Dantzler	Gayleen Lobeto	Deidre Santella
Tammara Billik	Jeanine Gamez	Chelsea Merrill	Glen Vandervoort
SSI Buffalo Southtowns Regional Group	Jeanne Koploy	Andrew Provost	Elaine Voeltz
Laura Caron	Summer Lawton	Russell Pruden	Krista Waitt
William Ching	John Lenczewski	Vicky Rathje	Heather Walker
Gayle Cortez	Lauren Linthicum	Jerry and Brenda Rush Family Foundation	

CORNERSTONE OF HOPE — \$1K+

A + E Networks	Jeanne Detellis	Stephen Knobbe	Marilyn Orlich
Doug Allen	Andrew Dzedzic	Heidi L Kuhn	Brian Payne
Jules Balen	Sylvia Fowler-Adams	Jon Lasch	James Ray
Bell Bank	Kathy Fried	Chris-Satya Lory	Louis Rogers
Robert Bill	John Friel	Mary Malenke	Mitch Simkins
Francis and Anne Brzezinski	Jesse Gamez	Jennifer Manning	John Thiebaud
Henrika Buchanan	Michelle Graham	Jasmine Marvin	Susan Tobin
Wendy Davies	Art Hadnett	Timothy Morgan	Chris Wade
Mike and Yvonne Deggelman	Keith and Mary Hinkebein	David Neff	Jeff Watson
	Alexa James	Janette Oriza	Todd Yelverton

HOPE IN LEADERSHIP

Board, Staff, and Volunteers

Our staff, board, and key volunteers are the heartbeat of Soaring Spirits. Though our team is small, the dedication runs deep. We believe in hope, and we work tirelessly to offer compassion, connection, and resources to every widowed person who reaches out. We commit to responding to inquiries within 72 hours, and we deliver weekly programs without interruption—ensuring that support is always available when it's needed most. Our team's purpose extends far beyond program delivery; we strive to make every widowed person feel genuinely seen, heard, and supported every single day of the year.

2025 Board of Directors

Terry Marvin — *Chair*

Jennifer Loudon — *Incoming Chair*

Michelle Dippel — *Secretary*

Victor Buono — *Treasurer*

Mike Inabinet — *Director*

Dr. Mike Rodriguez — *Director*

Jeanine Gamez — *Director*

Nancy Boxwell — *Director*

Joe Dafcik — *Director*

Staff

Michele Neff Hernandez — *Founder And CEO*

Angeline Thomas — *Deputy Director*

Susan Hannifin-MacNab — *Programs & Education Manager*

Mary Moore Hughes — *Virtual Programs Manager & Camp Widow® Program Director*

Sade Ariyo — *Communications & Diversity And Inclusion Officer*

Part-Time Staff

Adria Velardo — *Bookkeeper*

Lydia Ruiz — *Office Admin*

Contractors

Carrie West — *Director Of Research*

Izzy Mizell — *Social Media Manager*

Allison McClain — *Graphic Designer*

Erika Herrera — *Controller*

Key Volunteers

Lois Tucker Keating — *RGL Coordinator East*

Carolyn Jenkins — *RGL Coordinator West*

Rick Melott — *Virtual Programs Volunteer Coordinator*

Dr. Nancy Saltzman — *SSI Volunteer Coordinator*

Chris Montrose — *Camp Widow® Kids Program Administrator*

Dr. Michael Rodriguez — *Camp Widow® Kids Director*

Tami Wantola — *Curriculum and Training Strategic Advisor*

Roy Daus — *Camp Widow® Operations Manager*



BEHIND EVERY PROGRAM ARE DEDICATED LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS WHO KEEP THIS MOVEMENT OF HOPE THRIVING

SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT OF HOPE



SCAN HERE TO DONATE

Carrying Hope Forward

To the widowed people who have allowed us to walk beside you—thank you. Your courage, honesty, and willingness to share your stories are the very heart of this movement. You remind us daily that hope is possible, even in life’s most difficult seasons.

We are equally grateful to the new cities who have welcomed Soaring Spirits as a partner in community health. Together, we are reframing widowhood as not just an individual journey, but a community concern that impacts us all.

This *Movement of Hope* is truly a team effort. It is built by widowed people, volunteers, donors, sponsors, professionals, and compassionate leaders who believe in the power of connection. To every person who dedicated time, talent, or treasure to our mission in 2025—we are deeply grateful.

With your partnership, we step forward into the future knowing that together, we are creating stronger, healthier, more hopeful communities.

