

Innovating & Collaborating

Community Report | 2025

“Fernside has meant so much. I could not have helped my children navigate these big feelings all on my own and having a safe space for all our grief makes us more available to each other.”



“The group makes me feel good on hard/bad days.”



“I felt included with people who have had the same struggles.”



FERNSIDE

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES THROUGH GRIEF

Dear Friends,

On behalf of those we serve, thank you for your generous support. Your commitment has fueled **innovation** and **collaboration**, allowing us to deepen our impact.

We expanded two of our programs with **innovative**, family-centered offerings. We created a new Summer Art Series, an extension of our Family Program bringing families together to create keepsakes in memory of their loved ones. The positive response inspired us to add a Winter Art Series in December—a time that can be especially difficult for grieving families. Both programs were so well received that they are now permanent additions.

We launched a new **collaboration** with the Cincinnati Nature Center to offer innovative Family Outings as part of our Camp Program. Held on weekend mornings, families are invited to explore the healing power of nature while engaging in grief activities. We're thrilled to continue this partnership into 2026 - at no cost to Fernside. Thank you, Cincinnati Nature Center!

Our Community Outreach & Education Program set a record! 1,479 individuals benefited from training and educational presentations, and an additional 562 were reached through community events. Through strategic partnerships with TriHealth pediatric and primary care practices, local school districts, and the Division of Child Life and Integrative Care at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, we've strengthened our presence across the region.

Our **collaborative reach** even extended across the globe. Last summer, we met with delegations from Kharkiv, Ukraine, visiting through Cincinnati Sister Cities. These professionals sought guidance on supporting children in their war-torn country. Later we participated in a virtual session with over 50 Ukrainian colleagues now working to build a Fernside-inspired program in their region.

Closer to home, we're excited to share a new **collaborative partnership** with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, creating programming for children attending summer camp at four centers—Price Hill, Winton, Lincoln, and Bush—communities deeply affected by loss.

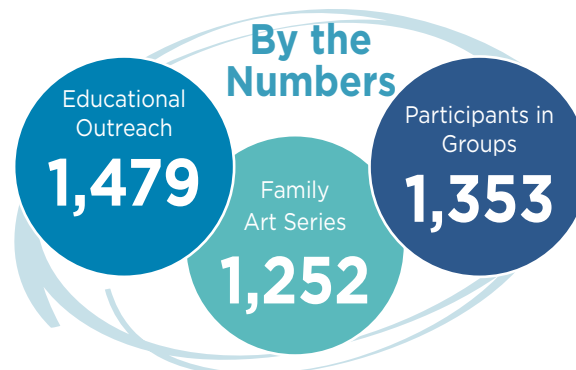
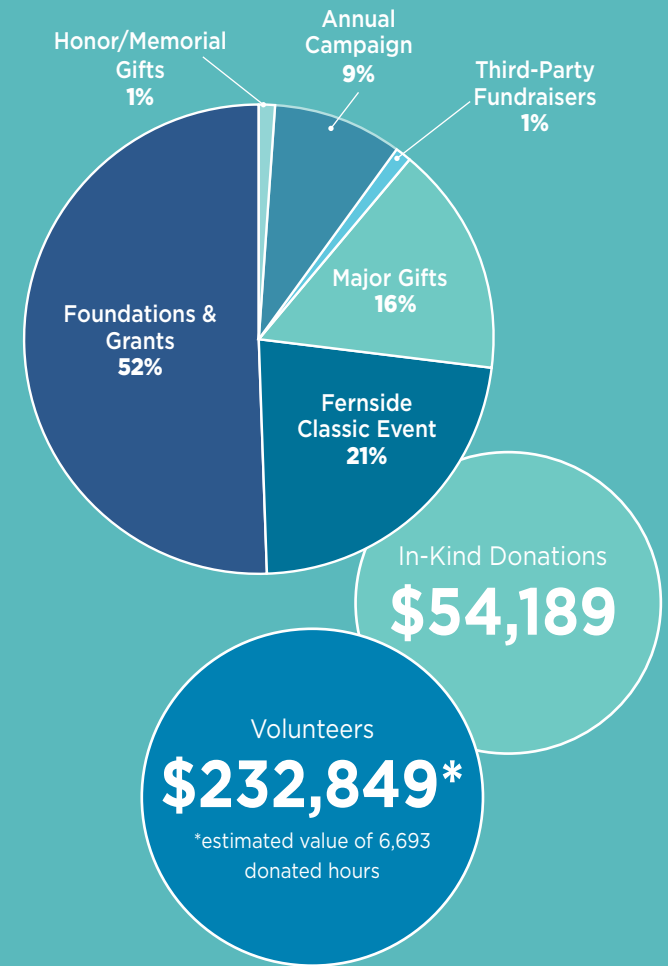
Thanks to you, Fernside is expanding our reach across oceans while deepening our roots right here in our hometown. And all our services remain free of charge. We could not do this without you.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Vicky Ott, MA, LPCC-S
Executive Director, Fernside



Circles of Support



“Fernside has given us a place to land after such a terrible time.”

Helping Our Colleagues in Ukraine through our partnership with Cincinnati Sister Cities

We were privileged to have the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in Ukraine to support their efforts in serving grieving children and families. We shared knowledge, training and resources to help them create local programs that provide emotional support and healing to grieving children. This partnership reflects our commitment to ensuring that every child deserves a safe space to grieve.



Strengthening Partnerships

Reimagining & Expanding Our Camp Program

We're thrilled to share that our Camp Program has been redesigned to offer year-round outdoor adventures for all ages! This exciting expansion allows more children, teens and adults the opportunity to explore their grief and resilience in nature.

Over the past year, 124 participants joined us in a variety of camp and retreat offerings:

Summer Camp (Ages 7-12) • July 2024

Young Adult Retreat • August 2024

Fernside & Cincinnati Nature Center Family Outings • October 2024 & February 2025

Teen Retreat • April 2025

Day Camp (Ages 3-9) • June 2025



Strengthening Our Community Through a Partnership with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission

Fernside's partnership with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission (CRC) began as a complement to their trauma-informed care initiative which supported our focus of increasing the number of grieving children and families served. We piloted our partnership by offering grief groups at four centers in June and July - Bush, Lincoln, Price Hill & Winton Hills, serving a total of 146 youth, ages 5-12. This combination of resources and expertise ensures access to essential grief support by bringing much-needed services to neighborhoods that need it most.



neighborhood grief support

Why Fernside?



Fernside's free programs make a lasting impact for grieving children and families.



In their own words:

Family: Having an art project to work on together as a family, encouraged a collaborative feeling of grieving together.

— *Family Art Series Participant*

Partner: Cornerstone Church has been a host site for Fernside for the past 15 years. We know how vulnerable children and families are when they have suffered the death of a parent or close loved one. We are honored to help our community in some small way by providing a safe and loving space for these families to process their grief and begin to heal with the support and guidance of the excellent programming and staff provided by Fernside.

— *Lynne McCollum, Cornerstone Church*

Donor: Fernside provided us with various ways to participate and volunteer at any level of commitment we needed. This variety played a huge roll in how we could support Fernside

for our Year of Giving. From Camp Games to Art Materials prep, we were able and eager to help. As the year progressed, my branch came to truly understand the impact Fernside has in the community, and it made us only prouder to support such a great cause.

— *Madeline Grosse, Branch Administrator,
Morgan Stanley*

Volunteer: Fernside was there for both us and our children in our time of need when we were going through our grief. Talking as adults was helpful, but the greatest benefit was seeing and hearing what our children were experiencing during their grief. It's not always evident especially when they are so young. We are so happy to volunteer with Fernside and the great staff helping others have the same experience we benefited from.

— *Matt & Pam Marshall,
Support Group Facilitators*

“ Staff gained valuable, practical strategies from an expert in the field, while also enjoying the discussion-based and hands-on learning components. These sessions not only expanded our clinical skills but also strengthened our connection to valuable community resources beyond the hospital setting.”

— *Kristina Ricketts, Education Specialist,
Child Life & Integrative Care Division, CCHMC*

Turn your WHY into HOW you can help.

We are able to **keep Fernside's programs free to all** because of the generosity of our donors, and the support of our volunteers.

How can you help? Please consider making a tax deductible gift to Fernside to help us continue to help all grieving children and families. Volunteer opportunities are available, as well. Contact us to learn more about ways you can keep Fernside's vital services available to our community—visit www.fernside.org.

Fernside is a 501(C)(3) organization supporting programs for children and families who have experienced a death. All donations are 100% tax deductible under U.S. law.