



# pathfinders

you never have to walk alone

## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

### A CAREGIVER'S JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

**Mike Augustyniak and Caroline Barnes had been married for nine years, living in Central New Jersey, winding down successful careers when they decided to move to Glenwood Springs during the pandemic to be closer to Caroline's family. Mike retired three years earlier from the Office of Emergency Management for the State of New Jersey, and Caroline took early retirement from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as they headed west to start a new chapter of their lives.**

Shortly before they moved to Glenwood, Mike began noticing issues with his short-term memory. It was failing him, and he was frustrated. He would walk into a room to tell Caroline something and completely lose his train of thought. As time passed, Mike continued to grow concerned with his inability to process and perform common tasks. After consulting with doctors, Mike was eventually diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), a rare brain disease that is rapidly progressive and always fatal.

CJD manifests as an aggressive form of dementia and with Mike's dementia-like symptoms progressing rapidly, Caroline, as many caregivers do, found herself struggling. Caroline was frustrated and it was extremely painful watching her husband slip away from her, becoming a shell of the man she had married. The grief she was experiencing, knowing that her husband was on a fast track to dying, nearly broke her heart and left her feeling lost. It was during her annual visit to her physician that Caroline was referred to Pathfinders. Before Caroline and I started working together, she had no idea that grief therapists even existed. We were fortunate to have been paired before Mike passed as I was able to help her navigate Mike's precipitous decline and eventually his passing, both of which she is certain she could not have done without my help. Caroline was lucky to have incredibly supportive family members who lived close by, but they were grieving too. Knowing she had me to talk with kept her from feeling that she was overburdening them. Caroline says that it was with my support and guidance that she eventually came to believe that even in her most despairing moments, she would survive the trauma.



Mike Augustyniak & Caroline Barnes



# FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear Pathfinders Supporters,

It was a very long, gray winter here in the Roaring Fork Valley and I can honestly say I am ready for spring and summer in a way I have never been before. When you work in the heavy world of grief and illness, you rely on sunshine and open skies for respite. Given that we didn't have as many of those days as we usually do, it makes me happy to know that spring is upon us!

We had a very busy winter, receiving new referrals on a weekly basis for both our school-based programs and our adult counseling. To best meet the increased demand for our services, we have brought additional counselors onto our team. While it is hard to watch grief, loss, and illness rise, Pathfinders is honored to help support those affected. I personally am so proud of our staff and how they show up for our community members who are in pain. Not only do our counselors provide individual and group support for children and adults, but our Pathfinders Angels volunteer their time to make meals and run errands to support those in need as well.

I recently had the opportunity to speak to community members and residents at the Sopris Lodge, an assisted living facility in Carbondale. I talked about the impacts of serious illnesses such as cancer and Alzheimer's on the family as well as the patient. We discussed caregiving and how hard the road can be when it comes to watching a loved one begin the dying process. I shared the personal story of a young woman who is caring for another younger adult. Since she is not the one directly affected by the original loss; the woman is always surprised when she hears that community members ask me how she is doing. It did, however, make her feel good to know that people cared and were worried about her as well.

Upon sharing this story, one of the audience members raised their hand and said, "As a result of what you shared about this young woman, I am going to go home and call all of my friends who are caregiving and find out how they are really doing and how I can give back." It was a poignant moment because we never know what others are carrying in this journey of loss and illness. If we can take the time to check in, it is a real gift.

I want to thank all of you for continuing to support us financially and emotionally. We are so blessed, and we need it all. It is because of you that we can continue to show up as we do.

***With Love,  
Allison Daily***





## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: A CAREGIVER'S JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

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Caroline is so grateful to live in an area serviced by an organization like Pathfinders. She feels it is invaluable to work with a therapist specializing in grief. During our time together, Caroline said she learned that while the precise way one grieves is specific to that person, there is a great deal that we who are grieving have in common. As Mike declined, Caroline experienced the despair, anger, self-doubt, self-judgment, and loneliness that came with that. I explained to her that this was anticipatory grief, which is complicated, thus validating Caroline's feelings and that her situation was incredibly unfair and difficult to process. In reflecting upon our time together, Caroline shares, "Perhaps most importantly, she helped me to see that allowing myself to feel and sit with that unfairness, to cry and scream when I needed to, was good for me. And knowing she and Pathfinders would be there for me through Mike's death and beyond was enormously comforting."

—Allison Daily, Executive Director

## COUNSELOR SPOTLIGHT: INTRODUCING SUSAN ELLIOTT

### What is the scope of your professional skill set and how does it shape your counseling methods?

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor with a master's degree in Professional Mental Health and a bachelor's degree in Exceptional Education. Prior to becoming a therapist, I worked as a special education teacher with a concentration in reading, executive functioning, memory, parenting support, and behavior interventions. I have 18 years of experience working with young adults and adolescents. I use strength-based and trauma-informed approaches to help clients with depression, anxiety, grief, loss, PTSD, communication skills, suicide ideation, and trauma. I use my skills from being a teacher to provide an approach that fits their learning style. I am trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Cognitive Behavior Therapy.



### How did you come to learn about Pathfinders and what drives you to continue working with the organization?

We recently moved from Eagle to the Roaring Fork Valley, and upon doing so, I decided to branch out and start a private practice. I began to crave the interactions you have when working with an organization, so I reached out to a friend, who introduced me to Kathy Hegberg. After sharing some of my professional goals with her, she encouraged me to talk with Allison with Pathfinders. Within the first two minutes of speaking with Allison, I knew that I wanted to be connected to Pathfinders. Once I started coordinating with Laura, Pathfinders school-based program coordinator, as well as the other Pathfinders therapists, I was certain that the organization would offer me the opportunity to be part of a community of empathetic, supportive, and skilled therapists. Although the work can be challenging, Pathfinders is successful because it is an organization that stays true to its targeted population. I have learned that it is easy for organizations to create unrealistic expectations of what they can provide. The Pathfinders' mission is something that is protected from the top, thus allowing me and the other therapists to focus on providing goal-oriented care.

### How do you believe your work with Pathfinders supports your own professional growth in the field of mental health?

The answer is quite simple—through the positive interactions my work with Pathfinders provides me with daily. Working with the school-based program, I have noticed that all of the schools have great respect for Pathfinders, which makes me feel very proud to be a part of the organization. Every teacher, principal, or school counselor I have met has been so invested in what is best for the student I am working with. Everyone involved, from Pathfinders counselors to the administrative professionals within the school, works with such grace and dignity to help provide me with a confidential area, communication channels when conflicts arise, and creative solutions when something does not come together. Schools are spontaneous places, and the people who work within them are consistently juggling multiple tasks. Working with Pathfinders sets me up for success, which in turn allows me to expand my skills and push myself to improve my practices.

### How do you incorporate the Pathfinder's mission statement when collaborating with schools?

I always keep the idea of safety at the forefront of my mind. The safer the professionals in the school feel in my presence, the lighter their day may become. Watching a school office try to help with scraped knees, a late bus, a scheduled fire drill, and a frustrated parent is the reality of what goes on all the time. I know that the simpler I can keep my duties, the better for everyone. The more flexible I am, the easier it is for all of those around me to meet so many needs at once. The mission reflects this approach and is a great reminder of how to extend the positive impact one person can make.



# COMMUNITY OFFERINGS

Since last fall, we have had the pleasure of offering complimentary sound healing and breathwork sessions throughout the Roaring Fork community. We are grateful to have both Megan DiSabatino and Allison Alexander on board to thoughtfully lead us during these sessions. The high-frequency sounds and vibrations that Megan creates during sound healing generate a sense of peace, well-being, and healing on a cellular level. These sessions provide the perfect environment for one to relax and surrender, an opportunity "to reconnect with ourselves and to feel our hearts and souls. A time to honor oneself and our loved ones and feel a sense of ease and acceptance." For Megan, it has been such a pleasure to offer these sound healing sessions to the Pathfinders community. She feels very fortunate to join this community for presence and healing and is grateful to Pathfinders "for creating opportunities for us to come together to reconnect, rest, feel, and heal." Breathwork sessions are also incredible in that they "create a safe container for people to move and express emotions they are both consciously aware of and those that are subconsciously impacting their lives without the need to put them into words." For Allison, "Offering these group sessions for the Pathfinders community is a tremendous privilege." She says that witnessing the shifts and healing that participants experience in a relatively short amount of time is a gift she remains grateful for and humbled by. If you have not yet had the chance to participate in one of our sound healing or breathwork sessions, we encourage you check the events page of our website and join us for one of these special evenings. —**Robyn Hubbard, Pathfinders Grief Counselor and Program Coordinator**

## GRIEF & HONOR RAFT TRIPS



**FEEL THE EASE & FLOW ON THE COLORADO**

### GRIEF & HONOR RAFT TRIPS

Feel the healing powers of floating a gentle section of our beautiful Colorado River.

**JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup>-25<sup>TH</sup> • AUG 4<sup>TH</sup>-6<sup>TH</sup> • SEPT 1<sup>ST</sup>-3<sup>RD</sup>**

WILDERNESS HEALING | GRIEF COUNSELORS & GUIDES  
NOURISHING FOOD | SUPPORT & COMPANIONSHIP

Fees are on a sliding scale and sponsored by Pathfinders.  
Trained raft guides and counselors will be present.

**PLEASE CALL FOR INFORMATION: Lisa Moretti 970.456.2769**

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**PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH OTHERS**

PHOTO BY FILIP MROZ | UNSPLASH.COM

## GRIEF & LOSS SUPPORT



**YOU WEREN'T ALONE THEN. . . YOU AREN'T NOW**

### Grief + Loss Support

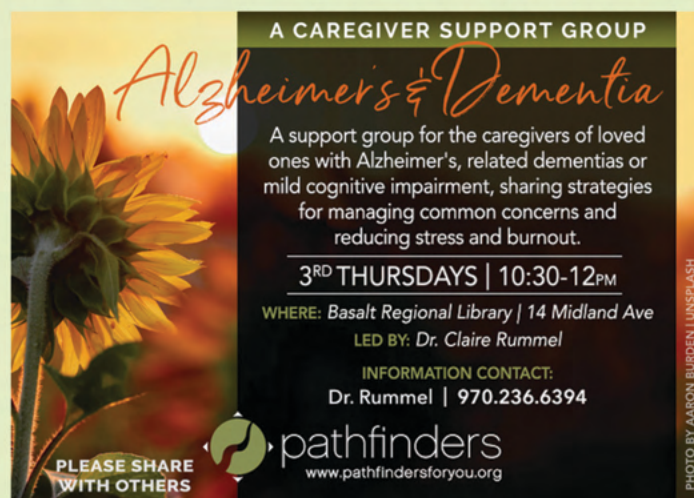
**STARTS MAY 30<sup>TH</sup> IN CARBONDALE:**

**LED BY:** Amanda Petersen  
Tuesday evenings 6 - 7:15pm  
May 30th | June 6th, 13th & 30th  
1101 Village Rd | Carbondale

**RESERVE YOUR SPACE:**  
[AMANDA@MOUNTAINLILYCOUNSELING.COM](mailto:AMANDA@MOUNTAINLILYCOUNSELING.COM)  
DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.

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you never have to walk alone

## CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP



**A CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP**

### Alzheimer's & Dementia

A support group for the caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer's, related dementias or mild cognitive impairment, sharing strategies for managing common concerns and reducing stress and burnout.

**3<sup>RD</sup> THURSDAYS | 10:30-12PM**

**WHERE:** Basalt Regional Library | 14 Midland Ave

**LED BY:** Dr. Claire Rummel

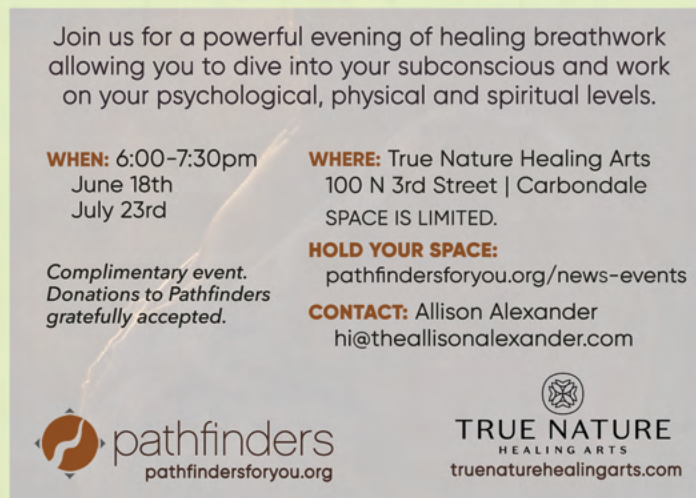
**INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
Dr. Rummel | 970.236.6394

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**PLEASE SHARE WITH OTHERS**

PHOTO BY AARON BURDEN | UNSPLASH

## HEALING BREATHWORK



Join us for a powerful evening of healing breathwork allowing you to dive into your subconscious and work on your psychological, physical and spiritual levels.

**WHEN:** 6:00-7:30pm  
June 18th  
July 23rd

**WHERE:** True Nature Healing Arts  
100 N 3rd Street | Carbondale  
SPACE IS LIMITED.

**HOLD YOUR SPACE:**  
[pathfindersforyou.org/news-events](http://pathfindersforyou.org/news-events)

**CONTACT:** Allison Alexander  
[hi@theallisonalexander.com](mailto:hi@theallisonalexander.com)

*Complimentary event.  
Donations to Pathfinders gratefully accepted.*

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[pathfindersforyou.org](http://pathfindersforyou.org)

 **TRUE NATURE**  
HEALING ARTS  
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# PATHFINDERS PROGRAM UPDATES

## PATHFINDERS ANGELS PROGRAM



I have the honor and privilege to serve as the volunteer coordinator for Pathfinders Angels, a group of dynamic and dedicated volunteers who support community members struggling with cancer and other debilitating illnesses. After starting the program in 2007, we soon realized that there was a need to not only assist those coping with cancer, but also those coping with other health concerns as well. What started as a small group of committed locals providing meals to those in Aspen who were in need has grown tremendously over the years and now includes over 85 community volunteers delivering meals throughout the Roaring Fork Valley. Although our clients' needs change on a weekly basis, we generally average about 22 meals a week. For our clients, the meals make all the difference. Just being able to take one thing off their plate helps so much, and the love that comes through these meals is so life-affirming and uplifting. Recently, one of the families we have been regularly providing meals reached out to thank us for being there when they needed the support. Specifically, this mom said that everyone has been so "incredibly kind and generous, and the meals have been delicious and truly helped to keep the wheels on the bus." This mom also shared that their son is about to have a birthday and he wanted to know if "instead of presents, he could ask everyone to donate to Pathfinders." She said this was a moment of clarity for her, acknowledging that Pathfinders didn't just step in to help with home-cooked meals, but that we showed their child "the impact of kindness toward others, something that has imprinted on him for life." And for that, she is truly thankful. I continue to be humbled by the generosity and kindness extended by the volunteers through the Pathfinder Angels program. Recently, one of our volunteers shared with us what drew her and her husband to the Angels program:



Macy

*"A good friend of mine, Sandy, who had been volunteering for Pathfinders for a long time, would mention to me now and then that she was cooking for some people this week. It was something that I loved hearing her talk about as I could tell how personal and deeply meaningful it was for her. Then I saw a social media post about the program. They were looking for more people to cook and deliver their meals. I immediately felt a call to action in that moment. I brought it up to my husband, Jeff, because he does most of the cooking at our house. He agreed it was a great idea and something we had the capacity for and would find meaning from. Having lived in this valley for 42 years we are, of course, deeply connected to it. But in recent years, some personal health scares have given us an even deeper understanding of how important it is to show up for each other through hard times. We're not amongst the wealthiest people in this community, yet we consider ourselves very blessed and grateful for the life that we live here. Cooking for families who need support through Pathfinders has been a great opportunity for us to give back and show up for a community that has done the same for our family over the years."*

—Mary Kenney, Pathfinders Angels Volunteer



Mary &amp; Jeff

As the needs continue to grow, we are always looking for more volunteers to join our efforts. Whether you can make a meal a month or a meal a week, we would love to have you join our team! I can be reached at [debbiekreutzer@comcast.net](mailto:debbiekreutzer@comcast.net) or 970.618.1621.

—Debbie Kreutzer, Pathfinders Angels Program Coordinator

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## PATHFINDERS SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM

As we begin to wrap up the school year, we want to recognize our amazing team of school-based counselors. Throughout the course of the school year, they have led 11 groups, served over 100 individual students, and provided crisis support within schools from Aspen to Rifle. Our program continues to expand rapidly, and we have recently grown our staff to accommodate the increased need. We are thrilled to welcome intern Erik Wardell and counselor Susan Elliot! Throughout the year, we offered several wonderful training sessions for our team, focusing on emotional regulation tools for students, resourcing and parts work, and grief exercises. Thank you to everyone who led and participated in the training sessions. We are so grateful to our amazing counselors, who give so much to our clients and the community. We look forward to serving more students, families, and staff in the upcoming school year!

—*Laura Irmen, Pathfinders Counselor and School-Based Program Coordinator*

## CALAWAY YOUNG CANCER CENTER

Pathfinders has recently partnered with the Calaway Young Cancer Center at Valley View Hospital to provide grief counseling to patients and staff. As the lead counselor for this new collaboration, I have spent the past 10 months counseling patients receiving treatment in the infusion center or radiation clinic on both an individual basis with scheduled sessions for patients and caregivers/families and through support group offerings. I am also pleased to be able to continue facilitating the long-standing Walk and Talk support group started by the late Nancy Reinisch over 15 years ago. Additionally, at Calaway, we are noticing more and more young people receiving treatment in the center, thus spurring the need for a new support group for cancer patients who juggle the lifestyle complexities of managing children at home and work demands along with their treatment. Through our work at Calaway, we also offer grief support to staff as needed to manage personal and patient losses, an inherent element of the work environment. For everyone involved, the new programming at Calaway has been incredibly meaningful. Personally, I am enjoying the team approach within the cancer center among the doctors, nurses, social workers, and integrative therapies staff. As they navigate the difficult and uncertain terrain of a cancer journey, patients and families truly appreciate the nature and personalization of this supportive approach.

—*Robyn Hubbard, Pathfinders Grief Counselor and Program Coordinator*

# Pathfinders

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