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## Group encourages grieving on the move

By Pam Mellskog  
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**HYGIENE** — In an earlier American age, those in mourning wore a black armband or nailed a black wreath to the front door.

“That alerted the community to treat them with care,” said Georgia Robertson, a grief counselor at HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties’ Longmont office.

“When you break your leg, you wear a cast, use a crutch and people open the door for you. They see you’re struggling and want to help,” she said. “But grief is invisible in our society now, and that makes it very hard to get the help you need sometimes.”

Support groups encourage some to share difficult feelings and fight the isolation that so often settles on those grieving.

“But going out walking sounded better than sitting around a table to me,” Mitzi Moore, 74, said.

Moore joined the meditative walking group HospiceCare launched in Boulder after her husband of 49 years died from cancer on July 31, 2008.

The pilot program there blossomed and prompted HospiceCare to lead a free, drop-in Longmont group from 5 to 6 p.m. every Thursday in September at Pella Crossing, a county trail and lake system



Georgia Robertson, HospiceCare grief counselor and Longmont grief walk leader poses for a picture at Pella Crossing near Hygiene. Jill P. Mott/Times-Call

### More Information

**What:** A drop-in meditative walking group

**When:** 5 to 6 p.m.  
Thursdays in September

**Where:** Pella Crossing, a county trail system just south of Hygiene on the east side of 75th Street

**Cost:** Free

**Information:** Call 303-604-5300

south of Hygiene.

Robertson plans to start each walk under the picnic table shelter with a brief meditation on mindfulness, she said.

She defined mindfulness as the act of being more aware of the present moment and using that awareness to make more sense of the loss.

“It’s a turbulent time when you’ve lost somebody,” Robertson said. “I’m trying to give them a skill to quiet down.”

Quieting down gives mourners more space to appreciate the potentially positive transforming power healthy mourning can make.

Most, she said, consider grieving “inside work,” that crying is the only physical outlet.

But walking allows those in grief to physically move forward through their pain, Robertson said.

After sharing a meditation, she plans on leading the group around the lakes and welcoming walkers to quietly reflect or talk to others on the way.

Moore said she did a little of both on her walks.

By joining the group, she began to appreciate how universal the grief response is — for instance, that others have good and bad days, too, without much rhyme or reason.

“Sometimes, though, when I was feeling down — this is a hard thing to say — but I didn’t really want to hear how bad someone else was feeling,” Moore said.

On those days, she would walk with someone she knew was a quiet person or a good listener.

Robertson said she hopes the walks help participants “normalize” their grief and view it as an appropriate response to loss.

“It’s the flipside of the coin. If you’ve loved someone deeply, you will grieve deeply,” she said.

The outdoor venue, with its four seasons, also reinforces another one of her messages — that change is the only constant in life.

Robertson hopes that something about watching ducks migrate and the leaves turn colors will encourage walkers to embrace the normality of life and death.

“Our society expects people to ‘get over it.’ Really, all I’m asking them to do is be

mindful of (their) grief as we walk,” she said. “And if you get here, half of your work is done because you’re making a choice to take care of yourself and recognize your grieving.”

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