

'No one expects this to happen'

A nonprofit provides financial help within the first few months of the death of a parent.

By **Kristin E. Holmes** INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Source: **Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)**; 888 words

Published: **2007-05-20**

Section: **NEIGHBORS MONTGOMERY** | Page **L03** | Edition: **N-MONTCO** | Memo: **Cover Story**

More than 100 people were partying inside the Bucks County Golf Club, but Ellen **Lindeman** couldn't muster the courage to go in. She was the guest of honor. Yet, she knew hardly anyone at her own party.

Lindeman drove by and kept driving.

The 35-year-old mother of two wanted to say "thank you" to the virtual strangers who had gathered to raise money for her, but pride was the problem.

"You feel like you don't want to draw attention to yourself, but no one expects this to happen," **Lindeman** said, "for a 33-year-old man to die."

Lindeman's husband, **Ted**, had died within three months of being diagnosed with esophageal cancer. The death not only brought a bewildering sense of loss, but also turned everyday life into a series of unsettling new challenges.

Ellen **Lindeman's** family was able to cope, thanks to efforts of neighbors and friends she didn't know she had. Now, **Lindeman** wants to do the same for other families dealing with the death of a young parent. That was the motivation behind her cofounding of the **Ted Lindeman** Outreach Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides grants to families within the first few months of the death of a parent. The organization, which also was begun by friends from that first dinner, awards up to \$3,000 a month during the first three months after a death.

"I know \$9,000 isn't going to change someone's life," said Ellen **Lindeman**, 39, of Warminster, "but it can help someone to spend more time with their children, pay their mortgage or pay bills."

Since its founding in 2004, the foundation has assisted six families in Montgomery and Bucks Counties. By providing a financial cushion, the foundation has given families the breathing space to cope.

People can become emotionally "frozen," said Elise Gaul, executive director of Peter's Place, a center for grieving children and families in Radnor. Spouses are frightened, sad and depressed, yet they must still find a way to take care of the children. Also, there are bread-and-butter concerns.

"With the young and widowed, there might not be a will, or life insurance, there might not be money in savings, or they may just have bought a house and have a big mortgage, but no mortgage insurance," said Deborah Gawthrop, of the Counseling Network for Loss and Transition in Erdenheim. "You find things that people in middle age have already addressed."

Last year, Lisa Rossi of Chalfont was one of the people whose families were helped by the foundation.

Rossi's husband, Christopher, had died of a heart attack while driving home from work. He also left an 8-year-old daughter, Amanda.

"When that happens, you just feel so devastated and alone," Rossi said. "But the support from people touched my heart."

That is where organizations such as the **Ted Lindeman** Outreach Foundation come in. Since the first dinner for Ellen **Lindeman's** family in 2004, the organization has raised an average of \$20,000 a year. On June 1, the foundation will hold its annual fund-raising gala at the Spring Mill Country Club in Ivyland.

Ted Lindeman was an engineer visiting from his native Holland when he met his future wife in a restaurant. He spoke very little English, but they were smitten with each other and conducted a bi-continent relationship until they married, a couple of years later, in 1996.

When the couple found a somewhat decrepit house in Warminster, Ellen **Lindeman** was doubtful, but her husband was enchanted.

"He loved the garden and the hardwood floors," Ellen **Lindeman** said. It was during a family vacation in Italy that **Ted Lindeman** had trouble swallowing. He died within months.

"I just wanted to pretend it didn't happen," Ellen **Lindeman** said of her husband's death. In the meantime, she had to deal with insurance and Social Security, work, paying the bills, and caring for her daughter, Taylor, then 5, and son Luke, then 3.

Lana Forbes, whose daughter Suzanne was in kindergarten with **Lindeman's** daughter, helped organize the effort of neighbors, other young moms and the larger community.

"We were both married with young children, but I didn't know her," said Forbes, who is from Jamison. "We were nervous about invading and intruding, but we thought maybe we could help."

In the end, the benefit helped **Lindeman** spend more time with her children while preparing for life without her husband.

"I'm doing things I never thought I'd do. I put quarter rounds on my moldings. I remembered seeing **Ted** do it," **Lindeman** said. "I worry about the kids. They say, 'What will happen to them if something happens to me?' I just want them to feel safe and protected."

Contact staff writer Kristin E. Holmes at 215-854-2791 or kholmes@phillynews.com.

The **Ted Lindeman** Outreach Foundation annual benefit dinner will be from 7 to 11 p.m. June 1 at the Spring Mill Country Club, 80 Jacksonville Rd., Ivyland. The event includes dinner, live music, and a silent auction. Tickets are \$55.

For more information, call 215-918-0490 or 215-918-2796, or visit

www.tedlindemanoutreachfoundation.com.

Illustration/Photo: ON THE COVER

Ellen **Lindeman**, whose loss led to the **Ted Lindeman** Foundation, her children Luke, 7, and Taylor, 8. Inquirer photo by Ed Hille.

ED HILLE / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Ellen **Lindeman** (right), whose loss of her husband spurred the creation of the **Ted Lindeman** Foundation, in her living room with her friend and fellow foundation member Lana Forbes.

A family photo of Ellen **Lindeman**'s husband, **Ted**, who died at the age of 33.

© Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

All content is copyrighted and may not be republished without permission