

The Intelligencer

Help for the young and grieving

By **CHRISTINA KRISTOFIC**

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Kim Barnard had gone to bed and just put her head on her pillow late on Mother's Day 2007 when she got the feeling she needed to go check on her husband. Mike had seemed a little off-kilter when they said good night.

She walked into Mike's den — "The Eagles' Nest," as he called it — to find him folded over in his chair. Mike had been diagnosed with a heart condition in December 2006 and had an internal defibrillator put in two weeks before. He wasn't as strong and healthy as he used to be, but she had never seen him like this: His skin was bluish-gray and Kim couldn't find a pulse.

Kim dialed 911, and the dispatcher talked her and her daughter through CPR. But Mike had died. He was 47. Kim was 43. And their daughter, Karlie, was about to turn 10. "You're literally in shock," she said. "I swear to God, I was in shock for three months."

Kim had lost her husband — the man she had lived with and loved for more than 13 years, the man who made her laugh, the man who helped raise their daughter. And in the midst of trying to cope with that loss, she had to figure out how to pay the \$1,600 monthly mortgage on their Roslyn home among other bills on her Abington Memorial Hospital salary. There was also Mike's brand new red Chevy pickup to pay off. And she wouldn't start receiving any of Mike's benefits for 90 days.

She was at her wit's end when she found on her doorstep an article about the Ted Lindeman Outreach Foundation. Someone — Kim still doesn't know who — had cut it out of a newspaper and left it in the door. She read it. "I thought, 'Oh, my God, this is wonderful!'" She called Ellen Lindeman, who was able to help right away.

Lindeman, of Warwick, had started the Ted Lindeman Outreach Foundation a few years earlier in honor of her husband who died from esophageal cancer in 2004. Some friends had held a gala dinner in 2004 to raise money to help Ellen get through her first months without Ted, and Ellen and her friends agreed to make the dinner a tradition and give the money to other young widows and widowers.

The foundation has raised about \$100,000 and helped eight families in the past four years. Few of the people helped knew Ellen Lindeman before she helped them. The families all seem to find the foundation by chance — it pops up in an Internet search, or a friend tells a friend, or one woman tells another while they're watching their kids' soccer game. Most have been young widows with children, but the foundation is helping a young widower this year.

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“It’s almost like we’re being helped from above,” said foundation vice president Lana Forbes. The foundation gives people up to \$9,000 to help with expenses for the first three months after they lose their spouses. Kim declined to say how much she had received.

“She gave me financial stability for three months,” Kim said of Ellen. “It was perfect timing because that’s when I needed it the most.” And after the three months ended and Mike’s benefits started coming, Kim was able to find firmer footing. She returned Mike’s truck to the dealer, sold many of his things at a yard sale or on e-Bay to get more money and sold the home in Roslyn and moved to a smaller one in Hatboro. “I should be OK for at least four years and then I have to re-evaluate everything,” Kim said.

But it’s still hard living without Mike. Kim survived breast cancer and still sees an oncologist on a regular basis, and she worries about who will take care of Karlie if the cancer returns. “I’m terrified because I don’t know what the future holds,” she said. “I’m the mom, the dad, the electrician, the plumber.”