HOW KATE ATWOOD TURNED LOSS INTO LOVE

With a half-dozen kids in tow, 23-year-old Kate Atwood pulled up to the bowling alley. To the average onlooker, the kids comprised a normal gang of ready-to-bowl youngsters: rowdy, chatty, happy. But every child was there with Kate for one common, childhood-crushing reason: they had all lost a parent.

Now eight years later, Kate looks back on all that has transpired since that evening in 2003: That bowling trip was the first event of what would become Kate’s Club, the nationally acclaimed nonprofit that she founded here in Atlanta, as a way to help children who have experienced the death of a parent.

From Loss to Love

Having lost her own mother to breast cancer at age 12, Kate knows firsthand how difficult it is for children to walk through pain and grief, especially when they feel like they’re taking the journey alone. “No child likes to be different,” says Kate. “The most powerful tool you can give to a child who’s going through adversity is to give them a peer who’s going through the same thing.”

That first bowling trip was Kate’s way of doing just that: bringing hurting children together. A few strikes, a few gutter balls, and Kate’s Club was born.

Today, the organization has touched the lives of more than 500 children in Metro Atlanta, some driving an hour or more to spend time with other school-age kids who also know this devastating loss. Kate’s Club is a place of healing for these families, where they build a hardy community and learn how to grieve with long-term support. It’s also a place where kids are reminded that they’re still kids—which is why there’s lots of fun built in, too. Games, arts and crafts, sports, community events and summer camps are all enjoyed by Kate’s kids.

Living by Giving

When she first started Kate’s Club, Kate had no idea of the success that would come with it, including an interview in People Magazine and appearances on The View, CNN and The Today Show. Her book, A Healing Place, has received rave reviews, and President George W. Bush called her a “soldier of compassion.” What began as a chance to impact a small handful of kids has now become the guiding force of her life.

“For purpose is found in being a part of something bigger than ourselves,” observes Kate. “I just connected with the joy that came from helping others—using my own loss as a vehicle—and almost instantly became addicted to that.”

For more information on Kate’s Club, visit www.katesclub.org or call 404-347-7619.
Kate Atwood has made it her life’s work to help others. Here are her suggestions for using your passions—and pain—for the greater good:

- **Determine your passion.** Kate’s Club was a cause born from her personal experience. “Start with something that is close to the vest,” she advises. “Just having that personal connection really boosts your commitment to the cause.” What experiences have you had, good and bad, that you could use to touch others?

- **Give more than your money.** Kate encourages people to donate financially because doing so deepens your commitment to the cause, but your time is just as valuable. “What makes it grow is when you go beyond just writing a check, when you can see it and feel it and touch it,” she says. Make a call, join a group, bake a cake, run a race—pick something tangible and do it.

- **Find joy in giving back.** Kate says that one of the biggest misconceptions people have about giving back is that it has to be sacrificial. “I say that giving back should be mutually beneficial,” she explains. “You should be receiving something back from the experience, emotionally or spiritually.” Joy, peace, healing, purpose: the giveback of giving is great.