The Junior League of Atlanta has thrived in promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. One aspect of this mission that the league has approached with great passion has been empowering family by focusing on the health, education, and welfare of women and children.

When a loved one passes away or a divorce takes place, families grieve and often struggle to cope. The JLA is dedicated to assisting and supporting children who have suffered from some type of grief, trauma, or loss by partnering with two worthy organizations, Camp STARS and Camp Good Mourning. These two grief and bereavement camps assist children and families in their personal healing process through a variety of programs and activities. Along with the JLA, the camps have developed therapeutic activities to help children, teens, and families establish healthy support systems and develop the necessary skills to cope effectively with grief. Both camps believe a positive and supportive system is critical to supporting children who must cope with a tragic loss.

The Junior League has sponsored numerous children who have suffered some type of trauma through the form of grief, crisis, or loss by allowing them to receive therapeutic treatment at one of these special camps. The host site for the camps is Camp Twin Lakes, comprised of 300 beautiful acres of land located outside of Atlanta in Rutledge, Georgia. This facility provides a great camping experience in a nurturing environment.

**CAMP GOOD MOURNING**

The Junior League of Atlanta sponsors Camp Good Mourning, a bereavement camp for children of Kate's Club. Kate's Club is an Atlanta-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower and engage children and teens facing life after the death of a parent or sibling.

In June 2015, Kate's Club started with only six children, their families, and an outing to a local bowling alley. Now nearly twelve years later, Kate's Club has partnered with organizations such as the JLA to touch the lives of more than 950 children and their families. Kate's Club supports hundreds of volunteers each year from the Junior League of Atlanta and engages its members in four main programs that provide social, recreational, and emotional support to the participating children.

According to Kate's Club, the premature death of a parent or sibling can cause a child to various ranges of emotions, and they are often left without the support necessary to understand their reaction to loss or express their grief in a healthy way. Studies have shown that the failure to address the needs of grieving children can significantly affect school performance and cause anxiety, low self-esteem, and more aggressive behavior. Unresolved grief and the inability to cope with the death of a loved one also play a significant role in the abuse of alcohol or drugs, depression, and risk of suicide. Kate's Club provides social and emotional support services to children ages five to eighteen in metropolitan Atlanta and its surrounding areas, at no cost to the child's family. By creating a safe, uplifting environment and providing them with critical skills to cope during a difficult and vulnerable time in their lives, Kate's Club programs have a positive impact on grieving youth by preparing them to be productive, healthy members of their families and communities.

Kate's Club organizes their annual three-day retreat, Camp Good Mourning, held at Camp Twin Lakes each summer. Campers enjoy a range of fun camp adventures and therapeutic grief support activities that bring families and children together in a traditional camp setting. They enjoy activities, friendship, and learning how to deal with their grief in a positive way.

At Camp Good Mourning, children and teens swim, hike, rock climb, play music, make arts and crafts, participate in healing circles and memory circles, and attend the annual camp dance. Campers are involved in grief support activities that encourage sharing their loss with their peers and learning various ways to cope with their feelings. This year, Camp Good Mourning takes place July 5–August 4.

**CAMP STARS**

Since 1939, The Junior League of Atlanta has also sponsored Camp STARS, the first bereavement camp of its kind in the state of Georgia. Operated by the Visiting Nurse Health System, the camp takes place during two weekends each year at Camp Twin Lakes.

Camp STARS bereavement camp was designed to help
Along with the JLA, the camps have developed therapeutic activities to help children, teens, and families establish healthy support systems and develop the necessary skills to cope effectively with grief.

Studies have shown that the failure to address the needs of grieving children can significantly affect school performance, and cause anxiety, low self-esteem, and more aggressive behavior.

How to Attend or Get Involved

Applications for 2015 Camp Good Mourning became available May 1. Applications need to be completely filled out, including a photo of their loved one, a copy of their insurance card, and a date chosen to attend the camp orientation for parents and guardians. Applications cannot be processed without all components. Parents and guardians will receive a confirmation email or letter once the application has been approved. For more information, visit katesclub.org/programs/camp-good-mourning/. For more information or to attend Camp STARS, visit vnhs.org/patient-resources-support/camp-stars/.

If you are interested in becoming a “Buddy” or volunteer with Kate’s Club/Camp Good Mourning or Camp STARS, please contact Community Placements at communityvp@jlatlanta.org. All volunteers interested in being a volunteer at camp need to complete an application and attend a mandatory camp training.