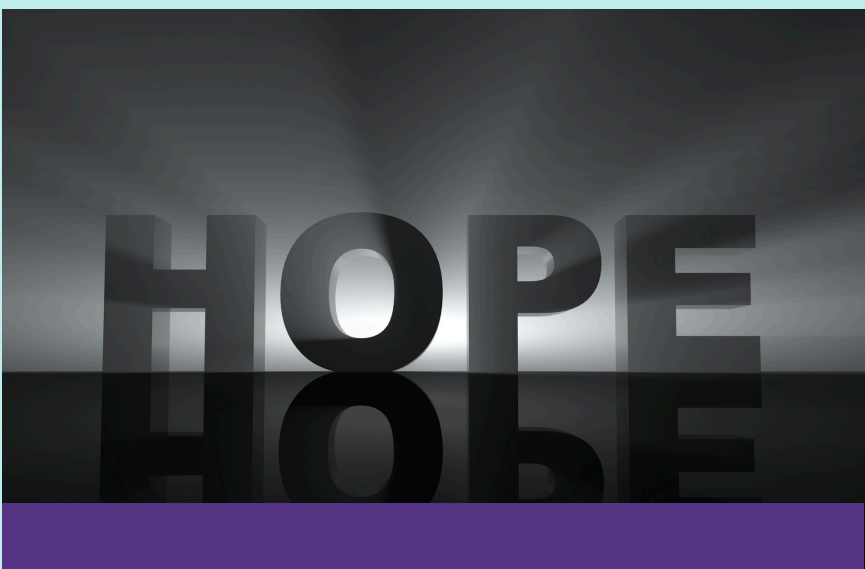




HOPE, DEFINED: LOGAN

By Logan White



LOOKING AHEAD

HOPE, Defined is a new series spotlighting the people behind Marshmallow’s HOPE. Each installment will explore the “why” behind our work, what drives our staff, and how they turn personal pain into purpose. If you are a staff member interested in sharing your story, Logan welcomes you to reach out and schedule a time to craft your narrative. Because at Marshmallow’s HOPE, every story matters — and every story has the power to save a life.

TURNING GRIEF INTO PURPOSE

The day I laid my brother Connor to rest, something inside me broke — but something else came alive. The brutal reality hit me like a freight train: I would never see his face again. Never hear his laugh. Never get the chance to be the brother I should’ve been. That day, I made him a promise: if he couldn’t have the world he deserved, I would spend the rest of my life fighting to build it for others. At first, it came from guilt. From rage. From love with nowhere to go. I felt like I had failed him — failed as a big brother, failed as a mentor, failed to protect him from the chaos that swallowed him whole. But over time, my mission changed. It’s not just about owing him something anymore. It’s about keeping Connor, and the fraternal love I’ll never stop carrying, alive in everything I do.

Grief Lit the Fuse

Grief stripped me bare. It forced me to face myself — every flaw, every shortcoming, every lie I told myself to make it through the day. The hardest part wasn’t losing Connor; it was confronting the version of me that thought my shortcomings caused his death. In hindsight, I see it differently. That constant self-blame was really the ache of love left unexpressed. As the old saying goes, grief is love with nowhere to go. Now, I choose to give that love direction. And it’s reshaped the way I move through life. These days, I live much more rooted in the moment. Every decision I make, every role I play in someone’s life, carries weight. Each moment is a chance to create love, inspiration, or opportunity — not just for me, but for everyone I encounter.

In the Fire of Crisis

Before Marshmallow’s HOPE, I worked in crisis response. I’ll never forget one case: a six-year-old boy who had already endured the unthinkable — sexual abuse by a family member. By the time I met him, he was already talking about not wanting to live. Imagine that: wanting to die before you even learn to ride a bike, to swim, to fall in love. People dismissed him as a “problem child”— I couldn’t. I saw the boy beneath the pain. Over months of consistent, relentless care, we built something together — a foundation of trust, of safety, of supportive adults who wouldn’t disappear. That foundation became the start of his healing. That’s the kind of fight I live for.

Scars That Bind Us

This work has taught me something: healing isn’t done alone. It happens in the trenches, shoulder-to-shoulder with others who carry their own scars. Marshmallow’s HOPE is proof of that. It’s not just an organization — it’s a lifeline. Working with a team who’s walked through hell themselves gives me strength on the days I don’t have any left. And together, we bring our unique talents, our connections, and our grit to the table. Out of that mix, something bigger than us is born.

Let Grief Define You — On Your Terms

Grief will define you. That’s inevitable. But how it defines you — that’s the part you get to decide. I choose to let it fuel me, not destroy me. I choose to take the weight of Connor’s absence and turn it into something that might save another brother, another sister, another family. And if you’ve lost someone, I’ll tell you this: don’t carry it alone. As human beings, we are wired to want to be understood. Reach out. Find your people. That sense of belonging can create a community you didn’t even know you needed.

The Promise That Doesn’t Die

Every day I wake up, I get another chance to keep a promise. To keep Connor alive in action, in love, in purpose. To turn grief into something that might save someone else’s world from breaking. And I won’t stop.

Logan White is a Community Outreach Coordinator based in Rockford, Illinois. In addition to his work at Marshmallow’s HOPE, he is a passionate advocate for opioid and substance use awareness, serving as a fundraiser and ambassador for Connor’s Second Chance, an endowment established through the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) in memory of his late brother. Logan is also an active graduate student at Judson University, pursuing licensure as a Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCPC) with a specialization in trauma-informed care and substance use counseling (CADC).

