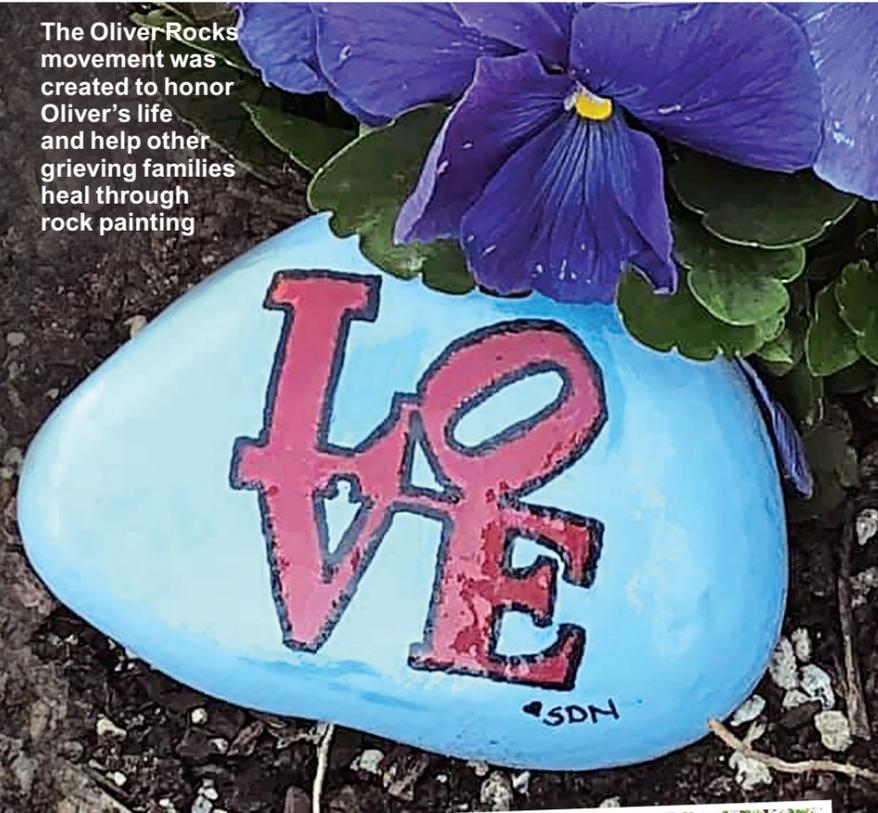


“Our son’s legacy is spreading hope and joy around the world!”



The Oliver Rocks movement was created to honor Oliver’s life and help other grieving families heal through rock painting



The Feldman family in 2018 (from left) Lauren, Connor, Oliver and Jason

When her son Oliver passed away just before his 17th birthday, Lauren Feldman’s heart was shattered and she didn’t know how to go on living without him. But when she came across a novel idea to honor his life through a memorial rock garden, Lauren discovered a way not only to ease her grief, but also to spread love, hope and healing to thousands!

Lauren Feldman watched in awe as she dropped off her 16-year-old son, Oliver, for his first day of 11th grade after months of hospital visits. In April of 2018, Oliver had been busy with Boy Scout service projects and was looking forward to summer, when he began experiencing pain in his right arm. Reviewing his X-rays, his doctor was somber. “I’m referring you to a specialist immediately,” he said to Oliver’s stunned family. Soon after, a biopsy confirmed a shocking diagnosis: Oliver had *osteosarcoma*, a type of bone cancer often found in teens.

How is this possible? Lauren wondered, as Oliver began the first of 12 rounds of chemotherapy, making his way through the grueling process with an optimistic word and ready smile. Still, the aggressive tumor continued to grow, eventually leading to his arm being amputated—and Lauren knew it wasn’t over.

But as Oliver smiled happily at her in anticipation of his first day back to school, Lauren realized her son was returning determined and hopeful.

That is one of the bravest things I’ve ever seen, she marveled. He is so resilient. But when a new CT scan showed Oliver’s cancer was spreading, his family would need more courage than they ever thought possible.

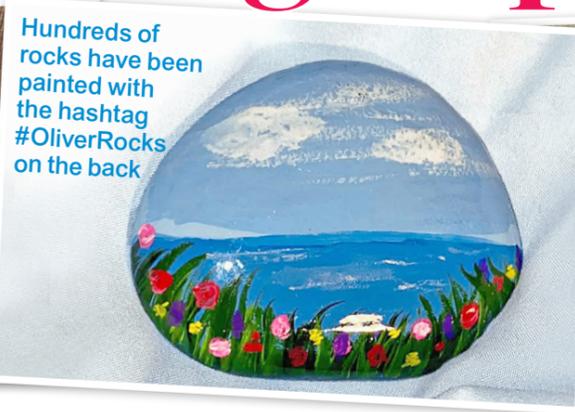
A heartbreaking loss

Though Oliver’s parents and older brother, Connor, were devastated, the family stayed hopeful, entering Oliver into two clinical trials to hopefully save his life.

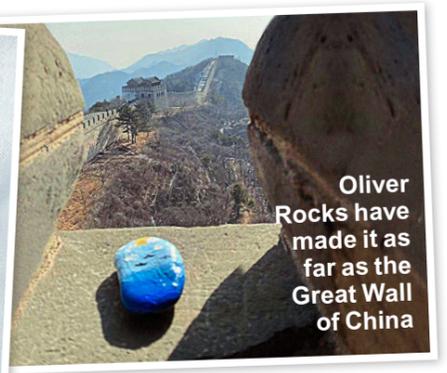
“I don’t want people to forget me,” Oliver told his mom as he advanced through the trials to no effect.



Oliver loved to paint and create art



Hundreds of rocks have been painted with the hashtag #OliverRocks on the back



Oliver Rocks have made it as far as the Great Wall of China

“That will never happen,” she vowed. And when in January, Oliver heartbreakingly passed away just a week before his 17th birthday, Lauren knew she had to keep that promise.

After months of musing about how best to honor her son, Lauren came across pictures on Facebook of memorial rock gardens painted by bereaved parents. How beautiful, she thought, scrolling through images of the colorful rocks. Maybe I could do this for Oliver.

Just then, Lauren felt a gentle nudge in her heart. I think Oliver is giving me an idea, she thought, her eyes welling as she remembered Oliver’s love of art. The rocks would reflect that—and spread love and joy, just like he did!

The first rock painting was such a success that she decided to host a painting party and reminisce with Oliver’s friends. “There were so many places he wanted to travel,” Lauren mused, when suddenly, an idea struck. “These rocks can do it for him!”

Setting up a Facebook page, Oliver Rocks, and Instagram @oliverf.rocks, Lauren asked followers to paint rocks and share them around the world.

When people paint a rock in Oliver’s memory, the power of creativity, something he loved so much, brings joy and light, like a ripple that holds a bit of his spirit, she wrote to the growing swell of new followers.

“Oliver Rocks has offered us a way to celebrate Oliver’s memory and connect with him”

Today, those joyful ripples have spread from coast to coast and even all the way to the Great Wall of China. And one day, Lauren hopes that Oliver Rocks will be found in all 50 states.

“There is no getting over the loss of my child,” says Lauren, who serves on the board of The Osteosarcoma Collaborative to support research and funding for the disease. “But I believe Oliver sent me this idea as a way to stay connected and celebrate him. Oliver Rocks has offered us a way to move forward with Oliver, to raise awareness—and to heal our hearts.”

—Monica Romano



3 meaningful ways to honor lost loved ones

1 Plant a garden
Visit FlowerChick.com, click “Gardening How To,” then “Roses,” then “Creating a Memory Garden” for ideas to craft a garden in honor of the one you lost. No green thumb? Go to ALivingTribute.org and have a tree planted in a U.S. National Forest in your loved one’s honor instead.

2 Tap into nostalgia
“Basking in nostalgia activates joy and sadness and has a paradoxical power that keeps us grounded yet hopeful,” says expert Krystine Batcho, Ph.D. To do: Take out old mementos from your loved one and reminisce about them. Sharing memories has been shown to boost joy and ease a hurting heart.

3 Try ‘balloon therapy’
“A balloon release, referred to as ‘balloon therapy,’ is a simple yet meaningful way to commemorate those you’ve lost,” says certified counselor Danielle Schultz. Simply buy a biodegradable helium balloon, write a heartfelt note, tie it to the string and hold your loved one’s memory close as you release it.

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