

Valerie's House Family Newsletter

A Message From Our Founder & CEO

Dear Families,

It is officially summer and that means a break in the schedule for many of our families when it comes to school, activities, and for just a little bit, Valerie's House. This year we are only breaking for a month and will start Valerie's House groups up again the first week of July. We take these few weeks off from groups, so our entire team may attend the National Alliance for Grieving Children conference, train a new group of dedicated and passionate volunteers, and build the curriculum for our new schedule of group night activities. If you ever have an idea for an activity or would like to make a suggestion on an activity, please don't ever hesitate to reach out to me or another member of the Valerie's House team. We learn so much from hearing from you. If you haven't filled out the evaluation we emailed you just yet, please take a few minutes to do that. Your evaluation helps us make sure your child is growing through their grief at Valerie's House.

Without their normal school and activity schedule this summer, you may notice your children begin to grieve more heavily. We know as adults, keeping busy can help keep our mind off our missing our loved one. It is the same for the children, and with a change in their routine, grief can hit them out of left field. Please talk with them, let them know you are here for them, and let them cry if they need to. We know crying is just one way children express their grief. There are many other ways, including angry outbursts, and fear of losing you as well. Please feel free to call any of us at Valerie's House at any time. We are always here for you, even to give you advice or just help you get through a tough moment.

I cannot wait to see all of you who can make it at our Summer Bash at Lakes Park in Fort Myers on July 25. We will have a great time and you will get to meet some families from our other nights as well.

See you real soon,



Angela Melvin | Founder and CEO of Valerie's House
angela@valerieshouse.org



Angela and VH Little Joslyn



VH Birthday Celebrations!

July Birthdays

Addison Q.	Emmah M.	Juliette R.
Aiden J.	Ferenc P.	Kai W.
Alex S.	Finley S.	Kasie R.
Alondra L.	Finn L.	Layla R.
Antonella P.	Gabriel D.	Maddie R.
Cadence L.	Grady B.	Mia B.
Charlie W.	Gwendolyn E.	Nayah A.
Cullen W.	Henry C.	Noah H.
David D.	Isabella D.	Sonja W.
Dyzire W.	Ja'Mari M.	Sglar S.
Emma S.	Jamarries H.	Torrence P.
		Tyanna B.

August Birthdays

Abigail C.	Antonio S.	Milton R.
Addy H.	Elise D.	Morgan R.
Adrianna G.	Hannah K.	Nathan C.
Aiden S.	Jacory J.	Olivia H.
Alexis T.	James E.	Olivia G.
Alicia P.	John C.	Rebekah W.
Alinah G.	Juan F.	Ruby D.
Alisha C.	Madison S.	Sabrina C.
Alondra P.	Mason M.	Taylor B.
Anthony K.		William S.

Val's PALs Mentor Program

Some of our grieving children are missing a role model due to their loss. Val's PALs, which stands for Positive Adult Leader, fills that void for them. Our Val's PALs mentors are caring adults who invest their time and energy to nurture and positively impact a young person.

If your child is interested in getting a mentor, you have any questions, or would like to learn more about the program please contact Mentor & Family Support Coordinator Staci at staci@valerieshouse.org.

September Birthdays

Aaliya S.	Grace H.	Miles V.
Abigail W.	Jacen G.	Mgleigh S.
Alex D.	Jackson R.	Nathan M.
Aligah L.	Janessa P.	Noah W.
Ariel M.	Jazlyn G.	Nolan B.
Bailey S.	Jennifer L.	Olivia H.
Brooke B.	Justin V.	Rylee B.
Chaniga C.	Liam K.	Savannah M.
Charley W.	Lilith D.	Savannah M.
Chase V.	Logan M.	Shylog S.
Christian T.	Lorraine C.	Surj H.
Connor S.	Madison S.	Tamara M.
David W.	Mason V.	Xander H.
Ethan R.	Matthew B.	Xavier W.
Ezequiel M.	Mikey W.	
	Miles V.	

Meet our Family Support & Outreach Assistant: Jessica



Aiden, Jessica, Sglar & Mackenzie

Jessica, her adopted niece, and her four children lived in Nevada when her husband, and father of her children, suddenly passed away. Shortly after his passing, she moved to Florida and found Valerie's House. Her family has been attending groups since 2019 to process their grief. She found herself, after almost two years, wanting to channel her pain into something good.

That is when she began volunteering where needed at the house. Shortly after, she came on as Family Support and Outreach Assistant. This newfound title allows her to do some good in her husband Zach's name and help other families like hers. After spending years working in a law office, she can help support families throughout their inquiry, enrollment, and "walk" through the Valerie's House programs.

Open Letter from Fort Myers Monday Night Mom

Rochelle



Oraia, Rochelle, Jesse, Raiden & Chloe

On December 22, 2020, my husband, Jesse Pitts, died in a car accident on his way home from work, just a few miles from our house. He was 32 and I was 30. He was the father of two girls, one boy, and another girl on the way. He doted over his children and was the best father I have ever seen.

On Christmas Eve at 11:50 p.m. we all walked Jesse down the hall for a "hero walk," as he was taken to the operating room to donate his heart, liver, and two kidneys. He saved four people's lives on Christmas Day. While four people received the best news they would ever hear, we were saying goodbye to our loved one. It felt like we were stuck in a tragic holiday movie.

I refused to sleep. I couldn't. The thought that I could go to sleep but he couldn't made me sick, so I stayed awake until I passed out. When I passed out and awoke early in the morning, I realized this was not just a nightmare. It was my new reality. I became hysterical again and, of all people, I called my previous boss, Allan Parvey, at 6 in the morning.

I'm in my last year of law school at Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, and prior to that I worked at Parvey and Cavenago Attorneys, P.A., for nearly six years. I have a very good relationship with Allan and see him as a father figure. When I called him, I was hysterical. He said he was sorry and that I would pull through this somehow. Then he said, "Let me call Valerie's House. They will know what to do." I had no idea what that even was, but I trusted him and said okay. I could hardly function, let alone make a call to this place. I didn't have to though, they called me.

They were kind and soft-spoken. They told me to come with the kids. They told me it was a grief group and, even though I told myself there was no way these people could help me, I went. I am so glad that I made myself and the kids go to Valerie's House. When we all got there the first night, I remember telling myself, "You can just drive away and they will never know."

I didn't drive away though. I was lost and knew I needed to try and go. I was put in a group with other widows and my children were put into age-appropriate groups with other grieving children. I was very teary, but I listened to everyone else speak. I finally felt normal.

The house makes us feel validated. My children have a safe space to speak about their father, and when they do, they hear, "Me too!" from the other children. Since going there, my children and I have made awesome friends that we see outside of the house. We finally feel like we may be normal somewhere.



Newborn baby, Wren

Read Rochelle's full story at valerieshouse.org/our-blog

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM) approximates rates of U.S. children and youth who will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the time they reach adulthood.

GRIEF IN OUR REGION Florida in 2020



1 IN 8
1 IN 8 CHILDREN IN FLORIDA WILL EXPERIENCE THE DEATH OF A PARENT OR SIBLING BY AGE 25.

20,250
BEREAVED CHILDREN IN LEE COUNTY

4,240
BEREAVED CHILDREN IN CHARLOTTE COUNTY

7,710
BEREAVED CHILDREN IN COLLIER COUNTY

Volunteer Spotlight

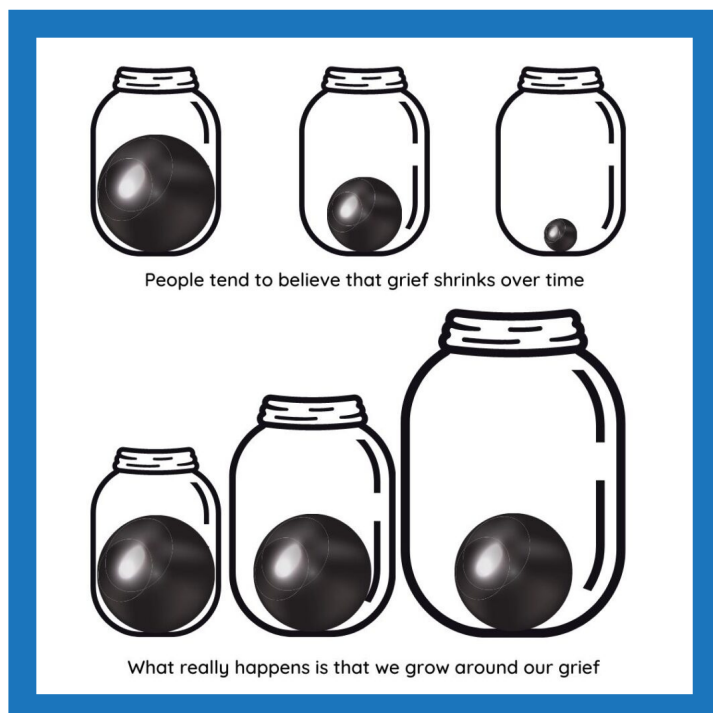
Courtney M.

Courtney found out about Valerie's House when looking for more opportunities to get involved with the SWFL community. She had just finished the MBA program at Florida Gulf Coast University and found herself with some free time that she wanted to use to make an impact.

In July 2017, Courtney attended orientation at the original Valerie's House location and instantly knew that it was somewhere that she would enjoy spending her time connecting with others. She met people who had passion, initiative, kind hearts, and experienced grief like she had. She knew this was the place she needed to be.

Courtney's dad, Chris, died on September 20, 2012. He was a former nurse who fought a long and challenging battle with addiction and mental health. Her paternal grandmother, who she spent a tremendous amount of time growing up, died January 20, 2013, just four months after her dad. She was a sophomore in college living 1,400 miles away from where they died. It was at a time where most people are embracing the college experience, learning about themselves, trying to fit in and being a college student grieving was challenging and isolating. "Having a place like Valerie's House would have been so impactful and I'm grateful to be a part of providing that service to our community now," Courtney said.

"I love volunteering at Valerie's House because of the peer support model, wrap around services provided to families, and ability to connect with people and meet them where they are at so they truly don't grieve alone. Normalizing grief and better educating our community on how to support friends, co-workers, and family members that may be living with grief is so important," Courtney said. "I'm proud to be a group facilitator on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays!"















What We Believe About Grief

- Each person has the capacity to heal
- Grief is individual
- Grief is personal
- There is no timeline for grieving
- Grief comes in waves
- You don't get over, you learn to live with it

Groups Start Back July 6! July-September Calendar:

July						
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August						
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

	Sunday Naples (1st & 3rd)
	Monday PG (1st & 3rd)
	Monday FM (2nd & 4th)
	Tuesday FM (1st and 3rd)
	Tuesday Sibling FM (2nd & 4th)
	Tuesday PG (2nd and 4th)
	Wednesday Naples (1st & 3rd)
	Wednesday FM (1st and 3rd)
	Wednesday FM (2nd and 4th)
	Wednesday Sibling Naples (2nd and 4th)
	Thursday FM (1st and 3rd)
	Thursday Naples (2nd and 4th)

September						
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Join our Valerie's House Private Family FB Page facebook.com/groups/valereshousefamilies

Don't Miss Our Family Fun Summer Event

Mark your calendars Valerie's House families! We have a fun day planned for you at Lakes Park in Fort Myers on Sunday, July 25th from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Join us in this last hoorah to summer and hang out with other families and volunteers. There will be food, music, face painting, a craft station for the kids and more!

Save The Date: Volunteer Training

- June 26-27: Training for Fort Myers volunteers
- July 17: Refresher training
- August 7-8: Training for Punta Gorda volunteers
- August 28: Refresher training for Naples volunteers

If you have any questions about group night schedules, thoughts or just need to talk, please reach out to our Program Team at 239-204-5804, or email Delaney Abroe directly at delaney@valereshouse.org and she will make sure a member of the Valerie's House team responds to you immediately.

For a complete list of Valerie's House programs, visit Valereshouse.org