



For Immediate Release

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New Grieving Center for Families Chosen for FGCU Make A Difference Day *Members of the Media Invited to Come Out*

FORT MYERS, Fla. (October 19, 2015) Valerie's House for Grieving Families, a new not-for-profit organization devoted to helping children and families work through grief following the death of a loved one, has been chosen by Florida Gulf Coast University as part of its annual "Make A Difference Day" project, **Saturday, October 24th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm**. Scores of students, faculty, coaches, alumni, and volunteers from the community will be at the site of the new Valerie's House, Inc., a center for grieving families, located at 1618 Avalon Place in historic Dean Park, Fort Myers, 33901.

Valerie's House was selected as one of 13 local charities to benefit from FGCU's annual Make a Difference Day to be held on October 24th. This is the fourth year FGCU and Wells Fargo have joined together for Make a Difference Day, an event created by USA Weekend Magazine in 1992 to encourage volunteerism and demonstrate its impact on communities. With the help of a generous grant from Wells Fargo & Company, FGCU has brought together 350 volunteers over the last four years to serve various charities for Make a Difference Day in Southwest Florida.

About 50 volunteers will converge at Valerie's House to paint a wall mural, clean and organize an activities room, do power washing, painting, and landscaping to spruce up the property in preparation of opening its doors to grieving Southwest Florida families in January 2016.

"It is very exciting to have been chosen out of the hundreds of charities in Southwest Florida for FGCU Make A Difference Day," said Angela Melvin, founder of Valerie's House. "We are brand new to the community and to have FGCU recognize our value is an honor. We can't wait to welcome the FGCU volunteers to our new property."

Members of the media are invited to come out to Valerie's House during Make A Difference Day, take photos, and interview students and volunteers, as the community comes together to support this much needed organization.

Valerie's House is named after Melvin's mother, Valerie Melvin, a 31-year old nurse and mother of two daughters who was killed in a tragic car accident in 1987 as she drove to pick up her girls from summer camp. Valerie's oldest daughter, Angela, was just 10 years old at the time. The family struggled to cope with her sudden loss. Over the years, Melvin sought opportunities to help grieving children cope with the loss of a loved one, finding there is still a huge void of counseling and support programs 28 years later. Following her heart, she founded Valerie's House to address this need and help children go on to lead fulfilling lives.

Valerie's House (www.valereshouseswfl.org) welcomes the support and involvement of interested individuals in the community. The first of its kind in this area, the new nonprofit organization will be providing Southwest Florida with

ongoing, community-based grief support services for children and families, where families will interact with others who have experienced similar kinds of losses.

For more information or to get involved, submit a contact form at www.valereshouseswfl.org/contact-us/ or contact Angela Melvin at 239-478-6734 or angela@valereshouseswfl.org.

About Wells Fargo

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About Florida Gulf Coast University

Public service and civic responsibility are core tenets of Florida Gulf Coast University's mission. At FGCU, service-learning is integrated into students' educational experience through academic service-learning courses, service-focused organizations, or by choosing a community partner of his/her choice. Service-learning enhances students' knowledge of course content and strengthens their problem-solving and communication skills, as well as their sense of civic responsibility. Last year, FGCU students served over 240,000 hours and overall FGCU students have contributed over 1.8 million hours of service to this community and beyond.