



For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

Gail M. Dolan
Dolan Marketing Services, Inc.
Gail@DolanMarketing.com
(239) 283-2803

New Grieving Center holds Open House during National Children's Grief Awareness Month
More than 3,000 families impacted in Southwest Florida

FORT MYERS, Fla. (November 5, 2015) Valerie's House for Grieving Families, a new not-for-profit organization devoted to helping children and their families work through grief following the death of a loved one, is inviting interested families to visit their new location in downtown Fort Myers. The Open House coincides with November, which is National Children's Grief Awareness Month and will be held at 1618 Avalon Place in historic Dean Park, Fort Myers, 33901 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 15 and from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17. The new location for Valerie's House was made possible by a generous gift from Stephen Bienko, CEO of College Hunks Moving.

Valerie's House founder Angela Melvin hopes to draw attention to the number of families who today are suffering loss in Southwest Florida ... often alone and in silence. One in seven Americans suffers the loss of a parent or sibling before the age of 20. In Lee and Collier counties alone, nearly 1,000 families each year are touched by the death of a loved one from birth to age 54 – the time when children have siblings and many adults have children.

"Valerie's House is here for those grieving families," Melvin said. "Children will get to know other children like them, heal together, and learn their loss doesn't have to limit their dreams."

Grieving families and members of the public and media are invited to tour the home and meet Valerie's House leaders to become more familiar with this new, vital community service that's cropping up in communities across the nation, but had not been available before now in Southwest Florida. Slated to officially open its doors in January 2016, Valerie's House will provide families with ongoing, community-based grief support as they interact with others who have experienced similar kinds of losses.

Valerie's House is named after Melvin's mother, Valerie Melvin, a 31-year old nurse, wife and mother of two daughters who was killed in a car accident in 1987 in Fort Myers as she was driving to pick her daughters up from summer camp. Valerie's oldest daughter, Angela, was just 10 years old at the time. Melvin returned to her hometown in 2013 and, following her heart, founded Valerie's House in 2015 to address this unmet need locally.

Valerie's House is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Its mission is to help children and families work through the loss of a loved one together and go on to live fulfilling lives so that no child should grieve alone. For more information or to get involved, go to www.valereshouseswfl.org, visit them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ValeriesHouseSWFL, or contact Angela Melvin at 239-478-6734 or angela@valereshouseswfl.org.