



For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

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

Valerie's House open house draws grieving families, volunteers and supporters

FORT MYERS, Fla. (November 27, 2015) More than 50 people toured the new Valerie's House of Southwest Florida during its recent open house, coinciding with National Children's Grief Awareness Month. Attendees included families with recent losses, volunteers and supporters who met Valerie's House leaders, talked with other grieving families, and learned more about the new program that will begin offering services to the community in January 2016. Children who attended the open house worked on an arts and craft activity about their lost loved one and selected a new teddy bear friend to take home from the teddy bear library.

Valerie's House is located in the historic Dean Park area of Fort Myers. It will be devoted to working with children and their families in Lee, Collier, Hendry and Charlotte Counties who are experiencing grief following the death of a close family member. It will provide families with ongoing, community-based grief support services and activities for children as they interact with others who have experienced similar kinds of losses. The house has been made possible by a generous donation from Stephen Bienko, CEO of College Hunks Moving in Southwest Florida.

Founder Angela Melvin experienced the loss of her mother 27 years ago in a car accident in Fort Myers when she was 10 years old and has sought ways to help other children and families deal with the difficult grieving process. Named after her mother, Valerie's House was born of years of research into how other communities are addressing this vital need not yet being met in Southwest Florida.

"We were thrilled to see so many families and members of the community come out to support us in our first open house," Melvin said. "At Valerie's House, children will get to know one another, enabling them to heal together and learn their loss doesn't have to limit their dreams."

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. Valerie's House is currently enrolling families for its January 2016 program. 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.