



Valerie's House NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025

OUR VISION IS THAT NO CHILD WILL GRIEVE ALONE

★ Save the Date ★ Upcoming Events

April 12th, 2025 Valerie's House Volunteer Retreat

at Valerie's House Fort Myers Family is Forever Home.
Look for an email from Bobbie Santiago
with more details.

April 27th, 2025 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Night

Details coming soon!

April 29th, 2025 College and Career Night

at Valerie's House Fort Myers Family is Forever Home
For our teens and young adults.

May 3rd, 2025 Cantina Laredo Fun Run

Event benefits Valerie's House
Follow us on social media for more details.

May 3rd, 2025 • 11am to 2pm Join us at the 'Normal is Overrated' Event

at FSW's Fort Myers campus
Tickets are free and the event is hosted by
Kids' Minds Matter.

May 29th, 2025 • 7:05pm Mighty Mussels Non-Profit Night

at Lee Health Sports Complex
Ask us about how you can get free tickets!

July 7th-11th, 2025 Valerie's House Summer Camp

at Valerie's House Fort Myers Family is Forever Home.
Ask our staff for details on how to register!

**Follow Us on Social Media
or Speak with Staff for
More Details About These
Upcoming Events!**

Help Us Grow by Leaving a Google Review

At Valerie's House, we are working hard to grow our presence online and connect with new families who may need our support. One way you can help us reach more families is by leaving an honest Google review. Your reviews could make a difference in helping new families feel more comfortable giving Valerie's House a chance. If you've already left us a positive review, thank you so much! Your kind words mean the world to us and help spread the message that no child should grieve alone.



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TAKING STAGE AT NAPLES WINTER WINE FESTIVAL



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A BUTTERFLY GARDEN OF HEALING

THANK YOU!

- Valerie's House Kids

Valerie's House, Inc.

FORT MYERS • NAPLES • PUNTA GORDA

239-204-5804

www.valeriesthouse.org



Our mission is to help children and families work through the loss of a loved one together and go on to live fulfilling lives.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER Angela Melvin

Dear Valerie's House Families,

It's hard to believe we're well into 2025 and I'm proud to report that Valerie's House is stronger than ever!

As I write this, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude and love for you, our families, as well as our vast community of supporters. We have grown not only into an incredible organization, but a community of healing—a space where families can grieve, heal, and find hope. None of it would be possible without the courage, resilience, and strength that each of you brings to this journey.



Angela Melvin

In this newsletter, you'll read about Valerie's House teen and Barron Collier High School senior, Dawson, and how he bravely shared his story with the community, as well as about the newly-painted mural and butterfly garden at the Fort Myers Family is Forever Home.

Valerie's House was founded on the belief that no one should have to grieve alone and, every day, I am reminded of how true this is. When you first walked through our doors, whether virtually or physically, you brought with you your stories, your tears, your hearts full of both sorrow and hope. Since that moment, we've had the honor of walking beside you—sometimes with words, sometimes in silence, but always with compassion and a shared understanding.

Sometimes we need to be reminded that there's no one right way to grieve. Some days are easier, and some days are much harder. It's in those harder moments that I want you to remember that you are not alone. You have a community here—a family of peers who understand, who are walking beside and with you, and who can offer love

and care in ways that only those who have walked a similar path can provide.

Our mission is to offer healing and hope, and I know that, for some of you, that journey feels long. The road to healing is not linear. It may feel as though progress is slow but take a moment to acknowledge how far you have come. Every small step is a victory, and even in the moments when it feels like you're standing still, know that healing is happening in ways that may not always be visible at first.

Thank you for the trust you've placed in us. It is a privilege to be a part of your healing process, and we are continually inspired by your strength and courage. Your willingness to open up, to allow yourselves to feel, and to support one another is what makes Valerie's House so special.

Together, we have created something much more than just a place for grief support—we've created a family. And families are there for each other through the tough times, the happy times, and every moment in between.

Remember, grief is not something you have to face alone. We are your family, and we are here for you, every step of the way.

Your friend and advocate,

Angela Melvin, Founder & CEO
Valerie's House

A HEALING TOUCH: The New Mural at Valerie's House

The backyard of the Lee County Family is Forever Home has a fresh look thanks to the talents of a local artist. The newly-painted mural features a tree with flowers growing around it symbolizing healing, hope, and growth through grief. The tree's leaves have been made from the hand prints of our Valerie's House children and teens. Each print represents a part of their journey—leaving behind a legacy of love, strength, and support.



Stacey and Chico, Fort Myers Wednesday grandparents night

TRANSFORMING OUR BACKYARD: A Butterfly Garden of Healing



Valerie's House families recently came together for a beautiful day of learning, healing, and honoring loved ones during our first official Butterfly Garden planting and butterfly release. This heartfelt event was made possible by one of our own Valerie's House families—the Strykers. Rachel, Scott, and Griffin lost their beloved son and brother, Logan, to cancer in 2024. For the Stryker family, butterflies symbolize transformation and a lasting connection. As Rachel shared, "When I see butterflies, I definitely see it as a sign from Logan... it makes me feel like he's with us."

Children learned about the life cycle of butterflies and planted flowers specially chosen to attract them to our new garden space. Griffin Stryker even stepped up to teach others about the journey from caterpillar to butterfly. Since the planting—done entirely by our

Valerie's House children—our backyard at the Forever Home has been full of fluttering wings and color. Butterflies now greet us often, and we can't wait for you to see them the next time you visit.



Carter, Fort Myers Thursday Group Nights



Jessie, Fort Myers Tuesday Group Nights



Valerie's House kids at butterfly release



Stryker family at butterfly release

VALERIE'S HOUSE TEEN TAKES STAGE at Naples Winter Wine Festival

Valerie's House teen and Barron Collier High School senior, Dawson, shared his grief story in front of hundreds of people at the 2025 Naples Winter Wine Festival.

He bravely shared how Valerie's House has helped him heal after losing his mother, who died less than one year ago.

"My family wasn't prepared for my mother's passing, and that's why organizations like Valerie's House are so essential. Every day, children like me experience grief and need a safe space to process their emotions," Dawson said.

His words moved the audience to silence—ending in a standing ovation.

With the support of Valerie's House and our Grief Support Counselor, Susan, Dawson is finding his voice and preparing for college, aiming to help grieving families

as a future financial planner. Thanks to Valerie's House, Dawson is proof that loss does not have to limit dreams!



Valerie's House Counselor Susan with Dawson at the Naples Winter Wine Festival

BUILDING SMILES with Legos at Valerie's House

A big thank you to the middle school students from the Community School of Naples who designed and built unique Lego kits to donate to Valerie's House. Their creations, from vehicles to nature scenes, will provide our families with an outlet for creative play.

These Lego kits offer a fun way for our children to express themselves and connect with others, while also serving as a reminder of the kindness in their community.

A big thank you to the students and faculty from CSN for their generosity and kindness.



Students from Community School of Naples at Valerie's House Naples

CELEBRATING CAROLYN: Eight Years of Dedication

Carolyn Vickery has been a familiar face at Valerie's House for the last eight years. She is a dedicated social worker with a passion of helping others, which is how she came across Valerie's House.

Carolyn's biggest drive to continue helping out is the kids, she says she has seen incredible growth from kids as they learn to manage their emotions. She loves the unique sense of community at Valerie's House, where everyone supports one another through their grief. She encourages others to get involved, knowing firsthand the impact volunteers can make.

We are so thankful for Carolyn's dedication to our families.



Thank you to the Valerie's House families who supported us at the Everblades game!

VALERIE'S HOUSE at Hertz Arena

A big thank you to the three-time Kelly Cup Champions the Florida Everblades for hosting a fundraiser night. Our families got the chance to come out and watch the Blades take on the Knight Monsters.

Everblades fans got a chance to stop by to learn more about Valerie's House and Swampy himself even put on our Colors of Emotion Mask.

A huge thank you to the Everblades for selecting Valerie's House and supporting our mission!

FINDING HOME IN SOCIAL WORK: Sheridan LoCicero's Journey with Valerie's House

Sheridan LoCicero is a school social worker who dedicates her time to supporting grieving children, both in schools and at Valerie's House.

Sheridan has witnessed remarkable transformations in the children attending Valerie's House. She believes Valerie's House gives our families a sense of belonging and community for families during their grief journey. For Sheridan, Valerie's House is a true home where families come together, support each other, and find strength in their shared experiences.

"When I think of Valerie's House, it really is that homey feel, no matter what location or how many families are a part of Valerie's House at any given time, it has that home and family feel," said Sheridan.



GRADY'S JOURNEY: Valerie's House Teen to Navy Crew Leader

Grady joined Valerie's House after his mother died from cancer when he was 12. During his time at Valerie's House, he worked through his grief, made lifelong friends and went on to become a mentor to other grieving children.

Grady shared, "My time at Valerie's House prepared me for the Navy. I'm confident in myself and fulfilling my dreams."

After graduating from Bonita Springs High School in 2024, Grady enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Now stationed in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Grady leads a crew of nine others and works as a jet mechanic. He is currently preparing for a transfer to Whidbey Island, Washington.



Grady



Valerie's House teen Grady stationed in Virginia Beach

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD in Charlotte County

Valerie's House Charlotte County just hosted its first-ever fundraiser, Cocktails for a Cause: Sunset Soirée—a night that truly reflected where we've been, where we are now, and where we're headed.

Originally planned for last November, the event was postponed after Hurricanes Helene and Milton. But when the moment finally arrived, it was clear how much love and support this community has for grieving families.

We started serving Charlotte County in 2019, hosting peer support groups in a church. In January 2024, we opened our very own home in Punta Gorda. This event was about more than fundraising—it was a celebration of the incredible journey we've taken together.



Amy Strom, Heather Tharpe, Angela Melvin & Amy Huddleston (Valerie's House staff)



Amy Strom, Paisley, Tera and Analisa

One of the most moving moments came from Tera, who is raising four children as her own after they lost their parents—her own family members. She and two of her girls bravely shared how Valerie's House has helped them find connection and healing with others who understand their grief.

The exact dollars raised aren't what matters most. What matters is knowing that Charlotte County stands with us. Many of our supporters haven't experienced childhood loss, but they believe in making sure no grieving child feels alone.

Thank you, Charlotte County, for believing in Valerie's House. We're just getting started.

FORT MYERS GROUP NIGHT SPRING 2025 CALENDAR

Look for your group night below. Please email Laree at Laree@ValeriesHouse.org with any questions.

APRIL

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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			

MAY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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 Memorial Day	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5 NACG Conference	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					

★	No Group
	Monday FM (2nd & 4th)
	Tuesday FM (1st & 3rd)
	Tuesday FM (2nd & 4th)
	Wednesday FM (1st & 3rd)
	Wednesday FM (2nd & 4th)

★	No Group
	Thursday FM (1st & 3rd)
	Virtual Monday FM (1st & 3rd) YA
	In Person Thursday FM (2nd) YA
	Monthly Monday FM (3rd) Preg. & Inf. Loss
	Monthly Thursday FM Phase 2 (2nd)

UPCOMING VALERIE'S HOUSE SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITIES:



★
April 1st-9th
Calming Jar

April 15th-28th
Waves of Grief

May 1st-14th
Grief Comic Strip:
What's Your Story

May 15th-June 2nd
Constellation
Connections

June 9th-19th
Family Activity:
Mosaic Flowerpots



NAPLES GROUP NIGHT SPRING 2025 CALENDAR

Look for your group night below. Please email Mary at Mary@ValeriesHouse.org with any questions.

APRIL

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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			

MAY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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 Memorial Day	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5 NACG Conference	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					

★	No Group
	Wednesday NA (1st & 3rd)
	Thursday NA (2nd & 4th)
	Virtual Monday (1st & 3rd) YA

PUNTA GORDA GROUP NIGHT SPRING 2025 CALENDAR

Look for your group night below. Please email Amy at amy.huddleston@valerieshouse.org with any questions.

APRIL

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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			

MAY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	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 Memorial Day	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5 NACG Conference	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					

★	No Group
	Tuesday PG (1st & 3rd)
	Tuesday PG (2nd & 4th)
	Thursday PG (1st & 3rd)
	Virtual Monday (1st & 3rd) YA