



Valerie's House NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2025

OUR VISION IS THAT NO CHILD WILL GRIEVE ALONE

★ Save the Date ★ Upcoming Events

Cape Coral Art Festival
January 11th-12th • 10am-5pm
Cape Coral Parkway, Cape Coral, FL 33904

FGCU Service Learning Fair
January 21st • 10am-2pm
FGCU Cohen Ball Room • 11090 FGCU Blvd. N., Fort Myers, FL 33965

Verandah Volunteer Fair
January 25th • Noon to 2:30pm
Oak Park in Verandah • 12201 River Village Way, Fort Myers, FL 33905

Everblades Valerie's House Night
February 21st • 7:30pm
Hertz Arena • 11000 Everblades Parkway, Estero, FL 33928
Ticket proceeds benefit Valerie's House, but you must buy your tickets from this link: bladestix.com/valerieshouse

Butterfly Garden Planting at Valerie's House
March 8th

Red Sox Community Corner
March 21st • Time TBA
JetBlue Park • 11500 Fenway South Drive, Fort Myers, FL 33913

CELEBRATING NINE YEARS OF VALERIE'S HOUSE and One Year at Our New Homes

January 2025 marks two special milestones for Valerie's House. Nine years ago, on January 11, 2016, we held our first group night in a historic home on Avalon Street in Fort Myers with 20 children. Today, we've grown to welcome over 3,000 children and families across Southwest Florida.



First Group Night
in 2016

January also marks one year since opening our Family is Forever Home in Fort Myers and our home in Punta Gorda. These spaces have been filled with connection, healing, and memories that remind us why we're here.

As we celebrate, we'd love to hear from you! Share your favorite memories or photos that show what Valerie's House has meant to your family.

Email them to justin@valerieshouse.org or send them to us on social media. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey!



What's Inside...



PAGE 2

A MESSAGE FROM FOUNDER,
ANGELA MELVIN



PAGE 3

SUNSET SOIRÉE:
A COMMUNITY UNITED



PAGE 5

A BIG THANK YOU TO
OUR AMAZING COMMUNITY

**THANK
YOU!**
- Valerie's House Kids

Valerie's House, Inc.
FORT MYERS • NAPLES • PUNTA GORDA

239-204-5804
www.valerieshouse.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,

As we move into 2025, I'd like to thank everyone who made 2024 an incredible year of love and togetherness at Valerie's House and reaffirm our commitment to you that we are here, walking alongside you with our unwavering support and a space to heal your hearts.

In this edition of the Family newsletter, you will see some of the meaningful topics for your group nights coming up, as well as your schedule of groups for January to March. You will also read the stories of some of our volunteers, families and staff about their journey to Valerie's House. We love sharing these stories with you!

You will also see some fun pictures from a few of our events over the past few months. From our Prince & Princess Party in October at the Fort Myers Family is Forever Home to our Family Portrait Day in November, we love being able to spend time with you even outside of group. Speaking of Family Portrait Day, we will have another one this coming year for those families who weren't able



Angela Melvin

to attend the most recent photography session.

We also have some special pictures from our inaugural Sunset Soirée at the Family is Forever Home in Fort Myers held November 21, when more than 300 supporters gathered to celebrate Valerie's House and raise funds as we go into 2025. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we continue to be able to provide Valerie's House to all families at no cost, and that's the way we want to keep it.

From the bottom of my heart, and on behalf of our board, staff, and volunteers, we are honored you have trusted Valerie's House to be in your life and walk alongside you and your family.

Your friend and advocate,

Angela Melvin
Founder and CEO | Valerie's House

UPCOMING VALERIE'S HOUSE SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITIES:



★
Crumbled to Courage
January 7th-16th

**Grief Values -
What Matters Most?**
January 21st-30th

Grief Art
February 4th-12th

Grief Timeline
February 18th-26th

Album Cover of Grief
March 4th-12th

Message in A Bottle
March 18th-26th



SUNSET SOIRÉE: A Community United for Grieving Families

Our inaugural Sunset Soirée at the Fort Myers Family is Forever Home was an unforgettable evening, filled with hundreds of community members who share our passion for helping grieving families.

This night wasn't about numbers—it was about the overwhelming support from people, businesses, and organizations who believe in our mission. When it came time to stand with Valerie's House, attendees gave generously, ensuring we have the resources to continue serving families in Southwest Florida.

The success of the soirée showed the strength of our community and its commitment to making sure no child grieves alone.



Inaugural Sunset Soirée Thursday, November 21, 2024

THE PHAM FAMILY: A Story of Hope and Healing



Elisa and Michael Pham attend Fort Myers groups on Mondays

At the Sunset Soirée, the Pham family shared their journey through grief with courage and vulnerability. After losing his wife to ovarian cancer, Michael Pham found refuge for his family at Valerie's House.

"This is the only place where I can speak my soul," Michael shared. His daughter Elisa described it as "some sort of a safe, inviting refuge for, like, those who lost someone."

Their story highlighted the importance of community and connection. "We rise by lifting others," Michael said.

The Pham family's openness was a powerful reminder of why Valerie's House exists: to provide a place of hope where no one grieves alone.

NICK AND EVAN: Healing Through Music

Nick and Evan inspired everyone at the soirée when the music video for their original song, "Rear View," was played. Both teens have experienced profound loss—Nick lost his mom, and Evan lost his dad when they were young. Instead of letting grief define them, they've turned to music as a way to process their emotions and express themselves. Their song is raw, heartfelt, and a testament to their resilience.

"Rear View" is now available on YouTube and Spotify, allowing their powerful message to reach even more people. Nick and Evan remind us of something we say often at Valerie's House: loss doesn't have to limit your dreams.



Nick and Evan attend Fort Myers groups on Mondays

WHY VOLUNTEERING AT VALERIE'S HOUSE Has Been So Rewarding for Chrissy

For Chrissy Humann, volunteering at Valerie's House has been an incredibly rewarding experience. "When I first started, I was so nervous about saying the wrong thing to the kids or caregivers," Chrissy shared. "But the other volunteers were so positive and supportive. Over time, I realized that being myself and engaging with the kids is all it takes to make a difference."



Chrissy Humann

Chrissy also found a sense of belonging through volunteering. "I've been in Florida for three years,

and it was hard to meet people and feel at home. Since I started at Valerie's House, I've found a family—a community between the volunteers, employees, and kids. It's the best decision I've ever made."

Chrissy is just one of more than 45 trained volunteers and group buddies who have a passion for helping our children, and whose love, heart, and dedication makes Valerie's House so special for so many.

CHRISTMAS FOR A CAUSE: Charlotte County's Heart for Grieving Families

This year's **Christmas for a Cause** was a beautiful reminder of the incredible support we have from our Charlotte County community. Held at **unWINED** in Punta Gorda, the event brought people together for an evening of holiday cheer, delicious food, and heartfelt generosity—all to ensure grieving families in Southwest Florida know they're not alone.

From the three-course wine-paired dinner to the lively auction, every part of the night reflected the community's genuine care for the children and families we serve. Thanks to the amazing attendees, sponsors, and donors, more than \$10,000 was raised to keep Valerie's House Charlotte County a place of hope and healing.

We are so grateful for the outpouring of love and support from our Charlotte County neighbors. Your commitment to helping grieving families reminds us all of the power of community and compassion.



Valerie's House Staff at Christmas for a Cause Event



Calypso Hodges and Valerie's House Kids at Holiday Party

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS: Smiles, Love, and Connection

December was a month of joy and togetherness at Valerie's House, as each of our locations—Naples, Fort Myers, and Punta Gorda—hosted special holiday parties for our families.

We know the holidays can be an especially hard time for many of you—a painful reminder of your loss and the loved ones you're missing. That is why gatherings like these mean so much. They are a chance to come together, share smiles, and find connection and support in a safe and loving space.

It's moments like these that remind us how grateful we are to be a part of your grief journeys. We are with you, we see you, and we are here for you.

Thank you for trusting us to walk alongside you, even when it's not easy. Your strength inspires us every day.

Enjoy more photos capturing the warmth and love from each location's holiday celebration on our website at www.valereshouse.org/photos

GIVING BACK: Teens and Young Adults Inspired by Valerie's House

We are so proud of several of our teens and young adults who shared their stories with **WINK News**, showing how Valerie's House has inspired them to give back.

Myah Greenberg, who lost her dad in 2021, shared how Valerie's House helped her find support and connection during a difficult time. Now, she's ready to give back. "I'm actually going to start volunteering and working here next year," Myah said.

Emely Calderon, who lost her mom, is studying social work after being inspired by the social workers she met at Valerie's House. "I met so many good social workers, and they would tell me a little bit about the field, and I would be like, this sounds like something I want to do," Emely shared.

Sean Sorrick, who joined Valerie's House as a high school freshman after losing his brother, now serves as a group facilitator while pursuing a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling. He finds purpose in helping others who are navigating their grief.

These incredible young people embody the heart of Valerie's House: turning grief into purpose. We are honored to be part of their journeys and proud of their courage to give back.

Story aired December 23, 2024



Myah Greenberg attends Fort Myers groups on Tuesdays



Emely Calderon

A BIG THANK YOU TO Our Amazing Community

This holiday season, we asked for help collecting gifts to support our grieving families—and the community's generosity, including that of local businesses, was incredible.

Thanks to the community's support, we turned Valerie's House into a holiday "shop," where parents and caregivers picked out gifts for their children, and our volunteers wrapped them with love. For families facing financial challenges or struggling to find the energy to shop during grief, this support meant the world.



Ray Kershaw and Lennar Continuing their Support of Valerie's House

FORT MYERS GROUP NIGHT WINTER 2025 CALENDAR

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

JANUARY

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	31	

FEBRUARY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
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MARCH

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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

★	No Group	★	No Group
	Monday FM (2nd & 4th)		Thursday FM (1st & 3rd)
	Tuesday FM (1st & 3rd)	Virtual	Monday FM (1st & 3rd) YA
	Tuesday FM (2nd & 4th)	In Person	Thursday FM (2nd) YA
	Wednesday FM (1st & 3rd)	Monthly	Monday FM (3rd) Preg. & Inf. Loss
	Wednesday FM (2nd & 4th)	Monthly	Thursday FM Phase 2 (2nd)

A MAGICAL NIGHT at Our Prince & Princess Party

Our Prince & Princess Party at the Fort Myers Family is Forever Home was an unforgettable evening filled with joy, laughter, and magical memories.

From crafts and treats to meeting Princess Cinderella and Prince Charming, it was a night where our kids could simply be kids, surrounded by love and support. Moments like these remind us of the power of connection and community.

Thank you for letting us share this magical evening with you. We're so grateful to be a part of your journey.



Valerie's House Prince & Princess Party

CREATING MEMORIES to Treasure

Thanks to **Evoke Studio**, many of our families recently had the chance to take beautiful family portraits—some for the first time since losing their loved ones. These photos are more than just pictures; they're meaningful memories that capture love, resilience, and the strength within each family.

Families like the Wagners and the Chungs shared heartwarming moments during this experience, reminding us of the power of connection and the importance of treasuring the present.



Chung Family

Wagner Family

NAPLES GROUP NIGHT WINTER 2025 CALENDAR

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

JANUARY

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
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FEBRUARY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
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MARCH

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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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

PUNTA GORDA GROUP NIGHT WINTER 2025 CALENDAR

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

JANUARY

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	31	

FEBRUARY

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
						1
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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