



Where Children Learn  
Loss Doesn't Have to  
Limit Their Dreams

### Happy Holidays Everyone!

One year ago, Valerie's House Pensacola was a dream. Fast forward to today and we are hosting one successful group night, and due to our continuous growth and need in the community, we will be expanding our services to three groups nights in the first half of 2022. We have so much to be thankful for!

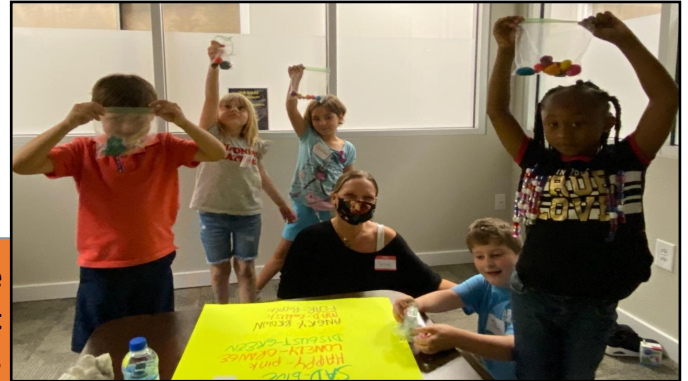
Our ability to serve these children would not have been possible without dedicated volunteers and generous donors who helped believe in our mission. With this continued support, VHP will continue to expand in our community, offering much-needed services for children and families that are grieving the

loss of a loved one. We are the only non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in the community whose sole mission is dedicated to helping children and families work through the loss of a loved one together.

We serve children (ages 5-18) and their families, who have had a parent or sibling die. Our services are needed now more than ever. A new study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* attempts to quantify the vast hole left by these deaths. It estimates that roughly 140,000 children under age 18 may have lost a parent or caregiver from March 2020 to June 2021 due to Covid or other causes classified as pandemic-related.

### Valerie's House Pensacola - Volunteer Spotlight

**Jennifer Elzweig** is a founding volunteer with Valerie's House Pensacola who also serves on the Valerie's House Pensacola Advisory Committee. Jenni is an art teacher at Workman Middle school, Escambia County School Districts. Jenni is a big help to Valerie's House Pensacola for all things creativity related. She also is a group leader on group nights. Thank you for all you do Jenni!



**"Working with the bereaved families at Valerie's House has really reinforced my belief that grief is simply about love. Watching children connect, learn coping strategies, and feel safe and secure to share their pain drives my desire to facilitate. I've learned so much from these young people, and I hope that by giving them the support they deserve they will continue to thrive despite their losses. They have shown me that even in the midst of sorrow, we can all find joy and hope for the future."** -Jennifer

### Valerie's House Pensacola – Family Spotlight



**Emma** is a 10-year-old girl who lost her mom to cancer. While talking with her dad during their intake he shared that Emma did not like talking about her mom. Emma's dad said before group she was very anxious about the whole thing and was worried, she would be uncomfortable or feel awkward. He said all that anxiety was gone as soon as she met the other kids. "She is happy to actually have a group of kids that know exactly what it is to lose someone." Her dad so grateful she can interact and build bonds with kids her age who can relate to her experience.

**"I like the fact that I can know and feel like I'm not alone being the only kid my age that has had a big loss like I have. And we have super fun activities that help with trauma processing and it doesn't even feel like that's what we are doing because we do it in a fun way."** -Emma

**We are honored these organizations chose to invest in our mission. Thank you!**

**Donors:** Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bear Family Foundation Grant, grants from community leaders: Gulf Power, Sandy Sansing, Cox Communications, Escambia County Sheriff's Dept., and International Paper Partners: Big Brothers Big Sisters, UWF Kugelman's Honors Program. **Special thank you** to our friends at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida for your continued support by letting us use the Big Brothers Big Sisters space. We are so appreciative of your partnership and support as we continue to grow and provide this resource to the Pensacola community. If you would like to learn more about the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program please follow this link! <http://www.bbbsnwfl.org/>

# Valerie's House Pensacola

If you are moved by our mission and would like to get involved more by volunteering or serving on board, please reach out to Founder **Crista Brandt** (contact info below...)\_



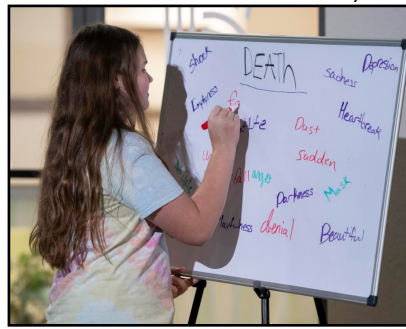
Our upper elementary age group meets in the foyer at BBBS. Chandler and Crista lead the group through opening check-in

Photo by: PNJ



Lower Elementary age group works on the nights activity: Masked Emotions

Photo by: PNJ



What I hate about Death Activity - kids add words that they associates with death on a white board during the Valerie's House group night "What I Hate About Death". We discuss these different emotions and then they will dip their cotton balls into the bowl of water; they take turns throwing the cotton ball(s) at the word/multiple words on the board. This is a healthy release of the emotions they are feeling; and eventually, the words/thoughts will be erased from the board.



Emma, Emma, and Savannah hang out during social time prior to the night's activities



Group night closing circle - all age groups come back together for closing announcements and hand squeeze around the room

## How to reach us...

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