



# HEALING THE SPIRIT



## Dear Donor Families,

It's Spring – and the National Donor Family Services Team has “sprung” into full action to provide opportunities for connections and healing.

Spring & Summer mean Donor Family Baseball game events – and they have been a “hit” with you! We had fast response to the invitations and the 75 tickets we had for each game were quickly claimed! A big thank you to the LifeNet Health Foundation for generously funding these popular events that remind us all that it's ok to smile and make new memories as we navigate our grief. It's also an opportunity to make connections with others who understand the grief journey.

The month of April saw three In Celebration & Remembrance events in VA with nearly 300 donor family members, recipients and LNH staff in attendance. These events are designed to remember your loved ones and the precious gifts of donation and to honor you – the cherished donor families. Dates for In Celebration & Remembrance events for FL and NW service areas:

- Jacksonville, FL – 9/7/24
- Pensacola, FL – 9/22/24
- Edmonds, WA – 10/5/24
- Billings, MT – 10/19/24

We hope you will mark your calendars and join us at these special events. Bring family and friends to share in remembering your loved ones. The connections made are another help in the healing journey.

We look forward to making many connections with you in 2024!

Spring 2024  
EX-2838.00

Healing the Spirit

Spring 2024

1-800-847-7831 | [healingthespirit.org](http://healingthespirit.org)



### UPCOMING EVENTS

## Spring/Summer Donor Family Baseball Game Events

Ball games have already taken place in Seattle, Pensacola & Jacksonville. All three games “sold out” quickly with many of you hoping to get off the waiting lists! Be sure to watch for the 2025 games and other events in the newsletter, LNH Donor Family Facebook page and the website [healingthespirit.org](http://healingthespirit.org).

**All families are invited to all events!**  
**Tickets are limited and must be reserved in advance!**



**Sunday, June 23 | 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 PM**

Augusta GreenJackets @ Salem Red Sox

CARILION CLINIC FIELD  
1004 Texas Street  
Salem, VA 24153



**RSVP TODAY**

*Food and drinks will be provided in a private area for dining and viewing the game. Available tickets are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Maximum 6 tickets per family.*

**Sunday, July 28 | 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM**

Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp @ Norfolk Tides

HARBOR PARK  
150 Park Avenue  
Norfolk, VA 23510



**RSVP TODAY**

*Food and drinks will be provided in a private area for dining and viewing the game. Available tickets are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Maximum 6 tickets per family.*

## Healing Tears



*Dear Dr. Leary:*

*My baby girl died at birth. I know other women who have lost children just months old. Family and friends try to console us up by telling us that we will get over our grief because we didn't have too much time to become attached and had not "invested" too much. We feel as though they are telling us that our child was not "real enough" to us. This makes us feel outraged, and alone as well as devastated. Am I crazy?*

Your grief is every bit as deep and profound as if you had nurtured your child into adulthood. A life is not more important or valuable because of their time on earth. Your outrage comes from having your grief unacknowledged, diminished, and not validated. Others who have not lost a child, whether in utero, at birth, or as infant, do not understand the magnitude or the meaning of your loss.

What you are experiencing is called "disenfranchised grief". It is grief that goes unrecognized and is not legitimized in our society. It is not deemed "as real" as other losses and so is not given the same respect, significance, or rituals as other deaths. Many parents who lose an adopted child also feel their grief invalidated and minimized.

The nature of your loss is sudden, and that factor compounds the intensity of your grief. The suddenness, lack of anticipation, and inability to prepare for the death leave you with feelings of being out of control and without support systems. Unlike the opportunities in an anticipated death such as terminal illness, you were not given the opportunity to say good-bye, to contribute to the care of your child, the time to understand the cause of death, and are left to struggle to find meaning.

One of the most important questions a grief therapist can ask a mourner is "to what extent, if any, had you expected the death of your loved one?" The answer guides caregivers with what strategies might be helpful.

The meaning of your loss is great. Your child has died. In addition, your legacy, hopes and dreams for the next generation in that child have been buried. You are grieving the loss of your child and all the hopes for the future attached to your child.

Next to our physical survival, the greatest need we have is to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, and to have our experience appreciated. Our most difficult times in grief are when our pain is not understood or permitted; when it is shunned or avoided, or our loss is deemed "less than" others.

You need to be heard; you need the facts as well as your emotions to be received, without judgement, interpretation, or advice. You need to hear from others that your grief is real, valid, and that it "okay to not be okay". The physical presence of a friend and the investment of time from an on-going relationship of support will help you heal.

Perhaps you can take this article to someone who asks you what they can do to help. If you can find one person who will genuinely listen to your pain as often as you need to visit it, rather than give you advice, you will be on your way toward healing. It is a lifelong journey, and only you can do it, but you do not have to be alone.

**Let it be,  
Lani**

*Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 35 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in eight hospices across the country.*

Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact us at [DFS@lifenethealth.org](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org).

## The Journey



### Your Grieving Needs

The LifeNet Health National Donor Family Services team is here to support your grieving needs. But what are those needs? Our programming uses the Six Needs of Mourners as identified by Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Specifically, these needs are:

- Acknowledging the reality of the death
- Embrace the pain of the loss
- Remember the person who died
- Develop a new self-identity
- Search for meaning
- Receive ongoing help from others

These needs are on-going as you reconcile the death of your loved one and there is no set time frame for how long grieving will take. For the full article on the Six Needs of Mourners, please click here: <https://www.centerforloss.com/grief/six-needs-mourning/>

Knowing you have support (especially when others around you may not realize you have these needs or understand how to help you) is part of why Donor Family Services is here!

## Donor Family Resources

- ❖ **Grief Companion Program** – Donor Family members understand the need for a listening ear from someone with a similar experience. These trained listeners can help when others don't seem to relate to your grief. For more information on having a Grief Companion or training to be a Grief Companion, please contact Paulette Cordes [paulette\\_cordes@lifenethealth.org](mailto:paulette_cordes@lifenethealth.org)
- ❖ **Donor Family Facebook Group** – We have a private Facebook page where LifeNet Health donor family members can share the ups and downs of living after a loss. The page also provides ongoing information about events, workshops, and remembrance ceremonies so that you don't miss a thing! For more information, please contact Chloe Reichert [chloe\\_reichert@lifenethealth.org](mailto:chloe_reichert@lifenethealth.org)
- ❖ **Healing the Spirit website** – Information on grief, remembering your loved one, and upcoming LifeNet Health events can be found on our website: [www.healingthespirit.org](http://www.healingthespirit.org)
- ❖ **Put your Grief into Action** – Many donor family members find healing through action. Opportunities are available:
  - Share Your Story (on social media, the LNH website, or speaking at LNH events)
  - Provide input and feedback on LNH support on a Donor Family Advisory Committee
  - Join the Community Ambassador Program to help educate others about donationFor more information, please contact [michaelv\\_jones@lifenethealth.org](mailto:michaelv_jones@lifenethealth.org)
- ❖ **Information on your loved one's donation** – Your loved one has left a legacy of love and compassion! We would be honored to share more specific information on how the gift of donation has impacted others through transplantation or research. Reach out to us:
  - [DFS@lifenethealth.org](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org)
  - Call us at 800-847-7831
  - Text us at 757-777-6134

If you would like more information on any Donor Family Service Programs, please contact us.

800.847.8731 | [DFS@lifenethealth.org](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org)