



## Dear Donor Families,

Autumn leaves have fallen as a signal to us things have changed. Often times the holiday season brings back cherished memories along with feelings of loss and deeper mourning. To the left in the *Announcements* section of this newsletter, you will find information on how to honor your loved one during our Live Virtual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony next month. Finding ways to honor those you are missing while also remembering to practice good self-care is so important. Wishing you peace and joy as we begin the holiday season.

With hope,

Debbie Hutt, DFS Director

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

800.847.8731 | DFS@lifenethealth.org

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**We are monitoring the current COVID-19 situation in hopes of returning to in-person events when it is safe to do so.**

#### Announcements:



#### Tree of Remembrance

Please Join Us for a Live Virtual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony. This holiday season, LifeNet Health will honor the generous spirit of our donors through a live virtual Tree of Remembrance Ceremony. Donor families across the United States are invited to join us virtually.

Sunday, Dec. 5, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. EST.  
<https://www.lifenethealth.org/healingthespirit/2021-tree-remembrance>

#### Help Us Decorate Our Tree

There are three ways you can provide an ornament:

- Mail in the ornament to Donor Family Services at 2900 Sabre St., Suite 800, Virginia Beach, VA 23452
- Drop off your ornament to Donor Family Services at the same address as above.
- Connect with us at <https://cvent.me/A3qRzx>  
By providing the needed information, an ornament will be placed on the tree.

Ornaments must be accompanied by the name of the donor, your contact information and must be received either physically or online by Nov. 26th. Questions? Please call 757-609-4671

## Healing Tears



*Dear Dr. Leary:*

*“I am dreading the holiday season. I used to look forward it but after losing my husband, nothing feels the same. My children are grown and want me to attend their gatherings but I am feeling really overwhelmed. What do you suggest I do to survive the holidays this year?”*

*Thank you, Weary Wife*

Dear Mary,

Please accept my condolences for the death of your beloved husband. Holidays and celebrations bring up our expectations and assumptions about what those special days are “suppose to” be about. “First” anniversaries or holidays without your loved one are especially challenging. It may feel as though a train is barreling down on you if you hold expectations for yourself or this season that do not match what you truly need. We may focus on what we do not have, and what has changed, rather than what we still have and those things that have not been altered. I do not advocate denying or minimizing your loss or your grief, but rather balancing it by choosing to focus on what remains. What is still present is his legacy of love, the memories and demonstrations of that love, and the love you continue to carry.

Traditions of the past can be woven into new traditions so that past memories and their meanings are not completely left behind. You can return to rituals and ceremonies that honor your loved one, finding meaning and solace in a shared experience with family and friends. You will be in community with each other, and the connection can make your loss more bearable.

Rituals and celebrations are important to mark lives lived, and those that have passed. Each of your heartaches is unique and none of it is common...but you have much in common. You grieve because you have loved. You come together again to remember and honor that love, and you come to these holiday celebrations because it is here that you are given permission, time, safety, and validation to remember and to grieve. Therefore, it may be helpful to not “skip” the holidays.

Together, during these remembrance celebrations, you do not need to be afraid that you will forget or that your loved ones will be forgotten. You can speak their name; you can tell their stories; you carry on their legacy; you share your loved one with others. Just having a caring environment in which you can express your feelings and be heard is profoundly healing.

You mention that you feel overwhelmed. Decisions of celebrations that you made in the past can be shared or changed to fit your current needs and new reality. Include your family as you plan for the holidays and talk about what will be different, as well as ways to remember your husband. Remember that each family member may have different feelings, needs and understandings about the holidays, but together you can weave a strong tapestry of love. Respect each other’s differences and capacity to share their experience, all the while respecting what you need and find ways to receive their support.

You can make new rules and traditions if that feels healing to you. To reduce some of the feelings of expectations from others, you might decide to accept fewer invitations; be aware of which gatherings feel comforting and which feel draining, and act accordingly in your own best interest.

The holidays will come no matter what you do, but rather than isolate and move through your grief alone, I encourage you to treat yourself like someone who deserves your support and compassion. If you cannot

advocate for yourself, find someone who will, and check in with them regularly. This is the time to ask for additional support with time for yourself, time with an understanding friend or therapist, and use community resources to address the stress of this time of year.

Please be honest with yourself and be aware of what you need moment to moment, and then take the step to find those who honor your grief and will respect your requests. Ask for what you need. You deserve compassion and permission to move through the holidays as you feel is most helpful.

My thoughts are with you,

Lani

Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 25 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in six hospices across the country.

Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact Aimee Evans at [aimee\\_evans@lifenethealth.org](mailto:aimee_evans@lifenethealth.org).



## Donor Family Story

### Terri Herrington Living Kidney Donor & Donor Wife

“Bryan would have been amazed at the legacy we’ve created”

In July of 2004, Terri Herrington’s 35 year old husband, Bryan died from a head injury after he fell from their roof. As a donor he was able to save four people through organ transplants and help countless others through tissue donation. Hearing from recipients can be incredibly healing for Donor Families. This was true for Terri, who was touched when the recipient of Bryan’s pancreas and kidney reached out to her with gratitude for the gift of life he received. In this particular connection, Terri and her sons kept in touch with Bryan’s recipient via calls, in-person meetings and through social media platforms. In fact, they had been in contact for 15 years when Bryan’s transplanted kidney began to fail.

Instead of focusing on the sadness that can come from this situation, Terri took immediate action to help by volunteering one of her own kidneys to take the place of Bryan’s. The transplant was a success and this lucky recipient carries with him Bryan’s pancreas and a kidney from his wife Terri. Terri finds comfort in knowing she and Bryan are working together to help give life to this very special man who refers to Terri as an angel. The uniqueness of this journey is phenomenal. It highlights donation after death as well as living donation. It encompasses the spirit of giving and caring for our fellow community members. It is a story of kindness and connection. In addition to these wonderful donation gifts, Terri also volunteers her time to promote donation serving as an Ambassador for *The United Network for Organ Sharing* as well as being a supportive member of the *LifeNet Health Donor Family Advisory Committee*. But her and Bryan’s legacy does not stop there, her son has pledged that if she should ever needs a kidney, he is first in line to donate one to her.



## The Journey

### How to Get the Support You Need

**Aimee Evans** *LifeNet Health Donor Family Advocate*

For most of us, our connections with our families, friends and community bring us a deep sense of belonging and purpose. But often times, when we are grieving, we pull back from those around us and focus within due to the paralyzing feelings of loss and despair. Sometimes it is hard to be sure of what to ask for or know what will help you feel better. You may be experiencing physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral or spiritual distress as all of these areas are impacted by stress. Losing the people we love is one of the most stressful things a person can face in their lifetime. Letting others know you are in need of support does not mean you are weak. In fact, it takes a great deal of strength to advocate for yourself.

You might be wondering how you can approach others with your needs as well as how to decide who to confide in. Dr. Kenneth J. Doka, *Senior Vice President of Grief Programs at Hospice Foundation of America* and author of multiple books on death and grieving, is well known for advising people to use his *DLR Model* when setting your expectations for others. In this model, those who are grieving make a list of the individuals whom make up their support system. First list each person by name and then categorize them by what type of support they are best at providing. An individual who is great at doing things to help, like running errands, would be labeled as a “Doer”. Someone who is better at listening and talking through your feelings could be labeled as a “Listener” and those who are a good distraction from the grief could be referred to as “Respite” providers. Respite providers are the ones you may call when you need a night of fun. Setting realistic expectations in this way allows you to have a go to list of who can help you in their own way when you are feeling overwhelmed. To view his recent webinar *Asking For Help When Grieving*, through the TAPS organization, go to: <https://www.taps.org/video/2021/asking-for-help> .

Give yourself permission to do what allows you cope and adjust to the new chapter in your life. Be a friend to yourself and advocate for what you need. Some people in your life may not understand your choices but that is okay. No two people grieve the same way or need the same type of supports. If you feel that your family and friends cannot provide the type of support you need, please consider reaching out for formal options. There are many support group and counseling options for grief and loss. You can begin your search by logging onto websites like *Hospice Foundation of America* [https://hospicefoundation.org/Grief-\(1\)/Support-Groups](https://hospicefoundation.org/Grief-(1)/Support-Groups) and *Compassionate Friends* <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/> .