

# 2021 Annual Report



## Jessica's House

*Grief support for children, teens,  
young adults and their families*



1

## warm and welcoming new permanent home



**We could not wait until the end of this report to share this exciting news. In summer 2021, after 9 years of leasing a small house in downtown Turlock, we moved into our newly constructed, \$6.8 million community-funded, 15,600 square foot permanent home. Now we are supporting more children than ever before. And we are still celebrating this tremendous milestone!**

# 1 essential mission

One in thirteen children will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the age of 18. This staggering statistic is why our mission is essential: To provide support in a safe place for children, teens, young adults and their families grieving a death, because no one should grieve alone.





## valley-wide region served

Jessica's House serves families from throughout the Central Valley, especially the Stanislaus and Merced County region. Because grief knows no boundaries, Jessica's House is here to support all families who are grieving, no matter where they reside.

# 9

## specialized peer support groups

Every weeknight, dozens of children, teens, young adults and their adult caregivers gather at Jessica's House to find hope and healing. Family members living with grief are placed in peer support groups by age, type of loss and the relationship to the

person who died. We offer support for our families through these specialized groups:

- **Parent Loss**
- **Sibling Loss**
- **Grandparent Loss**
- **HeartStrings (stillbirth and pregnancy loss)**
- **Hope After Accidental Overdose (new)**
- **COVID-19 Loss**
- **Spanish Language**
- **Hope After Homicide**
- **Hope After Suicide**





## **school districts supported**

The pandemic limited our ability to offer regularly scheduled, in-person support groups on campus in 2020-21. However, following the death of their cherished classmates, our teams provided virtual and in-person grief support to 112 students within the Ceres, Hilmar, and Turlock school districts.

Our staff and volunteers work with school personnel to ensure they have the resources and training to provide an environment that is sensitive to the needs of children who are grieving.

For the first eight months of 2021, grief support was offered virtually while adhering to the pandemic guidelines set forth by the Stanislaus County Public Health Department. Our team connected virtually with hundreds of children and their adult caregivers through 225 virtual grief support group sessions. At last, in September 2021 we were able to resume in-person grief support while wearing masks. For the first time in our new home, we facilitated 77 in-person support groups between September and December 2021.

# 302

peer support  
groups facilitated

- 376** Parent Loss Support Group participants
- 131** Sibling Loss Support Group participants
- 128** Hope After Suicide Support Group participants
- 85** Grandparent Loss Group participants
- 63** HeartStrings Support Group participants
- 44** Hope After Homicide Support Group participants
- 39** COVID-19 Loss Support Group participants
- 39** Spanish Language Support Group participants
- 980** Total number of children, teens, young adults and their caregivers supported (includes kids in school-based groups)



5  
365  
3

## families supported

At Jessica's House, we are one big family of staff and trained volunteers who collectively supported 365 families in 2021. Our weeknight support groups begin with our families gathering for pizza in our dining room, before their specialized group sessions begin. Providing a simple meal in advance of group eases the caregiver's burden of making mealtime happen before they arrive at Jessica's House.







*grieving children supported*

**625**

Eva's mommy died of cancer. Brandon's daddy was shot. Maria's brother died of suicide. And Hector's baby sister died before she was born. Their names have been changed, but their stories are real. Hundreds of children sought grief support at Jessica's House in 2021, each child with a story of their own. Some walked through our front door reluctantly for the very first time. Others arrived with hope. While each of their stories is unique, they all sought healing. And we gratefully accompanied and supported more than 625 children on their journey because no child should grieve alone.

# 14 new therapeutic spaces

Not previously available in our small, leased house, our new home features 14 uniquely different therapeutic spaces. In these spaces, children process their grief in their own way as they choose from a range of therapeutic-based activities. As children tell their stories in a safe place, they build connections with others who share similar losses.

DRAMATIC PLAYROOM

HOSPITAL PLAYROOM

LITTLES OUTDOOR PLAY AREA

LITTLES PLAYROOM

MIDDLES TALKING ROOM

MUSIC ROOM

PRE-LITTLES PLAYROOM

SAND PLAYROOM

SENSORY ROOM

SLOW MOVEMENT ROOM

TEEN ACTIVITY ROOM

TIME MACHINE

TEEN QUIET ROOM

VOLCANO ROOM



# 100s

of therapeutic activities

Hope and healing take place as children express themselves through age-specific therapeutic activities. In the Art Room, children create picture collages using magazine images that remind them of the person who died, or what they hope their life will look like in the future. In the Music Room they write lyrics that express their emotions. They create rhythm on HAPI drums that represent their grief. In the Volcano Room, children express anger as they throw foam blocks. After letting out big emotions, they calm in the Sensory Room. In the Hospital Playroom, they journal about the times they felt afraid while visiting their loved one in a hospital room. In the Slow Movement Room, they do yoga and can “Breathe Like a Bear,” as they inhale, then exhale while waving ribbon streamers to feel calm and focused. And in the backyard garden, they tend, nurture and observe the life and death cycles through plants, flowers and vegetables.



# 87,000+

deaths by overdose



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in the 12 months ending September 2020, more than 87,000\* people died of drug overdoses in the US. In Stanislaus County, there were 132\* deaths by overdose, a 50% increase over 2019.

In response to the growing number of families who are impacted by an overdose death, Jessica's House launched the new "Hope after Accidental Overdose" support group. Through this group, grieving families support each other in the uniqueness of grieving the death of a loved one by accidental overdose.



# 2

## **years operating during a global pandemic**

At all times, not just during a pandemic, the health and safety of our families, volunteers and staff is our top priority. During the pandemic, we followed and monitored the recommendations of the experts at Stanislaus County Public Health. At the beginning of the year, we delivered services to our families virtually. We were so grateful that in fall 2021, when the guidelines were updated, we were able to resume meeting in person for the first time since March 2020. First virtually, and eventually in person, our COVID-19 Loss group supported 10 children who were grieving the loss of a loved one who died during the pandemic.



**zero  
cost to  
families**

It costs \$1,500 for one child to receive services at Jessica's House. However, there is never a cost to families thanks to generous donors who recognize that families in grief should never worry about the cost of support. Our approach mirrors nationally established best practices for children's grief centers.

GRIEF COMES IN  
WAVES BUT YOU  
NEVER KNOW WHICH  
TYPE IT WILL BE.

CALM  
RIPPLE  
STORMY  
TIDAL  
TSUNAMI

@WE.ARE.THE.PEEKS

8,058

**social media  
followers**

What type of wave are you feeling? Today, we feel calm. Beyond the walls of Jessica's House, we extend support to those who are grieving even through our social media platforms. Our tweets, stories, reels and posts help those who need to share and be heard. And we are listening. Our social media outreach is demonstrated in this successful Facebook post that generated 1.1K likes, 225 shares and 258 comments.



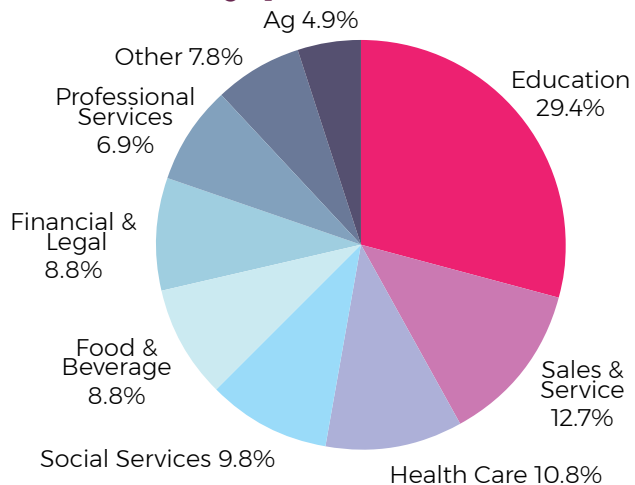
# 4,291

## volunteer hours donated

They are the heart of Jessica's House. Our 188 volunteers represent a variety of professions, including teachers, farmers, florists, musicians, social workers, jewelers, food service workers and more. Others are college interns, studying to pursue careers in services related to children and grief. Yet no matter their profession, they all have one thing in common—a heart to support families who are grieving. By day they are in their own workplaces, classrooms and homes. But by night, our trained volunteers are at Jessica's House, serving as family greeters, group facilitators, administrative support, and representing us at community events.

## estimated value \$150,185

## volunteers by profession





10

## full-time team members

“Other duties as assigned,” is how we roll. Jessica’s House staff are a caring, compassionate and flexible team of grief support professionals. They do whatever it takes to get the job done, and this year was like none other. Our team started the year providing virtual grief support on Zoom for 11 of the 12 months. In early summer, they rolled up their sleeves to pack up our leased space and unpack over 500 boxes at our permanent home. Then, they donned masks to conduct tours of our new home for 1,000+ special guests during our grand opening week. And in the fall, they pivoted to host our first in-person group sessions after being virtual for the 18 previous months. What’s another term for “Superhero” you ask? It’s “Jessica’s House team member.”



135

## Heart Circle Contributors

These individuals and organizations provided the resources to build a permanent new home for Jessica's House and to extend our caring support to more children, teens, young adults, and their families.

### VIOLET

*Contributors of \$250,000 or more*

EMC Health, Inc.  
For Healing Hearts Steering  
Committee Members

### JADE

*Contributors of \$100,000 up to \$250,000*

Bill and Carolyn Ahlem Family  
Ken and Lori Braden  
The Clauss Family  
E. & J. Gallo Winery and Family  
Barbara Garcia and Family  
The John and Jeani Ferrari  
Family Foundation  
The Foster Family  
Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc.  
Legacy Health Endowment  
Anonymous  
The Rogers Family  
Dorothy J. Rohn  
Bob and Brenda Schmidt  
Select Harvest USA

### AMBER

*Contributors of \$50,000 up to \$100,000*

Michael and Alison Allen  
Kayla Bernardi BEE Positive Foundation  
Ken Bethel  
Kevin and Melanie Chiesa &  
Ron and Jane Martella  
Dick Cunningham  
Dean and Liz Doerksen  
The Garton Family  
J & T Cattle Company  
McCulla Family Foundation  
In Loving Memory of Al and Patti Mendes  
MK Electric & Design, Inc.  
Robert and Dana Nicholson  
Robert and Shawna Nunes  
Spycher Brothers  
Matt and Maria Swanson  
Richard and Andrea Swanson  
Doug Ulrich  
Phil, Alan and Dominic Vallarine  
The Vieira Family  
Steve and Arlene Vilas  
Zenith Agribusiness Solutions

### POPPY

*Contributors of \$25,000 up to \$50,000*

Harold and Marlene Agresti Family  
Jim and Carol Ahlem  
Cody and Belle Alldrin  
John and Rebecca Arellano  
Dr. and Mrs. Gary Baker  
Tam Cordray  
Nancy Daley  
Aaron and Stephanie Hackler  
Ladd and Christine Hackler  
Nicholas and Jill Hackler  
Lander Veterinary Clinic  
Dr. Filipe and Melissa Lima  
Al and Carol Litfin  
Mitch and Terisa Logsdon -  
United Equipment Company  
Victor and Angela Martino  
Priscilla Peters  
Neil Sims and Timothy Lucas  
Larry and Candy Smith,  
Smith Chevrolet Cadillac  
Troy and Cassie Starn  
Winton-Ireland, Strom & Green  
Insurance Agency  
David and Elizabeth Woods

## INDIGO

*Contributors of \$10,000 up to \$25,000*

Grant and Melissa Ahlem  
Mark and Lindsay Ahlem  
Dr. Christopher and Sarah Akin  
Anonymous  
Cederlind Farms, Mary Lou, Jeff and Cindy  
Charles Ahlem Farms  
Anonymous  
Nathan and Amy Dabulewicz -  
Dabulewicz Insurance Agency  
Danielle's Gift  
Jay and Melinda DeGraff -  
The Greenery Nursery  
Fred and Kelli De Jong  
The Dirkse Family  
Michael and Danielle Everett  
Brian and Linda Genzoli  
Janelle Gray  
Grizzly Nut, LLC  
Brad and Lori Hansen  
Fred and Judi Honoré  
Duane and Barbara Matheron  
Kurt and Kelly McKenzie  
Allan and Carla Merrill  
Oak Valley Community Bank  
Smallwood Familia

Tom and Debbi Sperry  
MacKenzie Spycher  
Van and Nancy Switzer  
The Tanis Family  
Ulrich Management & Consulting  
Stephen and Sandy Vieira  
The Stuhmer Family  
Valley Heritage Realty  
Toni Ward  
Jack and Pat Wilkey  
Gloria Woods

## SCARLET

*Contributors of \$5,000 up to \$10,000*

Chris and Constance Anderson  
Curt and Julie Andre  
Dr. Harsha and Amy Bingi  
Larry and Judy Christoffersen  
Michael and Jonette Crowell Family  
Dr. Patrick Donovan and Cynthia Byers  
Chipponeri Electric, Inc.  
Ron and Lynn Dickerson  
The Dyt Family  
Bob and Carole Fernandes  
Janelle Foster  
Russ and Anita Garman  
Harmon-Redfern Family

Jim and Kathy Heller  
insureCAL Insurance Agency  
Flora Jacob  
Rod and Randee Jorritsma  
Tom and Gay Locke  
Rich and Joann McFerron  
Craig and Denise McIntire  
Don Morelli  
Anonymous  
The Pallios Family  
Bryan and Kirsten Saint  
Francis and Dumarina Sarguis  
Joseph and Bethany Simile  
Stephen and Kathleen Smith  
Filomena Sousa  
Stante Family  
Bret and Sheri Sutterley  
Alan and Diane Tate  
John and Janene Temple, Inspirations Salon  
Matt and Heather Thomas  
Turlock Lions Club  
Steve and Mary Volk  
Arlon and Susan Waterson  
Western Valley Insurance Associates, Inc.  
Yosemite Farm Credit, ACA  
Debbie Smith Zylstra

# \$156,736

## **general donations**

Even during the For Healing Hearts Capital Campaign, Jessica House received donations to keep our programs strong while we prepared to move into our new home. Heart Circle donors (see page 18-19) contributed additional funds for future investment in the program to ensure we are ready for every family in their time of need. Our goal for the future is to ensure we never have a wait list for families in need of support from Jessica's House.

We appreciate gifts of any amount because it takes a full, caring community to serve our families for no charge. In addition to capital campaign and annual giving commitments, generosity is extended through general donations, memorials and honorariums, community fundraisers, year-end giving, our wish list and dedicated funds to support a child who is grieving.





## **SUPPORT AND REVENUE SOURCES**

<b>Contributions</b>	<b>\$156,736.85</b>
<b>EMC Health Contributions</b>	<b>\$678,283.38</b>
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$835,020.23</b>

## **EXPENSES**

<b>Program Services</b>	<b>\$709,827.78</b>
<b>Management and General</b>	<b>\$44,112.19</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$81,080.26</b>
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$835,020.23</b>

Fiscal Year 2020-21  
(October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021)

## \$6.8 Million Capital Campaign Success

In 2021 we fulfilled the dream of building a permanent home for Jessica's House. The project team did an amazing job in keeping the cost within 7% of our original \$6 million funding goal – helped by generous in-kind contributions to keep our cash needs to just over \$6,416,000.

Meanwhile the total donations to the For Healing Hearts Capital Campaign were nearly 28% over our \$3 million target to match EMC Health. Wow! As a result of this amazing generosity, the new home for Jessica's House was finished with all costs covered by donations, and more than \$415,000 in reserve to support children, teens, young adults, and their families at their time of need. Thank you to our caring and generous community!



# for healing hearts

## A Capital Campaign for Jessica's House

### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

<b>Violet: EMC Health, Inc. Match</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>
<b>Jade: \$100,000 or more / under \$250,000</b>	<b>\$1,790,000</b>
<b>Amber: \$50,000 or more / under \$100,000</b>	<b>\$939,000</b>
<b>Poppy: \$25,000 or more / under \$50,000</b>	<b>\$475,008</b>
<b>Indigo: \$10,000 or more / under \$25,000</b>	<b>\$327,000</b>
<b>Scarlet: \$5,000 or more / under \$10,000</b>	<b>\$148,500</b>
<b>Campaign Gifts Under \$5,000 / Building Blocks</b>	<b>\$151,331</b>

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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,830,839</b>
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### PERMANENT HOME CONSTRUCTION

<b>Construction Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,584,839</b>
<b>Total Soft Costs</b>	<b>\$ 831,280</b>

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<b>Total Campaign/ Construction Expenses:</b>	<b>\$6,416,199</b>
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An additional \$158,268 of in-kind goods or services were donated to the project.



## Launching our First Heart Circle Drive

In the fall of 2021 Jessica's House launched the first Heart Circle Drive to give more children, teens and young adults access to best-practice grief support, and the chance to heal and hope again.

Every \$1,500 raised supports another child through grief, ensuring families will always find an open door and open arms at Jessica's House providing them with renewed hope and strength.

*Special thanks to the 2021-2022 Heart Circle Council*

### 2021-22 Heart Circle Council:

Nancy Daley, Chair

Brad Hansen

Judi Honoré

Melissa Lima

Colbie McRae

Bob Nicholson

Bryan Saint

Gloria Smallwood

Susan Waterson



# HEALING

As I reflect on 2021, the word “healing” comes to mind. Families who were on our waiting list were welcomed into our new home. And they began their healing. And even personally I was healing through the loss of my son, Carter.

We wore masks, and then we didn’t, and then we did again. We heard news about virus vaccinations and monitored the ever-changing state and federal guidelines. We were under construction with our new home and simultaneously conducting a \$6 million capital campaign. We worked virtually, from various nooks and crannies of our own homes and met on Zoom. We connected with longtime volunteers, and recruited new ones. We reviewed revised blueprints and selected from an array of interior and exterior paint colors. We recruited service clubs to help with the move and packing of boxes in our leased house that we had not occupied since the pandemic restricted our occupancy. We planned our grand opening celebrations, not knowing if in-person events would be allowed by the time we counted down to our ribbon cutting. And we oriented new families while adjusting to delivering in-person grief support services for the first time in our permanent home.

Through our ambitious goals and wavering challenges, the team never lost focus of our mission—to support children, teens and young adults who are grieving. Grief is fresh and strong in our family’s hearts, and we couldn’t wait to support them in their healing in our new home.

Jessica’s House has always been about healing, but 2021 elevated our trust in our natural capacity to heal. Just like the *I am Safe* song that we sing with our littles at the close of each group that says, “everything will be okay.” It was. It is. And it will be. . .

Thank you, every single one of you, for your resounding commitment to healing in 2021. May we continue our devotion to ensure that NO child in our community will ever grieve alone.



With sincere gratitude,

**Erin Nelson, ACTP**

Founder and Executive Director  
Jessica’s House

