



# HEALING THE SPIRIT



## Dear Donor Families,

Spring brings warmer, brighter days along with new leaves on the trees and flowers in the gardens. Pictured above is the Donor Memorial Garden located at the LifeNet Health Corporate Headquarters in Virginia Beach. On the September 16, 2010, donor father and ordained Presbyterian minister Jon Barton dedicated this garden to those who have given the ultimate gift. This garden is just one of the ways LifeNet Health honors donors and their families, as well as the mission to Save Lives, Restore Health and Give Hope. There are so many wonderful ways to celebrate those you love, whether it is through gardening, volunteering, sharing your story with others or joining in on our *In Remembrance and Celebration* ceremonies each year. We welcome you to find a way that helps you as you travel on your grief journey.

With hope,

*Debbie*

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](mailto:DFS@lifenethealth.org)

Spring 2021

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

#### In Celebration & Remembrance Ceremony

Did you know you can watch the 2021 IC&R ceremony at your convenience? Here is a link to our donor family website, Healing the Spirit, where you can view the ceremony whenever you choose. Find it under the Events Section.

[www.healingthespirit.org](http://www.healingthespirit.org)

**Free Webinars by TAPS**  
(The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing)

#### Live

Register to participate live:  
**May 20<sup>th</sup>: Grief Leadership**  
**12 am to 1:30 pm ET / 3 pm PST to 4:30 pm**

**To find out more and register, log into:**  
<https://www.taps.org/institute>

#### On-Demand

View at your own convenience:  
[Understanding Children's Grief](https://www.taps.org/webinar/2018/child-grief)

<https://www.taps.org/webinar/2018/child-grief>

# Healing Tears



**Dear Dr. Leary:**

***I am struggling to find a way to honor my late husband. Now that spring is here, I am thinking about starting a garden but am worried I might get upset when the plants die or don't do well. What are your thoughts on planting a garden as a way to grieve?"***

**Thank you, A Loving Wife**

**Dear Loving Wife,**

*It seems to me that creating a garden is a demonstration of your attention and tender loving care. When you place your focus on your intention to care for, tend, and appreciate your garden you can bring back the memories of the care and love you demonstrated for your husband. Yes, plants bloom and their flowers fade; plants emerge in the spring and die back in the winter; gardens are the reflection of the cycles we all experience. Let yourself trust your own strength to come back after loss, to feel your own spring after your winter.*

*I believe you are strong enough to let yourself feel upset if a plant does not thrive. It may be just the opportunity you need, like an invitation, to release the tears and pain that are stored in your body. Your grief is not a problem to be locked away or not expressed; the feelings are a natural and normal response to your husband's absence. I encourage you to be with whatever feelings arise, and to not be afraid or push them away.*

*Your garden can be a peaceful and healing place for you to remember your husband. You might want to plant his favorite flower, or a plant that reminds you of him. If he loved birds, placing a birdbath or birdhouse in the garden might shift your focus from what might go wrong, to remembrances of things that brought him joy. You can also incorporate more permanent things into your garden such as steppingstones, wind chimes, statues, or a bench that can remind you of your husband without the worry. I hope you can grieve in your garden. I hope you can give yourself over to the beauty and the wonder of a garden and focus on the blessings and the gifts, as you count the blessings and memories of your life with your husband.*

**Thinking of 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@lifenethhealth.org](mailto:aimee_evans@lifenethhealth.org).**



## Donor Family Story

### Katie Barton | Organ & Cornea Donor

“Wise beyond her years, Katie was always someone who was sharing and thinking of others.”

At 17 years old, Katie Barton was a beautiful young woman, full of life with a world of possibilities just beginning to unfold. She was looking forward to her senior year at Powhatan High School and enjoyed her job at the Children’s Academy working in the daycare.

Wednesday, June 18, 2003, began much like any other day. Katie set out in her car with the plan to stop by to see her special someone for a little while before going to work that morning. Less than a mile from her house, on a road she traveled hundreds of times before, something distracted her. Katie’s car drifted off the side of the road and in an attempt to get the car back on the road she overcorrected. Just as she lost control of her car, an oncoming vehicle approached and was not able to avoid a collision with Katie’s car. For days on end, there was an ongoing vigil inside and outside the hospital where Katie was taken. There were 40-50 people at any one time at Katie’s side praying for a miracle.

During her young life, Katie had felt strongly about being an organ and tissue donor. She had encouraged countless others to become donors just as she had done. Her father, Jon Barton, recalls her as “Wise beyond her years and was always someone who was sharing and thinking of others.” When it was determined that Katie had experienced brain death, her wish to help others through becoming a donor was granted. With the gifts of her liver, kidney, and corneas, she gave a new life and sight to others. She also provided another gift; by being a donor, she connected her family to the support provided within the donation community. Jon Barton currently serves on the LifeNet Health Board of Directors as he has for the past six years. He is also a current (and founding) member of the Faith Leaders’ Summit Steering Committee. Please see the next section to view pictures of the garden he created in honor of Katie.

## The Journey

### Sowing the Seeds of Hope

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



One of the most therapeutic activities a person can do is put their energy into nurturing and growing a garden. Connecting with Mother Nature while bringing beauty and gifts into the world feeds the soul; it may even feed your belly if you plant fruits and vegetables. Creating a healing garden in your own yard is a labor of love. It is an activity you can choose to do alone, with your family, your friends or community. Former First Lady of the United States, Lady Bird Johnson, is quoted as saying, “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” The circle of life touches all things in our world. The Healing Garden helps us realize there is a cycle we witness in nature. Accepting the cycle of living and

dying can be very cathartic as you tend to the seasons of change in the garden setting.

As you choose the theme of your garden think about your loved one(s); what things remind you of them? For instance, if your loved one enjoyed baseball you could design a garden with decorations like a “home plate.” You could also choose a theme that is more about the feeling of the garden by adding windchimes or glass marbles. There is no limit to your imagination and creativity in your Healing Garden. You can personalize it as much as you would like in relation to your loved one or create it as a place of serenity.

As you begin your garden, be careful to pick plants, trees and other items based on their life cycle. It is helpful to explain to all garden helpers that some plants only bloom for one season, some return every year (with the proper care) and some like trees can outlive those who plant them. It is also advisable to note the continuum of care for the items you have planted. When designing your Healing Garden, keep in mind the time it may require tending it. This will include watering and other possible activities like fertilizing and trimming.

Deciding how to enjoy your garden is completely up to you. It may be a place you visit daily, weekly, or maybe just on special occasions to celebrate and remember your loved one(s). Your garden area may be a place you walk through or one you prefer a bench or chair to have tranquil moments of solitude. If you do not have a yard to work with, a planter box in your apartment window, a kitchen window collection of plants or a place in the community to help contribute to a larger garden can be just as healing.

**Shown below is the garden Donor Dad, Jon Barton, created for his daughter, Katie.**



Spring is a perfect time to sow the seeds of love and hope. Jon lost his precious Katie 18 years ago. The love he continues to feel for her shines through in his beautiful garden. Here at LifeNet Health, we honor the legacy of all our donors infinitely. We invite all donor families to walk through our Donor Memorial Garden and celebrate those who have given the ultimate gift to others.