

***“I never imagined that I would find the help I needed because of the global pandemic”***

October 12<sup>th</sup> is the one-year anniversary of my husband Michael’s sudden death. He was 46, healthy, and taken from me and our daughter too soon.

Sofia barely talked for weeks after the funeral. As I mourned the death of my best friend, she mourned the death of her hero. Months later, my smiling, happy Sofia had still not come back. I pushed aside my grief to focus on the needs of our family. I learned about OUR HOUSE from a friend, but with everything else going on, couldn’t figure out how to make the time commitment work.

When the pandemic hit, everything changed. I was furloughed from my job and Sofia was schooling from home. I felt much more isolated away from friends, family, and co-workers, but I also had more time because I was staying at home.

I learned that OUR HOUSE was doing groups online and that made it so much easier for me and Sofia. By joining a children’s group, Sofia discovered she wasn’t the only kid who had lost a parent. Best of all, I could also join a group and know that what I’m facing is normal because other widows and widowers are facing the same challenges. I was also grateful that OUR HOUSE would work within my budget so we could both attend group.

My group gave me the space to grieve honestly and openly for my husband, and I feel so supported by these new friends who understand the pain, devastation, and loss. I can see such a difference in Sofia, too. She is now smiling a little bit more and talking about her feelings.

I never imagined I would have to face a global pandemic by myself; because of my OUR HOUSE group I don’t have to. It’s been almost a year since Michael died, and there is still pain every day, but I’m grateful there’s a place where my daughter and I can go to be with people who understand the pain and join us in remembering.

-Elizabeth

