

# Loving Nicole

A drunk driver killed our daughter and changed our world forever

Written by Valoree Lalime

Bill and Valoree Lalime remember their beloved daughter Nicole, who died tragically after being hit by a drunk driver on her way home from school. In memory of Nicole, Valoree joined Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and now speaks to others about how drinking and driving destroys lives.

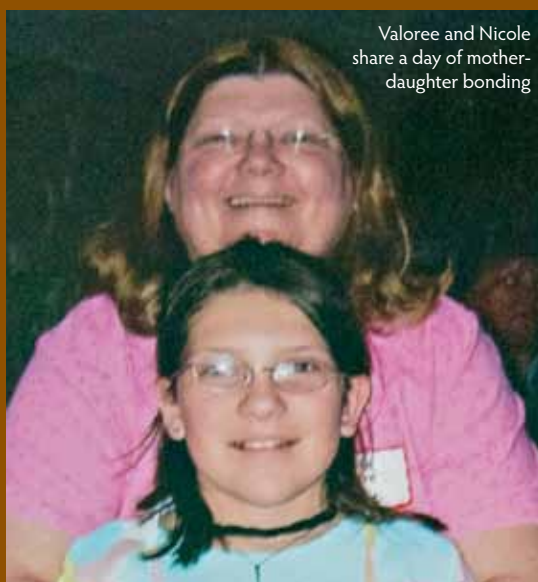


Photo by Suzi Issa

**O**n Dec. 16, 2008, I took my 13-year-old daughter Nicole to school. After attending private school for some time, she had just returned to Bleyl Middle School six weeks before. She changed significantly in the year and a half she was away at private school, becoming a young woman and looking more mature. On that December morning, we kissed goodbye, and I told her how much I loved her. She said, "Have a good day, Mom!" I didn't know at the time how much those words would mean to me later that day.



One of the last photos taken of Nicole, who was just 13 years old



Valoree and Nicole share a day of mother-daughter bonding



Nicole was a talented kid who put her heart into everything she did

### **An Unthinkable Phone Call**

That afternoon, I received a text message from her about a bad progress report saying she wasn't going to lie about it and would accept the consequences for the bad grades. I texted her back, but didn't receive a response. About 10 minutes later, I received a phone call. Thinking it was Nicole, I was surprised when I heard my husband Bill's voice instead. He was upset and said Nicole had been in an accident and that I needed to go to the hospital close to our home. He said he would meet me there.

I didn't know what to think. I was nervous, but trying to stay calm. When I called the hospital, they wouldn't give me any information, but said to get there safely. I was 30 minutes away, and the traffic was horrible. I called a friend asking if she could go there and be with Nicole.

### **Making Sense of the Chaos**

When I arrived at the hospital, I was escorted to the emergency room. I remember seeing so many people crying and looking worried. There was a flurry of activity. Someone told me that Nicole was having a CT scan, but she soon would be back and they would know more about her injuries. Someone announced, "They got him," but I didn't know what they were talking about. When I asked, the response was a mother's worst nightmare.

Nicole had just gotten off the school bus and was walking through the edge of a neighbor's yard towards our home. A repeat drunk

driver, going 65 to 75 miles per hour in the neighborhood, ran two stop signs and clipped the school bus before veering off the street and hitting Nicole. His blood alcohol level was 0.19, nearly three times the legal limit. He left the scene, leaving Nicole like a dead animal in the street.

I ran to my husband, who was trying to be positive in the chaotic situation. The doctor came in and told us Nicole's injuries were very severe. Her top cervical spine was crushed with serious damage to the spinal cord. She had bilateral head injuries and had been down for 40 minutes at the scene. They got her heart started once she was at the hospital. She was unconscious, full of tubes, and not breathing on her own. But Bill and I attempted to remain positive. They said her condition was critical and they didn't have the ability to provide the care she needed. She would have to be transported to Texas Children's Hospital.

### **Race Against Time**

It was too foggy for the medical helicopter to fly, so we waited for an ambulance. The wait seemed to take forever as each minute ticked away. Once the ambulance finally arrived, I climbed in the back with my daughter. It was dark and traffic was very heavy as we drove across town. About 25 minutes into the ride, the paramedics suddenly told the driver he needed to hurry – Nicole had gone into full cardiac arrest. The paramedics started CPR, and all I could do was pray as I cried, "Please, please, please, don't take Nicole from us," but the traffic wouldn't move. Nobody cared that my daughter was dying in this ambulance.

Bill and Valoree with their oldest daughter Michelle and their grandchildren.



## Take Action!

The Southeast Texas chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving includes the Cy-Fair area. Help make a change in current laws, donate to MADD, or find upcoming meetings and events by visiting the chapter's website at [madd.org/local-offices/tx/southeast-texas](http://madd.org/local-offices/tx/southeast-texas)

Finally, we arrived at the hospital. Paramedics continued with CPR, sweat pouring off their faces as they wheeled my daughter into the ER. It didn't work. Nicole was gone.

My attention turned to my husband and our older daughter Michelle who had arrived. How would Bill handle losing his sweet daughter who he adored? Michelle, nine months pregnant, was worried about me, saying, "You will be okay, Mom. You will be okay, right? I need you to be okay!"

We were in shock. Our daughter was dead. How could someone drive through our neighborhood, drunk at 3 p.m., and kill our daughter just after she got off the school bus? How does something like this happen? Why?

### Taking Action

That night, we went to Michelle and her husband's home and tried to go to sleep. We couldn't. About 2:30 a.m., less than 12 hours after this nightmare began, I received a phone call from someone at Life Gift. We agreed to donate Nicole's organs. She would have wanted that.

The next morning, we returned home and decided we would take action – more action than a simple organ donation. We wanted people to know about Nicole and share her love and kindness. She had given up all of her Christmas presents for the past two years, asking us to give the money to Living Water International to build fresh water wells in underdeveloped countries. Nicole would have wanted us to do good and to carry on her love for people. As a result, funds for Living Water International continue to be raised in Nicole's honor. A well was built and dedicated to her in Honduras.

## CY-FAIR HOLIDAY & HEALTH FESTIVAL

**Dec. 3, 2011**  
**10 am to 4 pm**  
**Berry Center in Cypress**



### ADMISSION TO THE SHOW IS FREE!

Bring the family to shop for the holidays, get pictures with Santa, see local choirs and dance troupes perform, enjoy fashion shows, have beauty procedures and health screenings done on site, and win prizes throughout the day.

### TOY DRIVE

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## LAYLA GRACE 5K

**Dec. 3, 2011**  
**9:15 am**  
**Berry Center in Cypress**



### RUN FOR THE CAUSE

The Layla Grace Children's Cancer Research Foundation is a non-profit organization focused on the discovery of new treatment options for children with high-risk cancer.

**5K RUN/WALK: \$25**

**KIDS 1 MILE FUN RUN: \$15**

Register for the race at [www.laylagrace.org/5k](http://www.laylagrace.org/5k)

### SPONSORSHIP INFO

[michelle@laylagrace.org](mailto:michelle@laylagrace.org) OR [danielle@laylagrace.org](mailto:danielle@laylagrace.org)  
 For more info about the foundation: [www.laylagrace.org](http://www.laylagrace.org)

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## Making a Difference for Nicole

Bill and I decided to help stop drunk driving. I got involved with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and I speak frequently to victims, offenders, and students. I share Nicole's story with them and try to help people understand how drinking and driving destroys lives.

Following her organ donations, Nicole was honored on the Gift of Life Float in the Rose Bowl Parade in 2009. She also has two laws named after her so far. One is called the Nicole Lalime Law and gives police the power to draw blood under broader circumstance, including after accidents in which a victim goes to the hospital. Her older sister Michelle gave birth to a baby girl just three days after her sister's death and named her after Nicole.

Nicole's killer was convicted in July 2010. He is in prison for a 30-year term and must have a picture of Nicole hanging in his cell. We have written letters, emailed, visited, and called state and national congressmen. We are also in the beginning stages of starting a foundation in Nicole's name to continue to do what we said we would do that morning after her death: Take action. Until the day the good Lord decides to take us to join Nicole, we will work to make a difference in our community and our country in all the ways Nicole would have wanted to. **CFM**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Cy-Fair Magazine would like to thank Valoree Lalime for sharing her family's inspirational story of courage and coping with the tragic loss of their daughter Nicole. If you have an inspirational story you'd like to share, please email us at editor@cyfairmagazine.com.*



# MADD

Statistics<sup>®</sup>

MADD serves a victim or survivor of drunk driving every nine minutes.

One in three people will be involved in an alcohol-related crash in their lifetime.

MADD has saved 27,000 young lives through passage of public health laws.

Every minute, one person is injured from an alcohol-related crash.

An average drunk driver has driven impaired 87 times before his or her first arrest.

50% to 75% of convicted drunk drivers continue to drive on a suspended license.

Source: [madd.org/statistics](http://madd.org/statistics)

## Your Family's Health & Wellness is Our Focus

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Annual Physicals & Immunizations  
Continuity of Care to Hospitals/Nursing Homes  
Acute and Chronic Disease Management  
Pediatrics to Geriatrics

ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS WALK INS WELCOME



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