



CAUSES

# Love Not Lost Donates Photography Sessions to People Facing a Terminal Diagnosis

By Kristyn Back | November 14, 2017 | No Comments



What's a picture worth? A thousand words? Ten thousand (as the Chinese proverb goes)?

What about a picture of someone you love who is dying? The value is irreplaceable. Inconceivable through words, only the essence of what you feel and experience when you hold it.

As a seasoned photographer, Ashley Jones has always understood the importance of capturing the perfect moment – her livelihood depended on it after all. But it wasn't until her daughter Sklar's Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) diagnosis and untimely death, that led Ashley to fully understand how vital photos are for families facing grief.

"After Sklyar passed away, I had a realization about how critical photos are for surviving family members after they lose the person they love," Ashley explains. "Photos not only gave me comfort in being able to hold Sklyar even though she was no longer living but the space to grieve. I was able to mourn however I needed to without fear of judgment, or expectation, or any other emotions people often bring into a room when they are trying to comfort someone grieving."

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"For me, those photos helped me through my grieving process and are now a source of so much joy. I wanted to give that gift to others and started donating portrait sessions to people."

Through her business, Shutter Sweet Photography, Ashley started gifting sessions to individuals diagnosed with a terminal illness. Over the last year and a half, that act of kindness has become a standalone grassroots nonprofit, [Love Not Lost](#).

"I began donating more and more portrait sessions while also giving away prints and books and artwork. My husband lovingly came to me and said, "I love that you're giving heart...But we have bills to pay." And he was right. But I realized that was something I wasn't willing to give up. I loved offering free sessions and prints to families."

"I knew if I believed in what I was doing and was willing to give it away, that maybe other people would be willing to join me on this journey. That's what led to the formation of the nonprofit."

Since founding Love Not Lost, Ashley has preserved memories for families across the country. Over the summer Love Not Lost onboarded three photographers to help strategically grow in Atlanta, with plans to replicate that growth in new cities over the next several years.

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"I'm only one person and therefore can only do so much. With an organization I can invite ^ other people to join me whether it's photographers, or volunteers, or people who want to give back. Together we can grow this nonprofit to a national level and serve so many more people than I would ever be able to serve on my own."

While Love Not Lost's focus is on preserving memories through donated photography and photo albums, it's also just as focused on supporting people in grief.

"We preserve memories and support people in grief because the driving question of our organization is '*how can we love people better?*' That's the driving question because when Kyle and I were going through everything with Skylar, the people who showed up to love us, were the ones who gave us the will to live and carry on. Our hearts were so broken that we didn't have the capacity to love ourselves, let alone each other. The people who showed up and loved us well through our grief kept us going and made the difference for where we are today so we could have a life again."

"So often people run from pain and suffering, and grief and death, because it seems so unknown. But grief is something we all experience. Whether it's the loss of a job, a dream, or a loved one. It's really important that we know how to show up and love people through that pain instead of it being something that pulls our relationships apart."

*If you live in the Atlanta area, Love Not Lost will be hosting their [Love It Forward event](#) at Monday Night Brewing on November 28. Love Not Lost is also currently in the midst of a crowdfunding campaign which you can [learn about and support here](#). Click here to learn more about becoming a [volunteer photographer](#) or discover other ways to give back by [clicking here](#).*

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