



Christina Gray holds a plant with the Planting Love Project tag that is given to people who need a boost in their lives.

Lifting Spirits and Saving a Life with Plants

By Lee Nelson

WHEN PLEASANTON REALTOR® Christina Gray's uncle died unexpectedly from a brain aneurysm, the grief became hard to process. She and her family — husband Lonnie, and teens, Ethan and Lauren — decided to launch the Planting Love Project in December 2020 to help others who might have felt isolated during the pandemic.

Gray had no idea that her grassroots effort of dropping off plants anonymously would save a man's life by a young woman coming forward to donate part of her liver.

"Who ever thought a tiny little plant could save a life? I guess it's proof that there really is no such thing as a small act of kindness, only monumental ones," states Gray, agent with Elation Real Estate.

They started this wave of compassion during the second wave of Covid shutdowns.

"Everyone had a collective grief at that time," she adds.

Having it be anonymous felt even more powerful for those helping, which started with 10 other families in Gray's life. Fifty bright pink cyclamen plants were purchased with seed money from the Make a Difference Foundation.

The plants get repotted and are delivered with an inspirational tag: "You may be happy, you may be sad, but one thing is certain — you're not alone. Hopefully, this plant will make you happy, knowing that someone is thinking of you." The tag also asks the recipient to keep the plant, pay it forward, or even buy a plant for someone else and "start planting love."

Gray's mother-in-law, Jan Gray, delivered a plant to her friends, Heidi and Mike Haas. She knew Mike had been waiting for a liver transplant a long time, and his health was failing. His wife became so curious about who

gave them the plant that she went online to the Planting Love Project website. She noticed the Gray name because Jan had been Heidi's boss years before. Heidi called her former boss to ask if she had done this nice thing for them and explained what Mike's predicament entailed. That prompted Jan to call her daughter-in-law about the situation.

The timing couldn't have been better for that information. The next day, Christina Gray got asked by the Pleasanton newspaper to do a story on the plant project. She told the reporter that she'd do the story if the Haases could be included.

That story led to a local television news story. Through all that, 11 people stepped forward to see if they were a good liver match. The youngest of the potential donors, Amy Galvan (27 at the time) was a perfect match. She had even worked for the couple! The surgery happened in March 2022, and now Haas is doing well, and Galvan has fully recovered.

"A little plant dropped at the doorstep put a series of things in motion that ended up giving life to another person," Gray adds. "It helped unite Mike and Amy. It's a story for a movie!"

Gray encourages other REALTORS®, communities, and individuals to buy plants and distribute them on their own. Tags can be printed from the website at <https://christinagray.com/the-planting-love-project>. They come in English, Italian, and Dutch, and soon in Spanish and Kreyol.

To find out more about Mike and liver transplants, visit: <https://www.aliverformike.com/>.

BIO: As a REALTOR® the last two years, Christina Gray creates virtual home tours through a cooking show in clients' kitchens, owns a photography business, and volunteers for numerous nonprofits while running the Planting Love Project.