CONNECTION

Widows Helping Widows
Rebuild Their Lives

September 9, 2026

I am writing on behalf of ***The W Connection***, a national nonprofit I co-founded in 2009 after my husband suddenly died 3 months after the birth of my son. I experienced firsthand how profoundly a woman's world can change after the death of a partner -and how essential it is that no widow be left to rebuild her life in isolation. The W Connection was founded by widows and run by widows, and The W Connection Board and I are deeply honored to support *Cleanup on Aisle 9*, a narrative film that approaches grief, widowhood, and the fragile, courageous process of rebuilding one's life after loss with rare honesty and grace.

For more than seventeen years, The W Connection has walked alongside widows across the country, offering peer-to-peer support groups, mentorship, educational programs, community resources, and research. Therapists, nurses, and doctors refer women to us when professional needs to be paired with the kind of understanding that only another widow can offer. Again and again, we hear the same quiet truth: grief can make a person feel unseen, untethered, and painfully alone. That is why honest portrayals of widowhood matter so deeply.

Cleanup on Aisle 9 helps widows feel seen by portraying what so many people have been afraid to share.

Grief is not linear. It arrives in waves -in the awful days, the unexpected breakdowns, the ordinary errands that suddenly become unbearable, and the small moments that break your heart all over again. I think of my friend Liam resizing his deceased wife's bracelet and sobbing in the jewelry shop, overwhelmed by love, memory, and the everyday challenges of a life permanently reshaped by loss. And still, grief also holds moments of strange, necessary humor; one of our members once called it the "Death Comedy Jam."

Cleanup on Aisle 9 understands that both can be true at once, and it embraces that truth with bravery and tenderness.

At The W Connection, we see every day that widows do not simply "move on." They move forward. They learn how to create *"Self-Balance"* -to survive a life they did not choose, and they begin to grow around the grief. We call these women **GEMS: Grief Emerging as Meaning and Strength**, a phrase born from our members' own lived experience. Sometimes it takes standing in a circle of other widows, hearing your own story reflected back with compassion, to recognize that something strong and beautiful is still emerging.

We are deeply moved that *Cleanup on Aisle 9* honors not only the pain and messiness of loss, but also the healing and growth that can follow.

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The detail that Kiki progresses in her widowhood journey by making a jar of pickles is exactly the kind of grounded, unexpected truth that makes grief feel human on screen. Healing does not always look dramatic. Sometimes it looks like getting through one small task, reclaiming one small part of yourself, or finding meaning in something as ordinary -and as miraculous- as creating a jar of pickles.

Films like *Cleanup on Aisle 9* are profoundly important: they can reach through the silence that often surrounds grief and remind people that they are not alone. They can help widows feel seen, and they can help friends, families, and communities understand how to show up with patience, humility, and love.

We believe *Cleanup on Aisle 9* has the potential to open conversations that are too often avoided and to bring comfort to people who may not yet know where to find it.

The W Connection supports this film wholeheartedly. This endorsement comes from me, The W Connection Board of Directors, and from the widows whose stories, courage, tears, laughter, and resilience have shaped our mission. I am certain that when our community sees the film, they will recognize themselves and feel recognized in return.

We would be honored to answer questions, provide feedback if helpful, and support the team developing this film as you continue to bring this meaningful story into the world. We have collaborated with other grief-related projects, including *Last Laughs*, the *Someone Spectacular* talkback, and research on the effects of grief on the mind and body, which we are presenting at the Nurse Practitioner Women's Health Care Conference in Virginia this September.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or if there is any additional support we can offer. We would be grateful to help in any way that honors the truth of this experience and the women who live it every day.

Sincerely,

Dawn Nargi

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