

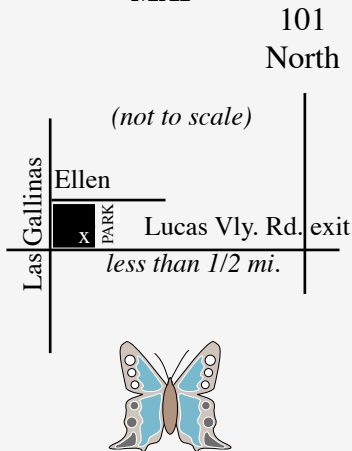
A non-profit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the loss of a child

Meeting Site

**Lucas Valley Community
Church Conference Room
2000 Las Gallinas at Lucas
Valley Rd. in San Rafael
3rd Tuesdays of the month
at 7:30 P.M. (7pm if first time)**

Directions Exit 101 at **Lucas Valley Rd.** and go west. Turn right onto **Las Gallinas** and make an immediate right onto **Ellen**, then a right turn into the parking lot at the signage. The Conference Room is located in the first building next to the parking lot. For more info, call Genesse Gentry at 415/457-3123. Please call prior to your first meeting, so that you might meet with the facilitator before the meeting begins.

MAP



Alternate site in San Francisco:

Parents: Community Meeting Room/Taravel Police Station at 2345-24th Ave. (near Taravel) in S.F. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. For more information, call Audre at 650/359-7928 or alhallum@comcast.net.

GRATITUDE.... THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But

**“Gradually the pain eases
and the warm memories
replace the sadness.”**

we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through “every parent’s nightmare” and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child’s death a good thing. It just means that our child’s life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don’t “sweat the small stuff.” We know what matters because we know

what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We “know how they feel.”

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

*Richard Edler
TCF, South Bay LA Chapter
As published in We Need Not Walk Alone, 1999 Anniversary Issue*

“AMANDA’S PARTY OF 3”

On the 6th anniversary of our daughter Amanda’s passing, her father, sister and I met at a restaurant for brunch. When the host asked for our name, I, unthinkingly, said: “Amanda”. As we sat waiting for our table, we heard over the loud speaker, “AMANDA’S PARTY OF 3”. We laughed with a few tears, and it was truly Amanda’s party. I think I will make a tradition of saying Amanda’s name when we go out on her special days from now on.

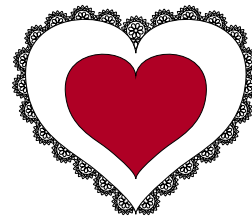
*Cecile Noland
TCF Marin Co., CA*

Sonoma County TCF Chapter

If anyone is interested in restarting the Sonoma County TCF chapter, contact the former chapter leader, *Anne McHugh*, at 707-762-8517.

*A touch of your hand
a smile on your face
another time, another place
You were my girl
I was your mom
together we met
the world head on.
Death cannot dim
The memories so fine
Your place is there
This world is mine.
But you will always be
MY SPECIAL VALENTINE*

A Special Valentine



Arlene Burroughs, TCF
Pikes Peak, CO

Check out our website at www.tcfmarin.org.

OUR CHILDREN'S LEGACY

Established in 2003 by the Kolsky Family and Autodesk, **The Autodesk Patrick Kolsky Memorial Scholarship** supports students studying Computer Science, Engineering or other technical disciplines. Tragically, Patrick died of undetermined natural causes during his freshman year at Chico State where he was studying Computer Science.

As a young teenager, Patrick, son of Alan and Linda, demonstrated a very early interest in computers and computer programming, spending much of his free time studying various computer programming languages. This is not surprising given that his grandfather was a nuclear physicist, his aunt (Alan's sister) was a Dr. in Computer Science and his dad (Alan, who creates our annual Our Children Remembered DVD) can do amazing things with them. Linda Kolsky says that he would ask her to go to the bookstore and buy him computer language manuals. He read them like novels and ultimately learned 4 computer languages. There was no doubt in Patrick's mind that he would major in computer science when he got to college.

While a student at Novato High, Patrick worked as a teacher's assistant for the Computer Science class until his sophomore year when he was hired by Autodesk as an intern. In addition to two wonderful years at Autodesk, Patrick also worked as an online writer and critic for Team X-Box where he developed quite a following of readers. His association with Team X-Box resulted in invitations by Sony Corp to attend game preview parties held for visitors and potential investors from Japan and other areas.

In first establishing this special scholarship program, his colleagues at Autodesk described Patrick as an outgoing, enthusiastic, and talented young man. He made a memorable impression on all who worked with him and his experience at Autodesk greatly impacted his young life.

It is in the spirit of Patrick's passion for the technical disciplines and in particular Computer Science that the Patrick Kolsky Memorial Scholarship was created. Administered by the Marin Education Foundation, this scholarship has helped five students achieve their educational dreams. Recipients have attended UC San Diego, UCLA, Sonoma State University and Cal Poly and the College of Marin.

For more information about this scholarship or to make a contribution please contact Traci Lanier of Marin Education Foundation at @ 415.451.4005.

I N M E M O R I A M

*In Memory of
Duncan MacConaghy*

Lois H. Feeney



Carol's Corner

Carol's Corner

If you have a question or topic you would like to see addressed by Carol, email her: clkearns@comcast.net

Q. HOW CAN WE CARE FOR OURSELVES AFTER THE DEATH OF OUR CHILD?

A. PART TWO: A continuation from the last issue

Sixth, it's okay to say "no." This is one important way to reduce stress, even if our child hasn't died. How many times do we do things we don't want to do because we don't know how to say no? This gets tricky after our child's death, because we may have a tendency to isolate and that's not good either. Finding the balance that works is important.

Seventh, keep a journal. Initially, when our child dies, the pain is so great we feel we can hardly breathe. With time and some serious grief work, we have better days but when a dark day again hits us, we feel like we've not made progress, and no matter how hard we try, are only going backwards. The journal can remind us of all the days in between when we did feel better.

Eighth, be careful about sanctifying your deceased child. This can complicate the grief of siblings who end up with jealousy on top of their grief. My son once said to me, "Mommy, why do our friends all have pictures of Krissie and not me?" I was shocked but relieved that he addressed this. I answered, "Sweetie, that's because we have you, but we don't have Krissie anymore. If you had died, they would have your picture and not her's."

Ninth, if your spirituality is important, now is the time to turn to it. Some find great comfort in their beliefs and others are so angry at God, they have no comfort at all. I was reminded by a very spiritual woman after Krissie's death that it was okay to get angry at God. He may be running the show but you don't have to like it!

Tenth, if you have a creative outlet, please turn to it. So much of our pain is ineffable. Our creative side, whether it's painting, music or poetry can be a way of facilitating healing. Having always been a painter, I went into my studio and found myself crying more than at any other time. Through my creativity, I was able to reach levels of pain that I couldn't through words alone.

These are only a few suggestions. You may have ideas of your own that have helped you. If you would like to share them with others or if you have any questions, please contact me at: clkearns@comcast.net. Take good care of yourselves.

L Shouldn't there be a word all unto itself to describe certain loss, frankly speaking the loss of a child? Loss has many connotations: debt, defeat, failure, etc. To express the loss of a child, there should be a word defining that only. Just one word that would be identifiable to the awful sadness and emptiness only a parent can experience when their child dies.

O This word would be hard to pronounce not because of its spelling, but due to its meaning. It would be spoken with a quiet, reverent voice and only if necessary. This would be the word that one would dread to use or hear amongst their family. This word could have no synonym. It would be among the English languages' most dreadful words. When spoken, it would quiet a room bringing tears to the eyes of a stranger and heaviness to even the coldest heart. A word that would carry such terror even when whispered, could only define "death of a child."

Patty Schiller

**Chapter Leader/No. CA
Regional Coordinator:**

Genesse Gentry
21 Shemran Ct.
Fairfax, CA 94930
415/457-3123

Marin TCF website:

www.tcfmarin.org

Talk with a Friend

When you want someone to talk with, the following people will welcome your call:

Judith Billings 707/452-1116 (afternoons)
Ed Garvey 650/756/8010 (suicide loss)
Sallee Kiilerich.... 415/897-6849
Natalie Meyring .. 415/383-4084 (sibling loss)
Diana deRegnier.. 415/383-1703 (suicide loss/call 9am-8pm)

TCF National Website

www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696
Phone: 630/990/0010
Toll Free: 877/969/0010
Fax: 630/990/0246
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Additional Support Sites

Inlovingmemoryonline.org
Healingafterloss.org
Bereavedparents.com
childloss.com
survivorsofsuicide.com

Men's Chat Room

TCF website on Mondays from 9-10 central time.

Other Bereaved Parent Resources

The Center for Attitudinal Healing in Sausalito
(415) 331-6161, ext. 106.

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.

Marin (415) 927-2273
SF (415) 626-5900
Sonoma (707) 935-7504

• • • • • **CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS** • • • • •

Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

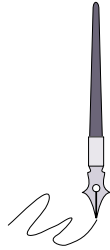
Tues., January 20th

Considering options of how to be active versus passive in our grief journey and healing though the baby steps may seem insignificant, being conscious of and reflecting upon the process can result in momentum. One of those active steps will be our discussion of what members would like to see happen in TCF meetings and activities.

Tues., February 17th

Love will be our topic this month since February is the month of love. We'll share the ways in which we keep our love alive with our children in our "new relationships". Some art supplies will also be provided to create a special Valentine during the meeting for any one who would like to do so. Optional: Please feel free to bring additional "mementos" to add to your special Valentine(s), or to contribute to our art project, or a Valentine's Day treat to share.

UPCOMING EVENT: Writing Workshop



Genesse Gentry and Marianne Rogoff will present a writing workshop on Saturday, January 24, 2009 from 10-3 at the Lucas Valley Community Church in San Rafael. The morning will be comprised of the kinds of writing exercises Genesse uses in her Poetry and Journaling Workshops at the National Conference, while the afternoon will focus on exercises Marianne uses in her "griefwriting" classes at Book Passage. Since this workshop is open to other No CA chapters, it would be good to sign up early. Contact Genesse at 457-3123 or gbgentry@aol.com.

Coming to a TCF meeting for the first time???

We recognize all too well that it takes courage to come to the first meeting, whether you are a bereaved parent of one month or 5 years. You are welcome to bring a friend or relative for moral support if you wish. You will find that it is all right to cry or to laugh, to share how you feel or just listen. You are welcome to come late and leave early. We recommend that you attend 2-3 meetings before deciding if TCF is not for you. Each meeting is as varied as the attendees and the topic.

You will meet parents in both early and late stages of the grief process. Longtime members are present at meetings to help new members process their tremendous losses in their lives, and to show that some time down the road of grief, they too will be able to function and grow and learn how to live with these losses. It is best if you contact TCF prior to your first meeting at 415-457-3123 so we can meet with you before the meeting begins.

Walk and Talk Group

All walks begin at 10 am on the 1st Saturday of the month (rain or shine). Bring water, appropriate clothing, and snacks/lunch if so desired; sometimes we "dine-out". Unless noted otherwise, please **RSVP** to Marcie so she will be on the lookout for you: marcieleach@aol.com or Nancy, nke1@juno.com.



Sat., January 3rd Children's' Memorial: Take Sir Francis Drake Blvd to Bon Air Road in Greenbrae across from Marin General Hospital. Take the path across the marsh and footbridge towards Corte Madera Creek. Turn right at the multi-use path and walk 1/2 mile or less to a bench. Just before the bench is a dirt path going off to the right. Take the path to the site.

Sat., February 7th McGinnis Park Walk: Take Smith Ranch Road east from "101". The road ends in the McGinnis Golf Parking Lot. Gather near the path to the right.

Sat., March 7th Samuel P. Taylor Park: Beautiful any time of the year. We can park and meet near the entrance on SFD and picnic afterwards.



Children's Memorial Children who have gone too soon can be included on our new plaque at the Greenbrae Memorial Site if their parents, grandparents, or siblings live/or lived in this county or if they attend TCF Marin meetings here or in San Francisco. For an application form and information to have your child's name memorialized, contact Karen Klingel at: kklingel@sbcglobal.net . Directions for the memorial are on this page.

In Memoriam

TCF Marin's main source of funding the newsletters, the meetings, the Candle Lighting and other TCF expenses has always been the Love Gifts sent in by TCF members, their friends and families in memory of our children. We think it's possible that people might like to donate money in memory of friends and family members (other than our children). These will be mentioned in the newsletter under the title *In Memoriam*. (This is separate from a Love Gift donation.) Send *In Memoriam* donation information (with check payable to TCF/Marin) to: TCF/Marin Newsletter Editor, 254 Butterfield Dr., Novato, CA 94945.

WISH LIST Our chapter has need of two new items: the first is a rolling book cart where we could store and display our books for members' use at meetings. The second is a Button-Making Machine that would enable us to make "photo buttons" of our children. This items retails for \$125-\$175. If you are able to assist, please contact Genesse at **457-3123** or gbgentry@aol.com.

2008 "Our Children Remembered" DVD

Ordering Information

Price per copy: \$20.00 includes postage, handling, sales tax, and a \$5.00 contribution to the Marin TCF Chapter for each copy purchased. Make checks payable to: Digital Video Dimensions and send your payment to:

Digital Video Dimensions
Attn: 2008 TCF DVD
273 Crest Road
Novato, CA 94945

*Thank you, Alan,
for another stellar gift !*

Please be sure to include your mailing address for the DVD along with your payment.

Shipping: DVDs will be shipped via First Class Mail within 5 days of receipt of payment.

Questions: Alan Kolsky
(415) 893-9070

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Newsletter Editor Position Open I have enjoyed keeping chapter members informed, supported and encouraged over the past 4-5 years, but my absence for a quarter of each year is making the process more difficult to achieve. You will find it to be a creative and healing element in your personal grief process, and achieve a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction knowing that your efforts are helping all of us survive the most severe loss in our lives. I will work with you to get you started. You do not need to be a writer or a graphic artist. Most of the articles are gleaned from the national TCF website source or other chapter newsletters. Please contact me, Sandy Williams, at tcfed@comcast.net or Genesse at **457-3123** or gbgentry@aol.com.

Directions to the Children's Memorial

Take Sir Francis Drake Blvd to Bon Air Road in Greenbrae. Park on Bon Air Rd. across from MGH. Take the path across the marsh and footbridge towards Corte Madera Creek. Turn right at the multi-use path and walk 1/8 mile or less to a bench. Just before the bench is a dirt path going off to the right. Take the path into the site. Be sure to take a moment to sit on the bench or look up at Mt. Tam and enjoy the solitude, beauty and solace of this site.

Thank you to the TCF members who made our Candle Lighting nurturing and beautiful to the eye, the ear, the spirit and the soul.

CorStone (formerly The Center for Attitudinal Healing) launches Project Grace

A service trip program dedicated to bringing community and relief to mothers and fathers who have lost a child

Project Grace, a CorStone program, has been established to bring together grieving mothers, fathers and families for unique service trips to communities-in-need around the world.

Project Grace was created with the purpose of providing a compassionate, non-judgmental environment in which participants who have lost a child can find strength and meaning through service to others, said Catherine Bowen Stern, who with Carole Mahoney founded the program. Common ground is reached through sharing stories, offering support and providing real, tangible aid to a community-in-need while honoring a loved one.

CorStone's goal is to develop and support emotional resilience in children, families and communities. Project Grace enables women and men who have lost a child to find community and heal through the transformative experience of helping others desperately in need. "We're very proud to introduce this new program," said Steve Leventhal, Executive Director of CorStone.

In 2008, Project Grace organized two service trips to Bucerias, Mexico to work in an orphanage and help with other service organizations in the area. "I am so grateful for the opportunity created for us. It's not lessened the pain, but it expanded my world around it," said Nancy Ross, a Project Grace participant.

Project Grace was inspired by the documentary film, **Motherland**, in which filmmaker Jen Steinman took six women grieving the death of a child to South Africa to work with children and families. Although these women did not know each other before they joined forces, they found a perspective they could not have reached on their own; they found a healing peace in the service to others and cross-cultural sharing. The life-changing experiences reported by each of the women who participated prompted Stern and Mahoney to begin offering service trips for the bereaved.

For more information about Project Grace, please contact Catherine Bowen Stern catherines@corstone.org or Carole Mahoney carolem@corstone.org.



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January/February 2009

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