



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

## MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION

**3rd Tuesday of the month  
7:30 P.M.**

**555 Northgate Dr.**

**First floor**

**Terra Linda, San Rafael  
(across the street from Sears)**

**Directions** exit Freitas Parkway west from 101. Make 1<sup>st</sup> available left turn, then another immediate left. Follow past the Northgate Shopping Center to a right on Northgate Dr. 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.



### **Alternate site in San Francisco:**

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

**Adult Siblings:** Not meeting as a group at this time. Former co-facilitators Elise Noland [eliseln@yahoo.com](mailto:eliseln@yahoo.com) and Caitlin Fager [orcfinder@gmail.com](mailto:orcfinder@gmail.com) are available for your questions and concerns.

## And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of "self help" were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April's meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother's Day and my son's birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I set at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child's story over and over and over again.

**"...a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope."**

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process. By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son's death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be "cured". As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope. Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we

*cont'd. on p. 2*

### **July's Child**

*Fireworks race toward  
heaven  
Brilliant colors in the sky.  
Their splendor ends in  
seconds  
On this evening in July,  
"Her birthday is this  
Saturday,"  
I whisper with a sigh.  
She was born this month,  
She loved this month  
And she chose this month  
to die.  
Like the bright and beautiful  
fireworks  
Glowing briefly in the dark  
They are gone too soon,  
and so was she  
Having been, and left her  
mark.  
A glorious incandescent life,  
A catalyst, a spark...  
Her being gently lit my path  
And softened all things  
stark.  
The July birth, the July  
death of my happy summer  
child  
Marked a life too brief that  
ended  
Without rancor, without  
guile.  
Like the fireworks that leave  
images  
On unprotected eyes...  
Her lustrous life engraved  
my heart...  
With love that never dies.*

—Sally Migliaccio, TCF  
Babylon,  
Long Island, NY

possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope. My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent. Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX  
October 24, 2006

### **Another Successful Sacred Altar Workshop Offered by Michele Rivers in May**



*"Michele is a joyful  
artist who allows  
beauty and comfort and  
peace into her home  
and life, and then gives  
that spirit to all those  
around her. The eight  
hour workshop was one  
of the best days I have  
spent and important for  
my healing process."*

Comment from attendee  
Enid Pollack

## *Carol's Corner*

### **NOT SO UNUSUAL AFTER ALL**

#### **A review of the Dreams and Unusual Happenings Workshop**

**by Carol Kearns**

The April Dreams and Unusual Happenings workshop was a great success. We all felt this even before reading the enthusiastic evaluations from workshop participants. The Aliotos welcomed us into their home and Georgia fed us one of her memorable lunches before the sharing began. As each of us introduced ourselves and began to tell our stories, we discovered our experiences before and after our children's deaths were not so unusual after all. This was the first opportunity for many to share these occurrences in a group setting.

Many told of visits from their children after their deaths, either in dreams or in full consciousness. One mother had two visits from her son where she saw and heard him. Another mother shared her skepticism about an after-life but said she had so many experiences with her son since his death that she is now not sure what to think! A father described hearing his daughter calling his name one night when he was alone and overwhelmed with sadness. This echoed my own experience after my daughter Kristen's death. I was lying in bed one night feeling very sad, discouraged and unable to fall asleep. In the stillness of the night, I heard my name being called only seconds apart and at two distinctly different times. The voice didn't sound like Kristen, but I still knew it was either her or another spirit letting me know that I wasn't alone. Consoled, I peacefully rolled over and fell asleep. This same father told of another time when he heard his daughter laughing while visiting her grave site. Both experiences were a great comfort to him.

I was especially moved when Alan Kolsky described his closeness to our children whenever he works on the videos for the annual candle lighting ceremonies. Alan said he is at a loss to explain how things sometimes happen, but believes that the children themselves have a hand in what they want the result to be. He has found that if they don't like his choice of music or scene, then it simple doesn't work. One time prior to the candle lighting when he had almost completed the video, his systems completely shut down. Alan panicked because he was running out of time and could not figure out what was wrong. Just as mysteriously, the video machine then started up again. Later he discovered that he had mixed up two of the children's pictures. He now thinks that the children had a hand in this giving him one last chance to get it right before the ceremony. No wonder the videos are so beautiful. Alan and our children are all in this together!

**Check out our newly refurbished website at: [tcfmarin.org](http://tcfmarin.org)**

### **Have a Question for Carol's Corner?**

Email your questions to [clkearns@comcast.net](mailto:clkearns@comcast.net).

*Warm summer sun, shine  
kindly here;  
Warm southern wind, blow  
softly here;  
Green sod above, lie light,  
lie light—  
Good night, dear heart,  
good night, good night.*

*—Robert Richardson  
(Inscription on the head-  
stone of Susy  
Clemens, daughter of Mark  
Twain)*

## CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

### Marin TCF website:

[www.tcfmarin.org](http://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](http://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](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

### Additional Support Sites

[Inlovingmemoryonline.org](http://Inlovingmemoryonline.org)  
[Healingafterloss.org](http://Healingafterloss.org)  
[Bereavedparents.com](http://Bereavedparents.com)  
[childloss.com](http://childloss.com)  
[survivorsofsuicide.com](http://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.

### 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 will know you are coming.

### Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

**Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>** - Coping Strategies for Stressful Times: How do you get through those tough times, like anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, holiday, etc. What works? What doesn't?

**Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>** - Open Forum: Come and share.

**Meeting Note:** While meeting topics are outlined in the newsletter, they are simply a guideline. Just as grief is unpredictable, so are our emotions on any given day. Our discussions are also open to the current needs of the members in attendance.

### Join TCF Members for a Social Walk

TCF walks occur on the **first Saturday of the month** and begin at 10 A.M. Bring water, hats, sunscreen and snacks/lunch (if desired.) We often picnic after the walk. **Contact Genesse Gentry at 457-3123 or [gbgentry@aol.com](mailto:gbgentry@aol.com) or [tcfed@comcast.net](mailto:tcfed@comcast.net).** We do appreciate knowing in advance who and how many are coming.

**Sat., July 7<sup>th</sup> Abbott's Lagoon-** Take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. to Fairfax. Meet at 10 a.m. in Albertson's (closed) parking lot near the coffee drive-thru, **or** meet in Olema in the parking lot across from the stop sign for Hwy. 1 around 10:30 a.m. **or** at the Abbot's Lagoon parking lot at the north end of Pt. Reyes around 11 a.m. We'll be seeing more of nature in bloom and hopefully mother and baby whales (migrating north) close to shore. Bring a lunch for picnic afterwards.

**Sat., August 4<sup>th</sup> Phoenix Lake** - Take Sir Francis Drake to Ross; turn left on Lagunitas. Park at the Ross P. O. or drive to the end of Lagunitas where there is limited parking. It is a pleasant walk from the P. O. to the Open Space, and about a 3-mile walk around the lake.

**Sat., Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> - No scheduled walk on Labor Day Weekend at this time.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** There have been times in the past when the walking group disbanded due to a lack of a walk leader. Marin TCF does not want to see this happen because the health benefits and the company of other TCF parents are very important. Do YOU have a location you want to share with other walkers? If you are only interested in leading one walk, we're interested! Email [mlhubal@yahoo.com](mailto:mlhubal@yahoo.com) or [gbgentry@aol.com](mailto:gbgentry@aol.com). Siblings are encouraged to join us. .

## Is the Role of Newsletter Editor in Your Future???

### We have an opportunity for YOUR participation!

Express your creativity and interest in print! This opportunity not only helps others in their grief process, but the editor as well. Easy access to articles from the National TCF website. No graphic skills necessary. Just a word processing program, an interest in keeping members informed, and a desire to “give back” to our chapter for all you’ve received. Contact Genesse Gentry at **457-3123** or **[gbgentry@aol.com](mailto:gbgentry@aol.com)**

*Thanks*

to Heinz Scheuenstuhl for answering our request for our web site redo! He is doing a WONDERFUL job!!! Check it out:

### **NEWS FLASH: A New Plaque for Children’s Memorial!!!**

We have just heard that we may add another plaque for the names of our children gone too soon at the Memorial in Greenbrae. Karen Klingel has offered to chair the committee for this project. During Karen’s summer absence, however, Sandy Williams will have information for you if you wish to have your child’s name memorialized. Contact : [tcfed@comcast.net](mailto:tcfed@comcast.net).

**In Memoriam Program** 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. Once in a while we've received donations from our members in memory of friends and family members who have died (other than our children). We have decided that more people might like to donate money in this way and that from now on we will also mention these donations 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: Sandy Williams, TCF/Marin Newsletter Editor, 254 Butterfield Dr., Novato, CA 94945.

### **Candle Lighting DVDs Info**

The DVD of the **2006 Candle Lighting Service** will be available for a \$10 donation at the TCF meetings or by contacting Diana DeRegnier by email: [healing\\_spirit@comcast.net](mailto:healing_spirit@comcast.net) (be sure to include the “.” between healing and spirit.) The DVD does NOT INCLUDE the wonderful DVD of our children created by Alan Kolsky. (See article at right.)

The DVD is also now viewable at [www.spiritlinksnewsletter.org/CLDVD.htm](http://www.spiritlinksnewsletter.org/CLDVD.htm). The recording is a huge gift thanks to Constance Beutel, Ed D, who recorded, edited and processed the DVD and flash for the website and duplication.

If you want a copy of the **2006 DVD of Our Children**, send a check for \$20 (which covers postage, handling and sales tax) to the address below. Include your address along with your payment. DVDs will be shipped via USPS First Class Mail within 5 days of receipt of payment.

Digital Video Dimensions  
attn: 2006 TCF DVD  
273 Crest Rd., Novato, CA 94945  
Questions: Alan Kolsky  
(415) 893-9070

### **Adult Siblings Loss Group No Longer Meeting**

Elise Noland and Caitlin Fager, past co-facilitators, are still available by phone or email for questions or concerns. Elise: [eliseln@yahoo.com](mailto:eliseln@yahoo.com) or Caitlin [cfager@gmail.com](mailto:cfager@gmail.com).

## **Am I Still A Mom?**

It has been more than three years since my only child, Todd, was killed in an automobile accident. The circumstances of the accident included my husband as the driver of the vehicle. Following the accident my former daughter in law filed a wrongful death suit against my husband and me. She has also terminated our relationship with Todd's children and eliminated any possibility of normal grandparent time spent with our three granddaughters. In the past two years we have seen our granddaughters for 5 hours and the time spent was meaningless. The message has been sent that we are no longer a part of Todd's children's lives.

My husband has held up remarkably well as long as he isn't forced to replay the accident in his mind over and over again. I don't want the details and have never looked at the pictures of the vehicle. To this day I do not want to know the extent of my child's injuries or the amount of suffering he underwent. I wonder about his last moments, his last thoughts. And then I wonder: am I still a mother?

I was a good mother to Todd; my life centered on raising him to persevere and be the kind, gentle, goal oriented, loving man that he became. My relationship with him as an adult was so rewarding, so full of joy. I enjoyed listening to my adult child and exchanging ideas with him. I shared the important facets of his family life, the birth of his children, babysitting on a moment's notice or when no one else would so that he and his wife could take some time off for a vacation. Discovering who my grandchildren were and how they perceived the world was enlightening and fulfilling. Watching his children grow and become individuals was a great joy to me. Watching him become a strong and gentle parent made my heart sing.

And so I wonder: am I still a mother? My son no longer lives. I defined myself as a mother for over 35 years. My finest accomplishment was raising my son to become the fine man that he was. Now the bond between mother and child is broken. Life's paradigm has shifted. Or has it?

Am I still someone's daughter and someone's granddaughter? Of course I am, even though I have lost my parents and grandparents. So, I am still a mother. I think of my son each day, and I remember the good and bad times, the tough decisions, the structure, the letting go, the building of ideals and sense of honor and duty to family. But most of all I remember my child's love and my love for my child and incredible journey of raising my child.

So when people ask me if I have any children, I say yes, I have one son and four grandchildren. I am a mother and a grandmother. Circumstances and the actions of others have altered my reality, of course. I realize, too, that my son's legacy and influence will have little impact on his children. But my son is my son forever. I am a mother. I am Todd's Mother.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX



**Marin County, California Chapter**  
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