

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

## **New Meeting Site**

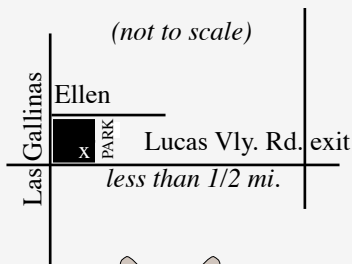
**Lucas Valley Community  
Church Conference Room  
2000 Las Gallinas at Lucas  
Valley Rd. in San Rafael  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month  
at 7:30 P.M. (7pm if first time)**

**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**

101  
North

(not to scale)



**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 [alhallum@comcast.net](mailto:alhallum@comcast.net).

## ***Strange Words Welcome New Members***

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: "We are so sorry you have to be here."

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to "size up" the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died.

We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the "after death" world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin • In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX • June 2006*

### **"YOU ARE SO STRONG"**

Empty words  
That don't touch the reality  
That my life has become.  
Walking through fog  
Incredible pain  
Searching for the beloved face  
I crave to see  
The voice that I strain to hear over the noises  
Of people who have no idea  
Of what the world has lost

*Charisse Smith, TCF ~ Tyler, TX*



**TCF Conference  
July 18 - 20, 2008  
Nashville, TN**

Register online at:  
[thecompassionatefriends.org](http://thecompassionatefriends.org)

**TCF Marin/San Francisco information phone line: 415/457-3123**

## Healing vs. Recovery

I have heard the term “recovery” and “healing” used interchangeably to refer to the goal of processing grief. I would like to propose the idea that recovery carries with it the assumption of an injury or illness and that when the necessary repair has taken place, the person will return basically to the same person he was previous to the injury or illness.

When a child dies there is, in deed, an injury of massive proportions. All systems—physical, mental, and spiritual—are affected. There is physical pain, emotional retching, spiritual upheaval, and struggling. All this may be occurring simultaneously. Though there may not be bleeding in the physical sense, there is emotional hemorrhaging. The body and psyche are in crisis. Bereaved parents are often unable to eat, they may experience sleep disturbances and disorientation. Believe it or not, all these reactions are normal. Grief is a normal part of life. This is not a mental illness or some chemical imbalance in the brain. What is *not* normal is to experience the death of a child.

The major difference between recovery and healing is that the goal is not to return to who we were before our child died. That goal is impossible to achieve. To continue to try to achieve a goal of recovery is to assume that life will be basically the same, with a few minor adjustments...such as we will set one less place at the table, buy less food, feel sad on holidays and cry a bit more. But our lives have been permanently and irrevocably changed and we are, in fact, becoming different people. The “becoming” is the healing.

During this process we examine every facet of our lives and or belief systems. This is a journey, not a “repair.” By living through this journey we become different people. True, we may basically look the same, but we are not the same as before our child died. We look at life in a new way. Our interests change and our priorities change. We will have a new and deeper level of understanding and compassion for those experiencing pain—all kinds of pain. We will have a different understanding of spirituality. We ourselves will feel new and different. We will carry some of the old person with us through the healing process, but we will emerge different.

We are healed...not recovered.

*By Birdie Tracy, TCF Shoreline Chapter*

*Reprinted from So. Suburban Chpt. Newsletter, Evergreen Park, IL, Oct. 2007 issue*

“We are *diminished* by grief, *replenished* by love, *held* by hope.”

*Darci Sims. Ph.D.,  
CGC, CHT*

## I AM YOUR SISTER AND ALWAYS WILL BE

“I am your sister and always will be.” That’s how Susie signed her cards to me. After awhile, she shortened it to, “I am...” And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and a half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found dead. Whatever it was ~ it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn’t pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smile warmed my heart . Yet I spent most of my life wishing things were different; wishing that she thought more of herself; wishing that she would take my advice; wishing that she was happier; wishing that we could accept each other.

Now, for two years, I’ve done nothing but wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love and support. (She needed and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been so alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

*by Michele Walters, TCF Baltimore, MD*

*reprinted from Comforting Friends Newsletter, Jan. ‘08  
Sacramento Chapter of Friends for Survival*

# Carol's Corner

## THE DANCE OF LIFE AND DEATH

I just became a grandmother for the first time. Early Saturday morning our son called to say his wife was in the hospital with labor pains 5 minutes apart. After calling the airlines, my husband and I darted for the airport to catch the next flight to San Diego. While joyfully awaiting our flight we received a message that one of our dear friends was nearing death after a long battle with ovarian cancer. We were completely unprepared for the immediate flood of contrasting feelings. Devastation over hearing we would never see our friend again collided head on with the ecstasy we had felt only moments before.

The mysterious weaving of life and death...a tapestry none of us can fully understand. Our friend had battled cancer with a dignity and strength we all admired. She had also just become a new grandmother with a little grandson that made her world complete whenever she held him. She had set a goal to be at her daughter's wedding this summer. She was experiencing life's great joys when her life ended.

I thought about Isabel Allende's words in her beautiful book *Paula* as she prepared her daughter's body after her death, gently washing and anointing her while at the same time welcoming her new granddaughter into the world. When I first read her book, I was fascinated by her insight into these seemingly contrasting situations. She didn't see it that way. "We celebrated the gifts she had given us in life, and all of us said goodbye and prayed in our own way. As the hours went by, something solemn and sacred filled the room, just as on the occasion of Andrea's (granddaughters) birth. The two moments are much alike: birth and death are made of the same fabric. The air became more and more still; we moved slowly, in order not to disturb our hearts' response. We were filled with Paula's spirit, as if we were all one being and there was no separation among us: life and death were joined. For a few hours, we experienced that reality the soul knows, absent time or space."

Many of us were in a joyful time of life when our own child died. A new promotion, a son accepted into the college of his choice, a fun family vacation, new home or recent graduation when our child was taken from us. I was in the midst of a joyful children's weekend that had been planned for two months with my friends and their children when my daughter Kristen was swept out to sea. We were all reeling with the intensity of our joy only moments before that was washed away by an intense sorrow. How could that happen?

As I look into my newborn grandson's eyes I can't help but wonder what life will ask of him. I know he will experience both pain and joy for that is what life is about. I know that at times, they may also collide for him as they did for us. We can not always protect him. I only hope that with our love, we give him the courage and confidence to not fear but instead grow from these holy mysteries of life.

### *Our Children's Legacy*

Sandy and Chuck McEowen's daughter Erin died suddenly from an undisclosed heart abnormality in 1992 at the age of 22. In her memory, the family established the *Erin Kathryn McEowen Fund* for research on heart rhythm abnormalities at U.C.S.F. administered by Dr. Melvin Scheinman. The fund also assists patients in need of medical intervention to cure serious heart rhythm disorders. Erin's parents have been overwhelmed by the letters they have received from patients thanking them for the help Erin's funds provided. One young female athlete benefitted from a much needed heart ablation procedure. Several months after the procedure, the McEowens were invited to witness the athlete's participation in the Santa Cruz Triathlon. She came in second! The *Erin Kathryn McEowen Fund* made a difference in her life.

UCSF Foundation • Box 0248 • San Francisco, CA 94143

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

Email her at  
ckearns@comcast.net.

• • • • • CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS • • • • •

### Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

**Tues., March 18<sup>th</sup> and Tues., April 15<sup>th</sup>**

For the March and April support meetings, we will be addressing two subjects (month of subject is dependent upon speaker availability.)

**Topic 1: The Post Traumatic Syndrome of our Healing:** A guest psychologist will help us work through this poignant and painful part of our grief process. As we move through the acceptance of our children in our lives, before and after their deaths, there is often an isolated sting that comes with thoughts or memories of the incident of death itself. We are hoping to learn some strategies to deal with this.

**Topic 2: The “New Normal”:** In the Spring of new beginnings all around us we will share, once again, about the concept of a “New Normal” and also the dissonance that sometimes results from enjoying the beauty of life around us, yet continuing to experience deep grief.

NOTE: Our new meeting site in one of Lucas Valley Community Church’s Conference Rooms is warm, welcoming and centrally located. We are most appreciative for its use.

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

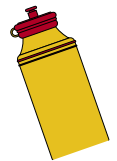
We recognize all too well that it takes courage to come to the first meeting, whether you are a bereaved parent of one month or 5 years. You are welcome to bring a friend or relative for moral support if you wish. You will find that it is all right to cry or to laugh, to share how you feel or just listen. 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.

Check out our website at [www.tcfmarin.org](http://www.tcfmarin.org) for more information.

### Walking Group Schedule

It’s good to have our members walking together . All walks begin at 10am 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](mailto:marcieleach@aol.com). Note some walks will indicate different leaders.



**Sat., Mar. 1<sup>st</sup>: Lucas Valley Marsh Area:** Meet in the parking lot near the McGinnis Club restaurant/golf course. We will walk out on the marsh area which is flat but unpaved. We should be enjoying wild flowers and water fowl. We will have the opportunity to eat lunch at the picnic tables or treat ourselves to lunch in the restaurant. Directions: Take Lucas Valley/ Smith Ranch exit east all the way to the end into the parking lot.

This walk will be led by Cecile Noland in memory of her daughter Amanda’s birth month. RSVP: [cecile\\_noland@yahoo.com](mailto:cecile_noland@yahoo.com).

**Sat., April 5<sup>th</sup> and Sat., May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Both of these walks will start at the Children’s Memorial across from Marin General Hospital. Directions for Memorial are on last page. Hopefully, the bulbs we planted will be in bloom by then. Plan for a walk and stay for lunch, ok? Contact [MarcieLeach@aol.com](mailto:MarcieLeach@aol.com) or Nancy at [nkel@juno.com](mailto:nkel@juno.com) or the TCF line at 457-3213.

#### 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.

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.

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

## Volunteer Opportunities in the Marin Chapter

**Newsletter Editor:** Here's a special niche for someone interested in keeping chapter members not only informed, but supported and encouraged. It is also a great way to process your own personal grief. The current newsletter editor will work with you to get started. Please contact the editor (Sandy Williams) at [tcfed@comcast.net](mailto:tcfed@comcast.net) or Genesse at **457-3123** or [gbgentry@aol.com](mailto:gbgentry@aol.com).

**Other Volunteer Opportunities available!** Contact Genesse at above information.

### A New Plaque for Children's Memorial

**Karen Klingel** is chairing the committee for the new plaque at the Greenbrae Memorial Site. Children who have gone too soon can be included on the plaque 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, you may contact Karen at: [kklingel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kklingel@sbcglobal.net). Directions for the memorial are on the last 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.

### Candle Lighting DVDs Info

The **2007 DVD of Our Children**, is available by mailing a check for \$20 (which includes a \$5 donation to the Marin TCF) made payable to **Digital Video Dimensions** to the address below. Include your mailing 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: 2007 TCF DVD  
273 Crest Rd., Novato, CA 94945

Questions: Alan Kolsky  
(415) 893-9070

### In Loving Memory...

If you are interested in creating a loving website for your child, go to [www.memory-of.com/Public/](http://www.memory-of.com/Public/).

### Chapter Leader Genesse Gentry to Be Interviewed June 5th on *Healing the Grieving Heart* -

This series can be heard on the Web live at [www.health.voiceamerica.com](http://www.health.voiceamerica.com) every Thursday at noon EST. *Healing Through Writing and Service* will be the topic for that date. Shows are also archived on the TCF national website and broadcast at 11 a.m. EST Sundays on a number of radio stations across the country and streamed online simultaneously at [www.HealthRadioNetwork.com](http://www.HealthRadioNetwork.com).

Hosts are: Dr. Gloria Horsley, bereaved parent and family therapist; and Dr. Heidi Horsley, bereaved sibling and an adjunct professor teaching graduate courses at Columbia University's School of Social Work including Intervention for Grief, Loss, and Bereavement.

### 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).

## Spring's Tears

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent blue  
A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.  
Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun  
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.  
It is this vow of nature's of resurgence in the spring  
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my suffering.  
For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year  
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.  
For nature has no power over death that holds you still,  
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.  
Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!  
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.  
Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are done?  
Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new dawn  
and feel the warmth of sunshine  
relish in the greening earth...  
to open arms, embracing life  
why can't it be YOUR birth?  
You were so young, your life so new when death crept in the door,  
And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more  
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes 'round each year  
Yet in your grave you're silent still,  
and I condemned am here.

Sally Migliaccio ~ TCF, Babylon NY ~ remembering Tracey, always

### Directions to the Children's Memorial

Take Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to Bon Air Road in Greenbrae. Park on Bon Air Road 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 1/8 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.

### Marin County, California Chapter

Newsletter Editor: Sandy Williams  
254 Butterfield Dr.  
Novato, CA 94945

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage PAID  
Larkspur, CA  
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**Change in Meeting Site**

### March/April 2008

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