

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

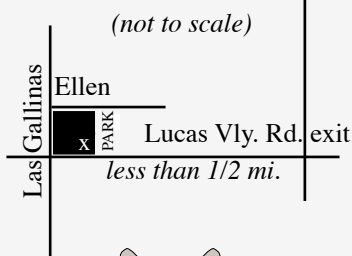
Meeting Site

**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 our TCF Hotline 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



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.

Six "Ts" of Grief Recovery

TIME How long depends upon the individual; no one can accurately predict. Well meaning friends and relatives may erroneously tell you, "It's been XX months, you should be over it now." You may be tempted to set those same expectations for yourself. Take the time to grieve now, not later. Unless you experience the pain and learn to live with it, unresolved grief will continue to come back when you least expect it in many other forms such as anger, guilt or depression. You'll know when you have recovered when perhaps one morning you wake up and realize that choking lump in your throat has gone and you have begun to resume control of your life.

TEARS Allow yourself to cry; the tears are healing. Let them flow for their cleansing value; they carry away waste chemicals that have built up in your body. If you cannot do so in public or at work, find a safe place such as a bereavement outreach or self-help network that can understand your tears. It's amazing the volume of tears and what brings them on (it's not always an obvious reminder of your loved one)! Remember to drink more water; tears tend to dehydrate you.

TALK Talk about your memories of your loved one and the details of their dying. Find understanding listeners. Talking helps to finalize their death and to dispel the myth that they will be back. Sometimes friends and relatives fear to mention the deceased thinking it will make you cry. Assure them that you want to talk because it will help you recover.

TOUCH You miss those hugs and touches from your loved one. Sometimes soon after their death, you build up a defensive shell around yourself. You may feel like a robot or a zombie. Allow yourself to be pampered, hugged and cosseted. If you're all alone without any family, make arrangements with a friend to give you a "healing hug" if you look or feel like you need it. Bereaved children need lots of hugs to reassure them of your continuing love.

TRUST You must trust in yourself that you will recover from this grief. You may have begun to question your trust in your religion. The anger you feel about your loved one leaving so many details for you to deal with may cause you to doubt your trust in yourself. It is a growing and learning experience to rediscover you as an individual.

TOIL Each person grieves in their own way that is right for them. Other words for toil are tiring work, drudgery, hard struggle, a laborious effort, strenuous fatiguing labor, to achieve a task despite the difficulties. Recognize that grief recovery is all this and more, but it's worth the effort. You will need to get more rest and eat healthily and regularly to renew your body for this work you must do.

Author Unknown ~ from www.friendsforsurvival.org

**You must trust
in yourself
that you will
recover from
this grief.**

Our Children's Legacy

My son, Adam, was 2 months shy of his 11th birthday when he died of cancer, after bravely fighting for 2 + years! He had been misdiagnosed for months, barely lived through an 8-hour biopsy in May of 1991, and endured 3 different protocols of gut wrenching chemotherapy that first summer. He suffered through weeks of radiation and more surgeries than I care to remember. All of these hospital procedures kept him out of school his fourth grade year but by the time 5th grade started we thought he might be out of the woods so he jumped at the chance to join his friends back at school. Adam had always enjoyed school and excelled at it, rejoining his gifted class as though he'd never skipped a beat!

His teachers had all said that he was always the first to help others. It was not only his classmates that he wanted to help but his animal friends as well. When he was in the 3rd grade Adam urged his classmates to join him in adopting a manatee, one of our endangered species. And when he first discovered his hair falling out from the chemotherapy while we were working in the garden he left it for the birds to make their nests from. His compassionate and caring nature always led me to believe that one day he would make a difference in the world. That belief kept my hope alive that he would make it through his cancer and continue to live. However, some false sense of normalcy had entered our lives when that winter more spots were discovered on his lungs and by late summer the spirits took him home.

You never quite get over losing a child. My heart has wounds that close at times but the scars remain fragile. There have been years of grief and difficult times as it changed our lives and was a hardship on my marriage and family. A few years after Adam's death I attended my first Relay For Life, the American Cancer Society's signature fundraising event. It was there that my grief turned a corner, for I realized that this was how I could keep Adam's memory alive. This was where I could make the difference that Adam could not. It is a real fear that bereaved parents have that their children will be forgotten. I was determined not to let that happen and I also needed to make some sense of his death.

By living in that dark hole of grief it negated Adam's death so I made a decision to turn his tragedy into something positive and do whatever I could so that no other family would have to go through the pain and grief of watching their child suffer and die from cancer and no other child would have to experience the hardships of cancer.

Over the years I have gone from being a team captain to one of the founding members of our own community's Relay For Life as well as a Legislative Ambassador, meeting our state and county legislators on Capitol Hill, both in Sacramento and DC to lobby for various cancer related policies. One day I will be reading the morning newspaper's announcement of the cure for cancer and I will take pride in knowing that Adam and I were a part of that movement!

Julie Dietz, Mom of Adam

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.

Adult Siblings Loss Group

Although this group is not presently active, Elise Noland and Caitlin Fager, past co-facilitators, are still available by phone or email for questions or concerns. Elise: or eliseln@yahoo.com or Caitlin cfager@gmail.com.

PLEASE
READ

Marin Chapter in a Transition Period

After several years at the helm, **Genesse Gentry** has officially stepped down as Marin County Chapter Leader. Genesse has held many positions since she arrived in 1991 as a newly-bereaved parent. While maintaining her position as Northern California Regional Coordinator, she will also continue to be active on our Steering Committee. We are extremely grateful to Genesse for all her diligence, energy and TLC throughout the years that have made the Marin chapter a stellar organization.

We are fortunate that **Diana de Regnier** has agreed to step in as interim Chapter Leader during this transition. Some of you may know Diana for her dedication to promoting and finding excellent talent for our annual Candle Lighting event. We are most appreciative of her willing to step forward at this time so that we may continue to function as a chapter under the National TCF organization's rules.

MARIN TCF IS A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION. It is able to support grieving families *only* because there are parents willing to put in the time, energy and talents to:

- answer Hotline calls from newly bereaved parents;
- follow up on progress of new members;
- plan and facilitate support meetings
- provide informative materials for new members;
- maintain a library of books on dealing with grief;
- develop and maintain a website for our chapter;
- publish a newsletter to keep parents knowledgeable about meetings and events;
- offer monthly walks for camaraderie and support;
- maintain necessary member data;
- maintain donation and expense records;
- provide a yearly Candle Lighting service for families;
- ensure your child's name on the Children's Memorial;
- promote workshops to help parents in their grief process;
- send warm notes to parents on their child's birthday and anniversary dates;
- and offer hugs and shoulders as parents progress through the different stages of grief.

It is not unusual for newly grieving parents to be unaware of all that takes place, how it takes place or that there is a Steering Committee responsible for all of the above.

The Steering Committee wants to be more visible to the membership and invites you to consider offering your time and talent so that this Chapter will continue to be the viable organization that it is. In these days, we cannot take for granted that what is here today will be here tomorrow. Please consider offering whatever talents, skills or interests you have to this great chapter. None of us are professionals at what we do; we are all just bereaved parents who know that we survived this tragedy in our lives because of the support we received from other caring parents.

Steering Committee Members would be welcome to hear from you and discuss how you might add to our mission of supporting parents like yourselves. There are many and varied opportunities.

Interim Chapter Leader:
Diana de Regnier
healing.spirit@comcast.net

Meeting Facilitator:
Louise Bruce
louise@novato.net

Outreach Packet Sender
Backup Phone Answerer:
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Children's Memorial Co. Head
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Answers TCF Phone line
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Nanette Jacobs
nanjacobs@comcast.net

Sandy McEowen
smctwins1@mac.com

Carol's Corner

Carol's Corner

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

LUNCH WITH MICHELLE

In the many years that I counseled bereaved parents in my private practice and in my work with Compassionate Friends, I had never met another mother with a similar situation to mine. But today I had lunch with Michelle Miller. Michelle's experience was uncannily like my own. We both had little girls who were pulled out to sea by a rogue wave. Her little Carolyn was 8 and my little Kristen was 7. They both had brothers with them who were slightly older and fortunately survived being hit by the wave. We were both single mothers. Michelle has two older sons, with the youngest close in age to Carolyn as my son Michel was to Kristen. Our lunch lasted 5 hours.

Michelle and I found a kindred connection in our unique situations. We both wondered what our daughters were thinking in their last moments. Were they calling for us as they held their breath, in the undertow? How long was your daughter in the water? The intense cold. Hypothermia. We had both heard stories of people in near drowning situations and had hung onto their descriptions of a sense of peace.

Do you think Kristen and Carolyn felt such peace? What do you think they felt? Coast Guard helicopters searched for their bodies. Carolyn was found that day. Kristen was not. How about your son? Does he go to the ocean? Do you? Both of our sons are quiet about their experiences and don't often share openly. Time stood still as we layered one experience over the other. A question, another thought, a nod of recognition. A knowing. What do you feel when you watch the waves? Do they come in or go out? Through smiles and tears we shared a journey that only the two of us could.

Kristen and Carolyn. Both children of Aries. The months of their deaths are near each other. Their death years far apart. Kristen died over 30 years ago and Carolyn in 2001. The dates are irrelevant. Time was irrelevant. Our hearts were torn open in the same way, by the same rogue wave. We both taught our children a love of the outdoors. We loved to hike, kayak, and explore, but nature turned on us that day. Our beautiful Pacific. We both had to find a way to befriend the ocean once again. We each found our own way.

When Michelle left, I thought about our little Kristen and Carolyn and knew they were smiling. Their mommies had connected. Neither of us had shared with another as we shared today. I'm invited to her house to have lunch, sit in the sun and walk to Corte Madera Creek to see the Compassionate Friends memorial stones with our little girls' names. Michelle heard of another mother whose five-year-old daughter was pulled out near the same place as Carolyn about one week later. We are going to try to find her. This *is* the essence of Compassionate Friends.

A Prayer for Spring

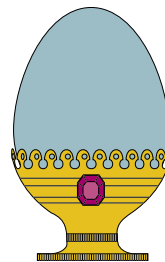
Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and anew,
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality of
sunshine and renewed life,
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me,
And as I recover from the insult
of life ~ continuance,
I readjust my focus to
include recovery and growth
as a possibility in my future,

Give me the strength to break out of
the cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it as
the place where I grew my wings,
Becoming a new person because of my loss.

Janis Hell, TCF Albany, NY



Members gathered on January 25th to attend a Writing Conference given by Genesse Gentry and Marianne Rogoff ~ both publishers of poetry or prose on grief. It was an inspirational day for many. Here are some of the creative offerings of those attending. More will follow in future issues.

Mourning

Imagine, your heart being taken from your chest and opened up as if it were a pouch with a zipper on it. Take the insides out and set them on a concrete slab and blow it up with a stick of dynamite. Scrape up all the fragments you can find, put them back into the now empty heart, zip it up put it back and go on with your life.

This is now the heart I must learn to live with. Starting all over because it is nothing like what it was since the moment I heard my sweet boy Douglas passed away. Days and months pass and I can't say how I live from one day to the next, they just keep happening.

*Janella Otell
Marin Co., CA TCF Chpt.*

To John
Beautiful boy.
Ocean tamer,
Mountain rider,
Snow skimmer,
Deep diver,
Death defier,



When will you surface?

*Both articles from Karen Klingel
Marin Co., CA TCF Chpt.*

Reflection

Mourning now, six years later — periods of blankness, inability to concentrate, wanting something to eat that I can't name, wanting, wanting — guilt persists, why didn't I do more, help more, love more, share more, explain more. I want others to do for me what I didn't do for John — listen to me, care about me, understand what I'm not saying, drag things out of me, love me, risk for me, give, give, give, give me everything you have. Tell me your story.

SEARCHING

*FIND IT, FIND THE THOUGHT, FIND THE FEELING.
WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR?*

*SOMETIMES IT'S A REASON FOR WHAT IS,
SOMETIMES FOR AN ANSWER TO A
QUESTION I HAVE NOT YET ASKED.*

*I CANNOT ASK THE QUESTION FOR TOO MANY REASONS,
TOO MANY QUESTIONS, ALL VYING FOR ATTENTION,
ALL DISRUPTING THE INNER PEACE I SEEK.*

*MY QUEST FOR SURVIVAL PREVAILS, I ESCAPE THE SEARCH.
I STOP ASKING QUESTIONS, FOR NOW I WILL
JUST KEEP ON SEARCHING FOR...*

*Kitty Forstner
Marin Co, CA TCF Chpt.*

CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interim Chapter Leader:

Diana deRegnier
healing.spirit@comcast.net
415/383-1703

No. CA Regional Coordinator:

Genesse Gentry
21 Shemran Ct.
Fairfax, CA 94930
415/457-2862

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 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

TCF National Website:

www.compassionatefriends.org
offers supportive services and
chat rooms

Additional Support Sites

friendsforsurvival.org
opentohope.com
groww.org
Healingafterloss.org
Bereavedparents.com
childloss.com
survivorsofsuicide.com
inlovingmemoryonline.org

Other Bereavement Resources

CorStone 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

Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

Tues., March 17th at 7:30 PM

Tues., April 21st at 7:30 PM

The monthly meetings offer parents support, camaraderie, resource materials, books on the grieving process, hugs (if desired) and most of all, the opportunity to voice your feelings in an accepting and nurturing environment.

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.

Project Grace

Project Grace and Seeds of Learning are looking for family members who have lost a child or sibling to join them in a unique service opportunity in Nicaragua, June 13-15, 2009. Project Grace is a program of CorStone (formerly the International Center for Attitudinal Healing) in Sausalito. It is a non-profit organization working around the world to develop and support emotional resilience in children, families and communities to better deal with challenge, conflict or crisis. For more information, contact Carole Mahoney at carole@corstone.org.

Marin member Michelle Miller will be participating in a Project Grace trip this year.

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.

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.

Sat., April 4th Baker Beach to Crissy Field on the Presidio: Meet at Baker Beach in SF, near the GG Bridge in the north parking lot (near the bathrms.) We'll head north along the coastal trail; include the new trails into the Marshall Beach area; walk along the bunkers, under the bridge, then drop down to Crissy Field on the Bay in the Presidio. We'll either eat sandwiches at the Warming Hut there, which also has a great bookstore/gift shop, or enjoy a more leisurely brunch at La Terasse, which is a little farther into the Presidio. After lunch, we'll have a choice of walking back to our cars at Baker Beach, or taking the free PresidiGo shuttle back. This is a great walk with lots to see, do, and eat! For this walk, please RSVP to kathbodnar@yahoo.com before the walk, and to confirm again the morning of the walk.

Sat., May 2nd Children's Memorial to Ross: We'll meet at the Memorial Site (see directions next page) and walk into Ross for lunch, possibly at a Half Day Cafe.



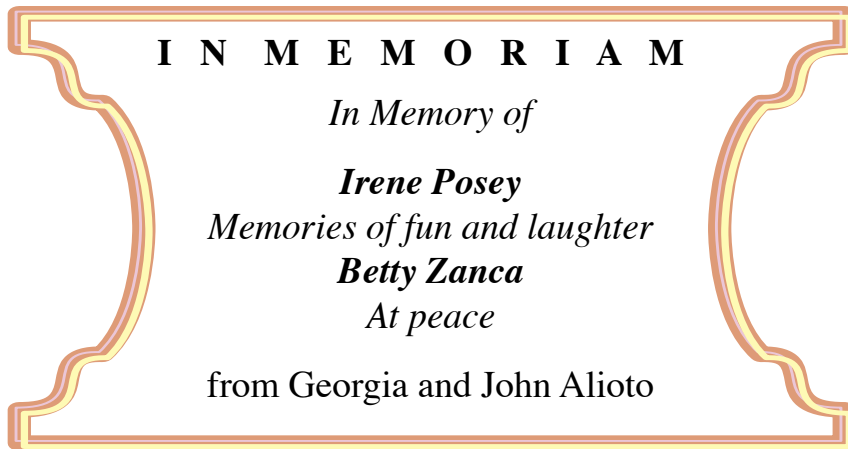
Check out our website at www.tcfmarin.org.



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.



Grief Support After the Death of a Child

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents & siblings. There is no religious affiliation & there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal. The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

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 gbgentry@aol.com.

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.

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
 Send Your Payment to: Digital Video Dimensions
 Attn: 2008 TCF DVD
 273 Crest Road
 Novato, CA 94945

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

Save the Date!

The Compassionate Friends
2009 National Conference

August 7-9, 2009 ~ Portland Oregon

“I always feel like I’m wrapped in a cocoon of compassionate love when I’m at a TCF National Conference. This is one of the greatest healing tools available to a bereaved family.”

TCF National Conference Attendee

A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey. Every person comes for the same reason - a child has died. It is a place where friendship, understanding, and hope are more than just words.

Reservations for those attending TCF’s national conference are being accepted by the Doubletree Hotel Portland where the conference will be held. TCF has negotiated for a large block of rooms at a special price for those attending the conference. Rate is \$129 per room per night in several different configurations. As always, we suggest that you make reservations early to avoid disappointment. To reserve online, visit [reservations](#). You may also call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-503-281-6111 and receive the negotiated price, but you must identify yourself as attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The rooms are available at this special rate for those staying the nights of August 5-August 9. Last day for reservations, if rooms are still available, will be July 4.

For more information and registration for the Conference, visit www.compassionatefriends.org



Marin County, California Chapter
P. O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915

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March/April 2009

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