

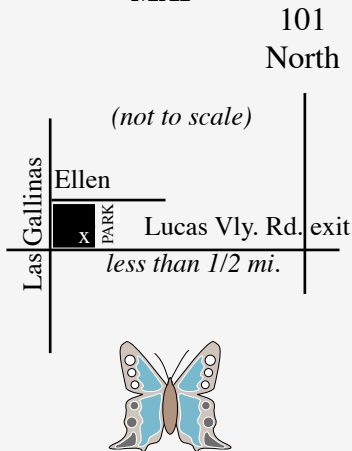
**A non-profit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the loss of a child**

## Meeting Site

**Lucas Valley Community  
Church Conference Room  
2000 Las Gallinas at Lucas  
Valley Rd. in San Rafael  
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



**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).

## May: The Unusually Difficult Month

For the bereaved parent, May is frequently the cruelest month. The month of May offers the rest of the world a promise of another carefree summer, swimming, family vacations, relaxation, reading, cookouts and picnics, trips to the lake and so much that is inherent in our culture.

Yet May also brings memories of our children. The common denominator for mothers (and fathers) is Mother's Day. This tradition was wonderful when our children were alive; now the direct mail and newspaper advertising, sentimental television spots, in-store promotions, cards and letters and the countdown to the day itself are very cruel reminders of our lost children. Who will remember us on Mother's Day?

This will be my fourth Mother's Day without my son. I miss him terribly all year long, but May and December are the worst months for me. First we have Mother's Day, then my son's birthday and throughout the month I am bombarded with invitations for high school and college graduations...each one reminding me of what once was. My son finishing grade school, high school, college, graduate school. Each was accompanied by a ceremony. All the ceremonies rush into my mind as I realize how much of myself is my memories and those memories are very entwined with my son's life. A big part of me died with him that night in December.

Three years ago I was overwhelmed, sobbing, still occasionally in deep shock. My mind was mush, my heart was crushed and I did not have the will to do much more than quietly weep. It was my first Mother's Day without my son, the first birthday that he wasn't here, the first Memorial Day Weekend without him. I was paralyzed. May would never be joyful for me again.

What to do....what to do. I ask myself this question each April as we begin the ramp up to the longest month. This year, I am counting out the last days of April and wondering how I will handle it. I am not worried about it; I am just wondering. I have gotten used to the transformation that has taken place in my mind, heart and soul. I experienced a slow spiritual awakening which accompanied a deep, deep sense of loss over which I have no control. I go with it.

There are questions that we must ask ourselves. The answers are unique to us. Collectively we know this is a month to dread; individually we have our own memories and our own methods of coping. Collectively we lean on each other for hope, comfort and support. Individually, we each walk our own road depending on how many circumstances of life are in our month of May: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations. How we handled the beginning of summer, the end of the school year.....all of these events can bombard us in May. *May, cont'd. on p. 2*

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**“We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.”**

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May, cont'd. from p. 1

The memories float into our minds like a mist that thickens into a heavy fog. We are enveloped in our fog of memories; the before death years come to us in a hodgepodge of the happiest times and clash with the reality of now. These are our memories, our children and ultimately our choices. And there seems to be little joy we can take from this month of memories.

Once again, we make the decision. If we are not ready to acknowledge Mother's Day, we shouldn't do it. If we are facing other days in May that will tear at our hearts, we must plan for it. Some of us prefer to be alone and isolated. Others of us prefer to be with friends or family. Some of us go to the cemetery, others go to the park. Some read, watch movies, sit on the deck or simply rest. Others take a weekend trip which puts them into a different state of reality.

There are as many choices as there are parents who have lost their children. Consider your options. Be honest with yourself. Don't be pushed into anything. Take control. We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I'm working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

May 2006 TCF, Katy, TX

### The Long Forever

You left us so quickly;  
there were no goodbyes.  
How long this forever,  
your death and our lives.  
The sadness, the anger,  
the loneliness of three,  
preferring four always,  
how small, this new we.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
From *Stars in the Deepest Night*  
– *After the Death of a Child*

### A Father Mourns Too

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen—my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son. This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die.



**“It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day...”**

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.

So, support and love is needed and needed badly. Of course, we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. I hope that bereaved fathers will not be forgotten on Father's Day. It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day and remember that the cute little commercials that hurt mothers in May take their toll on fathers in June.

Doug Hughes-TCF Las Vegas, NV

## DO REAL MEN ATTEND TCF MEETINGS?

It has often bothered me that more men and persons of cultural minorities don't attend TCF meetings. I know there are societal and cultural restraints which inhibit many bereaved persons from seeking outside help or support. Being both a man and a member of an ethnic group, I know very well the false pride which often restrains us from admitting we are not as self-sufficient as we want others to believe. We are taught (men in particular) at a young age not to reveal when we are hurt. We must be strong and brave and silent.

Stoic endurance is really not unique in any culture. The British call it "keeping a stiff upper lip." The Japanese call it *gaman*. Hispanics pride themselves on their ability to *aguantar*. In the U.S. it is embodied in the Puritan ethic.

When I began attending TCF meetings regularly, I wondered for a long time whether I was a "real man." Was I less macho than my peers? Couldn't I handle my grief in solitary dignity? The answers, I finally decided, were yes, no, and maybe. Maybe I could have adjusted to my son's death all by myself. Maybe I could have shunned the possibilities of self-destructive behavior, drunkenness, drug abuse, wild living, or the unraveling of my family life without TCF. Maybe I could have dealt alone with all the anger, despair, and depression. Fortunately I didn't have to.

I readily admit I wasn't very enthusiastic about going to my first TCF meeting. I imagined a group of people sitting around crying on each other's shoulders, bemoaning their cruel fate. Instead, I found people who were hurting as much as I; who, like me, were angry, who also often felt depressed—but who were working very hard to mend the tattered fabric of their lives! I soon discovered that this was a place where I could talk about my grief and still feel safe about it. Nobody was going to think me less of a man for not getting over my son's death in a few months.

TCF doesn't promise or offer any quick fixes. There are no magic words or formulas to take away your grief. Whatever "magic" takes place, I know now, happens slowly. I don't believe it is possible for a bereaved parent to "forget," but I think TCF's support and understanding help make it easier for us to go on with our lives. We need not become lifelong emotional cripples.

To all of you hurting people who have never attended a TCF meeting, I urge you to give it a try. Attend two or three meetings and see if some of the "magic" doesn't rub off on you. What have you got to lose? You can't hurt any worse than you already have. TCF is for any and all bereaved parents—men and women, minorities and gringos, people of any or no religious faith. The one thing everyone at TCF has in common is the death of a child—and how it feels.

*Steve Perez, TCF, Denver, CO*

### *Our Children's Legacy*

Our current meeting facilitator Louise Bruce and her husband are the parents of three children, Laura, Ben and Christopher. Two of their children were born with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. Though faced with challenges, the blessing of their children taught them to focus on what matters in life. With the help of fantastic nannies and special services, their family enjoyed traveling, camping and much needed respite, even though the daily demands of life made it difficult to seek out these helpers and activities. The sudden and unexpected deaths of Christopher in 2004 and Laura in 2005 were a tremendous loss. Now having the gift of time, the family is pursuing resources for other families. In their effort to make easier the path of other families facing similar challenges, they have founded the LaChris Connection.

Their very special children brought much joy to the lives they touched. Their examples of love and kindness will continue to shine through the efforts of the LaChris Connection. More information is available at: [www.lachrisconnection.org](http://www.lachrisconnection.org).

**Carol's Corner will return to us next issue. Do you have a question for Carol Kearns?**

Email her at [clkearns@comcast.net](mailto:clkearns@comcast.net).

• • • • • 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

**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

**Marin TCF Meeting Calendar**

**Tues., May 20<sup>th</sup>** There will be time for sharing followed by a presenter teaching us some Stress Reduction techniques.

**Tues., June 17<sup>th</sup>** Time for sharing followed by discussion on upcoming summer events, like Graduations, Weddings, Family Reunions. How do we celebrate these occasions with our children absent and make these events meaningful for all family members? As with all meetings, we will share what has personally worked for us.

**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. Note some walks will indicate different leaders.

**Sat., May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

This month we will walk south from the **Children's Memorial** (see directions on next page) on the path along Magnolia Blvd. through Larkspur and then along the railroad tracks. Perhaps we will stop at Max's for lunch. RSVP Marcie.

**Sat., June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Tennessee Valley** is our destination. From 101 south take the Highway 1/Shoreline exit. Follow Highway 1 for only one block, turning left at the Tennessee Valley sign. From 101 north, take the Highway 1/Shoreline exit, go under the freeway and follow the directions above. Follow Tennessee Valley Rd. to the end where we will meet in the parking lot. RSVP Marcie.

**Sat., July 5<sup>th</sup>**

We will do the **Rush Creek** walk in Novato. Take 101 north to the Atherton/San Marin exit. Turn right and then almost immediately turn left onto Binford, the frontage road, past the Park & Ride lot. Park in the Park & Ride or on the road itself. You will see the Marin Open Space sign and gate on the right. Bring a bag lunch for picnic in Sandy Williams yard afterwards (just 5 minutes away.) RSVP Sandy: tcfed@comcast.net.

**Special Mother's Day Hike Offered:** If you'd like to hike Tennessee Valley on 5/11, meet Pamela Ashkenazy at 10 am in the parking lot. Picnic on the beach. No need to RSVP. Questions? pamela@gsmgt.com



**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, contact Karen at: [kklingel@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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.

### 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.

### Listen to Chapter Leader Genesse Gentry on 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).

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

**Newsletter Editor Needed!:** 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.

### 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

### 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.

### 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: (415) 823-3778 or [eliseln@yahoo.com](mailto:eliseln@yahoo.com) or Caitlin (415) 823-2869 or [cfager@gmail.com](mailto:cfager@gmail.com).



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

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

The Conference will offer **friendship, understanding and hope** as attendees join in the banquets, workshops and sharing sessions, as well as other conference activities. Go online for all the workshop topic offered this year! **Join other Marin chapter members for a significant event.**

**Keynote Speakers include:**

- *Ann Hood*, bereaved parent and award winning author of 9 novels including **Comfort: My Journey Through Grief**.
- *Darrell Scott*, whose daughter was the first to be killed at the Columbine tragedy, has started **‘Rachel’s Challenge’** in her memory, a program presented at more than a thousand high schools to inspire students to pass along kindness and compassion.

**Other highlights:**

- a complete sibling program
- the very special *Walk to Remember*
- a special performance by the critically acclaimed Nashville Bluegrass band and other Nashville musicians



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**

**Marin County, California Chapter**  
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