



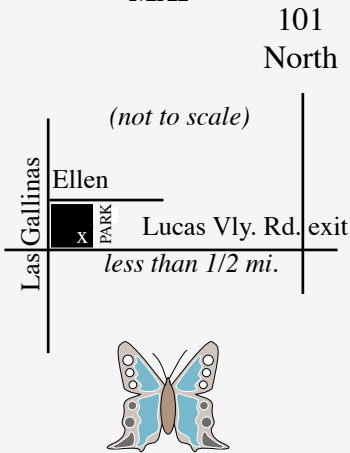
A non-profit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the loss of a child

Meeting Site

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

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

MAP



Alternate site in San Francisco:

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

A river of light,
 flowing east to west
 lingering an hour,
 then moving on.

Like the children,
 here too short a time,
 lighting our lives,
 then too soon gone.

Gathering together,
 being here for each other
 on one special night
 this time each year,

We light the candles
 with pride and sorrow
 reminding the world,
 they once were here.

Their lives live on
 in us, the living,
 who guard their memories
 like precious gold.

by Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
 (and Lori - 2/2/70 ~ 6/28/91)
 TCF Marin Chapter Leader, No CA Regional Coordinator
 to be included in her forthcoming new book.

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To have them back
 for just one minute
 we would give
 a thousand fold.

Tonight we say
 they are loved,
 they're remembered,
 and they will always be.

Like candle flames,
 they warm our souls
 and light our lives,
 to help us see.

A river of light,
 flowing east to west
 lingering an hour,
 then moving on.

Like the children,
 here too short a time,
 lighting our lives . . .
 then . . . gone.

That Their Light May Shine...

Every year on the 2nd Sunday in December, at 7pm around the world, candles are lit for children of *any age* who have died. The Compassionate Friends of Marin and San Francisco Bay Area invites *all* to join us December 14th, in a non-sectarian **celebration of our children's lives** at Unity In Marin at 600 Palm Drive (Hamilton area) in Novato. The service will

include music, poetry, and a slide show of our children's photos set to music. Join us at Unity In Marin or light a candle wherever you are that their light may always shine. Families are invited to bring a photo of their deceased loved one. A reception will follow. Guests may bring an hors d'oeuvre or desert to share if so inclined. Donations to cover the cost of the candle lighting service are welcome. For more information, see www.tcfmarin.org or call 415-457-3123.



The Compassionate Friends national Website also provides a place for families to share thoughts, and the Bereaved Chat Room will be open for real-time conversation throughout the day. <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

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

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.

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

A. This is a frequently asked question and most important. We all know how lonely we feel after our child's death. For others, life continues on and we can't even figure out what to buy at the grocery store. Our life must go forward as well but how? We may have other children to care for and yet we can hardly get out of bed. Just getting dressed is a struggle. I would like to offer a few suggestions that have helped me and some of my bereaved clients.

First, we must break things down. All we need to think about is what must be done — getting children off to school, paying bills or making meals. We can step back from our volunteer or social commitments. We probably cannot step back from work. Hopefully, you are in a supportive environment where work can be a refuge from the chaos of your personal life.

Second, pamper yourself as much as you can given inescapable commitments. This can be as simple as a bubble bath, a walk with a friend, massage, nap or curling up with a good book. Appreciate that you may not feel like doing any of these but it is important to try. Our energy is low when grieving, even if we've had eight hours of sleep. Grief is exhausting!

Third, just because people ask questions about our child's death, we don't have to answer them. Some people mean well and some are just curious. This is especially true after the death of our child due to murder or suicide. We can simply say, "I'm sorry, I just don't feel like talking about it." Or, "It's too painful for me to talk about my child's death." If they persist, and friends won't, they are asking for themselves not you, and I would simply walk away.

Fourth, the holidays are just around the corner and we may be already dreading them. Appreciate that you can do something different and meaningful. Please go to my web site, www.carolkearns.com, and search for the "Carol's Columns" link. There are a few articles on grief and the holidays that I hope will help.

Fifth, do not turn to drugs or alcohol. We want to do anything to lessen the pain, but this is not the answer! I can't stress this enough. In my practice I have seen too many people add even more pain to themselves and the family already in pain, because of complications from alcohol and drugs. Seek help from a therapist experienced in grief issues instead.

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

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 and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and 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.

The Love of My Life

Only December

Feelings heavy,
tears and tears.
Will the darkness last?
Or is it –
only December?
Hadn't past months
brought peace and hope?
Where is the strength
of October –
and November?
Lights, carols, ornaments
on trees,
cards from friends,
happy times in seasons
past.
We remember.
We remember.
Will January bring
light at last?
Will we be stronger then,
for making it through
this December?
When people ask
how I'm doing I say,
Well . . . you know . . .
it's December.

Genesse Bourdeau
Gentry
TCF Marin Chpt. Leader
No CA Regional
Coordinator
from *Stars in the Deepest
Night- After the Death of
a Child*

Sonoma County TCF Chapter

If anyone is inter-
ested in restarting
the Sonoma Coun-
ty TCF chapter,
contact the former
chapter leader,
Anne McHugh, at
707-762-8517.

On September 3, 2008, it will be seven years since my beloved daughter, Carolyn, passed from this earth. Her physical being died on Labor Day, 2001, when she was caught by a rogue wave that dragged her out to sea. Carolyn was just eight years old.

I was not present when Carolyn drowned in the ocean. I am convinced that had I been, and had it been Carolyn's fate to drown on that day no matter what, I would have died that day alongside my daughter. Instead, it seems that something greater than myself decided that I am to remain here on this earth awhile longer. Please do not be fooled by my physical presence though, as a part of me did die on that day, and innocence was lost that can never be regained.

These past seven years have been an eternity and a blink of an eye, just the same. How is it possible that I have lived this long without Carolyn to have and to hold? How is it possible that Carolyn has been gone for almost as long as she was here? She *is* here though. She never really left; it just took me awhile to understand. Carolyn remains in my heart forever. Love never dies.

It has been a difficult road to be certain. Sharp stones and smooth, all intermixed at first, and only a keen awareness of the sharp stones on the bare soles of my feet. (Sole/soul?) No rest for the weary, and nothing to stop the unrelenting pain of my ripped and torn flesh. Over time though, in traveling along this path, I noticed that the smooth stones began to outnumber the sharp ones, which enabled the healing to begin. The sharp stones still appear from time to time with little or no advance warning, and my flesh is torn open once again, but I suspect it will always be that way. My scars remain and I will not hide them for these are the scars that come from loving someone with all of your heart and soul, and that is not something that need be concealed. This road, this path, is the journey of grief and of love.

Somewhere in the depths of my suffering, I realized that I had an obligation to my daughter, Carolyn. Since the tide, so to speak had now shifted and I was to be my daughter's legacy instead of she being mine, I felt an obligation and a need to find a way to honor her. A way to honor her memory that also gave meaning to my life, for without meaning, there is no life for me. I chose to become a grief counselor and a life coach. (Or did they choose me?) I specialize in helping others who must also live the life of the "bereaved parent". I find it healing to be able to offer assistance to those who must walk on this difficult path. There are many ways one can offer assistance and this is one that, for a variety of reasons, I seem well suited for. I also feel closest to Carolyn in our "new relationship" when I do this work. I am grateful for my work and the meaning it brings to my life.

Carolyn remains the love of my life, and I hope she always will. For me, love is like the energy that creates the sun; it sustains my soul, my inner being, and it empowers my light to shine. Just as the sun, the moon, and the stars above shine, her love is a light that guides and inspires me to love.

By Michelle E. Miller, August 25, 2008
TCF Marin County, CA Chapter
Published in *We Need Not Walk Alone, Fall Issue 2008*
Michelle may be contacted at michelle@greenspiritlifecoaching.com

• • • • • 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., November 18th “Writing to Help Us Heal” will be the topic of the November Meeting. Marianne Rogoff, author of *Sylvie’s Life* and teacher of “Griefwriting” at Book Passage, and Genesse Gentry, author of *Stars in the Deepest Night* and workshop presenter at the last nine TCF national conferences, will speak about how writing has helped them in their healing after the deaths of their daughters. They will also discuss their upcoming writing workshop to be held in January 2009.

Tues., December 16th Since the Candle Lighting will be happening in the month of December, we will be look at the process of and reflecting on experiencing our children in a stronger way. We will explore the pros and cons — or difficult yet rewarding experiences — of traditions or events that bring thoughts of our children closer to our conscience. These can be truly painful, yet freeing, steps in our journey.

UPCOMING EVENT: Writing Workshop

Genesse Gentry and Marianne Rogoff will present this workshop in January (DBA). The morning will be comprised of the kinds of writing exercises Genesse uses in her Poetry and Journaling Workshops at the National Conference, while the afternoon will focus on exercises Marianne uses in her “griefwriting” classes at Book Passage. Since this workshop is open to other No CA chapters, it would be good to inquire early. For further information, contact 457-3123 or gbgentry@aol.com

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

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

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

Walking Group

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



Sat., November 1st Let’s revisit **Samuel P. Taylor Park** - beautiful any time of the year. We can park and meet on SFD near the entrance and picnic afterwards.

Sat., December 6th **Tennessee Valley** is good even if it is raining - From 101 south take Highway 1/Shoreline exit. Follow Highway 1 for one long block turning left at the Tennessee Valley sign. From 101 north, take the Highway 1/Shoreline exit, go under the freeway and follow the above directions. Follow Tennessee Valley Road to the end where we will meet in the parking lot.

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



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. Contact Karen Klingel at: kklingel@sbcglobal.net for an application form and information to have your child's name memorialized. Directions for the memorial are on this page.

In Memoriam

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

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

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

TCF Marin only works if YOU participate!

The Candle Lighting is almost upon us, and making it the best possible gathering and remembrance of our children is up to us. This is a unique and heartfelt opportunity during the Holiday Season to honor and remember our children (and siblings) who have gone too soon. Although all who have attended previously would likely agree, the Candle Lighting feels like a miracle when it comes to remembering our children, this is one miracle that needs volunteers to help make it happen. We are fortunate to once again have Alan Kolsky overseeing the production of the Candle Lighting DVD (see side bar), but the rest is up to us. We need a few folks to oversee the organizational details, such as the program, decorations, food, etc. Many hands make light work; if you can help, call Genesse at 457-3123.

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

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:eliseln@yahoo.com or Caitlin or cfager@gmail.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 & 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.

Photos for Candle Lighting Video

If you are new to TCF or if you want to put in a new photo of your child for this year's Candle Lighting DVD, please send the photo or email it to:

Digital Video Dimensions,
attn: 2008 TCF DVD
273 Crest Rd.
Novato, CA 94945
alan@digitalvideodimensions.com

DEADLINE: Nov. 30th

Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for photo return.

Questions: Alan Kolsky
(415) 893-9070

THANKSGIVINGS

The leaves have fallen, the trees are bare.
The day is crisp, a hint of snow in the air.
But inside the hearth is warmly blazing
And around the TV, the family is lazing
Watching the parade with floats galore.
While delightful scents waft from the kitchen door.
Turkey and dressing, and pumpkin pie in the air
Restlessly waiting to be called Thanksgiving fare.



**“For although he is
thankful for all his
family is blessed, he too
feels the emptiness of
the one missing guest.”**

Inside the kitchen a mother works preparing a feast for family and friends.
But inside, her heart is heavy and tears flow without end.
Tis the time of holiday cheer, a time of laughter and love — but inside her mind plays memories of the one above.
An empty hole in her heart for the one who is not there — the table is set except for the one spot left bare.
Just a candle and rose to fill the empty space — around the table Father offers the grace with tears on his face.
For although he is thankful for all his family is blessed, he too feels the emptiness of the one missing guest.
All join hands and shed the tears for the memories of past gone years.
Yes, one space is empty and can never be filled — oh but the love the memories yield.
One more holiday we mark without you, but you remain with us all holidays through.

Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta Online



**During the holiday season, whether you celebrate Christmas,
Hanukkah or Kiwansa, it is our desire that each of you will find
peace in your heart, joy in your families and hope in the future.**

Check out our website at www.tcfmarin.org for more information.



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

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