



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

**Meeting Site**

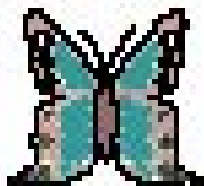
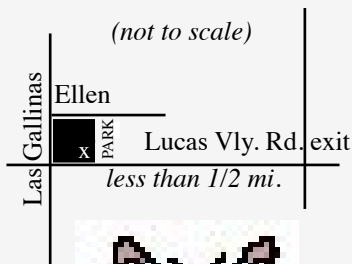
**Lucas Valley Community Church Conference Room  
2000 Las Gallinas at Lucas Valley Rd. in San Rafael  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month  
at 7:30 P.M. (7pm if first time)**

**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 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

(not to scale)



**San Francisco Chapter:**

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 730 pm. For more information, call Audre at 650/359-7928 or alhallum@comcast.net.

**Autumn Memories**

My son and I always enjoyed the autumn season. Yes, when we lived in the cold zone, we knew that winter’s winds and snows were on the way. But, yet, we took time to enjoy the beautiful array of colors that nature gave us as a final salute to the growing season. Todd and I raked leaves in the autumn. I had purchased a home in a town on the Mississippi River bluffs; the home had been built in the 1860s and I am sure some of the trees were well over 50 years old. The leaves would fall and we would rake. We made a game of it. Sometimes his best friend, Allen, would come over and help. The boys would jump into the piles and laugh with delight. We’d create a big pile and rake it to the concrete so that it could be burned. I can still see Todd laughing and dancing around that fire. His pure childhood joy was contagious.

Todd and I loved to look at the changing leaves along the bluffs of the river. We would drive on weekends and find the best view. Then we’d park and marvel at nature’s wonder. The big bluffs, the turning leaves, the eagles soaring above us. Ducks flying south...even the occasional group of geese overhead...honking, honking as they journeyed to a warmer climate.

The light is different in the autumn...it’s diffused somehow. It’s different than the light in any other season. Autumn sun was our favorite light. It seemed less harsh, more forgiving, gentler in a strange sort of way. That was another time and another place.

Now in the autumn I remember all the special times I shared with my child. Looking at leaves, collecting leaves, raking leaves.....we did this together, just the two of us. “Mom, when are we going to go look at leaves?” Todd would ask. That was my cue to load up some soft drinks and sandwiches and head out on the first sunny Saturday. We’d repeat this ritual until the leaves had all fallen and it was time to rake.

When we moved to the Houston area, Todd was 12, and we talked about the seasons. He told me about his great memories of leaves and drives and time together. He said he would miss autumn with me. That made me feel good. These were memories that we shared, of a time when it was just Todd and me for those special moments. Looking back, I am so glad that I spent the time to make memories. I thought I was making memories for my child, but in fact, I was making memories for us both. And now those memories are my memories.....good memories....memories that I will cherish always.

Here it is autumn again. Soon Todd will be gone five years. The memories are flooding back: the first day of each school each year, the changes as he grew to become a man. High school, college, graduate school...all began in the autumn. Autumn marks the beginning of many good memories for me. I listen as the school bus stops in front of our house to pick up today’s children. Once in a while I go to the door and watch them load up, chatting with each other as they take their seats. I think of my 12 year old son, getting on that bus in front of our home for the first time: the first day of school in Houston. And for a moment, just a fleeting moment, I think I can see him sitting at a window seat, waving at me. Waving goodbye.

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

## Halloween Memories

Most children enjoy Halloween, the costumes, the candy, the parties, trick or treat, the decorations and so much more. My son looked forward to Halloween with great anticipation. Until he reached the fourth grade, Todd was happy to pick out a costume at the discount store... usually the current movie or television monster. He came home from school in fourth grade and told me that there was going to be a costume contest and he really wanted to have a unique costume. I asked him what he wanted to be, and I will never forget his response: "I want to be a vampire, Mom. A really cool vampire." So, I talked to a friend of mine who was into stage production, and we went to her house the night before the contest.

She had a vampire cape, a vampire body suit, a vampire collar and great makeup. Todd loved it. My friend stopped at the house early the next morning and applied the makeup and did the finishing touches on Todd's costume. He looked just like the vampires in the movies, He was so pleased. He really wanted to win first place in his class. I dropped him at school and told him to have a wonderful time. He was elated.

As the day progressed, I wondered how he was doing. He had never wanted to win a prize before; what if he didn't get first place in his class? I worried about him, knowing that his feelings were easily hurt by cruel children and sometimes by cruel teachers. He called me at 3:30 to let me know he was home. I could hear excitement in his voice, and I asked him how he did. "Mom, you won't believe this", he said in a serious, low toned voice. "What happened?", I asked, now wondering about the day's events. "I won first place, Mom. First place in the whole school. I can't wait for Halloween. Wait till Grandpa sees me. He won't even recognize me. I even got a certificate for first place... I'm putting it up in my room." I was so happy that tears welled in my eyes. My son had tried his best, and he had won. He had put himself out there and he wasn't disappointed, disillusioned or discouraged.

That was the first of many accomplishments in my son's life. He went on to win in track in high school, restore a 1965 GTO from the ground up and receive numerous trophies and awards. He attained his BS and MBA and was successful and respected in business. He was a great father to his children, and his love for them was very deep. He never hesitated to tell them he loved them and how proud he was of them. He was a wonderful parent. He was always an amazing son. His death left a scar on my soul and a hole in my heart. But his first success is forever in my mind. The little certificate which he brought home and hung on his bedroom wall is a treasure of his wonderful childhood. Halloween is still a happy holiday, and it is one of the few which I enjoy. I thank my son for that and for all the joy he gave me in his short 35 years of life.

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

### **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. [eliseln@yahoo.com](mailto:eliseln@yahoo.com) or [cfager@gmail.com](mailto:cfager@gmail.com).

A most inspirational photo of 1,000 parents and siblings holding lit candles in memory of their loved ones at the National Conference in August in Portland, OR.

*Conference photos courtesy of  
Cecile Noland, Marin TCF.*



The impressive Candle Lighting Ceremony with 1,000 participants at the National Conference in August. Candy Lightner, founder of M.A.D.D., was the keynote speaker at the evening's banquet.

**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.

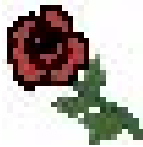
**Remember  
all things  
very well —**

**even many  
uncomfortable things.**

**All memories  
make you richer!**

*Sascha Wagner  
The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

**Love  
Gifts**



SAMPLE  
Love Gift

Eric & Theresa Smith  
In loving memory of  
*Sean Alan Smith*  
3/11/72~7/6/88

*You will always be with us in our hearts.  
Love, Mom and Dad*

**LOVE GIFT FORM** Love Gifts are “messages” published in our newsletter that honor children who have died. We are grateful to parents, grandparents and others who, by their Love Gifts donations, allow us to offer resources such as the Annual Candle Lighting Event, the newsletter, books, brochures and pamphlets at no cost to assist bereaved families. They also allow us to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. The donation amount is your choice, and Love Gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

**Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:**

Jan/Feb issue	Dec. 15	July/Aug issue	June 15
Mar/April issue	Feb. 15	Sept/Oct issue	Aug. 15
May/June issue	April 15	Nov/Dec issue	Oct. 15

**★ Please destroy older Love Gift forms and use this one with NEW ADDRESS to assure prompt delivery! ★**

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthdate & Anniversary Date \_\_\_\_\_ newsletter month \_\_\_\_\_

Message \_\_\_\_\_

Include your name, address and phone # **if not on check** in case of questions: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE ADDRESS CHANGE:** Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to **TCF/Marin** to:  
**TCF/Marin Newsletter Editor, P. O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.**

## Carol's Corner

To submit a question or concern, please contact: [clkearns@comcast.net](mailto:clkearns@comcast.net)

Carol has a very good website for bereaved parents: [www.carolkearns.com](http://www.carolkearns.com)

### Autumn

In the fall  
When amber leaves  
are shed,  
Softly—silently  
Like tears that wait  
to flow,  
I watch and grieve.  
My heart beats sadly  
in the fall;  
'Tis then I miss you  
most of all.

*Lily de Lauder*  
*TCF Van Nuys, CA*

## Q. What Does Finding Meaning in Our Grief Mean???

**A.** After the death of a child, when we are in the depths of grief, it is hard to believe we will ever be happy again. We are overwhelmed by what used to be the simplest of tasks, yet we still have to function. Life continues on never missing a beat. There is no magic wand and there are no magical words for surviving grief. As we each find our own way, we must be patient and gentle with ourselves.

Grief can focus us inward. It is only when we start to look outside of ourselves that the healing can begin. In trying to accept my daughter Kristen's death, I realized loving always brings the potential for suffering. But what other choice is there? Not to love or to have someone to love is to me a greater suffering. We must not allow the love we have for our deceased child to keep us from the love we have for our spouse, surviving children, and other loved ones. We must instead, allow our love for them to carry us forward. Through them we can begin a new life.

In order to cope with suffering, which is a natural part of life, we each need to search out that which is personally meaningful. This is the greatest challenge after our child has died, but until we do, we will not be free from the pain. What helped me after Kristen's death was connecting with other bereaved parents. I didn't care what their degrees were. I knew that they knew what I was going through and seeing how they rebuilt their lives gave me hope to do the same. This is another reason why The Compassionate Friends, Parents of Murdered Children, Survivors of Suicide, Help After Neonatal Death (HAND), and Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) organizations help on an ongoing basis. We can all learn from and be there for each other as we repair our shattered dreams.

I have completed my memoir, *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My Daughter's Death Has Taught Me the Meaning of Life*. Please read the specifics of my book launch below. I hope you can all be there because I want to dedicate that evening to our beloved children who died much too soon. May they never be forgotten.

### You Are Invited

to  
the Book Launch  
for Carol Kearns' new book

### *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My Daughter's Death Taught Me the Meaning of Life*

Sunday Evening, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.  
Book Passage — 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera

For more information about Carol and her book,  
go to her website: [www.carolkearns.com](http://www.carolkearns.com)

### BITTERSWEET

By Sascha Wagner  
from *The Poems of Sascha Wagner*

Bittersweet parents we are,  
loving and giving still.  
We render what tears  
grief demands —  
until, out of grieving darkness,  
we come to celebrate  
our children's life,  
and our own.

## CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Interim Chapter Leader:

Diana deRegnier  
healing.spirit@comcast.net  
415/897-5494

### No. CA Regional Coordinator:

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

### 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 ..415/385-1008  
(sibling loss)

### 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)

### TCF National Website:

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
offers supportive services and chat rooms

### Additional Support Sites

[friendsforsurvival.org](http://friendsforsurvival.org)  
[opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)  
[groww.org](http://groww.org)  
[Healingafterloss.org](http://Healingafterloss.org)  
[Bereavedparents.com](http://Bereavedparents.com)  
[childloss.com](http://childloss.com)  
[survivorsofsuicide.com](http://survivorsofsuicide.com)  
[inlovingmemoryonline.org](http://inlovingmemoryonline.org)

### Neonatal Support:

Chris Lehr, LCSW, (415) 282-7330. [www.HANDsupport.org](http://www.HANDsupport.org).

**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., Sept 15<sup>th</sup>** Both new and seasoned bereaved parents take both baby and giant steps into their "new normal" lives. We will express thoughts on how both grieving and taking steps in the world around us have woven together to make both processes more manageable.

**Tues., October 20<sup>th</sup>** Fall weather can create contemplative moods. Contemplation for the bereaved parent can be so bittersweet. Let us each share the tools that allow both the bitter and the sweet to drift into our hearts and minds and become an effective part of our grief journey.

### 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 at 7pm before the meeting begins.

Visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) & [www.tcfmarin.org](http://www.tcfmarin.org)  
for information and support services.

### Walk and Talk Group

All walks begin at 10 am on the 1st Saturday of the month (rain or shine) unless otherwise noted. Bring water, appropriate clothing, and snacks/lunch if so desired; sometimes we "dine-out" and will notify you in advance. Unless noted otherwise, please **RSVP** to Marcie so she will be on the lookout for you: [marcieleach@aol.com](mailto:marcieleach@aol.com)/259-7366.

**Sat., Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>:** NOTE this is the **SECOND Sat of the month** because of Labor Day Weekend conflicts. Meet at Sandy's at 254 Butterfield Dr. in Novato (101 to Atherton/San Marin; west over the freeway; **immediate** right on Redwood; left on Woodhollow; left on Sundance; right on Butterfield to the end.) Bring sack lunch for picnic following the walk in the backyard. Desserts and drinks provided. RSVP Sandy: [tcfed@comcast.net](mailto:tcfed@comcast.net).

### Sat., October 3<sup>rd</sup> China Beach to Cliff House, San Francisco

This is a repeat of a popular destination last fall: A walk in SF with SF/TCF members Kathy Bodnar and Gloria Cevallos. Meet at 10am at 428 Sea Cliff Ave. Directions: Take immediate 25<sup>th</sup> Ave. exit past toll gates. Follow 25<sup>th</sup> to a right on Lincoln (which then becomes El Camino del Mar after 1.2 miles.) At the T intersection (.3 mi.), make a right at Sea Cliff Ave. and then a sharp left to stay on Sea Cliff. The parking lot is ahead. Check with Kathy Bodnar: [kathbodnar@yahoo.com](mailto:kathbodnar@yahoo.com) or with Marcie: [marcieleach@aol.com](mailto:marcieleach@aol.com)

### Sat., Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> Phoenix Lake

Meet at the Ross Post Office and walk to Phoenix Lake. There should be some wonderful fall colors to enjoy! There is no leader for this walk at this time. However, check with Marcie in late October for that information.

If you want to be added to the Walk & Talk Group Email list  
for up-to-date information, email: [marcieleach@aol.com](mailto:marcieleach@aol.com)

## Will Marin TCF Continue to Enjoy a Newsletter?

After 5 years of service to Marin TCF, our current newsletter editor (Sandy Williams) is stepping down from the position and offering the opportunity to another member(s) who want to accept this gratifying challenge. As editor, you will not only inspire those in their grief process, but benefit yourself from dedicating your service in the memory of your child who has gone too soon. The Nov/Dec 2009 issue will be her final one. It would be a loss if there were no longer an avenue to offer supportive stories, inspirational poems, chapter news on walks, meeting notices, the opportunity to offer Love Gifts to our children, and educate the community of physicians, hospitals, funeral homes and hospices. If you think you could give back to the Marin chapter in some facet of the newsletter process, please contact Diana de Regnier ([healing.spirit@comcast.net](mailto:healing.spirit@comcast.net)) or Sandy Williams ([tcfed@comcast.net](mailto:tcfed@comcast.net).) Everything possible will be done to assure your comfort level in meeting this challenge.

## Children's Memorial Update

From my experience, one of the most difficult aspects of my son's death is not hearing his name mentioned again, or infrequently. To have a piece of mail addressed to him, to hear someone tell a story about him, or to find a picture previously unseen is a precious gift. I believe that our beloved dead wish to be remembered and that we wish to honor them by keeping their names alive in some way. Statues, the naming of buildings, scholarships, magnificent gravestones, endowments, the naming of towns: all these speak to honoring the memory of those who are no longer with us and whom we continue to love as if they were.

Our Compassionate Friends group of Marin is fortunate enough to have a lovely way to remember your child: engraving his /her name on a beautiful boulder, the fifth and last for which we are now gathering names. Currently, we have 36 names and have room for about 35 more names. If you would like to add your beloved child's name to this memorial, please e-mail Karen Klingel: [kklingel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kklingel@sbcglobal.net). A donation in any amount is requested.

**Look for an article about TCF Marin member Michelle Miller's involvement with *Project Grace* in the September 2009 issue of Marin Magazine!**

## Our 2009 Candle Lighting Event

**New Volunteers** are welcome to help with this year's annual event on December 12. If you have found this event meaningful and inspirational in past years, perhaps you would like to offer a small bit of time with the set-up/close of the Reception Area, the Candle Table, and the Refreshment Area. If you would like to be part of creating this wonderful and warm environment, contact Diana deRegnier by email: [healing.spirit@comcast.net](mailto:healing.spirit@comcast.net).

## Walk to Honor a Loved One

Join us for the *Out of the Darkness* Community Walk, a fundraiser for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, on Sat., Sept. 26 at 10 AM at Crissy Field in San Francisco. Register online at [www.outofthedarkness.org](http://www.outofthedarkness.org). For more information, contact Kathy Bodnar at [kathbodnar@yahoo.com](mailto:kathbodnar@yahoo.com).

## TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

## 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.

## 2009 "Our Children Remembered" DVD

If you would like to include a photo of your child in the DVD for this year's Candle Lighting ceremony, please send your photo or digital photo (along with name of your child) to Alan Kolsky **by November 30**. For photo return, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

**NOTE:** It is not necessary to send another photo if your child has already been in a previous DVD unless you wish to change the picture.

Video Dimensions  
Attn: 2009 TCF DVD  
273 Crest Road  
Novato, CA 94945

Email:  
[alan@digitalvideodimensions.com](mailto:alan@digitalvideodimensions.com)

## TCF 2009 National Conference Walk to Remember on August 9, 2009



Regional Coordinator Genesse Gentry (with butterfly umbrella) prepares for the Walk with other Marin and Region TCF members, along with hundreds of family members from across the country in Portland, Oregon.



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

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**Sept/Oct 2009**

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