



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

JULY—AUGUST, 2020 ISSUE

Vol 41, No. 4

#1184



This issue of the TCF Marin Newsletter is sponsored by love gifts from our members.

Chapter Leader:

Eileen Rusky
erusky@gmail.com

Facilitator:

Mark Rosengarden

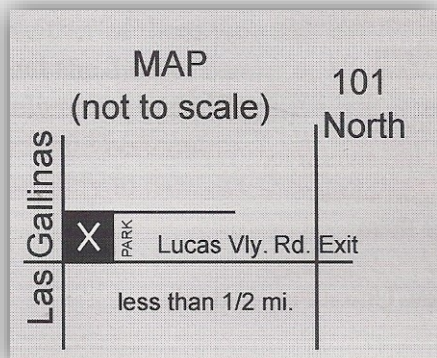
TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:

Meetings Temporarily Suspended

Group meetings are normally held on the third Monday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Hillside Church at Lucas Valley.

2000 Las Gallinas Avenue
(at Lucas Valley Road)
San Rafael, CA

First time attendees are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



FORWARD to this edition:

We sincerely regret not being able to hold our usual monthly support meetings due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the mandatory shelter-in-place quarantine. Please know that we ARE here to help you in your times of need. Please reach out to us by email at tcf-marin@gmail.com or check our website for more up to date contact information.

Please let us know if you are not receiving periodic email information or if your email address is not on our contact list. We will add you to the list.

Thank you for your continuing support at this trying time.



The Gift of Giving

In the Hope of Helping Others—The Compassionate Friends

After the death of our daughter Lori, I was completely devastated. Everything I believed about life was tossed out the window and I was filled with despair. It felt as if grief would destroy me.

Much of that time is now a blur, too painful to remember. But I do recall clearly my feeling of disconnection from most of the world of the living. My life had been ruined and I had no idea what to do. The friends with whom I'd surrounded myself before Lori's death had no way of knowing how to befriend me in this and I had no idea how to ask for the help I needed. So into my overwhelming grief was added hurt and loneliness because friends who didn't know what to do or say often opted to do and say nothing.

Then my husband and I found the monthly meetings of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) a support organization for families that have experienced the death of a child. I won't say the meetings were immediately a perfect fit for me, (continued on page 2)

Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, July 20, 2020
Monday, August 17, 2020
Monday, September 21, 2020
Monday, October 19, 2020



TCF RESOURCES:

TCF Marin County, CA Chapter

P.O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915
www.tcfmarin.org
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36595597804>
Info: Eileen Rusky (415) 457-3123

TCF San Francisco and Peninsula Chapter

Meets: 2nd Wednesday
Taraval Police Sta. 2345, 24th Ave
Contact: Audre Hallum
650.359.7928, cwhallum1@mac.com
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

TCF Sonoma County Chapter

tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com
(707) 490-8640

Northern CA Regional Coordinator:

Nancy Juracka
nancy_juracka@yahoo.com

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
www.compassionatefriends.org

Additional Support Sites

opentohope.com
survivorsofselfharm.com
griefspeaks.com

Other Grief Counseling Resources

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.
Free monthly drop in 1st Thursday 11am-12pm 17 E. Sir Francis Drake, Larkspur.
Marin and SF (415) 526-5699
Sonoma (707) 931-7299
Email: griefsupport@hbtb.org
Website: www.hospicebythebay.org

North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael

www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com
Ph.: 415-250-3027

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org Ph.: 707.721.4062

because they weren't, or that I felt comfortable as I attended, because I didn't. I was a very private person; I had had no experience crying on anyone's shoulder. My tears had always been in solitude. I'd never learned to express my feelings in words. So when someone asked me how I was feeling, I'd almost panic. How DID I feel? And after listening to the others in the circle, by the time my turn came, I was often overwhelmed with feelings. Like many others, I can't cry and talk at the same time, which caused people to have to wait as I tried to get the words out . . . I hated all the eyes on me while I tried to gain enough control to speak.

So why did I keep going? At the beginning it was because my husband, Bill, wanted to go and it was there that I learned more about how he was feeling. I was also learning from the more seasoned grievers ways of coping with my loss. All too soon I learned that TCF was actually a sanctuary, the rare place where I could try to explain my feelings or talk about Lori and her death without people trying to change the subject because they were being made uncomfortable by my words. And it was such a relief to find out that not only was it ok to voice my darkest thoughts and feelings, but others often felt the same way too. They understood! Some months I had to overcome my lethargy to get into the car and drive the half hour to get to the meetings, but every time I went I was thankful that I had. Looking back now, I realize that the meetings, and the friends I made at the meetings, probably saved my life.

But by the spring before the second anniversary of Lori's death, we were no longer attending every meeting. I regularly spoke with TCF friends, but didn't feel I needed to go every month. I had come to the point, as so many do, where I felt I'd received most of the help I would get from TCF. I might soon have stopped going to the meetings altogether. Now I can't even imagine who I would have become if that had happened. Instead I was given a gift, a reason to keep attending the meetings. Our facilitator was moving out of the area and I was asked to facilitate the local meetings. I said yes and found there was a whole new world of healing when I stopped going only for myself and began to attend meetings to help others. I can't overemphasize the importance of this turning point in my life.

From then on, every month I had to look outside myself into the hearts and minds of others and try to give them hope. I found the intensity of my own raw pain began to take a backseat to that of others more newly bereaved than I. Because I needed to find words for THEM, to try to help ease THEIR pain, a floodgate was gradually opened in me and words, amazing words, began to fill my life. Feelings, with the words to describe them, began to well up from my innermost being, feelings from the past, from those first months after Lori's death, and feelings in the present, words in the form of poetry, poems to help me understand myself and poems to help others. Truly, I believe this would not have happened if I hadn't opened my heart to my newly bereaved compassionate friends.

I believe there is the potential for something like this to happen to all who become actively involved in the "helping" aspect of The Compassionate Friends. I don't mean that everyone begins writing poetry. But I do believe that the greatest healing derived from TCF is this outward movement, (See page 7)

Carol's Corner

by Carol Kearns, PhD
author of "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare"



Columns for The Compassionate Friends

I have found great solace volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, a hard-working group that supports families seeking "the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child" (www.compassionatefriends.org). My columns discuss topics of continuing concern in the Marin County CA newsletter. - Carol

Suicide and Loss

I was asked the question, "What do you tell parents who have suicidal thoughts after their child dies?" As you all know, the death of a child is one of life's greatest pains. I think the only pain greater is losing more than one child, and too many of you parents have. When filled to the brim with pain, we may feel the only way to get rid of the pain is to get rid of ourselves. We can't imagine living without our child. Suicide may seem like the only option when the light at the end of the tunnel is either nonexistent or very dim. A suicidal person's perspective on life can narrow to the extent that she feels she has nothing to offer. The world is better off without her.

I remember well those suicidal feelings after my daughter Kristen's death and mention in my book how, when taking a bubble bath, I wanted to slip under the water and disappear. Exhausted from the pain, I saw this as an easy solution. Thank goodness an equally strong feeling overtook me: I could never do this to Michel, my son who was nine at the time. He had just lost his sister. He didn't need to lose his mother.

Still, living a life of pain would be like living a death. That wasn't an option. The only option was to somehow turn the pain into something meaningful.

This is the challenge we each face as bereaved parents if we are to live a life of meaning. Grief demands patience and a trust that we will find a way through. As impossible as this feels, we must try to reach deep within ourselves beyond the pain to the gifts our child gave us. Even in infant deaths, our babies gave us one of the greatest of gifts. They gave us love. We need to use the power of this love to create their

legacy. Suicide robs them of that.

We do not "get over" the loss of our child. We will never be the same. We will always miss them but, with the right support, we can recover from the anger, sadness, isolation and despair that threatened to devastate us. We heal and often become a better, stronger person.

From The Compassionate Friends to MADD, many wonderful organizations began with the death of a child. Great art, literature and music were created out of grief and have benefitted us all. The late Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who pioneered the field of grief and loss often said, "Remember, the purest gold comes from the hottest fire." When you feel yourself giving into the desperate feelings of suicide, I challenge you to look for the gold. What will your child's legacy be?

YOUR TREE NOVEMBER 13, 1998

I watch your tree grow
Wishing it were you.
How can it be?
Would you be big and strong?
Would you dance in the wind
like your tree?
It's been so long...
I love you little Krissie.

Mommy



Our Children Remembered, July, 2020

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Jonathan Adkisson, Jr.		Anne & Jonathan Adkisson
John Christopher Alioto, Jr.		John Alioto
Chancellor Argall		Grier Argall & Jeanni Lang
Maraina Lee Arik		Rich & Linda Arik
Garrett Artigiani		Joe & Anya Artigiani
Bret William Baumgarten		Bobbi & Dan Baumgarten
Nicholas Justin Bennett-Strauss		Stephanie & Jay Bennett-Strauss
Kevin Connor Bledsoe		AnnMarie Bledsoe
Nino Angelo Bosco		Frauka Kozar
Sean Stephen Bourke		Beryl Bourke
Brian Jay Buckley		Merilee Rossi, Chris Valentino & Family
Anthony Brandon Carmignani		Lynnette Frary & Tony Carmignani
Michelle Gayle Carter		Cynthia Carter
Lisa Danielle Clark		Julie & Bruce Clark. Lucy Martinez
Matthew Jason Comin		Marci & Mark Comin Comin
Matthew Corral		Karen Corral
Dylan Simon Duncan Wright		Mara Duncan
Bodi Cooper Ealey		Sarah Ealey, Eli Echelmeier
John Patrick Feeney		Lois & Dan Feeney
Peter Alexander Forstner		Kitty Forstner
René Garcia		Bertila, Carmen & Jose Armando Garcia
Basilio Nathan Garza Jr.		Renee Garza
Janet Suzanne Hoch		Linda & Peter Hoch
Mark Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Mina Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Matthew David Hubal		Bruce & Louise Hubal
Rodrigues Juliana		Connie Rodrigues
Alicia Scott Lee		Jon & Cathie Lee
Adam Blake London		Trudie London
Laura Catherine Maatz		Russell & Marcia Lizza
Michael Allen Mannheimer		Shirlee J. Newman
Fernando Martinez		Don & Maria Pazour
Sean Michael Morgan,Jr.		Sean & Claire Morgan
Alex Morris		Paula Morris & Cory Pohley
Melody Rae Osheroff		Aaron Osheroff
Luke Benjamin Pedemonte		Richard and Therese Pedemonte
Joshua Adam Portnoy		Bob & Gunilla Portnoy
Warren James Ruehle		Kate & Glenn Ruehle
Eric James Schor		Audrey Schor
Caleb Kalani Sears		Tim & Eliza Sears, Ann Bentley
Richard Sielert		Diane Sielert
Vinnie J. Simons		Lori Jones
Baby Sprinkles		Ed Dudkowski
Gregory Patrick Walsh		Sandy Williams
Brekhus Alan Williams		Catherine & Scott Williams
Spencer Wood		Rich & Denise Wood
Victor Robinson Zenoff		Nisha Zenoff

What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our Children Remembered, August, 2020

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Alana Teresa Alioto		John Alioto
Shane Arneson		Carolyn Beasley
Tobias M. Biedul		Charles Feeney & Holly Biedul
Anthony Brandon Carmignani		Lynnette Frary & Tony Carmignani
Taylor Lynn Cohen		Michael & Gail Cohen
Chloë Sabrina Dator		Dani Dator
Michael Chad Harris		Jerry & Trena Harris
Alecia Anne Marie Hopper		Bill Hopper, Constance Blake
Ian Emerson Jones		Nanette Biers
Michael J. Lockwood		Barbara Lockwood Albertoni
Mathew Gary Luce		Alice Clary, Christie Clary
Richard C. Mannheimer, Jr.		Shirlee J. Newman, Richard Mannheimer, Sr.
Chance Pierre Maurer		Tracy Maurer
Daniel McLaughlin		Eve Pell
Lori Margo Meislin		Barbara J. Meislin
Anthony Dino Nay		Bob & Diana Nay
Lauren Nelson		John & Vicki Nelson
Katie Okura		Ginny Anderson
Rebecca E. Pabst		Alan & Virginia Pabst
Kareem Rafeh		Hafez & Nada Rafeh
Benjamin Rosenthal		Robert Rosenthal
Jordyn Royall		Michelle Royall & Colin Fleumer
Anna Elizabeth Russell		Lorene Jackson
Eric James Schor		Audrey Schor
Colin Edward Schreck		Daly & David Schreck, Lesley & Ireland Cannan
Brian Richard Senior		Ann Senior
Railee Naomi Silvis		Linda Cox
Cary Warren Smith		Patsy Curry
Meghan Rae Teresi		James Teresi & Lynda Cardwell
Brigham Robert Thompson		Elizabeth Thompson Mollner
Isabelle Quinn van Bergen		Fran Quinn van Bergen
Eloi Ivan Vasquez-Margolin		Wendy Margolin
Jesse R. Venegas		Brent R. Venegas
Phoebe Stewart Washer		Drew Washer, David Washer
Max S. Jackson Weinreb		Beth Jackson & Marion Weinreb
Gabriel Alexander Whooley		Monica Whooley
Nathan Hall Wright		Elizabeth Wright

"My sister will die over and over again for the rest of my life. Grief is forever. It doesn't go away; it becomes a part of you, step for step, breath for breath. I will never stop grieving Bailey because I will never stop loving her. That's just how it is. Grief and love are conjoined, you don't get one without the other. All I can do is love her, and love the world, emulate her by living with daring and spirit and joy."

— [Jandy Nelson, *The Sky is Everywhere*](#)

"There need not be a purpose to a person's death, other than that they have lived the length of their days on this Earth and now begin the longer part of their existence."

— [Brian M. Holmes, *What Are You Crying About? Defeating Grief for Christians*](#)

No farewell words were spoken, no time to say goodbye, you were gone before we knew it, and only God knows why. - Author Unknown

Love Gifts

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.

We have received the following Love Gifts for the July/ August newsletter:

Donor/s: Shirlee Newman
Child: Michael Mannheimer
Dates: 6/18/62 - 7/10/19

Child: Richard Mannheimer
Dates: 6/27/61 - 8/22/10

"Those we love don't go away. They walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard, yet always near, still loved, still missed and very dear."

"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal," (from a headstone in Ireland)

For: "My loving sons."
From: Your loving mom.

Donor/s: Diane Sielert
Child: Richard Sielert
Dates: 2/19/64 - 7/12/14
"Always in my heart."



Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:

Jan/Feb issue	Dec. 15	Jul/Aug issue	Jun. 15
Mar/Apr issue	Feb. 15	Sep/Oct issue	Aug. 15
May/Jun issue	Apr. 15	Nov/Dec issue	Oct. 15

The following additional donation was made to the Georgia Alioto Memorial fund to develop our leadership group and provide conference support:

Purple Lady/Barbara J. Meislin Fund in memory of the Purple Lady's beloved daughter, Little Lady Lori.

NOTE:

Photographs for the annual Candle Lighting Ceremony Slide Show presentation need to be submitted no later than October 31 or there will not be time to add them to the Slide Show.



Love Gift Form:

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:

Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to TCF/Marin
to: TCF/Marin c/o Love Gifts, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.

this growth away from the self-centeredness, self-absorption of grief, towards the open hearted hope of helping others.

It comes to me that parenthood, itself, does something like this. From our self-centered, self-directed lives before our children are born, we learn the awesome responsibility of another person's life when we first gaze upon them. Our lives change focus and their survival and growth become our highest purpose; our hearts become larger because our children are in them. When our children die, we not only hurt because the most important, most loved people of our lives are gone, but that intense focus is gone and our sense of great purpose. We wander in a wasteland, searching for what has been lost.

When Lori died, we still had our 15-year-old daughter Megan at home, but I felt so crippled as a mother. How thankful I am that Megan was somehow able to get through those early years with a mother so distracted by grief - and emotionally distanced by fear. I was half a mother in more ways than one.

Now, because of TCF, I began to find a new focus for my maternal instincts and a new way to grow back into the loving mother I'd been before Lori died. As I tried to grow to the task of helping those more newly bereaved than I, just as I'd had to grow to the task of being Lori and Megan's mother, I was benefiting three-fold. First, my "mother" energy, which is a huge part of me, was again flowing outward. Second, as I was learning ways to help others heal, I was learning them for myself. And third, once again, I began to feel that I was doing something important with my life, that my life mattered, that my life had purpose.

When I look at other bereaved parents who seem to have survived this great loss the most successfully, I find that they too have again found purpose. And often that purpose has something to do with the child who has died. Sometimes they work towards eradicating the reason their child died: drunk driving and cancer are two examples. Some start foundations in their child's name. Some take up and even finish the work that their child started.

Many bereaved parents, like me, have regained a sense of purpose through The Compassionate Friends. My work in TCF has given me a great sense of purpose, satisfaction in helping the newly bereaved at our monthly meetings, being part of the Steering Committee, a vital part of my chapter, and Chapter Leader. As Regional Coordinator I also try to give support to my region's chapters, and the ripples go out from there.

And just as important to me, besides this sense of purpose, TCF has allowed me to keep Lori more visibly in my life. Wherever I go, whatever I do for TCF, Lori's name is mentioned; Lori is not forgotten. Be-

cause what I do for TCF matters, and because all I do for TCF, I do in her name, Lori's life continues to matter, all these years after she left this earth. Through TCF Lori remains in the forefront of all I do, the guiding star in the direction of my life. I could not have found a more loving or fitting way to honor her than I have through The Compassionate Friends. My grief and TCF have forced me to grow in ways of which I had never dreamed. And Lori has been with me every step of the way.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

In Memory of my daughter, Lori

From *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child* and previously published in *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

The Golden Gate Bridge: Still Beautiful

On May 23rd, 1995 my son jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge [in San Francisco]. Tempting as it is to believe he'd still be alive had there been a barrier, I think it would be naive. In my despair I wanted to blame the psychiatrist who refused to see him because he'd missed some appointments, the girlfriend who'd ended their relationship just two days prior to his jump, the crisis center at the hospital where he'd gone for help and who could have kept him had they read the signs right, but didn't; myself, (especially myself), for flawed parenting. But never did I blame the bridge! In the end it was his decision. In his farewell note, he said he was going to electrocute himself. What made him change his mind? I don't know, but I believe it was the deed, not the method, that he was determined to execute. People who really want to die find a way. So while a barrier would deter suicides on the bridge, it would hardly deter suicides. Should we eliminate tall buildings, parking structures, automobile exhaust pipes, ropes? In spite of very sad memories, I still appreciate the beauty of the bridge. People from all over the world enjoy the vistas from this compelling structure. Is it fair to impair the visibility in a futile effort to control deaths from the bridge? The bridge is for the living, too.

Carol Sheldon

TCF Marin County, CA



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage PAID
Larkspur, CA
Permit No.41

The Compassionate Friends of Marin County
P. O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915

JULY—AUGUST, 2020

Copyright © 2019 - All Rights Reserved
The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



A Flicker in the Distance

In this time of grief,
When the darkness is so great,
And your heart is aching so,
You feel that it may break.

Remember that in this darkness
There is a candle's light
A flicker in the distance
Small but intensely bright.

That tiny little glow
That seems so far away
Will grow brighter and brighter
With each passing day.

Time does not heal, as they say,
But it tends to numb
The ache we feel inside our heart
When that darkness comes.



In time your heart will feel lighter
And the memories won't bring such pain
The tears won't flow as often
And you will find laughter again.

So keep your eye on that distant glow
To see how far you came...
Because at the end of the darkness
That flicker becomes a flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Memory of Michelle, Jerry, and Danny
©1999. Permission for TCF chapters to reprint granted by the
author



Newsletter Printing provided by All-American Printing Services <https://allamericanprinting.com/>