



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 2020 ISSUE

Vol 41, No. 5

#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

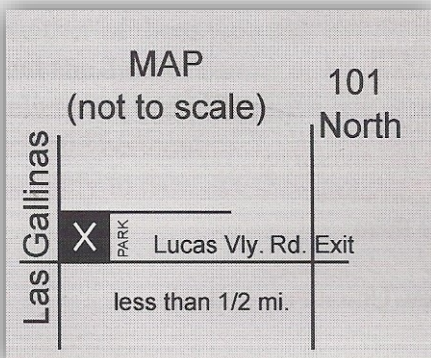
TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:

Meetings are being held via ZOOM

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

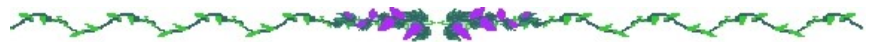
First time attendees are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



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. Monthly meetings are being presented online via ZOOM.

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.



History of the Children's Memorial

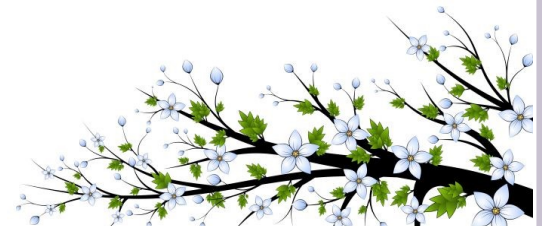
Tragically, in separate accidents in 1978, Sally and Larry Norton's 12 year old son, Jimmy, and Georgia and John Alioto's 11 year old daughter, Alana, died. Georgia, John, Larry and Sally became friends and after hearing about The Compassionate Friends on the Phil Donahue show, they decided to form our Marin Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. In 1991, I joined TCF Marin after our 21 year old daughter, Lori, died in a car accident. After all that time, Georgia was still running our chapter as head of the Steering Committee and I joined the Steering Committee in 1993. At each meeting, Georgia brought up her idea of a children's memorial garden and at each meeting, she was told our finances were barely covering the newsletter and other necessities so it was put off year after year.

Then in 1997, miraculously, we received a \$5000 donation that we decided

Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

- Monday, September 21, 2020
- Monday, October 19, 2020
- Monday, November 16, 2020
- Monday, December 21, 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
survivorsofsuicide.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

we could use to seed a plan for Georgia's Children's Memorial Garden. Georgia envisioned it somewhere at the civic center, while I imagined it being somewhere in nature, like on Mt. Tam. Georgia and I left the meeting planning to check out our ideas. We did, then related over a telephone conversation that neither idea would be allowed. As I stood in my kitchen talking to her, a picture popped into my mind of Lori and her friends feeding the ducks along Corte Madera Creek in Greenbrae. I explained what I saw and told Georgia I'd call to see if we could put something up there, but they'll probably tell us no." After calling around to see who actually owned that area, I was told it was Marin Open Space. And Marin Open Space actually had a docent program along there where benches, gazebos, etc. could be purchased and put up.

In the newsletter we called for volunteers for a children's memorial committee to meet on Bon Air Road across from the hospital to see if we could find a site. I got their early and started looking around. When I found a little path off to the right of the bike path, I walked into a small circular grove with a small oak tree in the middle and with a bench facing the marsh. The bench was old, graffitied with the word "ratkiss" and had a beer bottle balanced on the back. But immediately, I felt a sense of holiness, a feeling of being in one of this earth's special places and was very moved. I knew this place was somehow heaven sent. I didn't want to influence anyone, though, so when I met up with the others on the committee I didn't say anything. We walked along discussing the pros and cons of each place along the way, then walked into the little grove. Each and every one of us felt the magic of that site and unanimously decided to ask for it.

We knew it was a long shot, since we wanted so much space, but we talked the Open Space Committee into letting us have it after promising it would only be one boulder and "never become Stonehenge." Well . . . That promise was broken right away when we ended up with 160 children's names after our first calls and needed two boulders and two plaques to be able to include them. And over the years, under the auspices of very sweet open space rangers, we've snuck in more boulders and put up four more plaques, each time promising it would be the last. No one has yelled at us yet, thank goodness.

And now we finally have the sixth plaque ready to be installed. Georgia remained the heart and soul of TCF Marin until her death in 2017 and I can see her now, up there, along with Alana, Lori and all our children, beaming big, beautiful smiles down on all of us and saying, "Well done!"



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

GUILT: The Bereaved Parent's Unwelcome Visitor

In my twenty-five years of trauma counseling, I can't remember ever counseling a bereaved parent who didn't, at one stage or another, experience guilt. No matter the age or cause of their child's death, the "could haves, should haves and wish I would haves" seemed to creep in....

Our most important role as a parent is to protect our child. We feel we have failed in this most fundamental of all roles when our child dies. Our nurturing instinct turns against us in the form of guilt. There must have been something we could have done. None of us want to believe that we are that impotent as parents. I have even had clients with grown children who have not lived in their home in years make comments like, "I should have told him he was drinking too much;" or "I should have encouraged her to go more regularly to the doctors;" or "he always drove fast and I never said anything. I should have."

When my daughter Kristen was pulled out to sea by a wave and drowned, her father John and his wife drove for several hours to the beach cabin where we had been staying. They hoped beyond hope that by the time they'd arrive, the Coast Guard would have found her and the nightmare would end. When I answered the door, the look on my face told them the worst. Nearly, the first words from John were, "Carol, I hope to God, you're not feeling guilty." I was in such shock; I had no idea what he meant. However, it wasn't long before the shock wore off and the guilt crept in. Kristen was his flesh and blood as much as mine. If I hadn't heard those words I would have felt doubly guilty. Whenever I'd begin to spiral into guilt, I would remember his words. They became the greatest gift he could have given

me.

In its extreme, guilt can grab hold and never let go creating despondency that side tracks the grief process. In fact, we may feel so guilty that we believe we deserve whatever pain we have. Our goal in guilt is to learn to forgive ourselves. This is extremely difficult if we believe we were such bad parents that we deserve the pain. Accidents happen. They especially happen to active vital children no matter what age.

It is extremely important to address guilt when the death is by suicide. When someone chooses to kill himself, we know his pain was intense and his hope so diminished. How could we not have known? Surely we could have done something to stop them? How could we have been a good parent and not prevented this? We must remind ourselves that if we could have prevented it, we would have. This is much easier said than done. If our guilt persists, we may need professional counseling by a therapist experienced with grief issues.

KRISTEN

You were laughter and lightness,
You were rhinestones and scarves
You were fantasy in person.
A child's child,

Living outside of what others knew as real.

With the sudden surge of a frenzied wave
Living fantasy became nightmare.



Our Children Remembered, September, 2020

Child

Dates

Bereaved

Daniel Zacharia Ashkenazy		Pamela & Dan Ashkenazy
Sean Behan		Gerri & Robert Behan
Sylvia Chantal Bingham		Francoise Blusseau & Stephen Bingham
Jason Bohlke		Adam Bohlke & Britt Rosenmayr
Jacob Westley Brumbaugh		Mark & Deborah Brumbaugh
Damon Clark		Susan Radelt
Oksana Collins		Susan Collins
Chelsea Faith Dolan		Colleen Dolan
Dylan Simon Duncan Wright		Mara Duncan
Jacob Samuel Freeman		Michael Freeman & Lisa Klairmont
Errol Friedman		Jeff & Barbara Friedman
Savannah Louise Hill		Andrea Hill
Alecia Anne Marie Hopper		Constance Blake, Bill Hopper
Dana John Hudson		Diana Hudson
Evan Porter Larsen		Libby McQuiston
Chris Leach		Marcie & Don Leach
Athena Maguire		Alexandra Maguire
Fernando Martinez		Don & Maria Pazour
Timothy Patrick McBride		Lois Kortum & George McBride
Daniel McLaughlin		Eve Pell
Marci Eilene Meyring		Gary & Natalie Meyring
Lauren Nelson		John & Vicki Nelson
Diego Ruiz Palomino		Celia Ruiz & Michael Palomino
Nicholas Plaskon		John & Berit Lelas
Joshua Adam Portnoy		Bob & Gunilla Portnoy
Kareem Rafeh		Hafez & Nada Rafeh
Carolyn Reichling		Michelle Miller
Justin Daniel Reynolds		Carole Bonnici
Lara Rachel Rusky		Edward & Eileen Rusky
Benjamin P. Scheuenstuhl		Maureen & Heinz Scheuenstuhl
Brian Richard Senior		Ann Senior
Nicolas Simard		Julie Chabot & François Simard
Vinnie J. Simons		Lori Jones
Malika Ziani		Phyllis Callahan

I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value.—Hermann Hesse

Our Children Remembered, October, 2020

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Chancellor Argall		Grier Argall & Jeanni Lang
Lancelot Argall		Grier Argall & Jeanni Lang
Matthew Buckley		Mark & Kristina Buckley
Joey Ciatti		Becky Oken
Misty Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Adam Teplin Emmott		Kristina Teplin, Michelle J. Maguire
Debra Lynn Ferrua		Ronald & Joan Crook
Reneé Francesca Garcia		Bertlla, Carmen & Jose Armando Garcia
Ellen Marian Haas		Harold & Mary Haas
Pamela Dawn Heaster		Ila Benavidez-Heaster
Bowen Kader Johnson		Julie & Brian Gordon
Emma Kristen Kearns		Dr. Carol Kearns
Albert Levy		Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
Athena Maguire		Alexandra Maguire
Chance Pierre Maurer		Tracy Maurer
Robert Scott McIntosh		Jennifer Holman McIntosh
Ryan W. McKnight		Bob & Leesa Tuley
Peter McLaughlin		Eve Pell
Brian David Mixsell		Bill, Sandy & Belinda Mixsell
Kayden Montoya		Michelle Padilla-Goode
Peter Langhorne Morawitz		Terry Morawitz
Emily Grace Panicacci		Scott & Jennifer Panicacci
Phillip E. Perry		Sue Hecht
Steven Rodriguez		Rafael & Alex Rodriguez
Lonnie Roper II		Shirlee Roper
James Aaron Rosengarden		Mark Rosengarden
Susan Rudolph		Jackie Martin
Casey Sandvick		Rich Sandvick
Anthony Salvatore Santa Maria		Pam Santa Maria
Ellen Alexandra Scott		Carol Scott
Railee Naomi Silvis		Linda Cox
Adrian Rodolfo Valderrama		Rosa Sandoval & Rodolfo Valderrama
Isabelle Quinn van Bergen		Fran Quinn van Bergen
John Elliot Vipiana		Lisa Vipiana, John Vipiana
Gregory Patrick Walsh		Sandy Williams
Brittney Marie Weaver		Janine Schengel
Craig Weldon		Lee Weldon
Robert Craig Wilson		Mary C. Fishman
Kendra Elizabeth Young		Betsy & Bryant Young

"In this sad world of ours sorrow comes to all and it often comes with bitter agony. Perfect relief is not possible except with time. You cannot now believe that you will ever feel better. But this is not true. You are sure to be happy again. Knowing this, truly believing it will make you less miserable now. I have had enough experience to make this statement." — Abraham Lincoln

We can endure much more than we think we can; all human experience testifies to that. All we need to do is learn not to be afraid of pain. Grit your teeth and let it hurt. Don't deny it, don't be overwhelmed by it. It will not last forever. One day, the pain will be gone and you will still be there. — Harold Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*

"Grieving is a journey that teaches us how to love in a new way now that our loved one is no longer with us. Consciously remembering those who have died is the key that opens the heart, that allows us to love them in new ways." — Tom Attig, *The Heart of Grief*

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 no Love Gifts for the September/ October newsletter:

Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment and children's pleasure.
Gremlins and goblins
and ghosties at the door
of your house.

And the other children
come to the door of your mind.
Faces out of the past,
small ghosts with sweet, painted faces.

They do not shout.
Those children
who no longer march laughing
on cold Halloween nights,
they stand at the door of your mind

and you will let them in,
so that you can give them
the small gifts of Halloween,
a smile and a tear.

Sascha Wagner
The Compassionate Friends

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.

"The tears I feel today
I'll wait to shed tomorrow.
Though I'll not sleep this night
Nor find surcease from sorrow.
My eyes must keep their sight:
I dare not be tear-blinded.
I must be free to talk
Not choked with grief, clear-minded.
My mouth cannot betray
The anguish that I know.
Yes, I'll keep my tears til later:
But my grief will never go."

— [Anne McCaffrey](#), [Dragonsinger](#)

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

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.

It Doesn't Take Much

I am closing in on six years since my son Jordan died. Most days, I function productively. I have a "to-do" list (as I always have), I interact with the world in a reasonably coherent manner, and I like to think I help a few other people along the way. I know my dog is well cared for and I hope my husband and daughter think I have attended to them as best I can with whatever energy still resides within me.

Today, I had to go to the pharmacy to pick up the "solution" one needs in order to prepare for a colonoscopy. Even though I am well past the age when one is supposed to undergo that procedure on a regular basis, it is a procedure I have not been willing to endure in the last six years. Prior to the death of my son, I was a compliant patient any doctor would appreciate. I am less so these days. My approach to my medical care is highlighted by apathy.

Then my grief counselor died of colon cancer at the age of 59. His widow wrote a passionate, eloquent plea for people to get colonoscopies. So, I consider this one I'm getting to be the "John Anderson Memorial Colonoscopy."

And, as much as I loved John and appreciated him, I am not enthusiastic.

How could it be that the line in the pharmacy put me face to face with one of those round yellow Cheerios dispensers? The ones where a segment of the lid flips open so a child can reach in without spilling all the contents. They can't be more than about five inches in diameter. I haven't seen one of those in decades. I had no idea they are still made or sold. They seem to be such an antique.

For years, it was an indispensable accessory to my days. I packed it in diaper bags. I made sure it was in the stroller. I always had it in the car so it could easily be passed to a child in the car seat.

It didn't just house Cheerios. There were raisins, too. And goldfish. Maybe some nuts. If I was feeling indulgent, there may have been M&Ms. Sort of a trail mix. But that little Cheerios container went everywhere with us for many years. It soothed many moments of grumpiness. It tided us over until meal time. It distracted fits of boredom for long car rides.

And, today, I found myself eye-to-eye with that artifact from my days of happiness as a mom. Those eyes that stared at the Cheerios dispenser were eyes flooded with tears by the time I got to the head of the line at the pharmacy. Tearful eyes on a day when I thought I was handling things fairly well.

It doesn't take much.

Peggi Johnson

TCF Piedmont, VA

The Irritability of Grief

As much as I have read about grief, I don't think I've read anything about how irritable it makes me. I'm guessing I'm not alone. I am short tempered, easily annoyed, and just generally uncomfortable in my own skin. There seem to be many contributing factors.

First, even after four and a half years, I often do not sleep well. I go to bed too early, probably, because often I'm just "done" with the day and want it to be over. Then, I wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep because I ruminate over and over about Jordan's death, all the circumstances surrounding it, all the difficulties since. *I wish my mind had an "off" switch.* I could sure use one.

Next, my chest still hurts. Not as much of the time as it used to, but still often enough to bother me. There is an elephant who has planted its foot upon my chest.

Third, it takes a lot of energy to put on the mask I wear so that I can maneuver about in the world. The mask that smiles at the good news of others, the time they have with their intact families, the joys and challenges that come with an ordinary life. The kind of life I used to have.

There are fifty-five conditions listed on Wikipedia that can cause irritability. Grief isn't one of them. Insomnia and sleep deprivation are. I think grief should be there too.

I find exercise makes it better as does a dose of sunshine. Having a dog helps, especially a dog who "has issues."

Also, I'm not irritable when I am engaged in trying to be helpful to someone else. So I try to do more of that.

But I am still irritable. Grief makes me irritable.

Peggi Johnson

TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA



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

SEPT—OCT, 2020

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

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



Farewell to Dreams

Once upon a time we lived a fairy tale
 Where all lived happily ever after
 God's sun was bright and the stars at night
 Joined in the joy and laughter

We met each day in a composed way
 And met also each tribulation
 We survived each blow and resultant woe
 And loved without ration

Then one day the dreams went astray
 We bid goodbye to "ever after"
 Eyes filled with tears dissolved the cheers
 And goodbye to joy and laughter

Unhappily tossed, our dreams were lost
 In clouded skies there are no beams
 Ours to remember a glowing ember
 But goodbye to tales and farewell to dreams.

Harvey Hockstein
 TCF Morris Area, NJ
 In Memory of my daughter, Marilyn

